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Ecotourism Development in Indigenous Communities: A Mapuche Case Study

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Ecotourism Development in Indigenous Communities: A Mapuche Case Study



Figure 1: Traditional Mapuche Ruka by Shaelynn Nuckel 2018

Shaelynn Taylor Nuckel

Abstract

Ecotourism has been hailed as a way for indigenous communities to conserve biodiversity, promote environmental education, and drive economic development in exotic destination areas. In practice, ecotourism has often failed to meet its intended goals. Utilizing a case study of indigenous Mapuche communities in Chile's Coast of Carahue, where ecotourism infrastructure is emerging but still largely underdeveloped, this thesis examines the potential for ecotourism to be used as a tool for sustainable development, environmental conservation, and socio-political empowerment. It examines the complex interaction of factors involved in local indigenous ecotourism development, and assesses how these factors shape the ability of indigenous ecotourism to meet its intended goals. Chapter 1 uses quantitative data on the global ecotourism industry to examine ecotourism's positive and negative impacts on indigenous communities as well as its reliance on ecosystem services. Chapter 2 employs ecology to analyze the role of the community's surrounding wetland as a crucial component in local ecotourism development and environmental conservation. Chapter 3 engages politics to discuss interactions between key actors involved in ecotourism development, and to examine the roles of various levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and community stakeholders in the implementation of ecotourism programs. Chapter 4 incorporates anthropology to discuss the use of ecotourism to solidify Mapuche cultural identity and improve relations with broader Chilean society. Chapter 5 discusses policy recommendations for government, community, and other stakeholders involved in ecotourism development.

Keywords: ecotourism, ecotourism development, conservation, sustainable development, socio-political empowerment, indigenous, Mapuche, Chile

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Introduction

In the Summer of 2018, I travelled to Chile as part of a research team to study the potential for ecotourism development in rural indigenous communities inhabited by the Mapuche people, located in the Araucanía region of south-central Chile. The Mapuche people are Chile's largest indigenous group, residing in south-central Chile and south-western Argentina.

Historically, the Mapuche economy has depended on agriculture, but today, many members often migrate to Chile's urban cities of Temuco and Santiago in search of further economic opportunity. Beginning with the invasion and occupation of Mapuche territory in the late 1800s, the cultural identity of the Mapuche people has been continuously threatened as they faced decades of struggle to secure indigenous identity, cohesiveness, and territorial rights against the Chilean government. The "Mapuche Land Conflict" between the Mapuche and the Chilean government has perpetuated patterns of economic insecurity, land insecurity, and systematic oppression against the Mapuche people in modern Chile. As a result, many Mapuche have become very active in state political movements, activism, and advocacy for indigenous rights.

While the Mapuche people have traditionally survived on agricultural activity throughout the Araucanía region, there is an emerging group of members in the communities I visited, including Carahue, Trovolhue, Nehuentue, Cullinco, and Moncul, who are pursuing further economic opportunity in the form of local ecotourism enterprise. These communities reside nearby a pristine coastal wetland fed by the area's main rivers, the Río Imperial and Río Moncul. This wetland serves as crucial habitat for a variety of migratory bird species, provides great aesthetic and spiritual value to the Mapuche, and functions as the centerpiece for local Mapuche ecotourism development. However, not everyone supports the creation of this ecotourism

program. On one side, many believe the development of a local ecotourism enterprise to be a valuable economic opportunity, a chance to teach others about their culture and way of life, as well as a way to preserve this valuable natural ecosystem. On the other hand, opponents to the project have a strong aversion to the idea of opening up their territory to outsiders, while others prefer to pursue further agricultural activity around the wetland area.

Much of the research on ecotourism assumes that it can provide a multitude of benefits to communities and their surrounding ecosystems. However, there are many examples around the world that have demonstrated ecotourism's failure to meet its conservation and economic development goals, as well as its tendency to contribute a variety of negative impacts on local communities, including ecosystem degradation, pollution, and displacement of local residents. In recognition of ecotourism's potential to lead to either positive or negative effects in host communities, my research aims to provide an investigation into a number of key questions: First, how can communities create local ecotourism industries in a way that benefits them, and doesn't lead to the variety of adverse effects seen in many other endeavors worldwide? Who are the fundamental actors involved in ecotourism development, and how do they interact? Furthermore, what are the factors that shape the outcomes of tourism initiatives?

This thesis attempts to observe the ways in which certain Mapuche communities develop a local ecotourism venture in an area where tourism infrastructure is emerging but still largely underdeveloped. It explores the complex interaction of factors involved in local ecotourism development, and questions how these factors might shape the outcomes of tourism initiatives. It will assess the potential for ecotourism to be used as a tool for sustainable development, environmental conservation, and socio-political empowerment within these local communities.

Chapter 1 will use quantitative data on the global ecotourism industry to examine its positive and negative impacts on indigenous communities. It will also analyze the ecotourism industry's reliance on ecosystem services. Chapter 2 will employ ecological data in analyzing the role of the community's surrounding wetland as a crucial component in local ecotourism development and environmental conservation. Chapter 3 will engage politics to discuss interactions between key actors involved in ecotourism development, and examine the roles of various levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and community stakeholders in the implementation of ecotourism programs. Chapter 4 will incorporate anthropology to discuss the use of ecotourism to solidify Mapuche cultural identity and improve relations with broader Chilean society. Chapter 5 will discuss policy recommendations for government, community, and other stakeholders involved in ecotourism development.

Chapter 1. Ecotourism or Eco-colonialism?

Chapter 1 will provide background information on the global ecotourism industry. It will identify global examples of sustainable tourism management systems and examine ecotourism's potential to lead to certain environmental, political, and economic benefits. Then, the chapter will discuss the factors that can cause ecotourism to fail to meet its intended goals, highlighting ecotourism's potential to contribute various negative impacts on host communities and their environments. Later on, the chapter will focus on Chile's sustainable tourism programs, and evaluate the state of ecotourism throughout the country. Lastly, the chapter will touch upon both ecotourism's reliance on and its contribution to various ecosystem services.

Ecological tourism emerged in the 1980s as a result of growing sustainable environmental practices around the world, which began to transgress into the tourism industry.¹ Although conventional tourism was originally thought to be a relatively low-impact and non-polluting industry, evidence had begun to show that its environmental and social impacts were high while its economic benefits were low. Mass tourism often brought uneven economic benefits, overdevelopment, pollution, and cultural disruption by the influx of foreign tourists to host destinations.² Additionally, increasing development to meet the growing demand for tourism as well as human-related industrialization began to degrade the ecosystems and biodiversity of many popular vacation destinations. Honey describes many cases of this phenomenon. For example, algae blooms polluted water in the Adriatic Sea and made the area unattractive to tourists, while in Haiti, uncontrolled sewage caused the island's beaches to close.³

¹ Coria and Calfucura 2011, 47.

² Honey 2008, 10.

³ Ibid, 11.

As the negative impacts of conventional tourism on the environment became more apparent, there emerged a growing trend towards low-impact vacations with nature-based activities.⁴ Such kinds of nature tourism can be characterized as “travel to pristine places, usually involving physical activity,”⁵ and commonly includes biking, backpacking, rafting, hiking, and mountain climbing.⁶ Honey mentions a 1998 survey on 3,342 U.S. households, which found that 48.1% took part in nature-based activities during their last vacation, while 14.5% stated that they planned their most recent vacation so that nature-based activities would make up a significant part of that vacation.⁷ At the time, the growth of nature tourism around the world was aided by the “same ease and accessibility of modern transport that has fueled the rise in conventional tourism.”⁸ Honey points out that the increasing number of tourists to these formerly remote natural areas resulted in the same kinds of environmental degradation and pollution that had been seen throughout cases of conventional mass tourism. For example, visitors of the United States National Park System increased by 30% from 1980-2000, from about 220 million to over 285 million visitors.⁹ During this time period, popular parks such as Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon had become overrun with cars, loud music, exhaust fumes, and piles of garbage that were left behind by tourists, which led to many damaging effects on wildlife and their habitats.¹⁰

The emergence of environmental degradation as a result of nature tourism, which was originally thought to entail environmental sensitivity and awareness, again spurred another

⁴ Honey 2008, 11.

⁵ Ibid, 11.

⁶ Ibid, 12.

⁷ Ibid, 11.

⁸ Ibid, 12.

⁹ Ibid, 12.

¹⁰ Ibid, 12.

movement within the travel industry. Many travellers began the hunt for the world's most pristine, untouched natural environments to visit rather than the crowded, dirty destinations that had become overrun by both conventional and nature tourism.¹¹ These factors led to the emergence of a new industry, known as "ecotourism." While its early definitions have often been vague, ecotourism was thought to be "travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."¹² However, its modern, more complete definition has grown to encompass "environmentally sensitive, low-impact, culturally sensitive tourism that also help[s] educate visitors and local community members."¹³ Simply put, ecotourism can be thought of as travel with a conscience. As a growing number of people take part in this type of "eco-conscious" travel, ecotourism has faced continuous expansion. Ecotourism has been consistently growing at rates of 10%-12% per year.¹⁴ The industry is expected to grow three times faster than the conventional tourism industry as a whole in the coming years.¹⁵

Ecotourism as a Development Strategy. Due to its multifaceted nature, ecotourism can address a complex variety of issues. Ecotourism has an ability to integrate biological considerations with economic, social, and political factors, and is thought to be capable of meeting both environmental and human needs.¹⁶ It is praised as a way for communities to protect fragile ecosystems, conserve biodiversity, promote environmental education and awareness, and drive economic development in host communities.¹⁷ Hoping to capture some of these benefits, many countries have begun to market some form of ecotourism. Not only this, but ecotourism

¹¹ Ibid, 12.

¹² Ibid, 6.

¹³ Ibid, 14.

¹⁴ Coria and Calfucura 2011, 47.

¹⁵ Honey 2008, 7.

¹⁶ Ibid, 15.

¹⁷ Ibid, 4.

has been increasingly adopted as primary development strategy by many developing nations¹⁸ that are home to many of the world's most exotic species, pristine environments, and vulnerable indigenous peoples. The rationale is that governments can use ecotourism to improve the economic status of indigenous populations by forming a symbiotic relationship between tourism, indigenous communities, and natural environments.¹⁹ In this way, indigenous communities can create authentic tourism experiences that showcase both the pristine beauty of their surrounding environment as well as their diverse cultural and spiritual values. Community members would promote sustainable methods of land management and conservation to protect the area's natural biodiversity. Visitors would enjoy an enriching travel experience, and in turn, provide a valuable means of income that would stimulate the local economy and even drive economic development in some countries. Additionally, ecotourism has been seen as an alternative to more extractive economic activities such as logging, cattle ranching, mining, commercial fishing, agriculture, and conventional mass-tourism.²⁰

Many ecotourism sites are, according to Honey, "under some form of environmental protection by governments, conservation or scientific organizations, or private owners or entrepreneurs."²¹ In the last few decades, many countries have established a system of nature preserves and protected lands, and have partnered with indigenous communities to manage and run ecotourism operations. One notable success is Costa Rica's national park system. Threatened by the rampant and unchecked mining, logging, agriculture, and deforestation activities occurring throughout Latin America,²² the Costa Rican government pioneered a system of

¹⁸ Coria and Calfucura 2011, 47.

¹⁹ Ibid, 48.

²⁰ Honey 2008, 23.

²¹ Ibid, 13.

²² Ibid, 14.

national parks and protected areas to conserve forest land, biodiversity, and indigenous peoples.²³ Today, Costa Rica has become a world-renowned model for ecotourism, conservation, and sustainable land management.

The national park and preserved land system is not without flaws, however. Honey points out a variety of unfortunate side effects that may arise in the case of preserved lands. First, the establishment of preserves and parks often leads to the displacement of local community members, who are usually the marginalized poor. Additionally, these people may be unable to receive any benefits from their lands,²⁴ which can lead to rising tensions between local communities and preserve managers. Honey discusses other global examples that demonstrate the important role that local and indigenous peoples play in the successful maintenance of preserved lands. For example, in the 1970's, Kenya's government placed several preserves under the control of local community councils. These councils began to receive revenue from park entrance fees, hotels, and other tourism activities.²⁵ Honey discusses the so-called "stakeholder's theory," which posits that "people will protect what they receive value from."²⁶ In most cases, the role of indigenous communities in the management of the operation are legitimized by the government in order to protect the community. Empowering local community members to manage preserves and parklands and instilling mechanisms to allow them to derive the economic benefits of tourism may allow local governments to better achieve their own economic development and conservation goals.

²³ Miller 2012, 8.

²⁴ Honey 2008, 14.

²⁵ Ibid, 14.

²⁶ Ibid, 14.

Eco-colonialism. Although ecotourism is thought to provide many benefits in theory, it has often failed to meet its intended goals in practice, and has even exacerbated environmental, social, and economic problems. One major criticism of ecotourism is the difficulty that local community members and workers face in capturing the economic benefits of tourism. In an example of Galapagos ecotourism, one study has shown that while tourism has increased GDP in the Galapagos up 78% between 1999-2005, the per-capita income only increased 1.8% per year.²⁷ This shows that although tourism had a positive economic impact on the nation overall, it had a marginal impact on the economic livelihood of the individual households that reside within the tourism site. Another study of ecotourism showed that “total gross revenues from ecotourism that stays in the community is as low as 10% in certain countries.”²⁸ Due to a variety of constraints, including a lack of controls to ensure fair distribution of economic benefits,²⁹ ecotourism often fails to deliver its expected benefits to indigenous communities.³⁰

Indigenous ecotourism development occurs within the context of the global tourism industry that is influenced by non-indigenous tourism, conservation, and development activities.³¹ While developing nations face complex economic challenges, indigenous communities are plagued by additional political and social challenges that can make it even more difficult to achieve successful ecotourism development. Indigenous ecotourism efforts must contend with the same product development, marketing, competition, and training challenges faced by mainstream tourism operators, however, they also possess other objectives such as

²⁷ Ibid, 153.

²⁸ Coria and Calfucura 2011, 50.

²⁹ Ibid, 49.

³⁰ Ibid, 48.

³¹ Zeppel 2007, 332.

maintaining cultural knowledge and establishing territorial rights.³² Members of indigenous communities may fail to capture the economic benefits of ecotourism because the distribution of benefits from ecotourism is often characterized by a “manifest inequality among stakeholders involved in ecotourism development.”³³ Additionally, community members are often not consulted by major ecotourism stakeholders, such as large-scale tourism operators and travel companies, and are often left out of decision-making processes. While certain stakeholders may reap the majority of benefits from ecotourism, indigenous community members and workers, who often lack political and economic power, receive marginal benefits. This is often due to a lack of clear guidelines and regulation by host-country governments that can ensure the even distribution of wealth from ecotourism activity.³⁴ As ecotourism’s negative impacts on indigenous communities are increasingly coming to light, it seems that ecotourism may be likened to “ecocolonialism,”³⁵ a new form of exploitation of indigenous lands and cultures reminiscent of historical colonial oppression on the developing world. However, despite ecotourism’s potential to cause certain unintended consequences, ecotourism can and does contribute to positive impacts for host communities. However, the outcomes of tourism initiatives depend on multiple, complex factors. The complex variables involved in determining the many positive and negative outcomes of ecotourism initiatives will be explored further in later chapters.

Ecotourism in Chile. Chile maintains over 41 national parks, 46 national reserves, and 17 natural monuments.³⁶ Following in the footsteps of other neighboring South-American countries,

³² Zeppel 2007, 332.

³³ Coria and Calfucura 2011, 49.

³⁴ Ibid, 49.

³⁵ Crowe and Shryer 1995, 26.

³⁶ CONAF, “Parques de Chile,” Accessed May 8, 2019, <http://www.conaf.cl/parques-nacionales/parques-de-chile/>.

Chile has implemented a sustainable tourism initiative to showcase their pristine landscapes, abundant natural resources, and exotic species. According to a report by Columbia University students, “65% of long-haul tourists consider nature as the most influential reason for visiting Chile.”³⁷ The report points out that “emerging economies will receive more international tourists than advanced economies, and that by 2030 international arrivals will exceed 1.8 billion. Chile, one of twenty-five countries defined by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as an emerging economy, is seeking to capitalize on this increase.”³⁸ The report also mentions that the Chilean government officially established tourism as a main aspect of their economic development strategy in 2010. This legislation set a goal “to increase the tourism industry’s contribution to the country’s GDP from \$7.97B USD (3.2% of GDP) to \$15.5B USD (6% of GDP) by 2020.”³⁹ Currently, tourism is Chile’s 4th-largest industry after the mining, fruit, and paper industries, however, the Chilean government hopes to establish tourism as the 3rd largest by 2020. Furthermore, the legislation intends to increase the number of tourists annually from 3 million in 2011 to 5.4 million tourists by 2020. In 2012, Chile formally launched the Sustainable Tourism Innovation Program (PITS). This program, which places importance on public and private partnerships in order to implement its goals, includes key stakeholders such as the Chilean Federation of Tourism Enterprises, the National Tourism Service, CORFO, and the Under Secretary of State for Tourism.⁴⁰

Ecotourism and Ecosystem Services. Because ecotourism operations are based in pristine natural areas, the ecotourism industry depends wholly on the variety of complex relationships

³⁷ Beltran et al. 2013, 5.

³⁸ Ibid, 5.

³⁹ Ibid, 2.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 3.

that function to keep environments healthy, known as “ecosystem services.” According to the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment, ecosystem services are the “benefits people obtain from ecosystems.”⁴¹ The conceptual framework of the Millenium Assessment proposes that “people are integral parts of ecosystems and that a dynamic interaction exists between them and other parts of ecosystems, with the changing human condition driving, both directly and indirectly, changes in ecosystems and thereby causing changes in human well-being.”⁴²

The focus of Mapuche ecotourism efforts explored in this thesis is centered around a pristine natural wetland that surrounds the Río Imperial, the river system that runs directly through their communities. Wetlands are one of the most productive and diverse environments in the world, and as a result, they provide numerous ecosystem services to society. Such kinds of valuable ecosystem services and their relationship to human well-being have a direct impact on the outcomes of ecotourism initiatives. Currently, the Mapuche wetland supports diverse wildlife. It is home to an array of plant, mammal, and aquatic species, and is a key habitat for global migratory bird populations. The local fishing and culinary industries also depend on the river system, with many local fishermen supplying restaurants with daily fresh-caught seafood and shellfish. Among the variety of supporting, regulating, and provisioning services, the wetland also provides significant cultural services to the tribe and other community members. For example, the tribe derives great cultural, spiritual, historical, and aesthetic value from the wetland and surrounding natural area. The tribe is heavily inspired by the use of nature in many aspects of their daily lives, including cooking, growing and harvesting food, building, crafting, and performing religious ceremonies.

⁴¹ Reid et al. 2005, v.

⁴² Ibid, v.

Despite the clear importance of wetland ecosystems to the biosphere, as well as the great cultural services they provide to surrounding communities, it is difficult to quantify the value of the services that the wetland provides or its impacts on human well-being. As such, sustainable management of this wetland is crucial for the welfare of the local community and for the success of their ecotourism efforts. The distinct quality of ecotourism to simultaneously contribute to and depend on ecosystem services, as well of the nature of what those services are, will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Ecotourism Development. Since many examples of ecotourism around the world have depicted a negative, extractive relationship between the tourism operation and the destination site, how then, are the Mapuche to proceed? According to Honey, Gerardo Budowski argued that the relationship between tourism and conservation can be variously one of conflict, coexistence, or symbiosis.⁴³ One can only assume that symbiosis is the ultimate goal for ecotourism efforts. If ecotourism is meant to promote economic development in indigenous communities, studies have shown that some fundamental conditions must be met. “First, the economic benefits of ecotourism must be accessible to the target population. Second, indigenous communities need secure land tenure over the area in which ecotourism takes place. Third, ecotourism must promote deeper social and political justice goals to local communities, as well as the capability to make land use decisions for that area. If left unaddressed, these aspects restrict peoples' ability to enjoy the economic benefits of ecotourism.”⁴⁴ However, there are many variables that can impact the outcomes of ecotourism initiatives. In the following chapters, this thesis will analyze the

⁴³ Honey 2008, 15.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 16-17.

community's complex interactions of environmental, political, and socio-cultural factors that might affect Mapuche ecotourism efforts.

Chapter 2. Get Your Feet Wet

Chapter 2 will discuss the role of the community's surrounding wetland as a crucial component in local ecotourism development efforts and environmental conservation. It will first provide background information on wetland ecosystems as well as the many ecosystem services that they provide. The next section will describe the general geographical characteristics of the region and identify relevant communities located around the wetland. It will also discuss the ecological characteristics of the wetland, its range of plant and animal species, as well as the variety of important ecosystem services that these species perform. The chapter will then transition into a discussion of ecotourism in the area. It will assess the ability of ecotourism to be used as a management strategy and to contribute to local conservation. The chapter will delve into a discussion about international protection status as an important factor in ecotourism as well as highlight current nature ecotourism projects and opportunities occurring in the area. Lastly, the chapter will discuss various risks and challenges affecting ecotourism in the area and will offer various methods for its sustainable, long-term management.

Wetland Background. A wetland can be defined as “an ecosystem that arises when inundation by water produces soils dominated by anaerobic processes, which, in turn, forces the biota, particularly rooted plants, to adapt to flooding.”⁴⁵ Wetlands perform a great variety of ecosystem services that provide many benefits for humans. They regulate local and global climate, store and recycle organic matter and nutrients, and recharge groundwater. They help

⁴⁵ Keddy 2010, 1.

form topsoil, prevent soil erosion, maintain soil fertility. They also serve as crucial habitat for migratory species and maintain both biological and genetic diversity.⁴⁶ Wetlands also store carbon, provide oxygen, and process nitrogen.⁴⁷ There are many different types of wetlands around the world, which can be characterized as freshwater or saltwater ecosystems, and feature distinct species of plants and animals.⁴⁸ Wetland ecosystems are among the most productive habitats on earth with high rates of both primary and secondary organic production.⁴⁹ According to Keddy, “this production has both direct economic values (e.g. fisheries, trapping, hunting) and values that are more difficult to measure (e.g. carbon flow, recreation, support of endangered species).”⁵⁰ Though wetlands provide innumerable services to the environment and human populations worldwide, they are increasingly threatened by forces of pollution, climate change, and development. As a result, it is becoming more important to protect wetland ecosystems from such threats, and implement sustainable management strategies to ensure their well-being and longevity for years to come. Ecotourism is one such strategy that can provide a way to manage wetland ecosystems and maintain the many services that they provide.

The Moncul Wetland. The target communities discussed in this thesis are located near the Araucanía region’s Imperial and Moncul rivers, which together constitute a complex wetland system. This system, known as the Moncul Wetland, is located on the coast of south central Chile (38° 41’ 10.73’’ S - 73° 26’ 08.01’’ W) in Chile’s Cautin province.⁵¹ The Imperial River is formed at the convergence of the Chol Chol and Cautín Rivers in the vicinity of the nearby

⁴⁶ Ibid, 29.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 2.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 302.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 302.

⁵¹ Artigas 2018, 3.

city of Nueva Imperial. Spanning approximately 55 km, the river drains towards Chile's west coast and is situated between the towns of Carahue and Puerto Saavedra, which are located along the banks of the river to the north and south, respectively. A nearby mountain range, known as the Cordillera de Nahuelbuta, borders the river to the north. The Imperial converges with the Moncul River (Río Moncul) before it empties into the Pacific Ocean, just south of the town of Nehuentue. The Moncul River originates from the Laguna Trovolue, a small lagoon located within the town of Trovolue, and is bordered on the eastern side by the Cordillera de la Costa mountain range.⁵²

The Moncul wetland complex limits to the north with the Nahuelbuta mountain range, to the west with the Pacific Ocean, and to the south with the Imperial River. The three coastal range rivers that empty to the wetland and form the Moncul river are the: Puyanhue, San Jorge and El Peral. They originate from the Nahuelbuta coastal range and from elevations of 800 meters above sea level. The total area of the Moncul wetland complex is 4,118 hectares, and contains the estuaries of the Moncul and Imperial rivers. It spans from the mouths of the rivers to the coastal plains, in the form of marshes composed of tall grasses and reed beds.⁵³ The entire wetland complex divides into four disjointed areas that collectively capture the diversity of wetland habitats that exist in Moncul.⁵⁴ The first area is the tall grass, saline wetland which totals 2000 hectares and is dominated by *Spartina densiflora*. These marshlands support the greatest diversity and abundance of fauna and flora.⁵⁵ The second zone is the Trovolue wetland which totals about 200 hectares and is located in a flat valley 1.5 kilometers wide that includes

⁵² Ibid, 3.

⁵³ Hauenstein et al. 2002.

⁵⁴ Artigas 2018, 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 3.

Trovolhue lake. The third zone contains the humid prairies of Cullinco that total about 300 hectares and form as a result of dredging wetland areas. Fertilizers are used to promote the growth of grasses for cattle grazing. Runoff from these prairies are sources of excess nitrogen to the wetland system. The fourth and last zone is the 500 hectare area of coastal dunes that form the westernmost limit of the wetland complex and serves as a barrier to the neighboring Pacific ocean.⁵⁶

Services and Their Functions. Wetland ecosystems perform many services that benefit local, regional, and global environments. The Moncul wetland not only plays a key role in maintaining the ecological health of the surrounding area and its variety of species, but it also provides significant benefits to the local communities that reside nearby. One such service is the Moncul wetland's high rates of organic production of matter. Organic matter, comprised of carbon-based compounds, provides the essential building blocks for the formation of other life forms.⁵⁷ As was mentioned before, wetlands have some of the highest rates of primary production of organic matter in the world. In particular, tall grass marshlands produce more organic matter that they can consume or store, and therefore, they subsidize adjacent ecosystems with organic matter.⁵⁸

In addition to the Moncul wetland's high rate of primary production, the wetland also features high movement of particulate carbon that sustains many local species. Due to the movement of water through its many feeder streams and rivers, the wetland is inundated daily with particulate carbon that helps sustain local populations of phytoplankton and benthic microphytes, as well as various micro and macro invertebrates of nearby ecosystems such as the

⁵⁶ Ibid, 3.

⁵⁷ Keddy 2010, 302.

⁵⁸ Mitsch and Grosslink 2016.

Imperial river estuary.⁵⁹ In turn, this helps maintain shellfish populations throughout the estuary, which local human coastal communities in the area depend on as a source of food. These populations of shellfish have spurred the development of a local gastronomic industry, most notably in the coastal town of Nehuentue. Nehuentue's variety of restaurants attracts large swaths of local and regional tourists who come in search of the wetland's fresh and locally-sourced seafood. Though this group of restaurants provide a key source of income for local fishermen and business owners, they play an even more important role in the ongoing ecotourism development of the entire area. In particular, Nehuentue's gastronomic industry is a significant part of the existing tourism infrastructure of the area, which lacks a large selection of restaurants. In sum, the ecological processes of the Moncul wetland sustain local food sources, which support the town's gastronomic industry and local economy, and in-turn, help the area to establish a significant local identity and solidify emerging tourism infrastructure.

Another significant service performed by the Moncul wetland is biodiversity conservation of flora and fauna. The floristic catalog of the wetland and the river basin in Moncul is composed of 171 species, of which 71% are native.⁶⁰ The Moncul wetland contributes to the overall biodiversity of the biome to which it belongs, which is Valdivian temperate forest.⁶¹ Though the wetland is home to many types of plant, fish and shellfish species, it also serves as an important habitat for a large variety of migratory birds and waterfowl.⁶² According to Keddy, out of an estimated 9,000 species of birds in the world, 20% of those are wetland-dependent.⁶³ According to the Ramsar Convention, an international treaty that focuses

⁵⁹ Artigas 2018, 5.

⁶⁰ Alvares and Delgado 2004.

⁶¹ Olson 2001.

⁶² Artigas 2018, 3.

⁶³ Keddy 2010, 236-237.

on the conservation of wetlands and their resources,⁶⁴ waterfowl are one such species of bird that are dependent on wetlands.⁶⁵ In Moncul's northern section, the shores of the Trovolhue lagoon consist of 200 hectares of reed banks that provide refuge to 29 species of waterfowl.⁶⁶ Some other species of birds that are found in the wetland site include the Chiloé wigeon (*Anas sibilatrix*), Black duck (*Netta peposaca*), Patagonian duck (*Anas georgica*), Yellow-billed teal (*Anas flavirostris*), Black-necked swan (*Cygnus melancoryphus*), Gray heron (*Ardea cocoi*), and Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*). The wetlands provide refuge to these important migratory species and to many other species of birds and aquatic plants during critical stages of their development.⁶⁷ Maintaining the biodiversity and habitat of the Moncul wetland system may also help preserve biodiversity in the rest of the Araucanía region's wetlands.⁶⁸ As such, degradation of the wetland could result in far-reaching and long-lasting environmental consequences to the overall region. Given the importance of this wetland to the contribution to ecosystem services, and to the well-being of the Araucanía region's species and global populations of migratory birds, the maintenance and protection of the Moncul wetland is a critical issue for both its local communities and the region overall.

Ecotourism as Management Strategy. To many members of the local Mapuche community, the importance of the Mocol wetland to the biodiversity, ecological health, and local industry of the area is clear. However, others do not see the value that arises with the sustainable management of this wetland, and would prefer to pursue further agricultural activity in the

⁶⁴ Ramsar, "About the Ramsar Convention," Accessed May 1, 2019, <https://www.ramsar.org/about-the-ramsar-convention>.

⁶⁵ Keddy 2010, 237.

⁶⁶ Artigas 2018, 4.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 5.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 3.

wetland area. As was mentioned previously in the chapter, damage to the wetland that could come in the form of agricultural land uses, could threaten the overall ecological health of the region and result in other potential unknown consequences. Currently, none of the coastal wetlands around the Moncul or Imperial rivers are under national protection or some other type of conservation measure.⁶⁹ This presents a grave threat to the area, as this means many environmentally-damaging or extractive land uses could be practiced with little restriction. However, there is some flicker of hope. At the time of this research, various Mapuche communities were in the midst of negotiations to decide whether they would pursue official designation of the Moncul wetland as a protected Ramsar site. Despite some opposition, a group of politically-active Mapuche in the Nehuentue, Moncul, Carahue, Trovolue, and Cullinco communities came to an agreement about their desire to protect the Moncul wetland. With the help of various local government members, workers, and scientists, they compiled an application to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands to seek international protection of this biologically diverse and vulnerable wetland.

In the absence of official protection, local ecotourism development efforts appears to be a promising management tool that could uphold the well-being of the wetland and its surrounding communities. Ecotourism presents a dual-sided strategy. On one hand, ecotourism can be used as a tool for the protection and conservation of the wetland as community members manage its pristine surroundings and diverse species. On the other, it can also be used as an economic opportunity for the local Mapuche communities who create tourism experiences around the wetland ecosystem. Ecotourism programs would allow entrepreneurs to develop tourism

⁶⁹ Ibid, 3.

activities that align with their conservation goals and values towards the wetland, while also providing a valuable means of income to the area. Obtaining official protection measures and support from the Ramsar Convention in the future would only strengthen their wetland conservation efforts.

Tourism Opportunities. In order for ecotourism programs to be successful, it is essential for operators to have a marketable “product” or “destination.” Tourism destinations in general rely on the aesthetic and natural beauty of their surrounding areas to attract tourists to their sites. At the same time, tourism destinations must also have a variety of activities that visitors can partake in. In this case, the Moncul wetland, together with its attractive natural surroundings, variety of species, and unique cultural diversity, offers promising potential for the development of a distinct ecotourism destination in Chile’s Coast of Carahue.

Due to its strong biodiversity, particularly of migratory bird populations, the Moncul wetland presents an opportunity for the nature and wildlife aspects of ecotourism. As an important part of the global ecotourism industry, terrestrial animal or “wildlife” tourism often features the interaction or viewing of exotic species such as elephants and other safari animals. However, Blumstein identifies bird watching as the most popular terrestrial animal tourism activity worldwide.⁷⁰ The strong presence of migratory birds in the Moncul wetland can allow for the creation of many types of bird watching tourism activities, which may enable the local communities to capture some share of Chile’s bird-watching market.

The pristine natural surroundings of the area have driven the development of other types of tourism activities. The entire area between the communities is aesthetically beautiful, with

⁷⁰ Blumstein et al. 2017, 99.

rolling green hills, miles of pasture and farmland, green forests, and meandering rivers. On the coast, miles of dunes give way to an expanse of black-sand beaches that separate the interior land from the powerful crashing waves of the south Pacific ocean. These aesthetic characteristics allow for the creation of hiking, walking, biking, and horseback riding tours throughout the area. The Imperial and neighboring Moncul rivers are a defining characteristic of the area, and currently underpin the region's emerging ecotourism industry. Historically, these rivers served as valuable shipping and transportation routes that were essential to the surrounding agricultural and fishing villages. Today, they are used for fishing, boating, bird-watching, and other recreational activities.

The latest major tourism development in the area was the creation of a scenic boating route along the Imperial River. Along the route, kayakers and boaters are able to view firsthand the attractive scenery and the diverse wildlife of the area. The development of the Imperial river route has been extremely valuable to expanding nature tourism in the area, and has functioned as an impetus for the development of additional tourism projects and infrastructure. Hoping to capture some of the tourists partaking in river tours, local ecotourism entrepreneurs have created their own tourist offerings on their own riverside properties, ranging from lodges, restaurants, and picnic areas. One such entrepreneur, a local Mapuche woman, operates an eco-lodge that sits directly on the riverfront. The site includes a docking area for boaters and kayakers, picnic tables for outdoor dining, a number of hot tubs, an outdoor shower area, a medicinal plant garden, a small café as well as a main lodge building that consists of two bedrooms, a bathroom, living room, kitchen, and outdoor deck. Another Mapuche woman is working to build a small restaurant on her riverside property, while another local entrepreneur operates a small inn located

further downriver. These “stops” have been clearly marked on the river route map, and together make up the network of attractions that tourists can partake in along the route.

Challenges. One of ecotourism’s many criticisms is that despite its aspirations to conserve biodiversity and protect the environment, it may actually lead to ecological damage due to the added stress on wildlife and natural resources. Various consequences can arise as a result of human visitation to fragile environments, including behavioral changes in animals, accumulation of waste and litter, and habitat degradation. According to Blumstein, “human visitation can be considered a stressor for many wildlife species, eliciting physiological modifications such as the production of stress hormones and an increase in cardiovascular activity,”⁷¹ which may cause them to change their behaviors in avoidance of such stressors.⁷² Blumstein also describes how these “behavioral shifts can accumulate over time and have the potential to adversely impact animal populations in the long term.”⁷³

Solutions. Despite the potential risks involved in tourism in fragile natural environments, there are various safeguards and methods that can be used to avoid the negative ecological consequences of tourism. Blumstein maintains that “unless environmental conservation is at the core of nature-based tourism, its long-term sustainability is at risk.”⁷⁴ Every aspect of tourism development must take into account the significant potential of humans to contribute to these negative effects, and take measures to ensure the program benefits both human and wildlife populations. For example, tourism programs can manage or limit the number of visitors that visit the reserve during any one period.⁷⁵ Blumstein highlights the positive effect of providing

⁷¹ Ibid, 11.

⁷² Ibid, 36.

⁷³ Ibid, 31.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 3.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 106.

guidelines and education on improving tourist behavior.⁷⁶ This can also be done by posting signs throughout the reserve that inform visitors about appropriate behavior and the needs of wildlife in the area.⁷⁷ Alternatively, Blumstein also discusses the option of only allowing guided tours, whose “guides or rangers may control the distribution and inappropriate conducts of tourists.”⁷⁸ Erecting fences and other barriers is effective in “regulating tourist access to vulnerable bird colonies,”⁷⁹ but can also be used to protect other fragile species. “Boardwalks and platforms are also sometimes built to reduce vegetation damage and to keep tourists away from sensitive wildlife areas.”⁸⁰ Finally, visual shields, which are frequently used by birdwatchers, “prevent animals from seeing tourists, consequently minimize wildlife stress.”⁸¹ Such measures may be effective for the Moncul wetland, but can certainly be used in any ecotourism destination or program.

The success of the Mapuche ecotourism efforts depends on the safe and sustainable management of the Moncul wetland and its tourism program. Given that they derive many resources from the area, the Mapuche maintain a close spiritual connection, and practice a caring way of life that is in harmony with the land. Equipped with caring and responsible stewards, the Moncul wetland has potential to foster a successful ecotourism enterprise. At the same time, the Mapuche have an opportunity to create an immersive, educational experience for visitors that imparts a sense of love and care for the land and a sense of wisdom for sustainable living on a finite planet. In this way, the Mapuche ecotourism project can be seen as an opportunity for

⁷⁶ Ibid, 107.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 107.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 107.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 108.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 109.

⁸¹ Ibid, 109.

environmental education, which can ultimately advance goals of environmental conservation. Overall, ecotourism can promote awareness and concern for environmental issues for both locals and visitors. In turn, this can lead to positive changes in behaviors and attitudes that lead to greater support for nature conservation.⁸²

Chapter 3. Grass-Roots Politics

Ecotourism programs are first and foremost subject to the political climates of their host countries. Chapter 1 discussed the importance of policies that support ecotourism projects in ecotourism development, and highlighted the various issues involved in indigenous ecotourism, including the establishment of rights to territory and resources.⁸³ There are many instances of successful ecotourism development where indigenous groups have maintained control of their culture, lands, and rights that have allowed tribes to capture the benefits of tourism. However, there is little research on the ramifications that result from a lack of land rights or legal recognition and its impacts on indigenous tourism efforts.

Chapter 3 will engage politics to discuss interactions between key actors involved in ecotourism development, including local stakeholders, governments, the tourism industry, international organizations, and lending-institutions. First, it will analyze theory surrounding the role of government institutions involved in ecotourism development. Then, it will apply these concepts to the Chilean context to analyze the country's overall political climate and assess their current policies on ecotourism development. Then, the chapter will apply the issue of indigenous ecotourism against the backdrop of the Mapuche people's historic struggle for land rights and resources against the Chilean government, and analyze the implications of this on their ability to

⁸² Ibid, 142.

⁸³ Zeppel 2007, 332.

develop positive ecotourism outcomes. Finally, the chapter will focus closely on the target communities to highlight complex community interactions involved in Mapuche ecotourism development.

The Politics of Ecotourism. The politics of ecotourism includes a variety of key stakeholders that control the industry and support its development worldwide. The tourism industry is supported a vast network of transnational corporations that are becoming increasingly consolidated, spreading around the world, and penetrating new markets.⁸⁴ This network made up of international governing bodies, host country governments, policy-makers, travel agencies, tour operators, hotel chains, airlines, and travelers interact through supply and demand relationships that support the global travel industry. Additionally, as ecotourism has grown as a popular sustainable development strategy during the last few decades, conservation organizations and NGOs have also joined the ranks to support the growth of eco-conscious travel.⁸⁵ Ecotourism is also supported by an array of key interactions and mechanisms that work together to support, grow, and expand the industry to both penetrate new markets as well as improve existing ones. These include government policies and regulations, various infrastructure projects, subsidies, loans, and aid from commercial banks and international financial institutions⁸⁶ that are all conducive to ecotourism development. The politics of ecotourism is significant due to the complex working relationships between transnational stakeholders that support the growth of the entire industry worldwide. From this variety of stakeholders in addition to the various policy and financial mechanisms that ecotourism development requires, it is clear that ecotourism requires

⁸⁴ Honey 2007, 38.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 37.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 37.

immense cooperation and interaction across various entities and stakeholders if its development is to succeed and its goals are to be achieved.

So what do we make of emerging tourism “pockets,”⁸⁷ where tourism infrastructure is underdeveloped, such as in developing countries or rural areas? Because pristine natural areas are often located in the world’s most remote locations and habited by rural and indigenous populations who often lack financial and human capital, this suggests that rural indigenous populations may have more difficulty in trying to develop local ecotourism programs. According to Honey, “given their late entry into the field, many developing countries have limited possibilities to develop their own stock of knowledge and control over the business. They have had to adopt the established standards and therefore must rely on foreign firms to run majors sectors of the industry.”⁸⁸ Due to both the complex nature and high cost of development projects as well as a lack of financial resources, indigenous groups who are pursuing ecotourism development should involve a variety of key players and stakeholders to better achieve their development goals. This can include seeking help from foreign aid institutions and NGOs who aim to support development projects in developing countries, as well as advocating for policy changes that support ecotourism from government institutions. Mutual cooperation between these entities is essential in providing indigenous communities with the financial and human capital, training, and other tools to create successful ecotourism enterprises that meet the goals of environmental conservation, sustainable development, and socio-political empowerment.

Apart from the financial, political, and infrastructural challenges already involved in ecotourism development in developing countries, indigenous groups face additional challenges

⁸⁷ Ibid, 24.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 38.

that are not present in non-indigenous tourism development. One such challenge that plagues indigenous groups is the struggle for land rights over indigenous territory, legal recognition of indigenous status, and control over resources, labor, and other benefits.⁸⁹ Indigenous territory includes lands legally controlled by indigenous groups as well as formal titles for lands occupied and used.⁹⁰ For indigenous peoples, “regaining control of indigenous lands and territories are integral for self-determination and sustainable development of Indigenous tourism.”⁹¹

One of the major criticisms of ecotourism is that the economic benefits of ecotourism are poorly captured by host communities, local operators, and workers. Instead, economic benefits from tourism tend to flow out of the local community to larger tourism companies and other stakeholders. Legal recognition and land rights over tribal lands and resources can strengthen indigenous ecotourism efforts because they allow tribes to capture the benefits of ecotourism through community-owned enterprises, joint ventures, and other partnerships.⁹² These rights allow indigenous groups control over cultural indigenous knowledge and intellectual property, land, protected areas, labor, economic benefits, and a right to sustainable development of ancestral lands.⁹³ Maintaining control over ancestral lands allows indigenous groups freedom to make major decisions in ecotourism development processes, including the allocation of resources, the division of labor, and land use. By obtaining control over territory, resources, and development processes, it seems that indigenous groups may be better equipped to achieve positive ecotourism outcomes, and more likely to avoid the negative consequences of tourism often seen in other examples.

⁸⁹ Zeppel 2007, 317.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 317.

⁹¹ Ibid, 310.

⁹² Ibid, 313.

⁹³ Ibid, 317.

Chilean Political Context. Ecotourism projects are subject to the political climates of their host countries. One important concern for ecotourism is the political and social stability of the destination,⁹⁴ as well as the formation of policies that are conducive to its development. Chile is an aesthetically beautiful and exotic destination that boasts diverse species, landscapes, habitats. Popular ecotourism hotspots are located in the snow-capped Andes mountain region, Patagonia, and Easter Island. The country also maintains 36 national parks⁹⁵ and has designated almost 20% of its territory as protected areas.⁹⁶ While Chile is not a leader in ecotourism or environmental protection compared to central-American countries such as Belize or Costa Rica, the country is taking steps to improve. In 2010, the Chilean government officially enacted legislation to establish tourism as a primary part of its strategic development activities.⁹⁷ Chile names goals of protecting the environment, gaining competitiveness in international markets, and attracting higher-spending tourists looking for sustainable destinations. They also created the “Sustainable Tourism Innovation Program” in 2012 to assist in the creation and implementation of sustainable tourism programs in Chile.⁹⁸ Since then, Chile has developed many policies which aim to promote sustainable tourism. In 2013, Chile’s *Servicio Nacional de Turismo* (National Tourism Service)⁹⁹ implemented a nationally recognized certification, the “Seal of Sustainability,” which “incorporated the global standards of sustainable and renewable development for tourism businesses.”¹⁰⁰ The government has also authorized funds and grants for

⁹⁴ Miller 2012, 83.

⁹⁵ CONAF, “Parques de Chile,” Accessed May 8, 2019, <http://www.conaf.cl/parques-nacionales/parques-de-chile/>.

⁹⁶ Chile Travel, “National Parks and Reserves,” Accessed May 9, 2019, <https://chile.travel/en/intereses-destacados/national-parks-and-reserves>.

⁹⁷ Beltran et al. 2013, 2.

⁹⁸ Ibid, 2.

⁹⁹ Gilbert, “SERNATUR - Chile's National Tourism Service,” Accessed May 9, 2019, <http://santiagotourist.com/sernatur-national-tourism-service/>.

¹⁰⁰ Biz Latin Hub, “Chile's National Tourism Department Discuss Sustainable Tourism with BLH,” Accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.bizlatinhub.com/sustainable-tourism-insight-chile/>.

companies who apply for this certification in order for them to finance their sustainable tourism projects. Finally, Chile has invested heavily in infrastructure projects and improvements in order to improve the connectivity of its regions and contribute to the expansion of tourism throughout the country.¹⁰¹

The development of such policies is a huge step forward for promoting sustainable tourism and development in Chile. However, it is important to note that the terms “sustainability,” “sustainable tourism,” and “ecotourism” are still contested definitions with unclear meanings, practices, and guidelines. The term “sustainable tourism” used here describes the country’s commitment to more environmentally and socially conscious tourism practices and to sustainable development overall. It does not necessarily commit to promoting genuine “ecotourism,” which boasts a growing body of literature that outlines more definitive meanings and practices for truly environmentally and culturally-sensitive tourism. Regardless, Chile’s recent advancements in the tourism sector provide an interesting investigation into the relationship between such government policies and the real, tangible tourism and development practices that are occurring at the local level. Because decisions about financial aid and lending, and tourism policy, infrastructure, and marketing are all determined by host governments,¹⁰² they have a distinct influence on the outcomes of tourism initiatives. Additionally, given that governments control the allocation of land, both to indigenous control and environmental protection, the decisions made by the Chilean government will have a significant impact in the case of Mapuche community-based ecotourism development. Therefore, Chile’s decisions

¹⁰¹ Biz Latin Hub, “Chile’s National Tourism Department Discuss Sustainable Tourism with BLH,” Accessed May 5, 2019, <https://www.bizlatinhub.com/sustainable-tourism-insight-chile/>.

¹⁰² Duffy 2006, 3.

regarding tourism, development, infrastructure, and most significantly, about indigenous affairs, will greatly impact the Mapuche's local community-based ecotourism initiative.

The real question I will explore in the next sections is whether these policies amount to real, positive changes where it matters most: in local communities. The first section of Chapter 3 focused on outlining theory surrounding the various political interactions and mechanisms involved in ecotourism development in developing countries. Then, it turned to a discussion of the additional political challenges involved in indigenous ecotourism development, including struggles for rights over territory and resources. Lastly, it explored the state of Chile's commitment to sustainable tourism as a key development strategy. Now, I will apply these concepts to a major political issue currently occurring in Chile, known as the "Mapuche Land Conflict," to explore its impacts on the ability for Mapuche communities to pursue ecotourism initiatives and achieve positive ecotourism outcomes. This ultimately raises questions about how a lack of territorial rights and conflict with the political system in place can influence outcomes in indigenous ecotourism.

The Mapuche Land Conflict. Although Chile today is, according to Ortiz, "an example of the success of a free-market, neoliberal economy,"¹⁰³ the country possesses a history of political instability, especially in relation to indigenous issues. The Mapuche people once controlled territory from the area of Concepcion to Valdivia, Chile,¹⁰⁴ and parts of Argentina. Today, they make up between 4 and 10 percent of Chile's population.¹⁰⁵ Though the Mapuche were once known for their economic prosperity, coherence, and strength, they were left with "only 5

¹⁰³ Ortiz 2007, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Crow 2013, 19.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 1.

percent of their original territory after the occupation campaigns¹⁰⁶ of the late 1800s, which were conducted by the Chilean government on Mapuche territories. This loss of territory marked the beginning of a long colonial history, one which has led to the deterioration of the Mapuche people.¹⁰⁷

The bloody years of the Pinochet dictatorship was particularly brutal for the Mapuche people, due to General Augusto Pinochet's repressive, anti-indigenous policies and seizures of indigenous territory. One such policy was the Decree-Law 2568 of 1979, which "encouraged the division and privatization of indigenous communal lands, and stated that subdivided plots of land would 'cease to be considered as indigenous.'"¹⁰⁸ According to Crow, this legislation "effectively presumed the eradication of indigenous people as a distinct legal and social category."¹⁰⁹ In response to the losses of their land and identity, Mapuche protests and resistance resulted in acts of violence, torture, and death, with a total of 136 Mapuche reported as missing or dead during the Pinochet regime.¹¹⁰ Seeking the region's rich natural resources, Pinochet's other objectives included the development of labor-intensive commercial farms¹¹¹ as well as the expansion of the logging industry in the Araucanía.¹¹²

Logging of the Araucanía's forests, which continues to this day, has been a source of lasting conflict between the Mapuche people and the Chilean state. National and international conglomerates, receiving subsidies from the Chilean government,¹¹³ have rights to large tracts of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 201.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 201.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 152.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 152.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 152.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 155.

¹¹² Ibid, 155-156.

¹¹³ Ibid, 156.

forest throughout the Araucanía region. These logging companies are responsible for rampant logging of forests on ancestral Mapuche territory, and replanting non-native tree species such as eucalyptus, which has led to devastating environmental impacts on the surrounding environment. Together, the occupation of indigenous territory and the exploitation of the area's precious forest resources has led to several outbreaks of violence between the Mapuche and the logging companies. In an attempt to fight the exploitation of their natural resources and their sacred lands, some Mapuche activist groups have even led attacks against the logging companies, which have included setting fire to logging trucks and blocking roads in the Araucanía region.

More recent political history in Chile has not seen much improvement in the area of indigenous affairs. Though the Concertacion government of the 1990s-2000s attempted to differentiate themselves from the Pinochet era by passing pro-indigenous legislation, Crow characterizes this period of government action as nothing more than "hypocrisy."¹¹⁴ Despite idealistic promises from the period's political candidates and proposals aimed at increasing indigenous rights, Crow highlights how these policies did not amount to any practical changes in reality.¹¹⁵ Instead, the Chilean government implemented numerous development projects such as freeways and dams, expanded the logging industry,¹¹⁶ and finally, enacted anti-terror legislation¹¹⁷ which aimed at criminalizing radical Mapuche activists fighting for land and resource rights in the Araucanía.

Today, the state of the Mapuche land conflict has not improved and remains a hot-button topic in Chilean politics. Protests against logging and the over development of the Araucanía is

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 185.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 192-193.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 185.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 185.

still occurring today, while Mapuche activists continue to fight for rights to indigenous lands and resources. Additionally, the long history of oppression, coupled with ongoing arrests and persecution of Mapuche activists under the anti-terrorism laws, has severely damaged the reputation and perception of the Mapuche people and contributed to their overall social stratification in Chile. Compared to the rest of the Chilean society, the Mapuche are considered to have some of the poorest standards of poverty, health, education, and income in the country.¹¹⁸ Due to a lack in educational and economic opportunities and a lack in social mobility, Mapuche youth often migrate to Chile's urban cities of Temuco and Santiago in search of employment and higher education. Out-migration of youth only worsens the degradation of Mapuche identity and culture. Together, these forces of oppression caused by the refusal to grant various indigenous rights and territory have perpetuated systematic economic, political, and educational inequalities within the Mapuche people.

Given the dire state of affairs between the Mapuche and the Chilean state, this raises questions about the intersection between politics and indigenous rights involved in the implementation of ecotourism programs in the Araucanía. As seen in the mismatch between government promises and the policy actions actually taken, it is clear that the Mapuche people have been continuously ignored and let down by Chile and its citizens. It is unclear whether the Chilean government's commitment to "sustainable tourism" outlined earlier in the chapter will extend its benefits to the Mapuche tourism initiatives. However, despite the process of oppression inflicted upon the Mapuche people, this has led to increasing involvement in

¹¹⁸ Ortiz 2007, 5.

government processes, institutions, and activism as community members fight continue to fight for their rights and well-being.

Grass Roots Politics. Overall, the Mapuche people's political struggles have spurred a largely grassroots political movement within certain Mapuche communities, not only towards the pursuit of territorial rights and autonomy, but also towards economic development through ecotourism. Frustrated by the lack of political progress and the reality that they have been let down by their government, many communities maintain an overwhelming sense of self-sufficiency and independence in every aspect of daily life. This sense of independence is present in virtually all local community interactions, political activities, and major decision making processes as the Mapuche people work together to improve their communities.

The desire to pursue ecotourism comes as a result of the need to pursue economic alternatives to agriculture as well as increasing threats of development projects and logging activities in the Araucanía region. For many Mapuche community members, such as those in Carahue, Nehuentue, Trovolhue, Cullinco, and Moncul, ecotourism represents a strategy to improve their local economy and protect their valuable natural surroundings. However, not everyone shares this vision. Some community members are reluctant towards the idea of opening up their territories to outsiders. Others do not believe that a local ecotourism initiative will amount to tangible success and would rather pursue further agricultural activity. However, despite their challenges, many community members have banded together in pursuit of their goals. During the time of this research, I witnessed first-hand the passion, drive, and desire of the local Mapuche communities to see their visions for ecotourism come to fruition. This has

manifested in a largely grassroots, community-based effort towards ecotourism development in the Coast of Carahue.

The Mapuche community-based ecotourism initiative differs from many global examples of ecotourism where power over decision-making processes and control over the flow of economic benefits is held by outside tour companies, government institutions, and non-governmental organizations. Instead, the Mapuche initiative in the Coast of Carahue has been primarily pursued and controlled by local community members. For example, during major decision-making processes, community members held local meetings for everyone from the surrounding area to gather and discuss major issues. This ensured that everyone's voices are represented and heard, and that key decisions are made to benefit the entire community.

Community members have largely relied on each other in the implementation of their ongoing ecotourism development programs. However, they have also pursued assistance from local non-governmental organizations, such as the Catholic Church, researchers, and other tourism agencies. In other ways, community members band their resources and skills together in local trade guilds and entrepreneurial groups, known as *emprendimientos*. In these local community groups, members often trade resources such as local fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy products, both with each other and with outside communities. In the other entrepreneurial groups, members allocate financial resources towards ecotourism development projects and undergo training in areas such as hospitality and business management. For example, in one female-based *emprendimiento*, a small group of local women traded knowledge and financial resources to develop lodges and other attractions along the Imperial River.

Together, the local entrepreneurial groups and their complex community interactions demonstrate the area's unity and cohesiveness in the pursuit of their ecotourism development goals. Community members recognize the unique potential of their tourism initiative, however, they also realize that they need to work together in order to see the project come to light. While not every community in the area is on board with their plan, community members in Carahue, Nehuentue, Trovolhue, Cullinco, and Moncul believe that they can set a valuable example of community-based ecotourism development for other communities in the Auracanía region as they continue to work towards their goals.

Chapter 4. The Land That Used To Be

Chapter 4 will build off some of the major points set forth in the previous chapter, highlighting the influence of the Chilean political context and the Mapuche land conflict on the development of community-based ecotourism in local Mapuche communities in the Coast of Carahue. First, the chapter will discuss the various social challenges of ecotourism, the importance of social well-being in achieving ecotourism's broader goals, as well as issues in culturally-centered ecotourism. Then, it will analyze the intersection between the current state of politics with its impact on Mapuche cultural attitudes, practices, and well-being, and apply an anthropological perspective to explore how Mapuche culture can play a role in their current tourism initiatives. Lastly, the chapter will discuss ecotourism's potential to be used as a tool for sociopolitical empowerment, arguing that cultural aspects of Mapuche ecotourism can be used to improve relations between the Mapuche people and the rest of Chilean society. In incorporating the discussion on the Mapuche land conflict and the Chilean political context, I propose that cultural aspects of Mapuche ecotourism initiatives may promote positive social engagement,

improve relations between various Mapuche communities and broader Chilean society, and lead to socio-political empowerment of the Mapuche people.

While ecotourism may have the potential to achieve positive social, cultural, and political benefits, some have criticized ecotourism for its tendency to lead to certain social consequences, including exploitation and displacement of indigenous culture. Additionally, there may be various ethical concerns towards “selling” sacred ethnic culture and spiritual values at a cost. In discussing the potential for these negative social impacts, Scheyvens points out that “even where ecotourism results in economic benefits for a local community, it may result in damage to social and cultural systems thus undermining people’s overall quality of life.”¹¹⁹ Scheyvens highlights the need for community-based ecotourism to consider the social and cultural aspects of ecotourism rather than solely economic or environmental ones.¹²⁰ While it has been suggested that a community-based ecotourism approach that considers the social impacts of ecotourism activities is effective for avoiding social consequences, incorporating and even showcasing the culture of host communities within ecotourism projects themselves can be a valuable strategy for successful ecotourism development that benefits local communities through social and cultural empowerment.

Ethnotourism. Today, cultural, spiritual, and religious values of indigenous communities are becoming commonly featured aspects of ecotourism.¹²¹ According to Zeppel, “growing tourist demand for indigenous cultural experiences coincides with the indigenous need for new economic ventures deriving income from sustainable use of land and natural resources.”¹²² Due

¹¹⁹ Scheyvens 1999, 246.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 246.

¹²¹ Zeppel 2007, 311.

¹²² Ibid, 311.

to its distinct ability to recognize the unique “cultural links” between indigenous peoples and the natural environment,¹²³ ecotourism is used as a strategy to protect pristine environments while also improving the wellbeing of the rural and indigenous communities that often live within them. While previous chapters discussed that improving the wellbeing of indigenous communities can be achieved through ensuring equitable economic benefit from ecotourism activities or by promoting political empowerment, it also includes educating visitors about local culture and heritage, promoting cultural diversity and awareness, and maintaining the overall socio-cultural integrity of community members. This form of tourism which emphasizes the unique cultural aspects of communities, known as “ethnotourism,” is one category of the larger ecotourism movement. Ethnotourism is meant to showcase indigenous or rural cultural heritage, and often features cultural crafts, rituals, festivals, and dances,¹²⁴ as well as traditional methods of farming, cooking, dressing, and worship. Cultural tourism sites allow visitors the ability to experience the culturally-rich and diverse ways of life found in indigenous communities and homelands.

Socio-political Impacts. The seemingly natural capacity for ecotourism to fulfil these complex but overlapping political, cultural, and social goals suggests that the Mapuche in the Coast of Carahue can successfully incorporate their culture and heritage in their own ecotourism strategy. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, Mapuche ecotourism development must contend with a variety of important implications arising from the challenges posed by the Mapuche land conflict and their broader socio-political context. The Chilean political context and the Mapuche land conflict have significant implications for the development of

¹²³ Ibid, 311.

¹²⁴ Nepal 2007, 352.

community-based ecotourism in the Araucanía region. Together, the social and political hardships faced by Mapuche communities have both played a role in their desire to pursue ecotourism, and likewise, will impact the eventual outcomes of their initiatives.

Today, the current anti-terrorism legislation, the militarization of the Araucanía region, and the ongoing conflict between Mapuche activists and police which faces widespread media scrutiny, has led to an overwhelmingly negative perception of the Mapuche people throughout Chile. In her analysis of the Chilean people's attitudes towards indigenous affairs, Crow states that "many non-indigenous Chileans have refused to value or even accept the validity of Mapuche difference (be it cultural, ethnic, racial, national, political, or territorial)." ¹²⁵ At the same time, many Mapuche communities, citing historic injustices and systematic discrimination, have developed a particular aversion to non-Mapuche outsiders, known amongst the tribe as *winkas*. ¹²⁶ As a result of these political tensions, relations between the Mapuche people and the rest of Chilean society are largely strained, divided, and hostile.

Given the poor relationship between the Mapuche and non-indigenous Chileans, one may question why some Mapuche communities have decided to pursue ecotourism in the Araucanía region, and if they will emphasize their cultural heritage as a distinct part of their ecotourism program. It is furthermore questionable whether Chileans, many of whom maintain a negative outlook on the Mapuche themselves, would engage with the cultural aspects of their ecotourism initiatives. Among the target communities, the drive to pursue ecotourism stems from a need to pursue alternative means of economic opportunity other than agriculture, as well as a desire to protect their wetland ecosystem from development projects and degradation. Aside from these

¹²⁵ Crow 2013, 227.

¹²⁶ A term used to describe all who are not Mapuche, Course 2011, 164.

environmental, political, and economic motivations discussed in previous chapters, many Mapuche I interviewed believe that their project will also have certain social impacts, both for their people and for the region overall. I propose that cultural aspects of the Mapuche ecotourism initiative may lead to a number of distinct social benefits for the target communities. First, opening their region to tourism may help educate non-indigenous visitors on the Mapuche culture and way of life. Second, interacting with a higher number of visitors from the rest of Chile and instilling in them enriching cultural experiences and values could promote a more positive perception of the Mapuche and of the Araucanía region as a whole. Ultimately, by encouraging this sort of positive engagement, which could improve the relationship between the Mapuche and Chilean society overall, ecotourism can therefore contribute to the social and political empowerment of these Mapuche communities.

Socio-political Empowerment. Research has shown that ecotourism can help indigenous peoples gain political power, as well as strengthen the indigenous image and relationship with the society in which they live. In Nepal's discussion of indigenous ecotourism, he states: "It is believed that 'showcasing' native culture and values, especially through the art of storytelling and interpretation, in nonindigenous society will gain a fuller understanding and insight of their views, whilst providing indigenous peoples opportunities to assert their rights and autonomy through economic empowerment."¹²⁷ Nepal claims ecotourism is not just seen as a strategy for economic development or environmental protection, but also as a means to strengthen indigenous positions in both regional and national development and policy. The development of ecotourism can therefore be seen as an integral part of the broader process of indigenous control,

¹²⁷ Nepal 2007, 351.

self-reliance, and improvement of social, political, and economic conditions within society.¹²⁸ In the case of the Mapuche in Chile, this reflects the potential for ecotourism to be used as a valuable means to improve Mapuche-Chile relations, the tribe's overall perception, reputation, and level of respect, as well as their own social, political, and economic status within society.

Mapuche Indigenous Ecotourism. The Mapuche culture has many distinct qualities which make it particularly capable of promoting positive social engagement with visitors, which may result in improved Mapuche-Chilean relationships. The Mapuche people maintain a large body of values, practices, and lifestyles that can be shared with visitors through ecotourism. However, many towns in the Coast of Carahue also boast rich cultural histories. For example, the name “Carahue” translates to “the land that used to be,” or “the city that once was” in native Mapudungun,¹²⁹ referencing the city's reconstruction from the ruins of the historic city, *La Imperial*, that once stood before it.¹³⁰

In his anthropological investigation into Mapuche culture, Course identifies three basic aspects that underpin the overall functioning of the Mapuche cultural and social framework: speech, exchange, and sharing.¹³¹ Through these three functions, the Mapuche maintain a high “capacity for productive sociality—for creating productive relations with others,”¹³² which “may consist in the adult exchange of objects such as wine or meat or simply in the infant's exchange of a smile.”¹³³ Through these three functions, Mapuche people live out their strong sense of hospitality through conversation, mutual interaction, and sharing with others. In this way, the

¹²⁸ Ibid, 351.

¹²⁹ “Mapudungun” is the native language of the Mapuche people.

¹³⁰ Ministerio De Bienes Nacionales, *Ruta Costera De La Araucanía: Del Imperial Al Budi*, Accessed May 10, 2019, <http://rutas.bienes.cl/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/56.pdf>.

¹³¹ Course 2011, 28.

¹³² Ibid, 25.

¹³³ Ibid, 26.

Mapuche people can educate tourists on their way of life, promote more positive social interactions, and improve the overall relationship between two opposing identities—themselves and *winkas*.

This kind of positive social interaction would take place within the broader context of Mapuche indigenous ecotourism programs. While previous chapters detailed the environmental aspects of their ecotourism initiative surrounding the Moncul wetland, cultural aspects of Mapuche ecotourism surround the everyday patterns of life within indigenous communities. The first and perhaps the most iconic place these interactions take place is inside the *ruka*, a traditional Mapuche home. While Mapuche today typically live in more modern-style homes, the *ruka* functions as the center of life for the Mapuche people within their communities. With its broad wooden construction and thatched-roof, the *ruka* hosts important community meetings, banquets, meals, and ceremonies. For those who come to visit, guests may be invited to share a meal, warm up by the fire, talk with community elders, and even take home traditional wooden crafts. Other cultural tourism experiences can be derived from the Mapuche's wide body of indigenous knowledge surrounding traditional methods of farming, cooking, and managing land. Community members are deeply connected to the natural environment, and as a result, many aspects of their lives are in close harmony with the local plants, animals, and landscapes. Such lifestyles can provide a valuable perspective to most visitors' modern lifestyles, which tend to exploit resources and diminish the natural environment.

Despite the prevailing contention between the Mapuche and Chileans, many community members hope to move forward towards a more positive future—and more positive relationships. Many are eager to share their unique cultural values and experiences with others

through acts of exchange, conversation, and interaction in the midst of their indigenous communities. Furthermore, as Nepal noted, community members can utilize these opportunities to assert their indigenous rights, views, and knowledge with a greater audience.¹³⁴ For those travellers that come to visit, they may learn the value and pride of living as an indigenous Mapuche. Rather than the negative perception that is often assumed towards the Mapuche people in modern Chile, tourists may learn about the humble, peaceful reality of Mapuche communities. They may depart with a refreshed perspective on Chile's indigenous culture, recognizing the Mapuche's desire to live happily together, harmoniously with their traditional lands and resources, and with pride for their indigenous way of life. By promoting this sort of positive social engagement through enriching cultural tourism experiences, ecotourism may be part of a broader strategy to bridge gaps between the Mapuche people and broader Chilean society, and ultimately, to achieve the social and political empowerment of the Mapuche overall.

In her "Empowerment Framework," Scheyvens offers a guide which outlines ecotourism's potential effects of community empowerment. She outlines several psychological and social impacts that may take place during the broader process of community empowerment within ecotourism development. Psychological benefits include: enhanced community self-esteem due to outside recognition of the uniqueness and value of their culture, natural resources, and traditional knowledge; increased confidence which leads community members to seek out education and training opportunities; and lastly, increased socioeconomic status for traditionally underprivileged women and youth due to increased access to employment. Scheyvens also identifies social impacts of ecotourism, including: improved community

¹³⁴ Nepal 2007, 351.

cohesion as members work together to build a successful tourism program; and community development resulting from funds raised for schools and infrastructure.¹³⁵

Scheyvens points out that the way in which ecotourism is approached can have a significant impact on the eventual outcomes of ecotourism.¹³⁶ Ecotourism must contend with social concerns as well as economic and environmental ones if it is to avoid its potential for negative impacts to host communities. In the case of the Mapuche in Chile, community members have a significant opportunity to showcase their native cultural values and lifestyles as a distinct aspect of their ecotourism initiatives. While incorporating culture may be effective for promoting awareness for indigenous social issues, it can be essential to achieve the broader community development goals of ecotourism, including the social empowerment of local peoples. By incorporating their culture in ecotourism projects, the Mapuche people have an avenue through which to engage in positive social interaction with visitors, and the opportunity to assert their views, values, and perspectives on various issues. This positive social interaction may eventually improve the historically-strained relationship between the Mapuche people and Chilean citizens. Lastly, these effects may promote the social and political empowerment of the Mapuche people overall.

Chapter 5. Policy Recommendations for Ecotourism Development

The outcomes of indigenous ecotourism initiatives are influenced by a complex interaction of factors, including, environmental, political, economic, social, cultural, and historical factors. As such, the policy recommendations for such efforts will be equally as diverse, and must appeal to the variety of factors at play in the ecotourism development process.

¹³⁵ Scheyvens 1999, 247.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 246.

Additionally, ecotourism development takes place in a variety of stages and likewise, the recommendations will appeal to the “level” at which the tourism program is currently. In the indigenous tourism sector especially, ecotourism development faces a variety of additional challenges that arise with indigenous affairs, including the securing of land rights, cultural identity, economic power, and discrimination. According to Nepal, the successful development of indigenous ecotourism can depend on certain key drivers, including:

1. “Overwhelming local support for community-oriented projects
2. Proactive marketing and publicity at the national level
3. Strong social and economic standing of the participants
4. Community support for ecotourism and willingness to adapt to new economic opportunities
5. Projects built upon principles of partnership and collaboration
6. External support of the project from the government and NGOs”¹³⁷

Lastly, while ecotourism is commonly used to promote economic development in host communities, it is important to note that the ““successes’ of indigenous ecotourism ventures may also be measured in environmental, social, or political outcomes rather than in purely economic terms.”¹³⁸

Economic Recommendations. The stages of indigenous ecotourism development include: “(1) tourism exploration of Indigenous peoples on tribal lands; (2) involvement of the local community in providing tourism facilities, and (3) tribal tourism development based on secure land titles and partnerships with tour operators.”¹³⁹ Mapuche tourism activities can be

¹³⁷ Nepal 2007, 363.

¹³⁸ Zeppel 2007, 334.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 331.

characterized by both stages “1” and “2.” Community members have been actively pursuing ecotourism opportunities, developing tourism activities, as well as exploring the area’s potential to develop even further opportunities. However, because tourism in the area is at this early stage and infrastructure is emerging, local efforts must be aimed at procuring financial, logistical, and educational support from local, regional, and federal levels of government, as well as non-governmental organizations.

Given that some Mapuche community members already have developed tourism “products” or activities in the Coast of Carahue, such as lodges, river tours, and horse-riding, and others have many ideas for future projects, the main goal for local stakeholders should revolve around obtaining outside financial capital and investment. While the area is rich in natural biodiversity and beauty, it also faces some of the highest rates of poverty in Chile. Existing tourism programs in the area are unsustainable without investment from banks, lending institutions, government programs and grants, as well as NGOs. Outside investment will help cover startup costs incurred during these early stages, in the form of building and other infrastructure costs, program and activity development, equipment, and other supplies. In addition to issues regarding financial capital, the community faces challenges surrounding training and education about ecotourism. Many community members do not yet have the knowledge or experience to create marketable tourism products or destinations. Some do not know how to run a business or guide a tour. Others cannot speak the languages necessary to appeal to a wide variety of tourists from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. While the desire to create an ecotourism program is there, there are lasting financial and educational challenges that can make this process difficult. As such, investment must also be obtained in

order to fund education and training programs aimed at teaching business, management, hospitality, culinary, tour, and english-language skills. Luckily, some community members have already been able to acquire certain levels of training from various Catholic Church organizations in Chile. These skills are essential in building lasting tourism businesses, marketing to a broader audience, and appealing to tourists who come to visit.

Political Recommendations. The Mapuche people face significant political and social challenges regarding solidarity in support of their ecotourism efforts as well as historical tensions with the Chilean government. However, the Mapuche land conflict has also led to internal turmoil between various Mapuche communities in the Coast of Carahue. Some communities support ecotourism in the wetland, while others are against it. As such, community members must continue to work on reconciling their differences in order to solidify their efforts and work towards their ultimate vision for the wetland. Lastly, the Mapuche must continue to strengthen their political power by advocating for lands rights, autonomy, and cultural recognition from the Chilean government. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, land rights are an essential prerequisite for successful ecotourism development in indigenous territory. The securing of land rights can help ensure security and stability for the local economy that they intend to strengthen through ecotourism. Community members must continue to engage in political activism to ensure that their voices are represented in their government and to promote community well-being.

Furthermore, because the Chilean government has named sustainable tourism as a distinct part of its economic development strategy, Mapuche activists should also advocate for assistance in the development of sustainable tourism programs in the Araucanía region to various

government agencies, including: the National Tourism Service (SENATUR),¹⁴⁰ and the Undersecretary of State for Tourism.¹⁴¹ However, it is important to note that the political struggle for land rights has been an ongoing, historic conflict between the Mapuche people and the Chilean government. As such, progress towards the securing of land rights will most likely take a significant amount of time. Because of this reality, Mapuche communities should not rely exclusively on government support of their ecotourism programs. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Mapuche ecotourism development efforts have been primarily grassroots in nature and have not been supported by the Chilean government's sustainable tourism initiative thus far. In the meantime, they should instead pursue support from nongovernmental organizations, such as the Chilean Federation of Tourism Enterprises (FEDETUR), a non-profit trade association that represents 1,000 companies in Chile's tourism industry.¹⁴²

Government Recommendations. Chile is relatively new to the global ecotourism boom compared to neighboring South-American countries with established ecotourism sectors, such as Belize and Costa Rica. Aside from Patagonia and Easter Island, there are not many well-known true ecotourism destinations in the country. Chile can draw from these countries as examples of vastly successful ecotourism development, such as Costa Rica's national park system. However, Chile is making strides towards a more established ecotourism sector, and as mentioned in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, they have named "sustainable tourism" as an aspect of their national economic development strategy. This action can ensure that all levels of Chile's government will be united towards this common goal, and will focus a great deal of their resources towards achieving it. They should support programs and grants that go towards ecotourism development,

¹⁴⁰ Beltran et al. 2013, 2.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 3.

¹⁴² Ibid, 2.

especially within the country's rural areas that are home to fragile forest, coastal, and wetland ecosystems, rather than programs that support the already-established agro-export sector of their economy.

Moving forward, the Chilean government should focus attention on ecotourism as a source of foreign direct investment, rather than on more extractive activities such as logging, mining, commercial fishing, and agriculture. Currently, rampant logging activities in the Araucanía region threaten Mapuche ancestral territory as well as prospects for ecotourism development. Measures must be taken to protect the natural capital of the local environment in the Araucanía and in the Coast of Carahue, as non-native Eucalyptus tree species have threatened the surrounding ecosystem. CONAF, Chile's National Forest Corporation, could impose stricter regulations on timber practices and set upper limits on the amount of wood that can be cut by national and international logging conglomerates. CONAF can also provide economic incentives to logging companies and forest landowners for sustainable logging practices such as "reduced impact logging" and "best management practices," similar to Finland's successful approach in the country's Forestry Act of 1996.¹⁴³

In an alternative approach, Chile can follow the example set by the Costa Rican government in regards to the issue of logging in the Araucanía. According to Miller, Costa Rica faced threats of economic crisis and rapid deforestation during the 1980s, which coincided with the country's need to diversify their exports.¹⁴⁴ Ecotourism was one such strategy they pursued to address these issues. This resulted in a variety of positive effects for Costa Rica's economy as well as their then-emerging ecotourism industry. Miller states that ecotourism "helped to reverse

¹⁴³ Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, "Logging Conservation Practices," Accessed May 9, 2019. <https://globalforestatlas.yale.edu/forest-use-logging/logging/logging-conservation-practices>.

¹⁴⁴ Miller 2012, 9.

the trend of deforestation as land was set aside to be used for ecotourism. Much of the land that was set aside was incorporated into the Costa Rican national park system, which became the backbone of the ecotourism industry.”¹⁴⁵ Costa Rica sets a valuable example of wise and sustainable land management in their protection of fragile forest lands. Furthermore, this example demonstrates a potential opportunity for the Chilean government to strengthen their own burgeoning ecotourism industry by designating more areas in the Araucanía as protected lands.

Additionally, the Chilean government should focus on establishing a comprehensive set of regulations and policies regarding ecotourism within their “sustainable tourism” initiative. Some specific policies, regulations, or measures could include: creating an ecotourism task force to deal exclusively with ecotourism issues, designating more national parks and preserved lands, and enacting federal legislation that protects natural resources. Doing this will ensure that ecotourism developers and operators are held accountable for health, safety, environmental, social, and economic standards in ecotourism. This will also ensure that ecotourism goals are clearly defined, and help prevent the negative effects of ecotourism, including exploitation and environmental degradation, from impacting host communities. Furthermore, the Chilean government should adopt principles of “sustainability” into their federal policy making in all other areas of policy apart from tourism. According to Miller, an overall “orientation toward sustainability affects both state behavior, particularly with respect to environmental laws and regulations, and the individual’s orientation towards the environment.”¹⁴⁶ Clear goals, definitions, guidelines, and regulations will increase the chances for ecotourism operators and

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 9-10.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 14.

developers to meet their intended economic, environmental, and political goals, as well as orient the entire development movement towards a sustainable future.

According to Honey, public-private partnerships are another effective means through which ecotourism development is achieved. Public support of the private sector's push toward ecotourism can help serve as the main engine for development,¹⁴⁷ through the implementation of relevant ecotourism policies as well as providing direct financial subsidies to ecotourism development programs. In this case, the Chilean government should work to implement programs that provide direct financial aid to Mapuche ecotourism development in the Coast of Carahue. Though there is a long history of strife between the Mapuche people and the Chilean government, the Mapuche people should continue to participate in activism and in broader government processes in order to advocate for government support of Mapuche ecotourism development activities. Steps should be taken to guarantee that Mapuche community members are represented in the democratic process and that their voices are heard by higher levels of government. As was discussed in Chapter 3, involvement in government elections and in democratic processes to advocate for indigenous land rights and well-being, as well as support for ecotourism programs, can help ensure that local Mapuche community members will be able to control and manage the ecotourism sites, and increase the chances that they will capture the majority of economic benefits from tourism.

Non-Governmental Recommendations. There are many other actors in ecotourism development that can help local communities and host-countries achieve their development goals. First, lending institutions and banks, should focus on granting loans and aid directly to

¹⁴⁷ Honey 2008, 24.

host country governments to support infrastructure, business development, and human and social capital. Lending institutions can also send aid directly to local communities, to support small projects and programs at the local level. Financial support is the key factor in the equation that can make or break indigenous ecotourism efforts. NGOs can assist in other ways, by providing assistance and training in other relevant areas of ecotourism development. As discussed earlier in Chapter 5, the Catholic Church in Chile has been the main NGO that has contributed financial support and training services in areas such as hospitality, business management, and other skills to local community members in the Coast of Carahue. However, host country governments and local community stakeholders can seek further aid from organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund, the United Nations World Tourism Organization, and the Rainforest Alliance to assist in ecotourism development activities.

Local community stakeholders can also consult with international environmental protection organizations, such as the Ramsar Convention. As discussed in Chapter 2, local community members in the towns of Carahue, Nehuentue, Trovolhue, Cullinco, and Moncul who support the ecotourism project are currently pursuing designation of the Moncul wetland as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention. The Ramsar Convention, which focuses primarily on the protection and sustainable management of fragile wetland ecosystems around the world, can provide much-needed support for the wetland ecotourism site. The designation of the Moncul Wetland as a protected Ramsar site would encourage cooperation in the conservation of the wetland. Additionally, this designation would unite local community members in commitment to the sustainable use and management of its resources overall. Ensuring support, commitment, and partnership between both local community members and the

Ramsar Convention can help ensure that any ecotourism program in the Moncul wetland adheres to principles of sustainable management, and likewise, encourages protection of the wetland's unique biodiversity.

Environmental Recommendations. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are many strategies to avoid the negative ecological consequences that may arise in ecotourism. Blumstein maintains that “unless environmental conservation is at the core of nature-based tourism, its long-term sustainability is at risk.”¹⁴⁸ Therefore, Mapuche community members must keep environmental conservation and protection at the core of their ecotourism development programs. Blumstein offers a variety of effective environmental strategies. First, programs can manage or limit the number of visitors that visit the reserve during any one period.¹⁴⁹ Providing guidelines and education on proper tourist behavior can also lead to a variety of positive results.¹⁵⁰ This can also be done by posting signs throughout the reserve that inform visitors about appropriate behavior and the needs of wildlife in the area.¹⁵¹ Alternatively, Blumstein discusses the option of only allowing guided tours, whose “guides or rangers may control the distribution and inappropriate conducts of tourists.”¹⁵² Erecting fences and other barriers is effective in “regulating tourist access to vulnerable bird colonies,”¹⁵³ such as Moncul's waterfowl species, but can also be used to protect other fragile species. Additionally, constructing boardwalks and raised platforms can reduce vegetation damage and keep visitors away from the area's most sensitive wildlife areas,¹⁵⁴ however, they can also provide vantage points for optimal viewing of the area's natural beauty.

¹⁴⁸ Blumstein et al. 2017, 3.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 106.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 107.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 107.

¹⁵² Ibid, 107.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 108.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 109.

Finally, because the presence of humans within natural habitats can be a source of stress for many wildlife species, local community members can erect visual shields, which are frequently used by birdwatchers, in order to prevent wildlife from seeing tourists.¹⁵⁵ While these measures may be effective for protecting wildlife in the Moncul wetland, such measures can certainly be applied in any ecotourism destination or program.

Conclusion. Pursuing a mix of these policy recommendations can increase the chances of successful ecotourism development, while helping to prevent the negative effects of ecotourism from impacting host communities. Incorporating the lessons discussed throughout all chapters, the success of the Mapuche ecotourism effort depends on the safe and sustainable management of the Moncul wetland and the well-being of Mapuche people throughout various local communities in the Coast of Carahue. Equipped with caring and responsible stewards, the Moncul wetland has potential to foster a successful ecotourism enterprise in Chile's Coast of Carahue. Furthermore, these communities have an opportunity to create an immersive, educational experience for visitors. Not only can their ecotourism program impart a sense of love and care for the environment, but it can also help educate visitors on the Mapuche culture and way of life. By providing a rich cultural experience to tourists, they may leave with a newfound appreciation for the rich indigenous heritage of the Mapuche people. As they develop a deeper affinity and concern for indigenous issues, perhaps this can help improve the overall relationship between the Chilean public and the Mapuche people. Lastly, local Mapuche community members may feel a sense of empowerment through improved social relations, community

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 109.

cohesion, as well as political and economic strength through the development of their ecotourism programs.

While ecotourism is not a universal strategy to achieve every environmental, social, political, and economic goal, it can certainly function as a useful tool to benefit the environment, local communities, and visitors in various ways. Ecotourism is still a relatively young industry, as are many sustainability movements around the world. With the lack of regulation and policies for environmental protection, especially in the developing world, there is a certain potential for negative environmental, social, and economic consequences. However, as this thesis discussed throughout, the factors that influence the outcomes of tourism initiatives in local communities are complex, and may interact in different ways across various contexts. As long as ecotourism programs maintain the principles of local empowerment and sustainable management of the natural environment, ecotourism has the potential to benefit local people, biodiversity, and visitors alike.

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