

# **The role of migrant entrepreneurs in ecotourism development:**

The case of Las Trancas, Chile



Las Trancas Valley (Source: Jake Milstead)

Tourism Master's Thesis

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May 2018

*“Ethics is nothing else than reverence for life.”*

Albert Schweitzer

## **Acknowledgement**

Firstly, I would like to thank to my supervisor, Helene Balslev for her invaluable suggestions and patient guidance throughout the thesis-writing process and also for showing me, how to think critically about sustainable tourism.

I am also grateful to my family for supporting my studies in the last years, especially to my father, who tirelessly proofread my assignments, including this thesis.

Special thanks to Hanne Sorensen, who helped me and my research team with the organisation of the fieldtrip and provided useful insights into the research area and topic.

Finally, I would like to say thank you to all the friendly and helpful people in Las Trancas, who contributed to the thesis and provided a really friendly atmosphere and made me feel home there.

## **Abstract**

Communities of emerging tourism destinations are frequently considered as homogeneous entities based on geographic locations. The role of migrant entrepreneurs within destination communities is often overlooked, despite the recent acknowledgment of their significance. This thesis addresses this research gap and explores how a group of migrant entrepreneurs shape ecotourism in Las Trancas, Chile, as a novel form of tourism. In the analysis the tourism promoted by migrant entrepreneurs is analysed based on five ecotourism principles: 1) nature-based, 2) learning, 3) sustainability (socio-economic perspective), 4) sustainability (ecological perspective) and 5) the moral imperative (Fennell, 2015). Special attention is paid to the different practices of migrant entrepreneurs that influence tourism development. The thesis demonstrates that even though national and transnational entrepreneurs are a diverse group of people with different cultural and educational backgrounds, they have very similar objectives in terms of tourism development and they are agents of tourism change in Las Trancas. The thesis gives empirical evidence that communities are complex entities and suggests more research on community dynamics in emerging Latin American destinations to give way to appropriate policy making.

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# **1. Introduction**

It is acknowledged that tourism can be an effective tool for sustainable community development. Studies dealing with community development and local participation, however, tend to define communities based on their geographical positions and consider them as homogeneous entities. Cultural differences within communities are frequently overlooked and the role of migrant groups, whether they are national or transnational, is thus ignored. Taking into account the impacts of migrant entrepreneurs on tourism development is crucial, since they can considerably influence and shape the industry's evolution (see e.g. Clausen & Gyimóthy, 2016). In postcolonial settings, such as Latin America, addressing the role of migrant entrepreneurs, with a special attention to transnational people from the developed world is very important, as the appearance of transnational people can result in the emergence of neocolonialist structures (see e.g. Cole & Morgan, 2010).

## **1.1. Research questions**

In spite of the importance of the topic, there is a scarcity of research that addresses the influence of migrant entrepreneurs upon emerging destinations in Latin America. Clausen & Gyimóthy (2016) also suggest the reconsideration of the role of migrant groups in Latin America. Departing from this suggestion and the above outlined research gap, this thesis sets out to explore the role of transnational and national migrant entrepreneurs in the development of tourism in Las Trancas, Chile. It is suggested here that migrant entrepreneurs are agents of change, who promote the development of ecotourism, as a new form of tourism in the area. The role of entrepreneurs is explored through the analysis of the tourism promoted by the studied group of entrepreneurs based on the five principles of ecotourism (see Fennell, 2015). The thesis is guided by the following research questions:

1. How migrant entrepreneurs shape ecotourism development in Las Trancas?
2. How the tourism promoted by migrant entrepreneurs complies with the five core criteria of ecotourism?

## **1.2. Setting the scene**

### **1.2.1. Tourism in Chile**

The Republic of Chile is one of Latin America's most stable countries in political and economic terms and has a high human development ranking (UNDP, 2015). After the end of a military dictatorship between 1973 and 1990, tourism has started to increase significantly (Zunino, 2016). Chile is one of the most dynamically growing international tourism destinations in Latin America, with a remarkable 26% increase (the highest in the region) in the number of international tourist arrivals in 2016 – the third consecutive year of double-digit growth (UNWTO, 2017).



Compared to 2010 international arrivals grew by 100% in 2016: from 2.8 million in 2010 to 5.6 million in 2016 (UNWTO, 2017). According to SERNATUR (2017), the national tourism organisation of Chile, the industry's overall contribution to the economy was 3.1 million USD. By 2016 tourism became the 5<sup>th</sup> most important export product with 5.1% of the total export (SERNATUR, 2017). International tourism is focused on two major destinations: Atacama on the Northern and Torres del Paine National Park (in Patagonia) on the Southern part of the country. These two places are so popular that they overshadow other, smaller destinations in the country. However, there are relatively new, emerging destinations that also get their parts from the expanding tourism, like Las Trancas.

### **1.2.2. Las Trancas**

This thesis is based on the case of Las Trancas, a village in Bío Bío Region, Chile. The village is located in Las Trancas Valley, in the Andes. It should be highlighted that the main focus of this thesis is the village of Las Trancas and not the whole Valley, given that the Valley consists of other small towns and the fieldwork was carried out only in Las Trancas. The village is about 480 kilometres to the south from Santiago de Chile (the capital) and around 30 kilometres from the Argentinean border (as the crow flies). The area is sparsely populated and the closest city, Chillán is about 70 kilometres away from the village. The area is known for its picturesque landscapes, unique flora and fauna, hot springs, ski slopes, rivers and waterfalls and also for a nearby active volcano, Volcán Chillán Nuevo. Las Trancas has a paved main road, but the side roads are all unpaved, unilluminated and dusty. Along the main road there are some restaurants, bars, 'cabañas' (cabins) and three small supermarkets. The village gives the impression of a peaceful and idyllic place, with well-kept wooden or stone houses and neat gardens. Even if the streets are generally clean, in some places garbage is visible and stray dogs can be seen all over the village. Electricity and water is available in the village, although water supply is quite underdeveloped, since there is no municipal water supply. On almost all the side roads water pipes are visible that convey water from a nearby river to the houses that often have their own pipes.



**Valle Las Trancas, a valley in the western part of the Andes (Source: Google Maps)**

In Las Trancas tourism industry started to develop in the last 10-15 years, so it is very much in its infancy. Initially Las Trancas was a winter destination given its closeness to Nevados de Chillán Ski Resort. The Ski Resort is 7 kilometres away from the village and it is one of the main ski centres in the country with the longest slope in Latin America (Las Tres Marías – 13 kilometres long). This resort is located on one side of volcano Nevados de Chillán (just a few kilometres from the active volcano Chillán Nuevo) and consists of ski lifts, hot springs and accommodation establishments (including one five-star hotel). At the beginning, the high season in Las Trancas was limited to the period between June and August (winter season), but in the last decade, with the opening of accommodation, restaurants, tour operators and the nearby Bike Park Nevados (one of the biggest mountain bike parks in Latin America), summer (January and February) became the second high season. Even if many Chilean people go on holidays during summer, Las Trancas is still primarily a winter destination. The majority of tourists are from Chile, international tourism is still not significant in the country (Latin America is the main international market for Chile; see SERNATUR, 2017). Nonetheless, the industry provides about 2,000 job opportunities and a big number of local people have indirect tourism interests (e.g. have a bakery that caters also to tourists). Therefore, tourism is becoming increasingly important for the village. For the winter season many people go to Las Trancas to work due to the different job opportunities. Las Trancas is one of the few areas in Chile, where young local people choose to stay rather than migrate to cities or choose to return after studying. While nature is a key attraction of the area, the tourism of Las Trancas is certainly impacted by the presence and proximity of volcano Chillán Nuevo. The volcano's last major eruption was in 1973 and it is expected to erupt in every 20-30 years. During the fieldwork yellow alert (the third level of warning) was in effect. Soon after the end of the field trip the warning was raised to the second level (orange alert) notifying people about the probability of a major eruption. In 2017 and 2018 the continuous media coverage about the activity of the volcano discouraged people from visiting the area and resulted in lower tourist numbers.

Las Trancas is part of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve *Corredor Biológico Nevados de Chillán – Laguna del Laja* since 2011 due to its rich biodiversity (UNESCO, 2011). The Biosphere Reserve that incorporates two national reserves (Ñuble National Reserve and Huemules de Niblinto National Reserve) and one national park (Laguna del Laja National Park) has a unique ecological environment with a rich flora and fauna and numerous endemic species, such as the rare huemul deer or the lleuque tree. The climate of the area is determined by its special geographical location: it is located about 1,200 meters above sea level and surrounded by mountains. The area has four seasons, with hot summers, when precipitation is not considerable and cold winters with typically a big amount of snow both on the mountains and in the Valley. Small rivers and volcanic hot springs are running down from the mountains all year round. Therefore, the area has an abundance of natural resources that are all part of the tourism supply in Las Trancas and used by tourism operators. Tourism operators in the village are managed by a diverse group of entrepreneurs – some of them live in Las Trancas, but some of them manage their businesses from outside. The focus of this thesis is on a group of national and transnational entrepreneurs, who migrated to Las Trancas from different parts of the country and the world. The next chapter (Chapter 2) presents the research methodology, which is followed by the literature review in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 incorporates the analysis and in Chapter 5 the findings of the analysis are discussed. Finally, Chapter 6 includes the conclusions of this thesis.

## **2. Methodology**

This section presents the methodological considerations of the thesis. In the first section (Section 2.1) the epistemological and ontological points of departure are described together with the qualitative and exploratory nature of the research. Section 2.2 deals with research design, with a focus on the choice of the case study area and participants, and with a description of the relationship between theory and research. This is followed by a presentation of the fieldwork and the applied methods for data collection in Section 2.3. The last two sections, Section 2.4 and 2.5 reflect on the reliability and validity of the findings and critically discuss the limitations of the research.

### **2.1. Research strategy**

#### **2.1.1. Epistemological position**

Epistemology can be described in general terms as the study of knowledge, but more specifically it is “a theory of what constitutes knowledge and what the relationship between knowledge about objects and those objects themselves is, in other words, the relationships between reality and accounts of reality” (Hannam & Knox, 2010, p. 4). Epistemology consists of two contrasting views: positivism and interpretivism. The former emphasises the explanation of human behaviour, whereas the latter attempts to understand human behaviour (Bryman, 2012). The epistemological position of this thesis is interpretivism, as it intends to understand the emotions and values of community members of Las Trancas and how these emotions and values influence their behaviours. Contrary to positivism, interpretivism tries to construe the viewpoints of people about their social world and about their actions (Bryman, 2012), just like in the present case. In other words, instead of identifying quantifiable facts about the group of migrant entrepreneurs in Las Trancas through methods known from the natural sciences, this thesis attempts to understand the reasons lying behind the actions of people and the meanings attributed to these actions.

#### **2.1.2. Ontological position**

Ontological questions deal with the basic characteristics of social entities. Similarly to epistemology, there are two opposing positions in ontology: objectivism and constructionism. Supporters of objectivism believe that social entities can and should be regarded as objective beings with a reality outside social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2011), whereas advocates of constructionism see social entities as social constructions that are built up from the actions and perceptions of social actors (Hannam & Knox, 2010). In this case, the migrant group in Las Trancas, the studied ‘social entity’, is not considered to be independent from social actors, rather it is seen as a product of social interactions (Bryman, 2012).

Besides, the researcher, too, presents his own understanding of social reality, as he also contributed to its construction (Bryman, 2012). Accordingly, the ontological position of this thesis is constructionism. This position enables the researcher to appropriately understand the special socio-cultural context in Las Trancas in which tourism occurs, as Hannam & Knox (2010) suggested.

### **2.1.3. Qualitative strategy**

This thesis applies a qualitative research strategy that highlights the understanding of the world from the participants' perspective and views social life as the result of interpretations and interactions (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). According to Bryman (2012), studies having qualitative research strategies are most frequently characterised by the epistemological orientation of interpretivism and the ontological orientation of constructionism that is the case in the present thesis.

The viewpoints of participants and the interactions within the context of Las Trancas are presented through qualitative interviews and participant observation. The qualitative approach is different from the quantitative strategy, as “it does not produce quantified findings or have measurement and hypothesis-testing as an integral part of the research process” (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004, p. 3). Quantitative research is based on a ‘natural science’ approach and applies methods, such as questionnaires, structured interviews or content analysis (Bryman, 2012). Such an approach could have been taken in the present thesis with the application of quantitative questionnaires or structured interviews, however, with quantitative methods we would have been hindered by existent theories and our own presuppositions, and we would not have been able to get to know the real values, needs, perceptions and thoughts of local people. Therefore, while the importance of quantification in tourism research, such as the understanding of economic aspects, can be admitted, in the present case only qualitative approach enabled the apprehension of the complex “human dimensions” (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004, p. 4).

### **2.1.4. Exploratory research**

The research area is a small rural destination with an emerging tourism industry, but the available information about it, including tourist information, is very limited. There exist a couple of studies about the tourism of Las Trancas, but they are only available in Spanish. Due to the lack of information and English-language research about Las Trancas, it was not possible to acquire a general knowledge about the area and to prepare explicit research questions prior to the fieldwork. Therefore, an exploratory research approach was taken, which is designed to determine and modify research questions (Fyall, 2016) during or even after the fieldwork.

Participant observation formed an important part of the ‘discovery phase’ of the fieldwork, when our team attempted to get an understanding of the local context. With the help of qualitative interviews with tourism experts and local operators the observations were either confirmed or confuted. Being relatively well-connected in the community meant that we had access to a huge amount of data connected to different topics to study. The constant exploration, observations and interactions with local people allowed us to gradually clarify and narrow down the research questions.

## **2.2. Research design**

### **2.2.1. Case study**

A case study design has been adopted here that deals with the complexity and the specific nature of the case under scrutiny (Stake, 1995, as cited in Bryman, 2012). This thesis focuses on a group of migrant entrepreneurs in Las Trancas, as facilitators of ecotourism development. Based on Yin’s (2009) categorisation of case-types, the present case might best fit the unique/extreme case category that occurs most frequently in clinical studies. Yin (2009) gives the example of clinical psychology, where a particular injury or disorder can be so rare that every case is worth documenting and examining. The case of tourism development in Las Trancas by locally based businesses can be seen as unique and rare, as there is a scarcity of research about cases, where local tourism operators themselves, based on their knowledge of sustainability and without notable financial support from the government or NGOs start to develop tourism in a sustainable manner.

In qualitative research the sampling of contexts or areas and then participants is a usual strategy (Bryman, 2012). Las Trancas as a research setting was selected based on an opportunistic approach (Bryman, 2012), as the area was recommended by our main contact person (or ‘gatekeeper’ – Interviewee 1), who our research team could contact through our supervisor, Helene Balslev Clausen. Then, for the sampling of participants a snowball/chain sampling (Patton, 1990) was applied, as first we talked to Interviewee 1, who acted as a gatekeeper, as she connected us with the owners of a local tour operator (including the son and daughter-in-law of Interviewee 1) and also my accommodation owner. Through these people our team could contact other community members, who were mostly English-speaking business owners. Participant-sampling can also be seen as opportunistic, since we had unexpected possibilities to observe people and to make interviews with them.

Theoretical ideas were chosen only after the completion of the fieldwork and derived from the collected data, therefore the connection between research and theory can be seen as inductive. According to Bryman (2012), inductive approach is common for qualitatively conducted research: “When the predominant research strategy is qualitative, a case study tends to take an inductive approach to the relationship between theory and research” (p. 69).

## **2.3. Fieldwork and empirical data**

To collect data for the present thesis a sixteen-day study trip was made from 20 February until 7 March 2018. The fieldwork took place in Las Trancas, as presented in Chapter 1.

The fieldwork was conducted by a team of three researchers: besides the author of the present thesis, two fellow students participated in the trip, Mia Lundberg Christiansen (MLC) and Stephanie Knoth Hamilton (SKH). SKH, just like the author of this thesis, follows the specialisation Global Tourism Development (GTD) of the Tourism Master's Programme at Aalborg University, while MLC follows the "mainstream" courses of the same Programme, thus having a different background as the other two researchers. The presence of three researchers instead of only one proved to be highly advantageous, as it is shown in the following sections.

In order to answer the research question posed in Chapter 1, a multi-method approach was applied for the data collection. A mix of qualitative methods was used, which included participant observation (field notes), unstructured and semi-structured interviews and visual data (photos) collection. In the following all the methods are explained in detail with reference to their usefulness for this thesis.

### **2.3.1. Participant observation**

As a major method, participant observation aims to understand the everyday lives and world views of the researched people and it allows the researcher to interact with the researched (Crang & Cook, 2007). According to Crang & Cook (2007), the process of participant observation can be described as a "three-stage process" (p. 36): first, the researcher gains access to a certain community, second, the researcher works and/or lives among the researched people and third, the researcher goes back to the academia and makes sense out of the collected material. Since the third stage is ongoing, it will not be further discussed here.

In the present case, as mentioned earlier, our team could gain access to the local community through Interviewee 1, who is not only an ecotourism expert from the University of Concepción, but also a periodic resident of Las Trancas as the mother of the co-owner of a local tour operator (TO1). Through them, we could get access to certain community members and tourism operators of Las Trancas. As far as the second stage is concerned, we did not 'work' in the community, we merely lived there and participated in different activities, such as guided tours by TO1, different sport activities and also a barbeque party of TO1. We were offered to take part in different tours of TO1, which enabled us to observe the practices of tour guides and other participants, ask them questions and also to gain personal experiences. During these guided tours we moved between the roles of participants and observers. Moreover, our team could, at least to some extent, take part in the life of the community.

For example, SKH and MLC lived in a cabin together with the guides and interns working for TO1 and thus, we could create personal connections and sometimes, for example, we had dinners together with them. We could also get interesting insights into the everyday work of local tourism operators through the participation in certain activities, like when I accompanied the owner of my accommodation to fix a water pipe, a usual task connected to the maintenance of the water supply. In this case I had the chance not only to observe, but to be physically involved in the work and help with repairing the pipe, meanwhile talking with the accommodation owner about water supply issues.

The fact that we were three researchers with different backgrounds enabled us to critically discuss and reflect on each others' observations and experiences repeatedly during the fieldwork (e.g. during walking tours or lunch). These discussions about dissimilar feelings and experiences undoubtedly contributed to the knowledge creation and allowed us to consider different perspectives than ours. Throughout the fieldwork a research diary was kept, as it is suggested by different authors (see e.g. Crang & Cook, 2007). To make sure all my feelings, experiences and all the interesting details are recorded, notes were made at the end of every day throughout the fieldwork. During the walking tours sometimes we got useful information that was voice recorded, given the lack of opportunity to make notes by hand (later the information was noted down to the diary).

According to Hannam & Knox (2010), the method of participant observation can be made stronger with the application of interviews. During the fieldwork, in order to check the observations, questions were asked from interviewees based on the personal experiences and observations of our team. Qualitative interviews are presented in the next section.

### **2.3.2. Qualitative interviews**

Throughout the fieldwork an overall ten semi-structured and numerous unstructured interviews were conducted with local stakeholders, tour guides, ecotourism professionals and one tourist. At the beginning of the fieldwork our research team conducted unstructured interviews to enable respondents to express honestly and thoroughly their opinions about Las Trancas in general and as a tourism destination. Hannam & Knox (2010) suggest that this interview-type can be fruitful, when the interviewee is a professional who has a highly developed personal opinion. In the present case, for instance, on our first day of fieldwork we conducted an unstructured interview with Interviewee 1, our main contact person in Chile. Before this interview the broad subject had been established (tourism in Las Trancas) and then we let her speak about what the interesting or relevant issues are in her opinion. With unstructured interviews we could get an understanding of the local context and the issues most important for our respondents. The informal characteristic of this interview-type proved to be significant in terms of creating trust with our respondents in an area barely visited by western people. Unstructured interviews also let us ask more focused questions in the semi-structured interviews.



Conducting semi-structured interviews provided us with the opportunity to remain relatively informal throughout the conversations, which contributed to a more trustworthy and pleasant environment. We could ask our pre-prepared questions in a random order and we could also ask follow-up questions as the conversations evolved. Besides, according to Hannam & Knox (2010) “Semi-structured interviews result in the social construction of knowledge as interviewers and interviewees negotiate meanings and understandings” (p. 8). Therefore, this interview-type made it possible for the researchers and the respondents to create knowledge together.

All the interviews were conducted personally in English (more about language barriers in Section 2.5 about limitations). We needed to be very flexible in terms of the timing of the interviews – sometimes we had to wait hours for respondents or we had to return later, if they were busy with their work or were having lunch. Besides, we had to consider that some of the interviewees were more inclined to talk to one or two researchers of our team. For instance, the interview with Interviewee 4, the owner of my accommodation, was conducted solely by the author of the present thesis, since there was an already established good connection between me and Interviewee 4 and the presence of SKH and MLC during the interview would have been distracting for the respondent. Another important consideration was the recording of the interviews. When the interviews were made by at least two researchers, we asked the respondents for permission for recording only after short informal conversations, when we felt that the respondents were comfortable with it. When the interview was conducted by only one researcher, we asked the interviewees about the recording right in the beginning to make sure we get all the necessary information – making notes is slow and there is a risk of not noting all the important details and of misunderstanding. One could say that recording does not support trustworthiness and makes the respondents less honest and open to talk about issues resulting in unreliable data. All the recorded interviews were, however, conducted in the homes (or accommodation in the case of Interviewee 10, an interviewed tourist) or the workplaces of interviewees, where they could feel more comfortable. Moreover, we had connections to almost all the respondents, which can be seen as an advantage in terms of our trustworthiness and the openness of the respondents.

### **2.3.3. Visual data**

For this thesis photos were taken throughout the fieldwork. Crang & Cook (2007) mention some issues connected to photography, such as the researcher’s preference of scenes and what is recorded, the different reactions of people to cameras (e.g. smiling or posing) or ethical issues about permissions to use the photos. In this case, however, photos were taken to supplement field notes, as this way my memories can be recalled more easily at later points in the research process (Crang & Cook, 2007). Thus, photos make it easier to evoke details that would be otherwise difficult to remember only through field notes.

Besides, photography is also intended to be used as a tool to visualise text, to present, for example, what interviewees were talking about, making it easier for the reader to understand the context. Other visual methods were also considered, but, to answer the research questions it seemed to be irrelevant to use e.g. videos. Most probably it would have been also problematic or dangerous to make videos in some situations, for example during walking tours.

## **2.4. Reliability and validity**

Reliability and validity can be defined in different ways, when conducting qualitative research. According to Kirk & Miller (1986) “Reliability is the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research, and validity is the degree to which the finding is interpreted in a correct way” (p. 21).

Reliability, in other words, deals with the possibility to ‘replicate’ the research and get the same results, just like in scientific experiments. In the present case, since this thesis is based on a qualitative approach, probably other researchers would not come to the same conclusions, since, as Crang & Cook (2007) suggest, researchers bring their own interests, issues and talents for doing a project. However, being three researchers in the field and having discussions about ideas, experiences and feelings can be seen as a good base for reliability. We could challenge each other’s ideas and consult about the collected material that encouraged us to think out of the box.

This thesis does not look for one exclusive truth connected to the research topic, and accepts that the informants of the research, disregarding their power and position, do not have an exact and entire knowledge of how things happen in the local context (Oinas, 1999). Even if the thesis does not come to a conclusion that incorporates ‘the truth’, the approach was intended to be logically consistent and transparent. Owing to the attached transcriptions, field notes and photos one can follow how the conclusions are reached. Furthermore, validity is closely related to the social connection between the researcher and the researched, due to the probability that more honest conversations are possible in a reliable environment. As the attached audio files and transcriptions represent it, the unstructured and semi-structured interviews, and the fact that we had connections in the local community provided a fairly informal and trustworthy atmosphere for the conversations.

### **2.4.1. Triangulation**

Triangulation is a technique that “limits personal and methodological biases and enhances a study’s trustworthiness” (Decrop, 2004, p. 162). Denzin (1978) determines four triangulation-types: data, method, investigator and theoretical triangulation. Here the first three types of triangulation have been utilised. As presented above, data triangulation was applied by using qualitative interviews, participant observation and photos as different forms of primary data sources.

Interviews, for example, were used to confirm or confute the observations, thus making misunderstanding less probable. Method triangulation refers to the use of multiple methods to analyse a single problem (Decrop, 2004) – in this case the mentioned combination of qualitative methods was used. Finally, the participation of three researchers in the fieldwork can be seen as investigator triangulation that can reduce personal biases – deriving from gender, race, culture or subjective understanding – in examination and interpretation, according to Decrop (2004). The different cultural and educational backgrounds of the researchers resulted in observations with different focuses and dissimilar understandings. Data sharing subsequent to the fieldtrip made it possible to use the field notes of all the three researchers and thus, the analysis incorporates the observations and emotions of not only the author of this thesis, but also the two other researchers. With the technique of data, method and investigator triangulation the credibility of the findings (Bryman, 2012) was intended to be strengthened.

## **2.5. Limitations**

In spite of the above outlined benefits of qualitative research strategy, it has been subject to criticism. For instance, it is often criticised for the problems with generalising its findings (Bryman, 2012). It is admitted here that the findings about Las Trancas cannot be applied to other emerging rural destinations in Chile due to the socio-cultural, economic and ecological differences in the country. Additionally, the sample of community members interviewed in the fieldwork area cannot be seen as representative to all the residents of Las Trancas, given that we focused only on those that we could connect and those that could speak English. These people, though, turned out to make up one distinct group in the local community giving the research a new perspective. As it is proposed by Bryman (2012), instead of generalising the findings of qualitative research based on statistical criteria, its theory is what we can generalise: “it is the quality of the theoretical inferences that are made out of qualitative data that is crucial to the assessment of generalization” (p. 406).

Language was undoubtedly a barrier during the data collection. The fact that I and the other two members of the research team cannot speak Spanish and not many people could speak English in Las Trancas limited the number of research participants to the ones that could speak English. For example, from the group of interns and guides working for TO1 only one could speak English (Interviewee 11) and thus, we could make interviews solely with him. However, the people we got in touch with through our contact persons were all English-speaking, even if they sometimes had difficulties with the language, we did not have to cancel any interviews due to language issues. Still, the perspectives presented and analysed in this thesis, and therefore the findings, are certainly limited to the English-speaking residents of Las Trancas.

The fact that the fieldwork was carried out by three researchers has previously been presented to be a useful method that strengthens credibility. Being three researchers on the field, however, can also be a constraint when conducting interviews.

For example, interviewees can be embarrassed, when three people appear to ask questions making it more difficult to create an informal conversation. Another difficulty can arise, when questions are not asked in a logical order as a result of the different focuses of the interviewers, ending up jumping from one topic to another, thus making the flow of the interview less fluent. These complications were better tackled over time, showing that the fieldwork itself is a learning process.

Our position as white researchers from Europe definitely had an impact on the information we could get. We realised the importance of our different appearance, only when we visited the city of Chillán. People there were literally gazing upon us, as apparently the only white people in the city. This example well represents how we were treated and seen differently by local people. Even if the research participants answered to our questions, being from Europe might have limited our access to certain information. However, in the case of those respondents, who were Europeans or had European origins, our position most probably had a minor influence upon the information they shared with us.

Finally, the field trip took place at the end of February and at the beginning of March, which is the end of the summer season in Las Trancas Valley. Traditionally the Valley is a winter-destination, therefore the fieldwork was partly implemented in the off season. It was a constraint to some extent, as the observations were in part limited to the period until 1 March, however, later we had more time to conduct interviews with local operators, who were less occupied by that time.

### **3. Theoretical background**

This section discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the present thesis. Section 3.1 reviews the literature about sustainability in tourism. First, the concept of sustainable tourism and the general attitude of tourism operators to sustainability are discussed. This is followed by a review of the role of tourism in sustainable development. Then, Section 3.2 deals with the theory of ecotourism. This part presents a conceptual overview of ecotourism, with a focus on its positive and negative impacts. Finally, in Section 3.2.1 the principles of ecotourism are discussed.

#### **3.1. Sustainable development and tourism**

##### **3.1.1. The conceptualisation of sustainability in tourism**

Sustainability has been central to academic debates in tourism studies for decades. The considerable expansion of global mass tourism in the 1960s and 1970s and the increasingly apparent negative impacts of the industry raise awareness of the necessity for a more responsible approach to tourism.

Sustainability in general is a contested concept (Mowforth & Munt, 2016) with a huge number of different definitions by scholars, NGOs and other organisations. The term ‘sustainable development’ was first defined by the Brundtland Commission in *Our Common Future* in 1987: “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). In spite of the ambiguousness of this conceptualisation (Mowforth & Munt, 1998) and the fact that tourism is barely mentioned in the document, this definition has been used in numerous tourism studies. Nonetheless, sustainable tourism can be considered as a “sub-concept” of sustainable development (Hall, Gössling & Scott, 2015). Studies in the sustainable tourism literature have different, sometimes even conflicting focuses and understandings of sustainability in tourism (Saarinen, 2013). For instance, some scholars (see e.g. Swarbrooke, 1999) emphasise the necessities of the tourism industry and propose the sustainable use of resources only to sustain tourism. This approach is described as the “Tourism First” view (Burns, 1999) implying that the real objective of sustainability is the further development of tourism and the preservation of resources for the industry. Other studies focus on the environmental aspects (see e.g. Zeppel, 2015) and others on the community-based perspectives (see e.g. Blaikie, 2006) of sustainable tourism. The different understandings of the concept can be troublesome for policy-makers and academics as well, however, as Saarinen (2013) notes, in social sciences it is not common to acknowledge one single definition for a concept. It can be seen as necessary though, to clarify the conceptual orientation of the research.

The present thesis takes the conceptualisation of Saarinen (2013) as a starting point: “sustainability in tourism development should primarily be connected with the needs of people – not a certain industry – and the use of natural and cultural resources in a way that will safeguard human needs and provide quality of life and well-being in the future” (p. 10). This understanding is based on the original conceptualisation of sustainable development and highlights all the three main aspects or dimensions of sustainability: social (and cultural), environmental and economic (Hall et al., 2015).

### **3.1.2. The ‘pillars’ of sustainability**

In the sustainable tourism literature three ‘pillars’ or dimensions of sustainability are recognised: economic, social (including cultural) and environmental. Hall et al. (2015a) explained these three dimensions as the following:

- “Economic sustainability, which means generating prosperity at different levels of society and addressing the cost effectiveness of all economic activity. Crucially, it is about the viability of enterprises and activities and their ability to be maintained in the long term.
- Social sustainability, which means respecting human rights and equal opportunities for all in society. It requires an equitable distribution of benefits, with a focus on alleviating poverty. There is an emphasis on local communities, maintaining and strengthening their life support systems, recognizing and respecting different cultures and avoiding any form of exploitation.
- Environmental sustainability, which means conserving and managing resources, especially those that are not renewable or are precious in terms of life support. It requires action to minimize pollution of air, land and water, and to conserve biological diversity and natural heritage.” (p. 497).

However, quite often not all the three dimensions are considered to be equally important – there exist different approaches to sustainability. Hall et al. (2015a) categorise these approaches into three groups: 1) economic, 2) balanced/green growth and 3) steady-state approach. As it is further discussed in the next section (Section 3.1.2.1), tourism is often blamed for being overly focused on the economic perspective. In the steady-state approach sustainability is regarded to be based on the constraints of natural systems/natural capital, while the balanced approach is between the two others. The balanced approach views all the three pillars of sustainability as equally important: “The tourism system does include economic, social and environmental elements but these are supposedly given equal weight in system management” (Hall et al., 2015a, p. 496). Thus, none of the elements of sustainability are emphasised according to this viewpoint, instead it seeks a ‘balance’ of them. In the present thesis, as the definition of sustainability adopted here well presents, this balanced viewpoint is taken, as it is not the intention here to highlight any of the three dimensions.

### **3.1.2.1. Sustainability and tourism – an economic bias?**

Tourism is frequently said to be overly focused on the economic aspect of sustainability both in terms of research and policy making. Given that tourism is a market-driven economic activity, the industry is lead by the needs of consumers and the industry (Saarinen, 2013). Nonetheless, the demand can be a potential inducement for tourism operators to adopt more environmental sustainability practices, for instance. Recently consumers are becoming gradually more environmentally conscious (Choi, 2016) and this way they can promote a more environmentally sustainable tourism supply. Tourism operators, however, are inclined to adopt sustainability ideals only to a certain degree creating their own flexible sustainability ‘standards’ (see e.g. Saarinen, 2003). Businesses can exploit sustainability and they can “utilize sustainability as a strategy to build positive corporate brand image, to reduce operating costs, and to generate additional revenues” (Choi, 2016, p. 916). Tourism enterprises are even encouraged to use sustainability for economic advantages. In a recent publication of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) economic benefits are highlighted as incentives for tourism businesses to adopt sustainable development goals (SDGs): “Tourism companies need to be aware of the economic benefits that derive from placing the SDGs at the core of business models and practices” (WTO & UNEP, 2017, p. 22). In this sense, the incorporation of, for instance environmental or socio-cultural sustainability practices by tourism operators is only for the sake of economic sustainability, but not for the preservation of the environment or social benefit creation. Therefore, tourism companies are encouraged to develop sustainable strategies and apply sustainable practices in order to generate bigger profits. Whether the economic aspect of sustainability can be a successful tool or incentive for the achievement of comprehensive socio-cultural and environmental commitment of businesses is questionable. Sharpley (2013) takes the view that there are only a limited number of enterprises that are willing to go beyond their legal obligations connected to sustainability.

### **3.1.3. Sustainable development through tourism**

When discussing tourism and sustainability, studies tend to present an analysis with either a narrow or a broader view. The narrow approach deals with the sustainability of tourism that is, the sustainable use of resources by the industry, whereas in the broader perspective tourism is seen as an instrument for sustainable development. In this latter sense tourism is considered to be an alternative approach, which can be utilised for the development of an area in a sustainable manner: “This means that instead of taking the (central) role of tourism as granted, the industry is rather seen as a potential tool for sustainable development – but not as representing sustainable use of resources per se” (Saarinen, 2013, p. 10). Tourism can be an effective development tool, but it should be admitted that sometimes tourism is “not the best development option” (Bramwell, 2016, p. 915). Ringer (2013), similarly to the above discussion about the predominance of economic sustainability, is of the opinion that tourism satisfies the commercial requirements of an international business and rarely deals with local development necessities and hence, as Saarinen (2013) notes economic growth led by tourism does not necessarily mean advantages for local people and their environments.

For example, in protected areas, where the principal aim is ecological conservation, having no tourism development might be the best option, like in the case of the sub-Antarctic islands (Hall & Wouters, 1994). Besides, the contribution of tourism to development is mostly assessed and presented through quantitative data, such as tourism revenues or tourist numbers, and more qualitative factors, like the well-being of local people or their quality of life is disregarded (Saarinen, 2013). In the case of Las Trancas tourism is seen as a possible tool for sustainable development in the village and in the area. Thus, in this thesis the primary focus is not on the sustainable (or not sustainable) use of resources, but more on the industry's potential for enhancing sustainable development.

### **3.2. Ecotourism**

This section deals with ecotourism, as a form of tourism that is promoted by migrant entrepreneurs in Las Trancas. Ecotourism is considered to be the nature-based companion of sustainable tourism (Jamal, Camargo & Wilson, 2013). Similarly to 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development', ecotourism has also been defined in many ways by different scholars and organisations. In spite of the distinct emphases of the different definitions, there is a relative agreement in the literature that ecotourism is a part of nature-based tourism (NBT). According to Goodwin (1996) "Nature, or nature-based, tourism encompasses all forms of tourism – mass tourism, adventure tourism, low-impact tourism, ecotourism – which use natural resources in a wild or undeveloped form – including species, habitat, landscape, scenery and salt and fresh-water features. Nature tourism is travel for the purpose of enjoying undeveloped natural areas or wildlife" (p. 287). The author suggests that NBT might be, but is not necessarily sustainable and that it may include both consumptive (like hunting) and non-consumptive (like wildlife viewing) activities. In his view, only a few types of NBT play a part in conservation and ecotourism is comprised of these types. For this thesis Fennell's (2015) conceptualisation of ecotourism seems to be the most appropriate: "It is a form of nature-based tourism that places [...] first-hand emphasis on learning, sustainability (conservation and local participation/benefits), and ethical planning, development and management" (Fennell, 2015, p. 17). This definition well reflects the findings of Fennell's (2001) and Donohoe & Needham's (2006) studies about the contents of ecotourism definitions. Both studies found that the following five elements occurred the most frequently in ecotourism definitions: nature-based, preservation, education, sustainability, distribution of benefits and ethics or responsibility (Fennell, 2015). The above definition can be criticised for the exclusion of culture as an ecotourism principle. Fennell (2015) is of the opinion that culture is merely a secondary motivation in the ecotourism experience and, if it was one of the main motives, we would call it cultural tourism and not ecotourism. Even though culture is not the main area of interest in this type of tourism, a socially ethical and sustainable approach should include also the cultural perspective.



Sustainability, as it is apparent from the aforementioned definition of Saarinen (2013), should not only be concerned about conservation (environmental perspective) and local participation and benefit creation (socio-economic perspective), but also about the preservation of cultural resources (such as local traditions, language etc.). Therefore, I would complement the sustainability principle in Fennell's (2015) conceptualisation of ecotourism with cultural preservation, as an equally important element.

Acott, La Trobe & Howard (1998) make a clear distinction between the negative and positive features of ecotourism, which they call "shallow" and "deep" ecotourism. Shallow ecotourism is characterised by a business-as-usual approach to nature, which evaluates the natural world based on its usefulness to people – environment is seen merely as a resource that can be exploited for the benefit of humans. Intrinsic value of the natural world is not considered in this view, although the significance of future generations is admitted – anthropocentric and utilitarian views dominate the management decisions. In contrast, deep ecotourism highlights the significance of intrinsic value, community identity, small-scale development and community participation. It also emphasises that materialism for its own sake is inappropriate.

According to Wallace & Pierce (1996), tourism can be regarded as ecotourism if it is in line with the following six key principles:

1. Minimises the negative environmental (wildlife, vegetation, water etc.) and social (respect for local culture and people) impacts of its activities.
2. Makes awareness and increases understanding about the cultural and natural systems of the area and involves visitors in issues impacting these systems.
3. Plays a part in the management and conservation of legally protected and other natural areas.
4. Promotes local people's early and long-term involvement in the decision-making process that controls the number of tourists and determines the kind of tourism that should occur in the area.
5. Directs the benefits (economic etc.) to local people, but does not replace traditional activities (e.g. farming, fishing), instead it complements them.
6. Provides local people and nature tourism employees with special opportunities to visit and use natural areas and learn more about those places that are visited by tourists.

In their study Donohoe & Needham (2008) determined an ecotourism continuum that presents the operational congruency of ecotourism principles. They differentiate between "genuine" and "pseudo" ecotourism – the former being the most congruent and the latter the least congruent. In the case of genuine ecotourism operational policy and practice are guided by normative tenets and it complies with all of the principles of ecotourism. Pseudo ecotourism can be divided into two categories: ecotourism "lite" and "greenwashing". Ecotourism lite is more congruent and normative tenets are applied only to a certain degree – operational policy and practice are guided by the tenets some of the time.

Operators belonging to this category focus primarily on NBT and environmental education experiences. Greenwashing is the least congruent of the three categories: operational policy and practice are only rarely guided by normative principles. Operators in this category take an opportunistic approach and use ecotourism only to market themselves, but without real commitment – which is the so-called greenwashing.

### **3.2.1. The main criteria of ecotourism**

Fennell (2015), as it can be seen from his above definition, determined five core criteria, which can be used to define ecotourism: 1) nature-based, 2) sustainability (local participation and benefits, 3) sustainability (conservation), 4) learning and 5) the moral imperative. The sustainability criterion has been complemented here by the cultural perspective, to consider all the important elements of sustainability (social-cultural, economic and ecological). This section discusses the significance of the nature-based, learning and moral imperative criteria. Sustainability is not further discussed here, given the earlier review of sustainable tourism literature.

#### **3.2.1.1. Nature-based**

This criterion is vital, as ecotourism is a type of tourism that occurs in the nature and uses natural resources for its activities. Fennell (2015) takes the view that elements of the natural world (e.g. water, plants, rocks) become resources once they satisfy human necessities. In his view, whether these natural elements become resources or not is impacted by culture. As Mitchell (1989) suggests, “Natural resources are defined by human perceptions and attitudes, wants, technological skills legal, financial and institutional arrangements, as well as by political systems” (as cited in Fennell, 2015, p. 39). Fennell (2015) referring to Chubb & Chubb (1981) mentions that we can differentiate between developed and undeveloped resources. The former group includes those facilities that enable the use of a certain area (e.g. sewerages or highways), while the latter group incorporates seven resource-types: geographic location, climate and weather, topography and landforms, surface materials, water vegetation and flora and fauna. However, according to Chubb & Chubb (1981), what is developed and what is undeveloped in a tourism setting depends on one’s subjective perception. This differentiation between ‘developed’ and ‘undeveloped’ natural resources well represents that tourism studies tend to see things through the lenses of commoditisation. Fennell (2015) suggests that ‘undeveloped’ (natural) resources can either encourage people to visit a tourism destination or they can be constraints for tourism. The author mentions Montserrat as an example, which is known for its natural beauty and pleasant climate, but the eruption of its volcano had a severe effect on the tourism of the island. The case of Las Trancas represents that such a natural formation as a volcano can be both a motivation (inactive volcanoes are used for tourism purposes) and a constraint (the active volcano is rather a discouragement) for tourism.

Connected to the nature-based feature of ecotourism there is a debate between scholars if consumptive practices can be regarded as ecotourism. Fennell (2012) claims that consumptive use results in the decrease in natural resources and non-consumptive use does not bring about loss in the environment as a result of different activities or actions. The debate focuses primarily on the issue, whether consumptive activities (such as hunting or fishing) can be regarded as ecotourism or they should be considered as part of the broader concept of NBT. Novelli, Barnes & Humavinan (2006) suggest that both consumptive and non-consumptive activities and practices can fall under the concept of ecotourism: “where tourism strongly benefits the natural, economic and social environment, whether through consumptive or non-consumptive practices, it fits well within the concept of ecotourism” (p. 77). This viewpoint that consumptive practices, such as hunting or fishing can “strongly benefit” the natural environment is highly questionable. Some scholars do not support the idea of Novelli et al. (2006) that ecotourism can include consumptive activities (see e.g. Fennell, 2000 about billfishing). There is, however, a more balanced view, which accepts that consumptive practices can form part of a certain local culture and that ecotourists might participate in traditional hunting, for example (Fennell, 2015). This kind of consumptive activity, according to Fennell (2015), is different from hunting or fishing undertaken for personal satisfaction. Thus, this approach allows for a more flexible understanding of consumptiveness in ecotourism that considers the local cultural environment. We should also remember that other forms of ecotourism, such as hiking or biking, can also be consumptive in the sense that in the long term they can contribute to the degradation of the environment (e.g. hiking trails).

There exist a number of different activities based on natural resources, but being ‘nature-based’ does not differentiate ecotourism from other forms of NBT. Therefore, the consideration of the other criteria is necessary for the proper identification of ecotourism.

#### **3.2.1.2. Learning**

Learning is another important principle of ecotourism. According to Walter (2013), “Visitor learning is the central aim in almost all definitions of ecotourism” (p. 15), just like in the definition adopted here. Concerning this principle one of the main issues is whether the learning of ecotourists is long-lasting. Powell & Ham (2008) found that studies dealing with the impacts of ecotourism experiences on the knowledge, behaviours and attitudes of participants had mixed results. Referring to other studies Fennell (2015) claims that knowledge gained as part of the ecotourism experience does not have a long-lasting impact on the pro-environmental conduct of tourists at home. He suggests that the bigger part of ecotourists change merely their on-site behaviours, and when they get home, they continue to act in regular ways that might be less ecologically sensitive. One could doubt, however, if it is the role of tourism, whether it is ecotourism or any other type of tourism, to alter the everyday behaviours of tourists at home. Based on this sentiment, we could expect them, for example to go on hiking tours to be fit if they did so during their holidays.

If we consider merely the positive on-site effect of learning as part of the tourism experience, it can be seen as beneficial in itself in terms of the ecological sustainability of the industry. Expecting ecotourism to change the everyday behaviours of tourists at home after only a short holiday (lasting for a maximum of one-two weeks) is most probably unrealistic (see e.g. Tubb, 2003).

The role of ecotourism operators (including guides) as the main facilitators of ecotourism experiences and ecolodges is considered to be important with regard to learning (Fennell, 2015). In a study about North American ecotourism operators Yee (1992) found that 92% of the research participants acted in accordance with a code of ethics. Moreover, the findings suggest that 75% of the respondents had naturalists, ecologists or other experts as tour guides. Weiler & Davis (1993) takes the view that tour leaders are expected to play numerous important roles to create quality experiences for the participants: “S/he must be an organizer, a group leader, a teacher, and even an entertainer. In nature-based tourism, the tour leader must also be responsible for maintaining environmental quality, by motivating visitors to behave in an environmentally responsible way during the tour, and by interpreting the environment in such a way as to promote long-term attitude and behavioural change” (p. 97). According to this view, tour guides bear a significant responsibility for environmental teaching of visitors and taking care of the nature during the tours. The issue of the promotion of long-term learning appears also in this sentiment as a role of tour guides. Guiding can be important regarding its contribution to the local economy, since it can directly benefit local people (Fennell, 2015).

Ecolodges are also seen as important contributors to environmental education of visitors (Russell, Bottrill & Meredith, 1995). Russell et al. (1995) defined ecolodge as “a nature-dependent tourist lodge that meets the philosophy and principles of ecotourism” (as cited in Fennell, 2015, p. 125). Based on the ecotourism principles adopted here (see Fennell, 2015), an ecolodge should be nature-based, sustainable and ethical and it should promote the learning of visitors. Ecolodges support a participatory and educational experience and, at the same time they are developed and managed in relation to the environment in which they operate (Fennell, 2015). Thus, an ecolodge provides different experiences and have different focuses in terms of their operations and management compared to traditional lodges (see Russell et al., 1995 for a comprehensive comparison of traditional and ecolodges).

Consequently, the learning of visitors is considered to be an important element of ecotourism experiences, even if a long-term impact on the visitors’ environmental behaviours and attitudes seems to be unrealistic. Ecotour operators, including their guides and ecolodges seem to be crucial for the learning of tourists and for the promotion of environmentally conscious behaviours of visitors in the destination area. Even if it is hard to distinguish ecotourism from NBT in the case of some activities (like hunting or fishing), a focus on learning is one of the main features that distinguishes ecotourism from other types of tourism (e.g. hunting and fishing do not include learning).

### **3.2.1.3. The moral imperative**

Ethics seems to be a debated issue in the ecotourism literature, as, for instance, there are varying views about the importance of ethical considerations in ecotourism. According to Fennell (2015), the moral imperative is probably the most significant of the five aforementioned criteria of ecotourism. In an earlier study he doubts that “we will be able to achieve a successful ecotourism industry until we put in place a common pool of core values which allow us to articulate what it is that ecotourism must be” (Fennell, 2004, p. 119). Other scholars, however, challenge the necessity to include the ethical perspective in the concept of ecotourism. Buckley (2005) for example is of the opinion that we can possibly define ecotourism without reference to the ethical criteria, but still require ecotourists to act ethically – he gives the example of doctors, who are expected to act ethically, even though there is no definition of medicine in terms of ethics. Burns’ (2015) understanding is different from the earlier two viewpoints in that it emphasises solely the importance of environmental ethics: “A type of tourism that highlights ethical issues of a more environmental, rather than humanistic, imperative is ecotourism” (p. 121). A more balanced opinion is expressed by Jamal et al. (2013) in their study about sustainable tourism: “A clear focus on justice and ethics will be increasingly important for resource use and conservation, fair and equitable distribution of scarce resources in the face of urgent planetary sustainability and climate change concerns in 21st century” (p. 4604). This view suggests that ethics is closely related to sustainability and it should consider environmental and human needs as equally important. They also suggest that there is a missing practical and theoretical focus on justice and fairness towards the ones, who are most impacted by the ecological, social and cultural changes in the tourism systems. Jamal & Camargo (2014) discussed the notion of “Just Destination”, which is oriented towards justice and the good of the destination. In their opinion, “the approach to a Just Destination is situated and local – each place identifies and instantiates principles of justice, fairness and equity that comport with its political, participatory and social context” (p. 27). This sentiment, even if it is generally about sustainable tourism, is contrary to Fennell’s (2004) understanding of the role of ethics in ecotourism, as it suggests that we cannot identify a “common pool of core values” (as proposed by Fennell, 2004) – principles of ethics and justice should be determined locally.

Ethics and justice, just as in the case of sustainable tourism (see Jamal et al., 2013), should be considered as important parts of ecotourism for the sustainability of the industry. It should be admitted, however, that identifying universal core values for ecotourism would assume the homogeneity of destinations, while it is clearly not the case. Thus, it is accepted here that principles of ethics should be identified individually by destinations, based on the local context.

## 4. Analysis

This chapter, based on the theoretical underpinnings discussed in Chapter 3, presents the examination of the empirical data collected in Las Trancas. The first of the two main sections (Section 4.1) discusses the position and heterogeneity of the group of migrant entrepreneurs. This part is followed by Section 4.2, which incorporates the analysis of the tourism of Las Trancas based on Fennell's (2015) ecotourism principles, with a special attention to the role of migrant entrepreneurs in shaping ecotourism in the village.

### 4.1. Tourism entrepreneurs in Las Trancas

In Las Trancas tourism companies are operated by different actors. These actors can be grouped into two categories: external and migrant/local entrepreneurs (the terms *migrant* and *local* are used interchangeably, as they relate to the same group of entrepreneurs). The first group of business people are referred to as 'external', given that they are not permanent residents of Las Trancas, they only have their businesses there, while local entrepreneurs are permanent residents of the village. A local entrepreneur described external business people as the following: "...they came here, bought a land and built ten cabañas [cabins], but they're not [...] the community, actually. They're just guys, enterprises, no? And these guys are money-makers that just want to do something with the money to [...] get more benefits." (Interview 5). This quote implies existent tensions between external and local entrepreneurs connected to the right to do business in Las Trancas (more about these tensions in Section 4.2.5.1). The first tourism-related businesses in Las Trancas, restaurants and accommodation establishments, were set up both by external and local entrepreneurs: not only local people recognised the potentials of tourism, but also external investors. External businessmen could purchase lands, when the children of some local residents wanted to get rid of the lands they inherited. These entrepreneurs are from other parts of Chile, mostly from the nearby Chillán or Concepción and bought the lands as investment mostly to build cabins (small wooden or stone houses rented out to tourists – usually there are more cabins on one land). However, the focus of this thesis is primarily on local entrepreneurs, who are in fact a group of national and transnational migrant people, as presented in the next section.

#### 4.1.1. Local (or migrant) entrepreneurs – a diverse group

Paradoxically, the studied group of 'local' entrepreneurs consists of migrant workers, who are either national (Chilean) or transnational people (who have connections with at least two nations). Thus, even if these entrepreneurs are referred to as 'locals', they can be regarded both as external people, they have migrated to Las Trancas from other parts of Chile or the world (see Table 1), and also as locals, since they are not merely external investors, but local residents as well.

**Table 1** Details about migrant entrepreneurs (NB: the order of participants does not accord with the order of interviewees in the appendix to protect respondents' privacy)

Research participants	Origin	Education/experience	Time of moving to Las Trancas
Participant 1	Concepción (Chile)	Degree in ecotourism	2 years ago
Participant 2	Concepción (Chile)	Teaches ecotourism at the University of Concepción	10 years ago
Participant 3	Concepción (Chile)	Attended an English-language school, studied cooking, spent time travelling outside Chile (e.g. 3 months in the US)	4-5 years ago
Participant 4	Farellones (Chile)	He was a ski instructor for 10 winter seasons in Chile and Europe, then he ran his own event organising company	4-5 years ago
Participant 5	United Kingdom	Lawyer	7 years ago
Participant 6	Chile (not specified)	Degree in ecotourism	Not clear
Participant 7	Italy	She was brought up in Northern Italy	27 years ago
Participant 8	Santiago de Chile	Architect, participated in the UN Sustainable Cities Programme	11 years ago

As one local businessman highlighted: “We don’t only come here to make money and we have our house in Concepcion or Chillán for example. We, we have our house here, our home is here [...] I am planning on living here my whole life!” (Interview 5). This quote illustrates well that the group of migrant entrepreneurs consider themselves as local residents and clearly differentiate themselves from external business people. As it can be seen in Table 1, these migrant entrepreneurs with different cultural and educational backgrounds moved to Las Trancas in the last 5-10 years (with the exception of Participant 7). Research participants included in Table 1 are all presented here as one group of migrant entrepreneurs, however, we should be careful about assuming that the group is homogeneous and their operations and actions are guided by the same principles. Despite the fact that some of them have similar backgrounds (e.g. some studied ecotourism), the group is diverse and consists of people with dissimilar attitudes and values. A transnational entrepreneur highlighted the lack of union in the community: “...the people, who lives here are muy [very] separate. This is not a union! [...] I think that we are very special people, who is living here.” (Interview 8). This opinion was supported by other people as well. Another transnational entrepreneur, for example, differentiated herself from local people: “...you know we’ve got a lot more developed concept of caring of the environment than what I think they do here.” (Interview 6).

This quote implies that Europeans have more advanced views of environmental conservation than Chilean people, however, as it is presented in Section 4.2.4, national entrepreneurs, who migrated to Las Trancas from other parts of Chile, also attempt to apply different practices to conserve nature. Interviewee 6 apparently does not regard herself as part of the group of local entrepreneurs, but rather an outsider in the community. Furthermore, this viewpoint implies existent inequalities between the Global North and Global South and reflects the note of Lu & Nepal (2009) that sustainability (or sustainable tourism) is a western construct and we have to be careful, when trying to apply sustainability principles in developing contexts that are very different from the developed world. Despite all these, the business activities of transnational entrepreneurs (including Interviewee 6) in Las Trancas cannot be seen as an example of exploitative foreign investment that is, postcolonialism (see Hall & Tucker, 2004). These entrepreneurs manage their small businesses locally and do not intend to impose certain development modes to the destination that reinforce dependency on developed countries (Britton, 1982).

Consequently, the discussion above reflects well the suggestion of Clausen & Gyimóthy (2016) that communities or even groups within communities (in this case the group of migrant entrepreneurs) cannot be seen as homogeneous entities and that there are different understandings of sustainability in communities. The above quotes clearly insinuate that the group of migrant entrepreneurs is fragmented and consists of people with different attitudes. However, the following sections will present that, in spite of having different approaches to sustainability, they have similar objectives in terms of ecological and socio-economic sustainability. It is suggested here that migrant entrepreneurs, through their different cultural and educational backgrounds, shape a new form of tourism in Las Trancas that is, ecotourism. The next section encompasses a detailed analysis of the tourism of Las Trancas based on the principles of ecotourism determined by Fennel (2015) and presents how migrant entrepreneurs actually shape ecotourism.

## **4.2. Ecotourism in Las Trancas**

### **4.2.1 Nature based criterion**

Being nature-based is the first principal criterion of ecotourism, even if it does not define ecotourism *per se*. Without doubt, natural elements are essential for the tourism of Las Trancas and, since tourism actively ‘uses’ these elements, they should be regarded as resources (see Fennel, 2015). Even though this thesis focuses on the village of Las Trancas, natural resources used by tourism operators are not restricted to the village, thus, in the following those natural resources are highlighted that are used by tourism operators.



#### **4.2.1.1. The use of natural resources**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the area is part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve given its rich biodiversity. Biosphere reserves comprise of three zones: 1) a core zone, which is strictly protected, 2) a buffer zone, located around the core area, where some forms of resource use is permitted, providing it does not interfere with the core zone, and 3) transition zone, where all kinds of human uses are permitted (Fennell, 2015). Tourism operators have accessibility to all the three zones, although their activities in the core zones are very restricted. Before the fieldtrip the limited information I found about Las Trancas Valley did not include information that it is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and throughout the fieldwork no signs or brochures indicated that we were in the territory of the Reserve – it became clear only after an interview with an ecotourism expert (Interviewee 1). The ‘UNESCO-brand’ did not seem to be exploited by tourism operators in Las Trancas (only one tour operator publishes information about the reserve on its website), even if it could be used as a marketing tool – previous fieldwork in Cuba revealed that the ‘UNESCO-brand’ can promote tourism growth. The expansion of tourism, however, can be a threat for the natural environment, given its potential negative impacts (see e.g. Walle, 1995). According to Nelson (1991), the objective of this protected area type is education (which is further discussed in Section 4.2.2) and the conservation of natural areas (as cited in Fennell, 2015; see also UNESCO, n.d.). Being part of this protected area system of UNESCO and not promoting it considerably, implies that the area’s nature is intended to be conserved. Despite that, since tourism has been increasing in the area and operators actively use natural resources (as presented in the following sections), tourism can contribute to environmental degradation (Pickering, Rossi & Barros, 2011), which is in contrast to the original aim of biosphere reserves.

There is certainly an abundance of natural elements in Las Trancas Valley and its surroundings. A local hostel owner admitted that nature is the main attraction in the area: “So, why people likes to [...] come to Las Trancas? Because of the mountains, because of termas [hot springs], because of nature. If I, I’m gonna have a hostel, I put it there because there is already a volcano, there is already something interesting for the people.” (Interview 5). Another accommodation owner also implied the significance of nature for tourism: “I think it’s the most important tourism you can do here. [...] it’s about nature. You know? It’s the difference. The difference of this place. It has things that no other places has.” (Interview 7). These quotes clearly insinuate that natural elements form the basis of tourism generally in Las Trancas for all the operators in the village (apparently including even the external operators). Natural elements, such as mountains, hot springs, waterfalls and volcanoes, all satisfy human needs through tourism activities (these elements are the main ‘attractions’ of the area) and thus, they can all be viewed as natural resources (Fennell, 2015). Being nature-based is a vital criterion for ecotourism (Donohoe & Needham, 2006), but it is necessary to consider the ways these natural resources are used by tourism operators, in this case, by migrant entrepreneurs.

Such consumptive activities as fishing or hunting do not form part of local culture and traditions in the area, especially in the core zones of the Biosphere Reserve, where the ecosystem is strictly protected (UNESCO, 2011). As an ecotourism expert explained about the use of natural resources: “The only things you can leave are your footprints, and the only things you can take are your photos.” (Interview 1). This viewpoint suggests the non-consumptive use of resources and that the impacts of tourism on nature should be minimised. Tour operators had similar views and during the guided tours I went on practices to minimise negative environmental impacts were observed (the practices are analysed in detail in Section 4.2.4). For instance, tour participants were not allowed to take flowers or any other living natural elements. This observation guides the discussion to the consumptive–non-consumptive debate connected to natural resources (Fennell, 2015). Fennell (2012) deems only those activities to be consumptive that reduce the supply of resources (e.g. after hunting there are fewer animals). Based on this viewpoint, for instance, many of the tours of local tour operators could be regarded as non-consumptive: the tours on offer are typically hiking, trekking, mountain biking, rock climbing, skiing and snowshoe walking, but tourists can do safari tour (by an AWD car) and horseback riding as well. Considering these tours as non-consumptive, however, would ignore the fact that natural resources are actually commoditised and sold to tourists for consumption and thus, the tours are in fact consumptive. Some activities are especially consumptive, given that they contribute to the degradation of nature. For example, the bike tour I participated in seemed to be harmful for the nature trails we used, as the soil seemed to become eroded by the mountain bikes: “I enjoyed biking a lot, though, I felt like bike tours can slowly destroy nice trails.” (field note after a bike tour; Appendix 3). On a previous fieldwork in Cuba similar observations were made. These observations are supported by the findings of Pickering et al. (2011) that mountain biking (and also hiking) can result in the damage of nature, such as the reduction of vegetation height and species richness as well as soil compaction. Based on these findings, one could argue if consumptive forms of tourism (that is, when nature is commoditised and sold to tourists) can be strongly beneficial for the natural environment, as Novelli et al. (2006) suggest.

Consequently, there is no doubt that tourism is based on natural resources in Las Trancas and these resources act as catalysts in drawing people to the area, rather than being constraints to visitation (Fennell, 2015). The area is part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, which aims at conserving the biodiversity and the unique flora and fauna of the area. The ‘UNESCO-brand’ does not seem to be promoted in the area, although, tourism operators make use of the natural resources of the reserve. Therefore, natural resources are commoditised and sold to tourists and thus, all forms of use should be considered as consumptive (see Cohen, 1988). Some consumption-forms can even be destroying for the nature, still, tour operators managed by migrant entrepreneurs seemed to make efforts to minimise negative impacts and to conserve nature (see Section 4.2.4 for detailed analysis about these efforts). This section focused on tour operators, as they make use of a number of natural resources, although tourists consume resources in accommodation establishments as well, as it is discussed in the next section.

#### 4.2.1.2. Competition for natural resources?

Water-related issues were mentioned by almost all the participants of this research. The water supply of the village is available from a nearby river both for local residents and tourism establishments. A restaurant owner implied that water is one of the biggest issues in Las Trancas: "...we don't have enough water for all the [...] There's too many people [...] I think that this [...] will be really a problem if they don't solve. So, [...] the volcano and the water problem is the biggest one here in Las Trancas.[...] We don't have so much water and many years ago we don't [...] had problem with water. [...] Because there is a lot more people now, you see? [...] [Because of] Tourism and more houses." (Interview 8). This quote clearly insinuates that recently water has become a scarce resource in the village due to the increase in the number of tourists. During the fieldwork on one occasion the water tank of the accommodation where I stayed emptied making it impossible for the hosts and guests to have showers and wash the dishes. Paradoxically, as a transnational accommodation owner mentioned, some people intentionally use more water than they might need: "...the concept here is that people say if we don't use it, it gets wasted... Well, not really. It follows the natural course, you know. Just overflows [from water tanks and goes back to nature]." (Interview 6). This respondent apparently blamed local people for the overuse of water and water-related issues. This opinion is supported by observations made in the village: many people used a lot of water to sprinkle plants or sometimes merely dusty roads. However, it is unquestionable that the expansion of accommodation establishments and the increasing number of tourists brought about the shortage of water in the village. Therefore, tourism exploits water as a natural resource that results not only in the net loss of the resource (Fennell, 2012), but also creates a problem that might become severe in the future.

Water is also used in other ways by tourism: as mentioned earlier, local tour operators organise guided tours to rivers, hot springs and waterfalls, where 'water' is the main attraction. Tourism, however, is not the only industry that intends to use water as a resource. Recently, Biobio Region's Environmental Committee approved a project called 'Halcones' and enabled a Chilean company to construct a hydroelectric plant on river Diguillín (see Picture 1). Government supports one particular company and it was implied by different people that governmental officials will financially benefit from the project, once it is realised. This implication is further supported by the fact that Chilean students invented a more environmentally friendly hydroelectric plant, but in this project an older plant-type would be constructed. Residents of different villages in Las Trancas Valley do not give up and they have united and decided to take legal steps to restrain the construction of the plant. According to research participants, once the construction of the plant is realised, it will not only affect the river itself (e.g. contamination with heavy metals), but also the broader natural environment through the construction process. As a result, these works would have grave negative impacts on the tourism of Las Trancas (and the whole area), as it is based on natural resources. A transnational entrepreneur, for example, is trying to support the movement of local people, as she experienced in her country of origin the negative impacts of industrialisation: "So in the end of the day it is feeding another industry which is... We have no idea what the consequence of the mining.

You know in England we have seen the same course, but the mining was taking place. So it can have a huge impact!” (Interview 6). This quote is a good example that culture also influences the use of natural resources, as Fennell (2015) claims. This entrepreneur furthermore highlighted that the construction would interfere with the lifestyle choices of many locals who chose to live in the area given the lack of such constructions as a plant – hydroelectric plants can be found in many other natural areas in Chile. This sentiment was echoed by other entrepreneurs as well (during informal conversations), implying that migrant business people intend to conserve nature not merely for tourism, but for its intrinsic value. Resources are associated with their values to certain people or societies (Fennell, 2015), in this case, the river is certainly a precious resource for all the three interest groups: communities in Las Trancas Valley, the government and the company in charge of the construction. Thus, there is a competition between two industries for one resource that reflects well Mitchell’s (1989) note that resources are defined by human attitudes and wants. The attitudes of local people are apparently determined by their intention of preserving nature not only for tourism, but also for the intrinsic value of nature. The attitude of governmental officials and the construction company seem to be determined solely by economic interests.

## **4.2.2 Learning**

Learning is one of the main characteristics that differentiates ecotourism from other forms of NBT (Fennell, 2015). This section presents how the studied group of entrepreneurs in Las Trancas attempt to enhance the learning of tourists. It should be highlighted that it is not the aim of this thesis to measure the effectiveness of education, rather it is attempted to present if migrant entrepreneurs have an intention of educating tourists.

### **4.2.2.1 The role of tour operators**

Tour operators and ecolodges are seen as the major facilitators of the learning of tourists (Fennell, 2015). The role of tour operators and especially tour guides is highly important in terms of nature interpretation and the promotion of behaviour change through environmental education. Two out of the three major tour operators in Las Trancas are highlighted here – the operators of Interviewee 2 (Tour Operator 1) and Interviewee 3 (Tour Operator 2). Both enterprises were established by ecotourism experts and emphasised the importance of education. Tour Operator 1 is a relatively small and new business and it has only one employee (an intern). The owner has an ecotourism degree (see Table 1) and is specially trained for avalanche rescuing and first aid. Tour Operator 2 co-owned by Interviewee 3 is a bigger company that has been operating since 2011. All the three co-owners (who are also tour guides) have ecotourism backgrounds and two of them are qualified mountain rescuers and outdoor recreation leaders. They have two permanent employees as tour guides: one is a biologist (Interviewee 11) and the other is a specially trained regional ‘quality guide’ (he has a ‘quality guide’ certification from SERNATUR). The latter guide has indigenous *Mapuche* roots – Las Trancas does not have a *Mapuche* community and this guide was the only native person from the research participants. Having trained and specialised guides with specific insights into the area, like the two above operators, is a feature of ecotour operators, as Yee (1992) suggests.

For both tour operators environmental education seemed to be an integral and important part of the tourism experience. The two operators were primarily focused on the education of tourists about the environment and the encouragement of appropriate on-site behaviour not to cause harm to nature. Interviewee 2, for instance “...always tells especially to Chilean tourists to respect nature, not to leave trash etc.” (Interview 2). Throughout the tours I participated in (organised by Tour Operator 2), education was primarily concerning the ecology and geography of the area (e.g. different plants or mountains) and participants on one of the tours were informed about nature conservation efforts in the area. According to one of the owners of Tour Operator 2, “Usually people care about nature more after participating in tours.” (Interview 3). Therefore, it implies that nature interpretation can be efficient for the promotion of environmentally conscious tourist conduct. These quotes highlight the importance of tour leaders in the conservation of nature, which is increasingly admitted in the literature (see e.g. Huang, 2016 or Weiler & Davis, 1993). According to Weiler & Davis (1993), one of the major responsibilities of tour leaders is maintaining the quality of nature through the promotion of environmentally responsible tourist conduct. Additionally, Tour Operator 2 organises special educational tours for secondary school students to explain to them, among other things that tourism is something that they should do together with the local community. Thus, this operator tries to impact upon the future behaviours of children as travellers and make them be aware of the importance of local communities in tourism. This approach insinuates a long-term educational intention of this tour operator. The study of Farmer, Knapp & Benton (2007) suggests that environmental education field trips can enhance the pro-environmental attitudes of students in the long term. Therefore, the initiative of Tour Operator 2 might be an effective tool for the long-term environmental education of students.

#### **4.2.2.2 The role of accommodation**

The other group of tourism businesses promoting the learning of tourists are ecolodges. Four research participants are accommodation owners or employees (Interviewee 7 is the only employee, who works for his father) in Las Trancas. The concept of ecolodge is complex, as this kind of accommodation should be nature-dependent and should meet the (five) principles of ecotourism (Russell et al., 1995). The nature-dependency of the four accommodation is unquestionable as their major attractiveness is their location in nature, but determining whether they meet the five principles of ecotourism would require a comprehensive analysis, which is not the intention here. Thus, in the following the establishments of the four research participants will be regarded only as accommodation, but not as ecolodges.

The importance of educating tourists was not equally important for the four businesses. Interviewee 5, the owner of the accommodation where I stayed during the fieldwork, seemed to be the most enthusiastic about educating his guests:

*“...education is, is a very-very important part of, everything pretty much, but in tourism I think it’s fundamental to have a, a way that people should, should be in the place. [...] we can teach the people with guides, for example. With signs, like lots of signs [...] And also in the streets, like in the communication I have with my clients here in the hostel, for example. We separate the trash and we do this, we do that... And [...] people gets that. People gets that, understand, because people [...] are not stupid! They understand! [...] We have [...] a very good and a very important mission here in Las Trancas. [...] Because, if fifty thousand people visit us every year we can, we can change fifty thousand minds every year!” (Interview 5).*

For this entrepreneur the learning of tourists has a great significance. In his view, tourists’ on-site behaviour, the way they “should be in the place”, can be influenced by education through guides and signs. Fennell (2015) also considers guides as the main facilitators of tourist learning, and signs as important forms of interpretation. Too many detailed signs, however, can be problematic in terms of their effectiveness (see Hughes & Morrison-Sanders, 2005). This business owner implied that tourists’ behaviour can be positively affected also in the long term through the communication with guests, including explanations about practices. I also experienced this attitude, when the owner let me know about selective waste collection and that the lights should be switched off after leaving a room not to waste energy.

Another accommodation owner also gives information to her guests, when they arrive and she made the information available in written form as well:

*“...we have everything in a little booklet. It is also in the website with all the conditions. But [...] I like to do it in person with the people, when I speak to them. Because... When they read things, they look at the sign and they, they just see the sign, they actually not take time to read the sign. So whenever a guest checks in, I explain to them, you know, this is a native woodland. This is the bugs. [...] There is a little form, which has some photos of the local bugs here, which I do have in the guest booklet. Because you now. They just... I don’t know. Squish them or scream. Spray with fly spray. You have to explain to them that they are not dangerous. Just let them go past you on the way. But yeah, I do it in person.” (Interview 6).*

Thus, in this accommodation the emphasis is very much upon the on-site learning of visitors and through this, the conservation of nature. According to the respondent, education by means of personal communication and in written form is efficient and people “understand the concept” (Interview 6). Similarly, another accommodation owner also gives explanations to her guests about environmental conservation and selective waste collection in person and in booklets and she also found it mostly efficient: “I say that we separate the garbage. Take care of the environment. [...] The most [tourists are helping her]. Not all. [...] And more of them says that they like my concept.” (Interview 9). These reflections are supported by the findings of Fennell (2015), who claimed, based on other studies that the majority of ecotourists are motivated to comply with the expectations (e.g. of hosts in this case) during their stays. The above quotes also present that accommodation owners intend to promote the learning of their guests, mostly with a focus on the on-site learning.

However, not all the accommodation establishments were found to have practices to encourage appropriate tourist conduct. Interviewee 7, contrary to the prior three entrepreneurs, did not mention any forms of education that he has or intends to have in the accommodation. The lack of willingness to educate and inform guests was not implied by the interviewee.

Consequently, migrant entrepreneurs seem to promote the environmental learning of visitors, a vital aim of ecotourism (Walter, 2013). Most businesses emphasise the on-site learning of visitors, however, some businesses make efforts to support even long-term environmental education. The findings also confirm the suggestion of Fennell (2015) that tour guides and accommodation have an important role in environmental education (see also Huang, 2016). Only one operator was found not providing its guests with environmental education – the exact reasons behind it would require a more in-depth analysis, which is not the aim of this thesis.

### **4.2.3 Sustainability – socio-economic perspective**

This section discusses the social (including cultural) and economic sustainability of the tourism of Las Trancas. These aspects are examined together, as they are closely related to each other.

As mentioned earlier, migrant entrepreneurs are a culturally diverse group in the community of Las Trancas. Even though they have various cultural and educational backgrounds, their social and economic (and also ecological, see Section 4.2.4) attitudes are corresponding. These attitudes, however, appear to be different from external entrepreneurs' attitudes. A local business owner said the following about the dissimilar economic viewpoints of local and external business people:

*“There is two types of business. One of the business, for example one of the mentalities of [...] this kind of business is to [...] have the more benefits as possible and it doesn't matter if you already reach the [...] level of lifestyle of living you wanna have, you wanna just keep making money. And that's the most destructive way of economy. Because they already forgot their real necessities, the basic necessities and they're all about making more money. And the other way of thinking in the economy is have a business, run it [...] if possible by yourself and make a living on it and if you get it, just stay there and it's fine! And keep it [...] simple...”* (Interview 5).

External enterprises are believed to be associated with the first business-type, whereas local enterprises with the second type. Many of the research participants (migrant business people) were considered to be part of the second group, insinuating that they do not wish to grow uncontrolledly, but they see it as a means of livelihood (Interview 5). This view implies again a conflict between local and external business people over the right to do business and to have the benefits deriving from tourism – since the conflict has a crucial moral aspect, it is further analysed in Section 4.2.5.1.

Nevertheless, local operators endeavour to share benefits with the exclusion of external operators and with the inclusion of locals (even if they are from other nearby villages in the Valley). Concerning socio-economic benefit sharing Interviewee 5 was of the following opinion: “...this other view [that migrant entrepreneurs have] is way more inclusive and [...] wants to make [...] a good living for everybody in the Valley. [...] that’s a community thinking, you know? Something that is good for everybody and not only for my business. [...] A different way to see community.” (Interview 5). The actions and practices of this businessman present well how this idea is actually carried out. He explained, for example, that he could have washing machines in his accommodation, but he intends to support a woman from the nearby Los Lleuques, who has just started her own laundry business and provides her services to accommodation. He also mentioned that he does not seek commission-based co-operation, he prefers when local enterprises offer each other for free. However, there are new businesses, as he explained, that need such commission-based collaboration to be able to sell their products – he gave the example of one of his friends, who started a small tour operator, but has difficulties with selling his tours given his lack of office. Besides these, Interviewee 5 could boost his business with offering guided tours or having his own bicycle rental, but the only reason he does not have these services is that he does not want to become a competitor of local tour operators. His sentiment about benefit sharing was echoed and put into action by other local entrepreneurs as well. A local tour operator, for example, works solely with local service providers (Interview 3). They offer the snacks of the local artisan bakery (owned by Interviewee 4) on their tours, even if it is relatively more expensive compared to the local food prices, and they also co-operate with an accommodation (owned by Interviewee 9). Interviewee 3 also mentioned that they try to sell the aforementioned school trips off-season to help the community and extend the season. Other local entrepreneurs have similar co-operations, which are very frequent in Las Trancas according to an ecotourism expert, who is well-connected in the area (Interview 1).

Based on the above examples local entrepreneurs seem to make efforts to fairly redistribute part of the benefits deriving from tourism and support the local community (or communities), in other words, to meet the requirements of social sustainability (see Hall et al., 2015a). By means of benefit sharing, they promote the long-term viability of local enterprises and activities that is, economic sustainability (Hall et al., 2015a). Instead of merely focusing on their own interests, local businesses attempt to share the benefits of tourism with local community members (other businesses) through the involvement of other local stakeholders in the tourism system. The direction of benefits to local people is one of the main principles of ecotourism, according to Wallace & Pierce (1996).

Nonetheless, governmental authorities do not seem to support community development efforts in the area. During an informal conversation Interviewee 5 insinuated that “this area (including Las Trancas) is not the focus of the national government, as they try to support the poorer regions. He implied that the government might think this area can finance developments, such as the new water system, as it has more money from tourism.” (Fieldnotes, Appendix 3).



This opinion suggests that Las Trancas and the surrounding areas are not amongst the poorest regions of Chile and thus, they are not priority areas in terms of governmental support (similarly, Interviewee 10 also mentioned in an informal conversation that Las Trancas looks like a richer village compared to southern parts of the country). However, an ecotourism expert implied that the local municipality (that comprises of more villages in the Valley) does not have sufficient financial resources: “they [the municipality] don’t have so much money. [...] What does the municipality live off? The basically the taxes the people pay. But who pay taxes? The ones who live there, but not the tourist.” (Interview 1). Even if the area is not amongst the poorest regions in Chile, the local government seemingly does not have adequate financial resources to support community development (e.g. such basic infrastructures as water supply system or recycling system). Besides, the fact that the government recently approved the hydroelectric plant project on a nearby river would definitely be problematic for tourism and thus, for the socio-economic development of communities in the Valley. A tour guide mentioned during an informal conversation that “it would destroy the landscape and tourists were not interested in this area anymore. So, it would be a barrier to tourism development.” (Interview 11). Instead of trying to support local tourism businesses in their development efforts, the government supports a company to realise a project that will hinder the further development of tourism and the society. Therefore, the efforts of migrant entrepreneurs to improve the social and economic conditions of local communities (Las Trancas and other villages in the Valley) through tourism are not united with the efforts of governmental authorities, which would be necessary for community development, according to the definition of Bujold (1995).

#### **4.2.4 Sustainability – ecological perspective**

Las Trancas and the surrounding areas, as part of the Biosphere Reserve, provide tourism operators with numerous natural resources to be utilised. However, in ecotourism it is not enough to merely use nature, there must be an intention of service providers to conserve the environment (Fennell, 2015). This section discusses the conservational practices of local entrepreneurs and the barriers businesses have to face with regard to nature conservation.

##### **4.2.4.1 Conservational practices**

Apart from caring about the strictly protected ecosystem of the Biosphere Reserve’s core areas and not cutting down endemic trees on their lands, tourism operators do not have to comply with strict environmental regulations or policies. In fact it is contingent upon businesses what practices they want to apply to conserve nature, if any. Given the lack of regulations, the studied entrepreneurs adopted different conservational methods that are influenced by their prior experience and knowledge. For example, an accommodation complex, managed by a local man, has not had any practices connected to environmental sustainability until the son of the owner (Interviewee 7), who studied ecotourism, started to help him with the business in the last few years and “tried to show him the sustainable way to do things in tourism” (Interview 7). Interviewee 7, thus, acts as a facilitator of change and promotes the establishment’s more sustainable operations. As part of their “sustainable policies” they use more efficient light bulbs and bio-pellets for their heating system.

These two practices undoubtedly cannot be considered as “sustainable policies”, although the introduction of environmentally sustainable practices in an accommodation complex, which was not designed for sustainable operations, is not without difficulties (more about the barriers in the next section).

Other accommodation establishments were planned with the objective to enable ecologically sustainable operations in the longer term. One of the first of this kind was planned and built by a Chilean architect woman, who decided to have a project with a focus on sustainability after taking part in the UN Sustainable Cities Programme: “I worked in a project. Of [...] united nations. [...] Sustainable city program. [...] And I learned about the concepts of sustainability. So [...] I want to do project with that concept.” (Interview 9). Her accommodation was built with several innovative and unique ideas to conserve nature. The cabins are all made of used containers (Picture 2) and lifted up (Picture 3) together with the pathway that connects the cabins (Picture 4) to minimise the harm caused to the vegetation. Trees are not cut down, not even the ones that are dried and lifeless (Picture 5) to leave the land as natural as possible. The energy consumption is partially covered by solar panels – more panels are planned to be set up in the future. Waste is collected selectively (Picture 6): the collected plastic bottles, metal cans and glass are taken to Chillán. Besides, organic waste is also collected to make compost, which is used in the private organic garden of the owner. The cabins are heated with wood and during the winter it is ensured that heat loss is minimised. The garden was equipped with a pool, which can be seen as controversial in terms of environmental sustainability. A transnational accommodation owner (Interviewee 6) implied that having a pool is not environmentally sustainable: “We don’t have a swimming pool for the same reason [...] you know it is a lot of water that you spend on a swimming pool. Lot of maintains. Lot of chemicals you have to throw in the pool. And then when you empty the pool, when do all that waters go? You know, on to the local land.” (Interview 6). This opinion suggests that having a swimming pool can cause harm to nature and thus, represents the dissimilar opinions of a Chilean and a transnational entrepreneur about nature conservation. The accommodation of Interviewee 6 was constructed based on a similar concept to the earlier, with a respect of nature: “...the cabins were all placed in parts of the woods, which didn’t have trees. So we didn’t have to cut anything down. I have allergic reaction when someone cuts trees down. [...] The idea is 3 cabins and try to interfere as little as possible.” (Interview 6). The cabins were wooden (the wood they used was from “managed” resource) and the accommodation owner and her family lived in used, but repaired containers, just as in the prior case. Waste is selectively collected and taken to Chillán. In Section 4.2.2 it was already mentioned that the owner tries to educate her guests about nature to conserve the flora and fauna on her land. For example, the area is the habitat of some dangerous-look, but actually harmless bugs (like a kind of tarantula and scorpion) and the owner talks about the bugs to her guests to prevent them from causing harm to these animals. This entrepreneur also contributed to the broader environmental conservation of the area, as she prepared a new by-law (she had been a lawyer in the UK before she moved to Las Trancas) that aims to reduce the negative natural impacts of tourists (caused e.g. with camping or cross-country motorcycling).

Another accommodation (owned by a Chilean entrepreneur), where I stayed during the fieldwork, bears close similarities to the earlier two places in terms of environmental consciousness, such as the thoughtful construction of the establishment (e.g. reliable material choice for the building), selective waste collection (including compost) and modern wood heating system (where not only wood, but also selectively collected waste paper is burnt). Besides these, the accommodation has double windows that are rare and expensive in Chile, but, according to the owner, in the long term its worth having them (Interview 5). Animals and plants are also taken care of – Picture 7 and Picture 8, for example, present that nature is used, but also protected. Nonetheless, this entrepreneur is also planning to have a swimming pool in the future. The above examples insinuate that a number of different practices are applied by migrant accommodation owners for the same objective: to conserve nature and to minimise negative environmental impacts. However, as the example of the swimming pool well presents it, environmental conservation is seen differently by entrepreneurs with dissimilar cultural backgrounds reflecting the suggestion of Hall et al., (2015) that environmental conservation is culturally driven. Therefore, the consideration of intangible ecocultural relationships (Jamal et al., 2013) seems to be important, as community members and entrepreneurs with different cultural backgrounds have dissimilar attitudes to nature conservation and relationships with nature.

For tour operators natural resources are vital elements of their offer, but they use nature differently from accommodation and thus, they need to apply different conservational practices. As it was discussed earlier, some activities of the analysed operators, for example, mountain biking or hiking can have negative impacts upon natural elements (see Pickering et al., 2011), not to mention the air, noise and potentially soil pollution caused by the old safari car on safari tours. Instead of supporting conservation, these activities promote environmental degradation. However, the two tour operators apparently make efforts to minimise the negative environmental impacts. They adopted similar conservational techniques, even though empirical data was collected only from one of them. It seemed to be evident for both of them not to leave trash during the tours and to prevent tourists from littering. During the tours (organised by the operator of Interviewee 3) participants were not allowed to take anything from nature and only the beaten path was used not to harm the otherwise pristine areas. Fennell (2015) noted that tourism operators are inclined to place more people on sensitive environments than they are supposed to. Even if the two operators do not have to comply with such regulations, both of them determined the maximum number of tour participants to minimise the pressure on nature (Interview 1 and 2).

Besides accommodation establishments and tour operators, other local businesses apply similar conservation methods to the ones mentioned above and seem to be interested in nature conservation. As the owner of an artisan bakery explained, taking care of the environment is even more important for her than having tourists (who are crucial for her business): “...if it comes tourists that are going to destroy everything, I’d rather like it to be empty. [...] Because [...] I prefer to take care of this place, not come tourist that are going to destroy everything.” (Interview 4). This view certainly implies that environment is precious and crucial for the respondent not merely in terms of its value to tourism, but also for its intrinsic value.

In the bakery, waste is collected selectively and taken to Chillán and also compost is made. Waste paper is used during the winter for heating and plastic is reused. A restaurant had similar practices except for making compost, which would be too much due to the big amount of waste food (Interview 8).

The above examples illustrate well that local tourism operators adopt dissimilar environmentally sustainable practices reflecting the suggestion of Clausen & Gyimóthy (2016) that sustainability is understood in multiple ways within communities. All the migrant entrepreneurs seemed to strive to minimise the negative environmental impacts of their operations, a vital requirement of both environmental sustainability (Hall et al., 2015a) and ecotourism (Wallace & Pierce, 1996). It also became evident that environmental conservation is socially constructed and culturally driven, as Hall et al., (2015) suggest. Even if some activities of, for example, tour operators cannot be seen as environmentally sustainable, the fact that operators attempt to minimise the negative impacts on nature is promising. However, there exist other factors that influence the sustainability of local businesses. The next section presents the main barriers to their environmentally sustainable operations and practices.

#### **4.2.4.2 Barriers to ecological sustainability**

Some practices of local businesses cannot be environmentally sustainable due to different barriers and entrepreneurs are forced to apply methods that do not support environmental conservation or even that harm nature. For instance, the old water system definitely seemed to damage the environment: the natural flow of a river near Las Trancas is interrupted to collect water in huge tanks and convey it through water pipes to the houses in the village. The huge, plastic water tanks looked absurd in the middle of the forest and did not fit the otherwise pristine area (Picture 9). Water pipes go through forests and undoubtedly have a negative impact on the vegetation (Picture 10), especially because quite frequently they need to be fixed and the waste remaining after maintenance works is left in the forest (see Appendix 3). Besides, there is no municipal sewage system – every house needs to have its own system. As an accommodation owner explained, they separate “black” and “grey” water (Interview 5). The former is water from the toilette that goes to the ground after filtering the solid materials in a container and the latter is water from shower and dishwashing that goes to the garden without filtering meaning that all the ingredients of shower gels and dish washers end up in the garden. This accommodation uses biodegradable dishwasher to reduce soil pollution, although, according to the owner, the ingredients of shower gels and shampoos are not problematic for the environment, as they are filtered in the ground. Still, chemicals and artificial components are certainly not beneficial for the natural world, even if they are filtered.

Financial issues can also be barriers to the adoption of ecologically sustainable practices. For instance, Interviewee 7, who is working for his father’s accommodation complex, mentioned that they do not collect waste selectively, as they should take the garbage of their guests to Chillán (they can have up to 90 guests), which would be too expensive for them:

“...we want to do this business more sustainable. But it’s very hard, ‘cos it’s a very big place. It’s most difficult [...] in that way. ‘Cos, it’s more expensive.” (Interview 7). Thus, the accommodation cannot cover the expenses of appropriate waste management due to the lack of municipal recycling system, which was mentioned as a serious issue by other respondents as well. Also, there are no municipal garbage collectors to clean the streets, instead the job is undertaken by a group of concerned local people (including Interviewee 8 and 9).

Therefore, the lack of municipal water supply, sewerage and recycling systems severely hamper the conservation of nature and through this, environmental sustainability (Hall et al., 2015a) and also ecotourism (Wallace & Pierce, 1996). Local entrepreneurs have certain practices to reduce environmental harm (e.g. using biodegradable dish washer), however, they are unable to overcome all the barriers due to financial issues or because it is physically impossible (e.g. old water system).

## **4.2.5 The moral imperative**

The last analysed criterion of ecotourism is one of the most significant of the five principles (Fennell, 2015). Dealing with justice and ethics in a rural and postcolonial context in the Global South, especially where businesses managed by transnational entrepreneurs from Western (European) countries form important part of the local tourism supply, seems to be highly important (see Jamal et al., 2013). Departing from the suggestion of Jamal & Camargo (2014) regarding the “Just Destination” that justice, fairness and equity is determined by each place, this section discusses the just practices of local tourism operators in Las Trancas. These practices are closely related to the earlier examined sustainability practices, but here the focus is on the ethical perspective.

### **4.2.5.1 An ethic of justice and fairness**

In the community of Las Trancas there seemed to be tensions between migrant or local entrepreneurs, who moved to Las Trancas in the last decade, and external business people, who do not live in Las Trancas, over the right to do business and have the benefits of tourism. Local owners expressed their resentment against the people, who go to Las Trancas merely to earn money, but do not live there (see Interview 5, 6 and 9). One could ask, however, why migrant entrepreneurs think they have more right to do business in Las Trancas than external entrepreneurs. For example, why does a business owner from Europe, who migrated to Las Trancas only a few years ago, think that he/she has more right to do business there than a Chilean owner, who manages his/her company from another nearby city, but has lived in Chile his/her whole life.

External entrepreneurs were described by locals as mere investors that do not care about other than their incomes: “...people come here to [...] have money. And they are not worry about the places.” (Interview 9). Another, transnational entrepreneur had a very similar opinion: “The majority of people of business here don’t live here. So, [...] they are not so involved [...] They care about their income!” (Interview 6).

These opinions insinuate that external operators are not concerned about the environment and community of Las Trancas, they simply wish to reap financial benefits of their businesses. They do not help local people with such community-wide actions as cleaning the streets and sometimes they even cause harm to the environment with, for instance, cutting down native trees, as Interviewee 6 mentioned. Therefore, the tensions between external and migrant entrepreneurs exist in fact not because external entrepreneurs do not live in the village, but rather due to their complete lack of care for the local community and the environment.

In contrast, the attitudes and actions of local entrepreneurs suggest a care for nature and the well-being of local communities, including the inhabitants of other villages in the Valley, as the already cited part of Interview 5 suggests: “...this other view [that local entrepreneurs have] is way more inclusive and [...] wants to make [...] a good living for everybody in the Valley.” (Interview 5). This viewpoint implies that local entrepreneurs consider not only their own needs, but also the well-being of other community members, even if they are part of other communities in the Valley. The earlier sections discussed in detail, how local entrepreneurs attempt to share the benefits deriving from tourism and promote economic and social equity. For example, Interviewee 5 supports disadvantaged and new local businesses with co-operation and the connection of their supply with the demand (e.g. he helps a new tour operator with selling its tours). He cares so much for those other businesses that he even limits the number of activities he offers to prevent competition in the small destination. Other local entrepreneurs also attempt to support each other and care for the well-being of the local community through co-operation – as a local businessman mentioned they “...have connections only with local service providers (e.g. local bakery). This is a win-win situation for everyone.” (Interview 3). Thus, co-operation cannot be seen as purely altruistic, because they are in fact mutually beneficial actions.

Migrant business people also help neighbouring communities in the Valley through their active participation in the movement against the hydroelectric plant on River Diguillín. A Chilean entrepreneur explained, why they support the movement: “...we care a lot about [...] this central hydroelectric [hydroelectric plant]... It doesn’t really affect us, you know? But, it does affect a lot to our neighbourhood down the Valley, another town, small town [...] And they need our support too! So, we join them! And fight, you know?” (Interview 5). This opinion suggests that the primary reason for participating in the movement against the plant is to support the other community (or in fact communities, as other towns would also be impacted, as it turned out from informal conversations). It should be admitted though that businesses in Las Trancas would also be impacted by the construction works, so local entrepreneurs themselves are interested in not having the plant. However, the efforts of the people from Las Trancas are remarkable (e.g. organising charitable parties or raising funds) considering that the indirect negative impacts on Las Trancas would definitely be minor compared to the impacts on the other villages. The process of construction and the plant itself would have severe negative impacts on nature and the tourism of those other communities (“...[the plant] would destroy the landscape and tourists were not interested in this area anymore.”, Interview 11) and thus, also the well-being of inhabitants would be negatively impacted, as many of them work in tourism.

This example insinuates also that local entrepreneurs in Las Trancas care for the well-being of other communities as well as the conservation of the area's environment. Therefore, the ethical actions of migrant operators can be seen as complex, given that they appeared to support the movement against the hydroelectric plant predominantly to help the other communities and to preserve nature, but they themselves are interested in not destroying the pristine nature of the area, as their businesses would also be impacted.

The above examples all insinuate that there exist tacit principles of justice, fairness and equity in Las Trancas, just like in the "Just Destination" (Jamal & Camargo, 2014). These principles guide the operations of migrant entrepreneurs, who apparently attempt to facilitate social and economic equity, including the well-being of local community members, through co-operation and the involvement of disadvantaged or less frequented businesses in the tourism system. Migrant entrepreneurs proved to care not only for the interests of tourism and their own businesses, but also the well-being of other community members (and communities) and the conservation of nature. These findings support the suggestion of Fennell (2015) that ecotourism can be seen as a more ethically based sector of tourism, at least from the perspective of operators (see Fennell & Malloy, 1997). However, even if they have practices to conserve nature, it was presented in the prior sections that the operations of tourism businesses, especially tour operators, clearly do have a negative impact on natural resources. Contrary to external operators though, local entrepreneurs seem to have an ethic of care for the well-being of the destination and do not merely seek their own benefits and the benefit of the industry. Apparently, migrant entrepreneurs attempt to alter the tourism of Las Trancas, formerly dominated by external businesses that do not seem to have an ethic of care, and promote the justice and the good of the destination (Jamal & Camargo, 2014). It should be emphasised, although that those community members, who do not have tourism businesses are disregarded here and this thesis does not discuss how they benefit from tourism. Nonetheless, in the small community of Las Trancas local people are mostly involved in tourism-related enterprises.

## 5. Discussion of the findings

Recently, the unique role of migrant entrepreneurs in shaping tourism is becoming evident (see e.g. Clausen & Gyimóthy, 2016), which is also reflected in the case of Las Trancas. The above analysis presented that migrant/local entrepreneurs, including both national and transnational people, have become agents of tourism change and have been shaping a new form of tourism in Las Trancas. However, they seem to have varying sustainability priorities and practices (especially concerning environmental sustainability) that highlights their heterogeneity and confirms the findings of Clausen & Gyimóthy (2016) that sustainability is understood differently within the local community. In spite of their dissimilar practices, all the studied local business people can be seen as agents of change and proponents of ecotourism development. Transnational entrepreneurs seemingly have a special position, as they participate in community initiatives, but do not necessarily consider themselves as part of the community.

The analysis explored how the new form of tourism promoted by migrant entrepreneurs meet the five core criteria of ecotourism, determined by Fennell (2015). Learning and the moral imperative can be seen as the two criteria that make ecotourism distinct from other types of NBT (Fennell, 2015). The findings indicate that the majority of tourism operators aim to promote the environmental learning of visitors, primarily to influence the on-site behaviours of tourists. It should be highlighted though that the commitment of the operators proved to be different with some operators not showing any intention to educate visitors and with some being very committed even to influence tourists' general environmental attitudes. Connected to the moral imperative, it is evident that the actions and practices of entrepreneurs are guided by tacit principles of justice, fairness and equity. Involving disadvantaged community members in the tourism system and providing them opportunities to do their businesses as well as sharing the benefits of tourism through co-operations clearly imply that entrepreneurs make efforts to enhance the well-being of the local community and other neighbouring communities that are small and powerless. Seemingly local entrepreneurs have their own principles of justice and ethics that are determined by the political and social contexts, as Jamal & Camargo (2014) suggest. Migrant entrepreneurs see these principles as clearly different from the ones of external operators, who appeared to care only for their businesses and profits. The principles of justice and ethics correspond with the requirements of socio-economic sustainability and insinuate that local entrepreneurs promote social and economic sustainability (see Hall et al., 2015a). However, it was also presented that the socio-economic commitment of business people is also influenced by their personal interests (e.g. in the case of co-operations), but still, their primary concern was seemingly the interest of the community.

Environmental sustainability appeared to be equally important for all the local operators, however, the practices they adopted are divergent and sometimes not in accordance with the requirements of environmental sustainability (see Hall et al., 2015a).



This finding is also supported by the results of Saarinen's (2003) that tourism operators tend to create their own flexible sustainability standards and adopt the ideals of sustainability only to a certain extent. The dissimilar adoption of sustainability principles seems to be the result of the lack of regulations or policies that would guide the operations of businesses. Tour operators, for example, were identified to be controversial: on the one hand, they support environmental protection, for example through nature interpretation, but on the other hand, the tours on offer contribute to environmental degradation in areas that are part of a Biosphere Reserve. Despite these, it was presented too that the adoption of innovative methods to conserve nature contributed to the change of tourism in Las Trancas and the development of ecotourism. Additionally, some actions of the operators were found not to be environmentally sustainable due to external factors, such as the lack of modern water, sewerage and waste recycling systems that cannot be altered without governmental help.

Consequently, based on the above analysis it is apparent that the concept of ecotourism is quite complex and unclear, as Jamal et al. (2013) also insinuate. Given its conceptual vagueness, it is difficult to determine whether it is ecotourism or simply another form of NBT that is present in a particular destination. As Fennell (2015) concludes, the label 'ecotourism' cannot guarantee sustainability in practice and ecotourism can also be unsustainable similarly to other, more intrusive forms of tourism, if not guided by a moral imperative. The new form of tourism that is promoted by migrant/local entrepreneurs is undoubtedly guided by some ethical principles, both in socio-economic and environmental terms. These principles seek the well-being of the destination rather than only the interests of the industry, even if co-operations were obviously beneficial for all parties. There are also examples for altruistic actions that serve merely the support of disadvantaged community members. Migrant entrepreneurs were also found to promote some forms of environmental education, however, education is not equally important for all the local entrepreneurs. Operators seemed to make efforts to meet the requirements of socio-economic and environmental sustainability (see Hall et al., 2015a), however, in the latter case the practices of entrepreneurs were apparently different, which can be seen as a result of the cultural differences of business people. In terms of the nature-based criterion, there is no doubt that tourism in Las Trancas is based on unique natural resources. It should be emphasised, however, that the results do not represent an end stage of tourism development, as the five analysed principles of ecotourism are dynamic and changing over time (Mitchell, 1989).

## 6. Conclusion

The analysis of the tourism of Las Trancas shed light on the important role of a group of migrant national and transnational entrepreneurs, who were proved to shape a new form of tourism in the area that is, ecotourism. It was presented that migrant entrepreneurs have similar objectives concerning environmental and socio-economic sustainability, but their practices are dissimilar due to cultural differences. They make efforts to conserve nature and minimise the negative impacts of their operations as well as to redistribute part of their benefits and support the local community. Therefore, being migrant in Las Trancas with similar objectives makes the analysed entrepreneurs one group, although it is a very fragmented group given their different values and applied practices. This finding clearly implies that communities are not homogeneous entities (see Clausen & Gyimóthy, 2016) and there exist groups within communities that can be further divided into sub-groups and eventually individuals with diverse practices that are influenced by their cultural and educational backgrounds as well as their prior experience. In spite of the dissimilarities, migrant entrepreneurs can be seen as agents of tourism change in Las Trancas, who has been shaping ecotourism development. They shape this new form of tourism in Las Trancas with having more than a business-as-usual attitude, since, as demonstrated in the analysis, they consider social and environmental ethics, facilitate the environmental learning of visitors and aim at the socio-economic and environmental sustainability of the industry. Being ethically driven and promoting environmental education are two features that make ecotourism different from other forms of NBT (Fennell, 2015). My analysis clearly shows that the ethical attitudes of migrant entrepreneurs can confute Saarinen's (2013) conclusion that expecting tourism as a private sector economic actor to share its benefits might not be realistic. Benefit sharing was certainly manifested in the practices of migrant entrepreneurs, who form important part of the private sector in Las Trancas, however, they are not the only private actors in the village. Accordingly, the analysed migrant entrepreneurs attempt to act ethically, try to educate tourists and strive to run their businesses in an environmentally and socio-economically sustainable way along with the fact that tourism in Las Trancas is undoubtedly nature-based, imply that operators make efforts to comply with the five ecotourism criteria. However, this form of tourism was presented to be promoted by only a group of businesses people, for instance external operators were disregarded here and thus, the findings do not present the general support of ecotourism in Las Trancas. Still, the influence of migrant entrepreneurs seemed to be substantial upon Las Trancas, as a tourism destination. As part of the migrant group, transnational entrepreneurs were proved to have a special position in the community: on the one hand, they support community initiatives, but, on the other hand they do not necessarily see themselves as part of the local community. Despite that, their businesses cannot be seen as exploitative foreign investments (see Clausen & Gyimóthy, 2016), since they had an ethic of care for the environment and the local community. This thesis gave some empirical evidence that communities of destinations are highly complex entities that cannot be regarded as one group based merely on their geographic locations.

Community dynamics within emerging tourism destinations in Latin America, with a special attention to migrant entrepreneurs, need more in-depth analysis with focusing not only on European or Western concepts, but also the particular contexts. Voicing these often alternative or diverse ways of organising will give way to appropriate policy making. It should be highlighted that all the destinations ought to be examined individually, as all the communities are different and we cannot generalise the findings of such case studies as this thesis. I would also propose the consideration of environmental and socio-economic ethics not only for the evaluation of ecotourism, but for the assessment of tourism development in general, especially in the Global South, to promote a more ethically based and just industry.

## 7. References

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## Appendix 1 – Photos



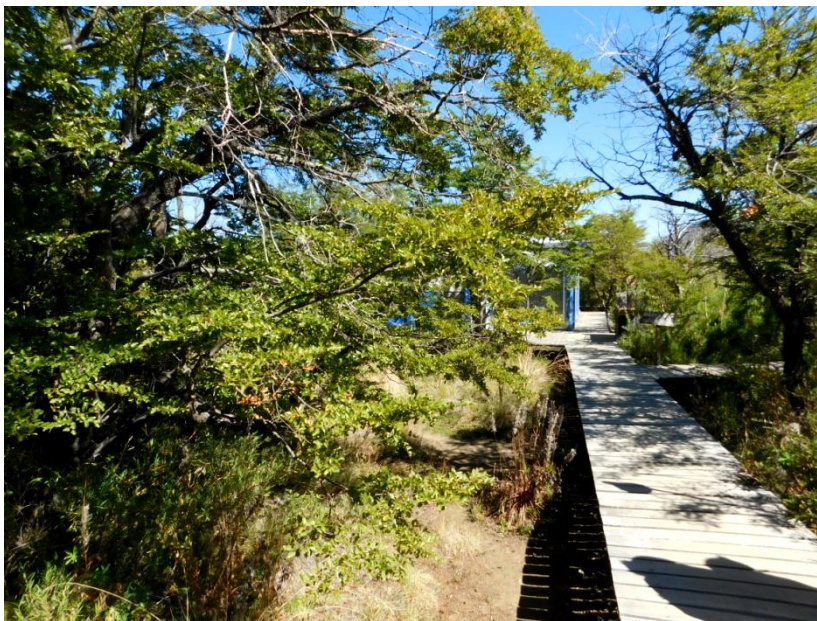
**1. Picture River Diguillín and its unspoiled surroundings**



**2. Picture Used containers as cabins that represent an innovative way of thinking**



**3. Picture All the cabins are lifted up in this place not to harm nature**



**4. Picture Lifted path that connects the cabins**





**5. Picture A dried tree in the garden of the accommodation of Interviewee 9**



**6. Picture Selective waste collection in an accommodation**



**7. Picture A hammock-seat hanging from a tree on the terrace of an accommodation (see also Picture 9)**



**8. Picture The tree on Picture 8 is used, but also protected with a towel**





**9. Picture Water tanks in the middle of a forest and the dry channel of the river**



**10. Picture Water pipes harming the vegetation on a hillside near Las Trancas village**