

BACKPACKER HOTSPOTS

Cultural and social change of place and identity

A study from Taganga, Colombia



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Homenaje a un Boga Tagangero

*[...]Navega Julio Matos, viejo boga de la mar
navegante de estrellas, Tagangero en alta mar.*

*Tendiendo el trasmayo la historia te ve pasar,
hunde el canaleta que tu voz la escucharán todos tus nietos,
ahora inquietos por el mundo que están viendo tu eres cierto,
por tus ojos, por tu risa, por tus cuentos.*

*Rema junto a las estrellas, tu si que haces parte de ellas,
viejo boga que navega el firmamento [...]*

(Rolando Sanchez, Taganga)

(Homage for a Boga Tagangero)

Sail Julio Matos, old boga¹of the ocean
you who sail the stars, Tagangero in open sea.
Putting out the trasmayo², the history will see you pass by
sinking the paddle.

Your voice is heard by all your grandchildren,
they are nervous for the world they see.

You are true,
true are your eyes, your smile, your tales.

Row beside the stars, you who truly belong to them,
Old boga who sails the sky of stars

¹ Boga: The fisherman sitting at the end of and steering the canoe.

² Trasmayo: A special fishing net used by local fishermen in Taganga.

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Abstract

This study examines the social and cultural impacts of backpacker tourism in a small coastal Colombian village. The national security in Colombia has improved much the last decade and Taganga has hence been established as a backpacker hotspot with increased tourism arrivals every year. Previous characteristics of an isolated town of fishermen and a traditional organization of the economy have been exchanged with capitalism, modernization and Western influences through in-migration and backpacker arrivals. This is a thesis about backpacker tourism, and foremost about the challenges met by local residents in how to handle the increasing tourist masses and how to continuously reconstruct their own identity both separately from and in connection to tourism. Through engaging with theories of place identity, place meanings and social representations of place I seek to understand cultural belonging and meanings attached to Taganga. The empirical work is based upon qualitative methods whereby I have analysed the identities and cultures existing in Taganga, both regarding native inhabitants, backpackers and in-migrants from elsewhere in Colombia. The analyses have recognized the complexity that exists within defined social units, and the many ways different groups of people comprehend and give meanings to place. Different conceptions of place are utilized and necessary for understanding how and why different people engage differently with one particular locality.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

MacCannell sees the modern tourist as a contemporary pilgrim always in search for authenticity, like “a modern version of the universal human concern with the sacred” (in Urry 2002: 9). The search for authenticity in communities, places and people is made possible through the continuous globalization engraving every part of our daily life. Globalization is one of the most discussed and analysed phenomenon within the social sciences the last decades. Some people explicitly hold to the idea of the world getting smaller and of distances (both figurative and physical) vanishing, others stress the increased diversity and differentiation coming to surface with technological inventions, while the rest of us try to somehow see both perspectives as equally relevant and use it in our own understandings of the world and its social and cultural changes. The growth in international mass- tourism is made possible by transportation technology foremost, additional to a general rise in wealth and leisure time in developed and now also developing countries. Thousands of people travel every day with all their cultural understandings from their lives and homes in their backpack. My interest for this paper hence lies in understanding how the cultures of the host and the cultures of the guest (in my case backpackers) interrelate and meet both in a physical, psychological, social and political landscape at tourist destinations. Expectations, norms and power relations play an important role in establishing these relations, which I attempt to demonstrate through my case study of Taganga, Colombia.

This is a thesis about backpacker tourism, and foremost about the challenges met by local residents in how to handle the increasing tourist masses and how to continuously reconstruct their own identity both separately from and in connection to tourism. On the one hand it is a thesis specifically concerned around a small place called Taganga in the northern parts of Colombia in the specific region of Latin America. My fieldwork has exclusively been carried out here, in a couple of unique square kilometres on the earth’s surface, and can not be generalized to other places. On the other hand, the thesis challenges and discusses tourism and the travelling culture of backpackers, which have no geographical limitations whatsoever. I try to analyse cultural meetings between host and guest, between the local and the global culture, seeking to challenge the set distinctions between these cultures and the different modes of understanding cultural meetings. My intentions for my research is hence to first find out *what* changes backpacker tourism exposes to a local community (mainly social, structural

and cultural, but also economic), and secondly *how* the local population perceive these changes.

1.1 Backpacker tourism

Tourism is predicted to become an important part of the national income for many developing countries in the future, and there has been a continuous discussion on how the distinctive form of backpacker tourism positively affects economic and social development at the local level. At the same time, backpackers have been accused by academics to be pleasure-oriented hedonists, ignorant of the social and economic powers they enforce. I have no urge of making such normative judgements or to put the different modes of travelling up against each other. I believe the cultures of all types of tourism are complex, both what concerns shared characteristics among the travellers and the affects they enforce on a local community. One should not be intimidated by cultural diversity *within* the culture one studies, and I support the suggestion made in the introduction chapter by Hastrup and Olwig to alternatively study “networks of interrelations where there is a mutual construction of identities through cultural encounters”(Olwig and Hastrup 2007:3).

Cohen (2003) highlights an important lack of research on backpacker tourism, namely the extent and significance of the backpackers’ interactions with the host community. The locals usually stand in the background without being studied as subjects in their own right. To get a better picture of the host’s perceptions and attitudes to the backpackers, Cohen suggests that

“[We] need anthropological community studies of popular backpacker destinations in which the researcher will achieve a grasp of the local situation and study the backpacking visitors within its context” (Cohen 2003: 107).

This point has been taken into regard while conducting my own research. I have been focusing upon the meanings, perceptions and understandings the local population has toward tourism in respect to societal and cultural changes of their home town. I have tried to interrelate and compare place identities, meanings and understandings both from the perspective of the local population and the backpackers, though aiming my research at the benefit of the locals. Interesting and comprehensive studies have been published concerning the culture of backpacking (see Cohen 2003, Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003, O’Reilly 2006, Sørensen 2003) as well as concerning tourism and its socio-cultural impacts in general

(see Urry 2002, MacCannell 1973, Duncan and Gregory 1999, Rojek and Urry 1997). Closely related to my research project, Huxley (2004) has carried out research on how backpackers relate to and interact with the local population, but still there seems to be a lack of a qualitative study focusing on the host's perception of the encounters with backpackers.

Backpacking as “a massive movement of youths to the less developed regions of the world” (Cohen 2003: 105) started simultaneously with two major social and political upheavals of the 1960's, namely the student revolution and the Vietnam War. The failure of the student revolution and the frustrations concerning the war in Vietnam has by Cohen (2003) been interpreted as the driving force for many young Western people who decided to travel after the disappointments back home. Since then, backpacker tourism has experienced a huge growth in the amount of travellers and many countries and local communities rely on the incomes achieved from this segment in the tourist industry. Backpacking has developed from being a mode of travelling for alternative youth connected to subcultures, to becoming publicly accepted activity for all segments of our societies who have the economic foundation to travel, (though on budget) to one or more places in an extended time period. Huxley's study of backpackers indicates that “the search for the ‘exotic’ or other cultures – which has existed for centuries – is a crucial part of backpacking” (2004: 38). There is a search for the genuine experience and genuine cultures which Urry has labelled the quest for authenticity (2002). (See Chapter 2 for further discussion on these concepts).

Tourism has opened up for a consumption of local culture and traditions, and power relations that have existed in a local community prior to tourism are often blurred by the sharp inequality experienced between the visitor and the host including different interests and power mechanisms. However, when one studies backpacker tourism it is also reasonable to highlight positive impacts this industry has in both economic and socio-cultural terms. Westerhausen and Macbeth suggest that local communities should “utilize compatible tourism niche markets, such as backpackers, in order to preserve and enhance their social and cultural identity in the long term” (2003: 72). The segment of backpacker tourism is portrayed to be an alternative sustainable industry, focusing on how backpackers can prove to be an efficient development strategy.

Youth and student travel is now increasingly being recognized as an important part of the global travel market (Richards and Wilson 2003). It has been maintained that backpacker tourism “displays its own spatial, economic and social patterns of development” (Brenner and

Fricke 2007: 218), suggesting to view backpacker tourism with a different potential than imposed on mass- tourism in traditional tourism theories. Young independent travellers tend to travel more frequently and for longer periods of time than many older tourists or tourists buying package holidays. It is also expected that youth travel will provide an important basis for the travel decisions of future generations as well as today's package travels, as backpackers explore unknown areas for tourism and put popular destinations on the map (Richards and Wilson 2003). Up to this date most backpackers have had their origin in Western countries, but we notice a change in trends with more travellers from Asia and Latin America also being represented. As more and more backpackers travel to far-away and exotic destinations, we simultaneously see the market economic response in the production and sale of guidebooks. Guidebooks such as Lonely Planet, Rough Guides and Footprint possess a grand power position and influence in how and where backpacking travels are conducted and which tourist facilities are being used and visited by the backpackers.

In studies of young travellers and backpackers, it has been argued that to neglect this segment of the tourist industry is common, stemming from the misconception that youth travel markets are of lower economic value (Richards and Wilson 2003: 7, Cohen 2003, Sørensen 2003). Statistics and findings from Richards and Wilson's quantitative study of the habits and characteristics of young and student travellers illustrate however a different picture; this segment of the tourist industry is an important economic actor as well as an industry in growth. In their study, young travellers were considered trendsetters in global tourism with possibilities to create new attractions and establish new destinations. Their longer travel periods lead to a wider spread of economic expenditure in terms of both time and space, whereas they additionally tend to spend money in local (often rural) communities. A growing interest in backpacker tourism can thus be attributed to its rapid territorial expansion and its considerable socio-economic impact (Brenner and Fricke 2007). It seems therefore reasonable and rational to bestow the world's backpackers with more influence and capacity as well as responsibility than they have previously received from the academic world.

1.2 Discussion of key concepts

Travelling as a concept typically excludes people on the move such as refugees and migrants. A similar understanding of the concept is applied in Roudometof's (2005) article concerning the differences between transnationalism and cosmopolitanism, where cosmopolitans can be

compared with tourists. Tourists are seen as real *travellers*, while anyone else travelling (for whatever reasons) is seen as transnationalists or transmigrants. Even though the two concepts of cosmopolitanism and transnationalism are often used interchangeably, Roudometof demonstrates that they have however in academic circles tended to refer to different types of individuals or groups of people, pointing toward their class, origin, social situation or motivation for 'travelling'. Hannerz (1990: 239) describes the cosmopolitan individual as having "an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences", illustrated by a willingness to engage with the other. Cosmopolitan is here fronted as something voluntarily; a world view and cultural practice to be chosen by each individual. Roudometof argues that transnationalists on the other hand are perceived as not possessing these "cultural and intellectual predispositions" (2005: 114), and are thereby considered as 'people out of place'. Transnationalists here include migrant workers, exiles or refugees. As Roudometof argues, the two terms are "employed selectively with regard to people of different classes as well as different racial and ethnic backgrounds" (2005: 115).

In a similar way, our everyday use of the term 'traveller' has tended to signify a certain type of moving individual with a certain background and specific qualities. Travelling has come to signify leisure. Roberson, in *Defining Travel: diverse visions*, argues that travelling traditionally has been seen as transformative and freeing and as a "double voyage of discovery" (2001: xii); not only for gaining knowledge about the wide world but also about the self. Also in modern ideas about travel, an image of the typical rites of passage and of thereby voluntary movement in space is evident. "Regardless of the kind of travel one undertakes, some communalities remain in the defining discussions of travel", Roberson argues (2001: xiii). Like Roberson, I find that 'traveller' is a misleading and inadequate concept when referring exclusively to tourists travelling in a certain manner. As we will read in this thesis, Taganga consists of several 'travellers' and people moving across space. Not only do we find travelling tourists enjoying Taganga for leisure or holiday reasons, but we also find mobile Tagangeros selling their land to foreigners or the tourist industry, leaving behind their home town searching for a better future elsewhere.

However, in my thesis I have chosen to apply the concepts of 'travelling' and 'traveller' as signifying individuals on the move in connection to leisure or holiday. Even though defining a traveller can be discussed and criticized in academic readings, it has nevertheless become a commonly used term describing young tourists or backpackers, and it is also the term used by

the majority of young independent tourists themselves³. I have therefore chosen to use the term traveller together with other terms signifying the visiting individuals in Taganga (backpackers, tourists, visitors). Throughout this paper all these terms are used without any further reference to certain ‘qualities’ the visitors might possess. Similarly, the concepts used in this thesis in reference to the local inhabitants in Taganga range from everything like ‘host community’ or ‘natives’ to ‘Tagangeros’ or simply ‘the locals’. All concepts are also here applied with no further meaning attached to them other than referring to the settled population in Taganga.

1.3 Research Question

Exploring the social and cultural changes exposed by backpacker tourism and how the host community of Taganga relates to these changes has been my overall focus for the thesis. My research has focused on the residential population in Taganga who were the main actors who could inform me on this matter, supplemented by reflections by visiting backpackers.

My main research question regarding the subject of backpacker tourism in Taganga is the following:

How has the arrival of backpackers influenced the social and cultural character of Taganga and the inhabitants’ place identity?

Here it is fruitful to determine how I comprehend the concept *place identity* and how I find it meaningful and relevant to my project. According to Agnew (1987, in Gustafson 2000:6), place identity is a “subjective territorial identity” connected to any given individual’s sense of place. Identity in itself can be described as “a summery statement about who we are, a symbolic way to display important information about ourselves [...] and the groups to which we belong” (Harris 2005: 155). One can say that ones place identity reflects levels of attachment to a place, which symbolises our own personal identity. Place identities, i.e. the meanings attributed to places, are generated within, and in conflicts between, social groups (Gustafson 2000). I want to explore how groups or cultures in Taganga use place identification to distinguish themselves from others, and how the local inhabitants’ place

³ Statistics from Richards and Wilson’s (2003: 16) study revealed that half of the interviewed identified with the label ‘traveller’, compared with almost a third who called themselves ‘backpackers’. Less than 20% of the young independent travellers considered themselves ‘tourists’.

identity has changed along with backpacker arrivals and the cross-cultural meetings between hosts and guests. I additionally want to analyse conflicting understandings and meanings of the place Taganga due to these cultural encounters. I am applying the focus used in Per Gustafson's (2000: 9) research asking not only *what* meanings of place are attributed, but also analysing *how* this attribution of meanings occurs. We will see in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 that particularly the sharing of memories and traditions are ways the local population in Taganga are attributing meaning to their home place.

I have applied two sub-questions for the purpose of specifying and elaborating the main research question. These sub-questions are:

1. Which attributes and characteristics of place make Taganga meaningful for the different social groups existing here?
2. What place identities and social/cultural units exist in Taganga, and how has the social changes caused by tourism in Taganga impacted the construction of identity and cultural belonging?

The first sub-question is based on the concept of meaningful places discussed among others by the sociologist Per Gustafson. The meanings of place are closely related to identity, and I will explore how different social groups (or cultures) attach meaning and identify with the village in different manners. Place as both a physical and a socio-cultural environment will be discussed applying place-theories by different social scientists, analysing how one singular place can be linked to several social representations at the same time.

The intention of the second sub-question is to map place identities that exist among both the local population and the visiting tourists in Taganga. I want to discover how senses of place vary between local residents and backpackers, suggesting that sense of place relates directly to ones social, cultural and historical background in addition to ones status in the society. Secondly I want to explore how societal changes in Taganga have influenced identity and sense of belonging in the Tagangan community. I here understand societal changes as concerning physical changes such as the infrastructure of the town, structural changes in work and welfare, as well as social and cultural changes defining the relations existing among the inhabitants and the tourists. Additionally it seeks to explain how identities, personal or shared within a group, are developed and take form in this rather closed society where 'the local meets the global'. The focus of the question is on how the Tagangeros *themselves* have

experienced and understood the societal changes that have occurred the last decades, and how these changes have impacted their identity and their surrounding environment.

I also find it important to use my data material and my findings to predict the future of Taganga and its inhabitants. This focus is not included in my research questions, but is directly relevant in evaluating the purpose of the project by linking it to future possibilities and prospects for the Tagangeros. On one hand, I wish to explore the societal effects of tourism and the general attitude and belief in backpacker tourism among the Tagangeros, and whether the locals desire to remain a backpacker magnet, a backpacker hotspot. On the other hand, I want to specify the factors determining backpacker destinations. This includes both physical features (landscape, climate, infrastructure, aesthetics, attractions etc) and social and cultural features (town atmosphere, social reputation, availability of drugs, density of other travellers etc). This mapping of the preferences of the backpackers can be very useful for local communities who want to establish themselves as backpacker destinations, knowing how to meet and be aware of the demands from the visitors.

A last point important for my thesis is to suggest a connection between the violent history of the Colombian nation and how Colombians (in my case Tagangeros) shape identities connected to local places. In other words I question how a violent national history can produce an increased sense of local identity. Due to space limitations I am unable to engage in an in-depth discussion on the matter. Nevertheless I want to use records of the violent Colombian society in relation to a deterritorialization of its population to analyse how Tagangeros perceive their own identity and their attitude toward 'outsiders' such as tourists or Colombians from other regions. In light of this, a short introduction to the social and political situation in Colombia is given in Chapter 3 in addition to local conditions describing Taganga in specific. In the same chapter I also present a development project in process in Taganga outlined by local authorities called "Malecón Taganga". Even though my thesis does not concern the physical development of Taganga, this construction project is nevertheless specifically presented due to the importance and preoccupation the Tagangeros themselves have linked to it. The project symbolises the lack of political decision making in Taganga and illustrates the local inhabitants' general scepticism toward outside forces such as political authorities, tourism and in-migrants impacting their home town and challenging their place identities.

The next chapter presents existing theories of tourism and of the global processes of cultures, identities and places. It discusses the local versus the global and how they interrelate within and between cultures, and highlights the processes of cultural meetings and intercultural relations. Chapter 3 presents the context for my thesis and serves as an insight to the societal conditions under which Colombians and the Tagangeros live, while Chapter 4 deals with the methods applied for collecting data in Taganga. Finally Chapter 5 presents the findings of the project and my analysis of them, while Chapter 6 focuses on how I can use these findings to determine the place identities existing in Taganga and answer my research questions. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis, highlighting the most important findings and thus placing my project in a relevant position for the future development of Taganga.

Chapter 2 Theory

“Travel erodes the brittleness and rigidity of spatial boundaries and suggests social, political and cultural identity as an amalgam, the intricacy of which defies the comparative simplicity of ‘identity’” (Smith and Katz 1993:78)

Discussing travelling and globalization, it is impossible to overlook the fact that travel, increased mobilization and tourism challenge and diminish geographical and social boundaries. It is important to recognize the very nature of tourism as a complex set of social discourses and practices (Rojek and Urry 1997). As Smith and Katz point out above, travelling enables interplay among people that are no longer inaccessible to each other, a social process that cause challenges to ‘fixed’ identities. In their view, identity is created by ones social, political and cultural background, and is challenged and redefined continuously as one interacts with other individuals. Clifford (in Smith and Katz 1993: 78) maintains that travel “moves us beyond the fixity of singular locations”, pointing to the complexity of societal borders and claiming geographical location is just a category utilized for political action. He seeks a dynamic rather than a static conception of location (Smith and Katz 1993: 78), focusing on the interrelationships between groups of people occurring at every locality on earth. The activity of travelling thus has implication for the creation of identity.

The political geographer John Agnew (1987, in Cresswell 2004: 7) has a similar view, introducing three aspects of place as “meaningful locations”; place as location, as locale and as sense of place. Location identifies a setting, a geographical (physical) area; locale constitutes the setting in which social relations are constituted; while sense of place is aimed at the local “structure of feeling” and to the subjective and emotional attachment people have to places (in Gustafson 2000: 6; Cresswell 2004: 7). Agnew demonstrates how meaningful places (i.e. places that individuals feel some kind of attachment to or meanings/feelings related to) emerge in a social context through social relations. They are related to social, economic, political and cultural surroundings, at the same time as they are actual locations on a map. One therefore has to apply all three elements of place, Agnew maintains, to fully capture the meaning of place and to analyse the social relations settled here (Gustafson 2000). These three conceptions of place relates to the concepts of *self*, *others* and *environment* introduced by Gustafson (2000) in his research on meaningful places. The concepts are in his study utilized in a “three- pole triangular model within which various meanings of place”

(2000: 9) can be mapped, illustrating attributes determining and important for all individuals when conceptualizing meaningful places. All attributions of meaning (like for example citizenship, life path or institutions) are placed within or in between these three poles. The meanings concerning *self* are connected to life path, emotions, memories, safety and activities, while *others* represents meanings toward other individuals found at the place and typical comparisons between 'us/here' and 'them/there' (Gustafson 1996: 10). *Environment* typifies meanings that are neither connected to the self or ones social relations with others, but rather to the physical environment including distinctive features, events and institutions. The perceptions of place presented by Gustafson and Agnew will further be utilized in Chapter 6 when analysing the understandings of place found in Taganga.

2.1 Culture and identity

Edward Said points to the increasing demolition of national identities as a result of the ongoing globalization and growth in human movement. "Because the world has become far more integrated and demographically mixed than ever before, the whole concept of national identity has to be revised and, in most places that I know, is in the process of being revised" (2004: 24). National identities are being challenged by local, regional and global cultures, often overlapping, where identification takes place among individuals considering themselves belonging to the same meaning systems.

Hannerz defines culture as "the meanings which people create, and which create people, as members of societies" (1992: 3). He emphasizes the fact that culture is collective. Geertz similarly comprehends *society* as an arrangement of social relationships in a group, whereas *culture* then is "the group's shared beliefs and symbols" (1973, in Hall and Lew 2009: 141). Olwig and Hastrup claim that culture is something which is "possessed by all of humankind" (2007: 4), but that it exists in bounded and unique cultural wholes corresponding to localized social groups. Tourism is further related to modern mass culture, where being a tourist is suggested to be the core of what it means to be modern (Rothman 1998, in Hall and Lew 2009). Hall and Lew mention the upcoming of *cultural relativism* ("the equal value of all cultures") and *cultural homogenization* (where "cultural diversity is subsumed under a single, worldwide culture", e.g. 'Americanization') as concepts and societal trends connected to tourism (2009: 142). Both aspects are explained by an increase in tourism and cross-cultural meetings resulting in new perceptions of cultural development and places (Hall and Lew 2009).

I want to suggest that belonging to a specific culture can be compared to attachment to specific statuses, which changes according to different social situations where one interferes. Sørensen suggest that the social category of backpackers is more like a social construct than a definition, which relies heavily on a ‘travel ideology’ which identify the culture (2003: 852). There is a lot of existing literature discussing the travel ideology of backpackers, where both Sørensen (2003), Cohen (2003), Westerhausen and Macbeth (2003), O’Reilly (2006), Scheyvens (2002), Richards and Wilson (2004) and Shaffer (2004), among others, present informative discussions around this matter.

Olwig and Hastrup (2007: 5) emphasize one important notion regarding identity making, namely the notion of the “*mutual* construction of identities through cultural encounters” (my italics). Not only are the local Tagangers influenced by Western culture from foreigners settling in the town or from tourists visiting Taganga. The tourists themselves are also greatly affected by the people they meet in Taganga, both by fellow travellers and by the native population they meet at every destination. It is a complex meeting involving uneven power, economic and social relations, additional to the fact that the meetings often are of a temporary and superficial manner. Nevertheless, as Pratt has argued concerning the relationship between colonizer and colonized, it is possible to treat the relationships between host and guest in tourism in terms of “interaction, interlocking understandings and practices” and not only in terms of “separateness or apartheid” (Pratt 1992: 7). This perspective of “contact zone”, which Pratt applies to the space of colonial encounters, is in my project appropriate to apply for the space of tourism encounter; the place and village of Taganga. The concept of contact zone relates to the spatial and temporal co presence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical borders, and whose roads and lives are now intersecting. This perspective thus emphasizes “how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other” (Pratt 1992: 7).

2.2 Local belonging and sense of place

Gillian Rose (1995) discusses the formation of identity connected to ‘sense of place’ (see also Breakwell 1986 and Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996 on discussions regarding place identity). She argues that meanings given to a place through sense of place can develop to be so powerful that they turn into a specific part of an individual’s identity (1995). Holloway and Hubbard claim that developing a sense of place requires that an individual knows the place

intimately and reacts to it emotionally, rather than rationally (2001: 74). In contrast to scientists such as Giddens and Ziehe who state that the increased globalization is leading to a decreased importance and relevance of the local place and its impacts on the individual (Paulgaard 2002), Rose suggests that the world's globalization has resulted in a fragmentation of the world into smaller places. Giddens' statement that social relations are being dissolved from local connections and rearticulated across time and space (Paulgaard 2002:30) is thus replaced by a vision where these social relations and the meeting with the globalizing world are actually *strengthening* the local belonging to a place (Rose 1995).

Places are however also shaped by humans and human relations. Escobar points to the fact that every place is constituted by social structures and cultural practices (2001: 143), and these structures and practices are what essentially construct a place-specific local identity. Sense of place is thus social feelings, determined by the power structures in the specific society and locality. This correlates with Agnew's models of meaningful places considering both sense of place (individual perceptions and attachments) and locale (social relations and interactions). Rose claims that a sense of place is given by a "system of meaning through which we make sense of the world" (1995: 99), hence how we culturally interpret the world and our society. We clearly establish and distinguish different groups of people and where they respectively belong through the use of sense of place, in order to identify and give meaning to where one self belongs. We establish social differentiation through our production of spatial borders. Senses of place can therefore be said to partly be "a result of underlying structures of power" in every society (Rose 1995: 100), and I would add to also partly be part of producing these structures.

Rose suggests there exist three ways an individual can relate to a place; to identify oneself *with* a place, to identify *against* a place and *not* to identify with a place at all. To identify *with* a place is closely connected to a sense of belonging and the way one defines oneself will also be how one defines that place. Looking at my project, this way of identifying with Taganga will be experienced by local inhabitants or travellers who see opportunities and potential for the town through personal growth and the making of an identity (Rose 1995). Fosso introduces the idea 'place of opportunities' (Fosso 2004: 125) to describe this way of giving meaning to a place, where the potential of the place is experienced in positive terms.

To identify *against* a place is however to experience a sense of place which perceives the characteristics and the people at that place as everything that oneself is not. Belonging is established by contrasting oneself from people and places where one will use dichotomies like we/them and us/others (Rose 1995, Twigger-Ross and Uzzell 1996). Rose refers to Edward Said's *Orientalism* to demonstrate this notion (Rose 1995: 92). Said discusses how the West produces romanticized myths and fears of the Orient ('the Others') to create a self image as civilized and modern (Rose 1995). By identifying the Orient as something different, the West used this otherness to give a picture of how they perceived their own identity, i.e. how they wanted to be perceived by others. By identifying against a certain place one immediately refers to another place, one could say a 'counter place'. One sees constraints in one place (Fosso 2004: 130-132) as closely related to the opportunities at the counter place.

Finally, it is also possible to not identify at all with a place. Often this is recognized if an individual has a special and very powerful sense of place and identity towards another specific place that does not necessarily contrast with the place in question. Rose indicates cross-cultural migrants as typically belonging to this sense of place, where cultural differences functions as obstacles for establishing a place identity (1995). One lacks belonging and feels foreign, and there will not be established any coherence between the place and ones self- identity.

A person's or a group's sense of place will often be strengthened and intensified by the feeling of threat, as will be discussed and illustrated in Chapter 5 where native Tagangeros' sense of place is contrasting and reacting against tourism and modernity. Feelings for a place can be explained through social and physical boundaries. The power-structures that exist at every place are determining which groups of people are insiders and which are outsiders – who belongs to the place and who does not. In *Orientalism*, Said applies power-structures to explain how the West legitimized invasion and economic exploitation of the Orient based on the idea that the Orient was uncivilized and barbaric (Rose 1995). Imperialism and colonization thus became the result of the West's sense of place toward the Orient.

2.3 Power relations in tourism and 'the others'

The notion of tourism is in itself demonstrating uneven power relations between the consumers and the producers of tourist services, destinations and facilities. The competition

among the producers and suppliers of tourist services is high in providing particular services in particular places, while the average tourist on her or his side can travel and enjoy tourism wherever on the planet. Almost every place in the world can become an ‘object of the tourist gaze’, as Urry (2002) puts it. Suppliers of tourist services therefore continuously have to make innovations to minimise labour costs and meet the tourists’ desires in order to be able to compete with other destinations.

Tourism can be seen as a new form of imperialism where the West intrude and exploit local communities and insert cultural changes. Pratt (1992) describes the typical European explorer in the seventeenth century as an imperialist who introduced Western order in a land coloured by chaos. Her book examines how European travel writings from the unknown ‘world outside’ have influenced the European identity, and asks herself how it has produced “Europe’s differentiated conceptions of itself in relation to something it became possible to call ‘the rest of the world’” (Pratt 1992: 5). She emphasizes Europe’s (the metropolis) desire to present and re-present the other culture and their need to determine the periphery, either through “the civilizing mission or the cash flow of development” (1992: 6). Europe actually blinds itself to see the ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis – namely through identity and self representation. “[T]o consider a place and its people as foreign is to exclude them from an assumed (Western) normality”, claims Shurmer-Smith and Hannam (1994: 17), referring to ‘foreignness’ as attached to power relations. The notion of foreignness and its symbolism can be used as a ‘commodifiable resource’ (Ardner 1987, cited in Shurmer-Smith and Hannam 1994) in travel advertisement, music and movies to attract interest and visitors to a foreign and ‘unknown’ destination. Local traditions, heritage and ways of living become objects and commodities through a process of differentiating and exclusion of what is regarded inside and outside, known and unknown.

2.4 Modern ideals and post-modern practises

In his article “Backpackers: diversity and change”, Eric Cohen (2003) analyses the backpackers’ ideals, behaviour and self identity and how they relate to every destination. According to Cohen, the phenomenon of backpacking steams from the ideal of the ‘drifter’ from the time of the student revolution in the 60’s and 70’s were many young people felt alienated in their home societies and were seeking alternative ways of life. The main difference of that time’s drifter and today’s backpacker lies in the different way they travel

and act upon arrival. While the earlier drifter mostly travelled alone to unknown places seeking to explore and exceed limits, today the majority of backpackers gather in huge enclaves and appreciate to a higher degree the hedonistic lifestyle. The search for authenticity, for places and people of genuine character and origin is a central goal for both the drifter and the groups of backpackers. The demand for authenticity at the destinations is then produced and put forward by the host (Cohen 2003: 97, Huxley 2004: 39). The drifter wish to experience, both 'existential' and 'experimental', an alternative place to replace its own place of origin (Cohen 2003: 97), and makes by this a much stronger demand on authenticity than the normal mass- tourist. This wish of experience is valid also among backpackers today, though they do not always seem to achieve authentic experiences.

Backpackers express an admiration of the drifter-ideology and will often try to imitate its character, although few of them wish to actually live up to this experimental and existential way of travelling. Instead of being recognized with the spontaneity, independence and longing for exploration typical for the drifter, the backpackers more than anything travel for recreation and pleasure typical of the mass tourist (Cohen 2003). Backpacker hotspots are characterized by Cohen to be popular destinations where a lot of backpackers come together at the same time exchanging experiences, stories, plans and information. Like in mass tourism, certain places get a popular reputation among the travelling cultures and seem to be important "must-do's" for many backpackers. Cohen goes as far as claiming that the interrelations made by a traveller towards the local populations at such destinations are subaltern to their desire of meeting and spending time with other fellow travellers (2003: 98).

One can find both rural and urban hotspots (enclaves). Urban enclaves have mostly been established in central big cities by practical reasons concerning planning a travel, transportation and orienting in a new country, while the rural ones have occurred from more concrete choices and demands of the backpackers and because of the different qualities the place possess. These qualities will in many instances include hedonistic desires such as the availability of food, alcohol, narcotic drugs, recreation and entertainment, and are often to be preferred in rural settings more than urban even though one finds these element of enjoyment in both types of enclaves (Cohen 2003).

From the 1990's and onward research in tourism has registered a post-modern trend where a "legitimizing of the quest for 'fun' and of a ludic (playful) attitude to the world" (Cohen 2003:100) is dominating while the genuine and authentic are of less importance. Instead of

experiencing 'the other' and authenticity, the tourists seek to the familiar and recreation. In light of these observations, Cohen suggests that today's backpackers are characterized by modern ideals of travelling established by the drifters (the desire for authenticity), while the actual performance of their travels are aiming more at post-modern ideals (the hedonistic lifestyle). The backpackers want to be identified with an image in coherence with the earlier drifters seeking authentic anti-tourism destinations, even though their practices are more similar to the post-modern mass tourism that they try to distance themselves from.

Cohen suggests several explanations to the clear difference between drifters and backpackers. Today most young people decide to travel not due to an alienated feeling toward their home society, but rather as a break between two periods in ones life. Obtaining freedom in travelling, the backpackers enjoy being outside and disconnected from the social expectations and norms their home society produces, and to experiment with the tolerance one finds and shares with other backpackers in the enclaves. The drifters' critique of the Western society and their desire to explore unknown societies and people is substituted with a break from the routine life at home and an experimentation of new experiences. This view is also supported by Richards and Wilson (2003) in their quantitative study of backpacker tourism, where many of the backpackers presented a desire to "experience as much as possible" (2003: 17) during their travel.

2.5 A quest for authenticity

The previous sub-chapter has outlined the modern idealization of travelling among backpackers by the search for authenticity inspired by the drifters. This quest for genuine experiences and cultures affects how the individual backpacker relates and behaves upon the meeting with the local culture. Harris defines authenticity as "a state of preferred existence usually contrasted with the falseness and artificiality of modern life" (2005: 24), and in tourism he sees authentic locations as contrasted with commercialized tourist and leisure sites. Authenticity can also be said to be "a property, which real objects may or may not possess, which refers to their credibility and originality" (Mantecón and Huete 2008: 361). The desire of the backpacker then, is to "go beyond the façade of the tourist industry" (Huxley 2004: 39), for instance by observing the work of fishermen obtaining and organizing the daily catch or participating in a local wedding or religious ceremony. In these situations the backpackers get the feeling of being part of something genuine and real, something that would have appeared

independent of the presence of tourists. This infiltration of the local life is illustrated by Hannerz (1990, cited in Huxley 2004: 40) as going ‘backstage’, where the backpacker from within can participate in the local lifestyle. In contrast, staged events (or staged culture in general) through the tourism industry is perceived as unreal and an unauthentic representation of tradition or culture (Huxley 2004). MacCannell (1973) was one of the first authors of tourism to discuss the idea of authenticity. He claims that “the term ‘tourist’ is increasingly used as a derisive label for someone who seems content with his obviously inauthentic experiences” (1973: 592), illustrating the connection of tourism and (lack of) authenticity being present in the academic literature already in the 70’s.

The relationship between host and guest is affected by various factors. It is obvious that these social relations exist between humans that normally in their daily life would not have met, i.e. individuals finding themselves in a ‘contact zone’ as discussed earlier in this chapter by Pratt (1992). Huxley (2004) points to four elements in the travelling culture restraining the possibilities for a backpacker to experience genuine two-ways cultural meetings with the local population;

First of all one has to consider the economic asymmetry between host and guest. This asymmetry is further reinforced by the “delight at haggling over prices with the local traders” (Huxley 2004: 41), often with no reflection about the traders’ economic situation. Secondly, one will find imbalanced roles and relationships between host and guest at tourist destinations. This imbalance reduces the ability to experience authentic cultural meetings due to the fact that the host is serving the guest and is often prepared to do what it takes to please her or his demands. Time is the third possible obstacle for cultural meetings, considering that few backpackers spend more than a few days to a week at the same place, and therefore do not have enough time to establish contacts and networks. At last, the meetings between fellow backpackers are often the main cause to the lack of cultural meetings between host and guest. The exotic travel destinations appear as a meeting ground for Western travellers. According to MacCannell, the meeting between backpackers at a tourist destination is inevitable;

[...] the dominant element in every tourist landscape is the tourists. The others one meet in tourist settings are other tourists and local workers whose job it is to serve tourists. (MacCannell 2001, cited in Huxley 2004: 42).

Huxley defines authenticity as “routine aspects of mundane quotidian existence, reproduced on an everyday basis, and located outside of the tourist centres and infrastructure” (2004: 43),

where the quest for authenticity is the quest for unique experiences. Consequently she claims that authentic culture and meetings will not take place in a backpacker hotspot like Taganga. Is it so, then, that an increasing number of visitors at a destination (thus characterizing the place as touristic) will lower the attraction of the place due to backpackers' quest for authenticity?

2.5.1 Staged authenticity in tourism

In accordance to Cohen's theories of tourism and backpackers this will not be the case. As mentioned earlier, both mass-tourists and now also a growing amount of independent travellers will identify themselves with a quest for authenticity in 'untouched' and unknown places, while they really act and make decisions in a more hedonistic and recreation-oriented manner. In practice the backpackers as other tourists practice a devotion to pleasure, enjoyment and relaxation. They experience a freedom involved with being outside ones everyday life expectations and norms when it comes to experimenting with narcotic drugs, alcohol and liberal sexual behaviour, among other things. Authenticity has an imagined value, and many visitors at tourist destinations will in fact be satisfied with a staged performance of authenticity. This includes recreations that represent traditional culture and local life, but that exists somehow in a staged tourist-directed setting (Hall and Lew 2009).

Others are critical to Cohen's theory. Westerhausen and Macbeth claim that sub-cultural meeting places for backpackers are established through 'mythical qualities' in danger of being lost with increased popularity from travellers (2003: 71). A destination obtains its social reputation among the travellers, imparted in conversations between backpackers and in guidebooks; "once declared a desirable destination by both Lonely Planet and the word of mouth alike, visitor numbers can expand almost exponentially" (Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003: 73). Changes in the atmosphere and charm of a place, caused by construction, adjustment to tourism or other factors may harm the place' reputation. This may in turn cause a rejection of the destination as a backpacker hotspot and a decrease in the number of visitors, or to put it in Westerhausen and Macbeth's words, "a place has had it" (2003: 74). It is important to mention that a destination can according to their view still retain their traditional clientele as long as the visitors are able to withhold their preferred lifestyle at the destination.

Hall and Lew focus on the ways the demand for traditional culture represented by crafts, performances and alike has the potential to "revive and strengthen disappearing cultural

traditions” (2009: 149). They claim however that the actual authenticity of these cultural artefacts is non-relevant, or at least depending on the eyes of the consumer and the meanings they attach to the object. They distinguish between authentic objects and authentic experiences or ways of life. While objects can be measured and compared by objective criteria, experimental authenticity is concerned with personal and subjective feelings (Hall and Lew 2009). As already mentioned, this process of “adapting authentic cultural expressions for tourists” is labelled staged authenticity (Hall and Lew 2009: 153), namely because the supposed authenticity and cultural artefact is put ‘on stage’ for the tourists to consume and observe. These constructed tourist attractions stems from “those who are subject to the tourist gaze”, both to protect themselves from “intrusions into their lives backstage” and to take economic advantage of the opportunities it presents for profit (Urry 2002: 9). Urry also points out that it may be incorrect to assert that a search for authenticity form the basis of the organization of tourism. Rather, he suggests that tourists are actually seeking difference from their everyday life, which is difference between one’s normal place of residence and work and the object of the tourist gaze. As he puts it, “the middle-class tourist will seek to be ‘a peasant for a day’ while the lower middle-class tourist will seek to be ‘king/queen for a day’” (Urry 2002: 11).

Millie Creighton (1997) has conducted some interesting studies of the use of authenticity in the marketing of tradition in Japanese travel industry. In her work she demonstrates how contemporary feelings of homelessness among urban Japanese are being exploited to establish ‘nostalgia tourism’ at remote areas transformed into travel destinations. These destinations offer “the return to a pre-Western, pre-industrialized, and nonurban past” (Creighton 1997: 239), focusing on a shared traditional identity of all Japanese people. The advertisements for these rural destinations appeal to the Japanese fascination with *furusato* which means hometown or home village. *Furusato* is however normally symbolized by rural scenery, even for Japanese who are raised in large cities.

This must be discussed in relation to the construction of shared identity. How can it be that a concept meaning home village or native place automatically is connected to rural scenery? Creighton suggests that the advertisements reflect a desire to highlight tradition and a lost rural lifestyle which “reveals a contemporary quest for community and collective identity” (1997: 241). The advertisements thus want to provoke a belief of loss or lack in the Japanese urban lifestyle, promoting everyone to travel to a rural destination discovering their roots and traditions. They also serve to “link the present via the past to the future by addressing fears of

a vanishing cultural identity” (1997: 242). I would like to supplement that the advertisements reflect a sense of staged authenticity, where ones furusato is presented to always constitute rurality and thus establishing an emotional link between native place (tradition), identity and rural locations.

Creighton clarifies that a specific place identity is masked in these advertisements, so that every rural locality is symbolically experienced as anyone’s furusato regardless of ones actual place of origin. This nostalgia tourism substantiates the feeling of loss and estrangement from a Japanese cultural heritage while contrasting to the notion of modernisation and Westernization of Japanese life and leisure time. The same can be said about much of the advertisement existing in Western countries promoting exotic and ‘authentic’ travel destinations.

2.6 Deterritorialization and reterritorialization of culture and the tourist space

In an ever more globalized world, we can read about complex societies and complex cultures that are both developed from ‘within’ and from external factors and influences. We find the West, the modern and the global as oppositional to terms like simple, traditional, and local. Friedman (2007) claims that the notion of simple versus complex cultures is misleading and stems from previous distinctions between primitive and civilized as well as traditional and modern. Friedman here criticizes the promotion of culture as homogenous and uniform. Anthropologists undertaking fieldwork in a foreign society have constantly tried to get a comprehensive and explainable overview of its societal and cultural characteristics, and have thereby been criticized of representing a homogenous representation of cultures (Friedman 2007). Friedman claims that investigating globalization has nothing to do with the flow or movement of culture, because culture is not a substance and can therefore not move. Instead, he suggests we should investigate the processes “which meaning is attributed in specific social contexts distributed in the global arena” (2007: 270). He maintains that the relationship between global social processes (such as tourism) and the identification and representations of local places and societies (like for example local reactions toward tourism) must be emphasized.

Appadurai (1991, in Olwig 2007: 18) views the present world as being in a state of deterritorialization, where money, commodities and persons are in a continuous circulation around the world. He sees this displacement of people, cultures and objects as a process resulting in 'imagined worlds' where lived, local experiences are emphasized as a result of complicated transnational structures (2007: 19). Cultures as well as people are seen as deterritorialized. We will see in Chapter 6 that a half century of civil war in Colombia has resulted in a deterritorialization of the inhabitants, where a shared national identity barely exists among my informants in Taganga. Supporting Appadurai's theories, the Tagangeros are instead valuing and emphasizing local belonging and local identities as opposed to national belonging.

Olwig and Hastrup's book *Siting Culture* (2007) asks the overall question of where culture is located in our world of transnationalism, and seeks to comprehend "the particular form the community has taken and the role of place within it" (Olwig 2007: 19). Moving in space creates transnational communities, but Olwig maintains that it is wrong to view deterritorialization primarily as a matter of physical removal from a territory (2007). From studies of the Caribbean island of Nevis, she can refer to economic and social deterritorialization of former African slaves who were denied land and property after the abolition of slavery. The many obstacles placed in the way for their acquisition of land lead to heavy out migration off the island in order to accumulate necessary means to start a new life on Nevis with their families. In addition, British missionary activities changed the social norms and values on the island, whereby many of the people of African descent no longer found themselves as respectable members of the Nevisian society. Deterritorialized people were thus found both among individuals who were physically absent from the island but with maintained ties with their families on Nevis, and among people on Nevis hoping to emigrate in order to improve their life and economic situation.

Only a few individuals of the Nevisian community were able to return from their migratory work abroad with sufficient economic means to thus become reterritorialized on their home island. Reterritorialization is here a process of post-deterritorialization where members of the society once deterritorialized from their land (either physical or social) are in condition of returning to their society and lead comfortably and place-embedded lives. Reterritorialization can however be accomplished by settling in a new place as well, as the concept is defined as "the relocalizing of culture and lifestyle in new or changed contexts" (Kale 2005: 69). In this

way reterritorialization can be linked with the concept of hybrid identity where one adapts to two different cultural worlds at the same time.

The deterritorialization that took place on Nevis in the mid nineteenth century has nevertheless not raised severe negative consequences economically nor socially or culturally. In fact, the Nevisian community has developed successfully, where Nevisians have been able to exploit socio-economic resources outside the local society while maintaining strong cultural ties with the home island. Olwig describes this process as “non-local space of networks of relations extending between Nevisians on and off the island” (2007: 23). It illustrates perfectly the mobile and culturally complex lives that people are leading today, including the difficulties that can arise if one employs a territorially based concept of culture (Olwig 2007: 33). Many migrants and other travellers in our world are overall related to this social feature; while being physically present in specific localities, they are at the same time part of translocal communities rooted in distant places.

How can we then draw lines between de- and reterritorialization and tourism? Olwig argues that mobile people often can develop attachment to a specific place and play a central source for identity making in their global network of relations, a place which may not be their place of residence (2007: 35). Can the same be said about travellers in Taganga? In the case of Taganga we can come to question whether it is the local inhabitants or the travellers who define the socio-cultural contexts in the community, or whether it is always a question of interrelations between the two groups. In the case of the migrants of Nevis, we have seen a constant interplay between the global and the local, and between globalizing and localizing. As the Nevisians, the backpackers in Taganga are people on the move at the same time as they are part of “localized, integrated and self-contained cultural units” (Olwig 2007: 35) in their interactions and attribution to the Tagangan culture. We will see in Chapter 5 that both the travellers and the Tagangeros relate to notions within the travelling culture as well as the native culture when they are asked to define and make sense of Taganga in social and cultural manners. The two cultures seem equally important in describing the characteristics of Taganga. Later in this thesis it will be discussed whether there really exists two separate and distinctive cultures, the travelling and the place-bound, present in the village at all times (see 6.3 and 6.4).

2.7 The reverse of the medal - implications of tourism

Already in the 1960's the economist Mishan presented multiple explanations why there are fundamental limits to the scale of contemporary tourism (Urry 2002). Mishan discussed the congestion cost imposed by the extra tourist, including "undesirable effects of overcrowded beaches, a lack of peace and quiet, the destruction of the scenery and the use of fossil fuels contributing to global warming" (Urry 2002: 40). These congestion costs are moreover leading to a strong incentive to go as soon as possible, to be able to enjoy the unspoilt view and natural, authentic objects before the crowds get there. His arguments lay on the basis that geographical space is a strictly limited resource, where a tourist market without regulations finally will lead to self- destruction of the places which are the objects of the tourist gaze (Urry 2002).

Mishan and his pessimistic arguments have experienced critiques from other academics and social researchers. Beckerman replied to Mishan's scepticism toward mass-tourism stating that mass-tourism could in fact increase the available services at a destination that were previously unobtainable due to low numbers of visitors, services that also the pioneer visitors could enjoy and benefit from (Urry 2002: 40). Also it must be said that Mishan's critiques of mass-tourism predominantly speak the cause of the visitors who will have to share the consumption of good with other tourists, while not mentioning for example the assumed increase in income for the host population.

Urry (2002: 51-53) claims there are a number of factors determining the social, cultural and economic impacts tourism will have on a society, and particularly on the social relations that are established between hosts and guests. First of all one must consider the number of tourists visiting a place in relation to the size of both the host population and the area visited. He claims huge geographical areas tolerate more visitors both in environmental and social terms than small areas, while likewise a place with high population density can not take as many visitors as spread populations. Secondly one has to take into account the predominant object of the tourist gaze. Observing physical objects is less intrusive than observing the private lives of hosts and local population which can produce social stress. The organization of the tourist industry is a third factor determining the social relations occurring between host and guest; whether it is private or publicly owned and financed, whether it is locally owned or involves immigrating workers and whether there are conflicts between the local population and the emergent tourist industry.

One factor that differ mostly North European and North American tourism hosts from other hosts in less developed countries, is the fact that Western hosts will probably find themselves as guests on other occasions. Urry claims that this perhaps creates fewer strains within the tourist industry in these countries. Normally there are bigger inequalities, both social and economic, between the visitors and the indigenous population, with the visitors obtaining the social and economic power. Urry indicates that varying local objections to tourism in fact are “objections to modernity itself: to mobility and change, to new kinds of personal relationships, to a reduced role of family and tradition, and to different cultural configurations” (2002: 53). We will see later in this thesis that these assumptions are closely related to the lived reality of many Tagangeros I spoke with.

Chapter 3 Colombia and Taganga

The objectives of this chapter is to introduce to the reader the social, cultural and political conditions under which the Tagangeros and also the Colombian population in general live, in order to better understand and interpret the behaviours, meanings and identities of the Tagangeros. Historical background and societal and cultural conditions must be seen as influencing for human behaviour and identity formation (Smith and Katz 1993) and as factors actively to be used in the interpretation of this. My aim is in the concluding chapters to highlight links and relations between the context under which the Tagangeros live on the one side and their reactions and understandings toward tourism on the other. I start by presenting a brief overview of Colombia as a country and nation in regard to today's political and demographic situation, historical lines as well as the country's position in international tourism. Historical and political conditions in Colombia's past as well as in today's society are given attention, for later in this paper being applied in explaining the mentality and formation of meaning present in Taganga. A presentation of Taganga and the people living there in addition to the physical changes taking place in regard to tourism is discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

3.1 Colombia

Colombia with almost 50 million inhabitants⁴ has the second largest population in South America after Brazil, and is the forth biggest country on its continent after Brazil, Argentina and Peru. Colombia is situated in the north-western part of South America, and has eastern borders with Venezuela and Brazil, while Peru and Ecuador borders in the south and Panama borders in the northwest. Its coastlines include the Caribbean Sea in the north and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Geographically Colombia is dominated by the Andes which separate the country into lowland in the east and highland in the west. The population is concentrated in the Andean highlands and along the Caribbean coast. The lowland, including Los Llanos (plains) and Amazonas virgin forest cover more than sixty percent of the total land area but is very sparsely populated. The country's capital city Bogotá is situated at 2600 meters in the centre of the country, and is the most populated city in Colombia followed by Cali, Medellín, Barranquilla and Cartagena.

⁴ Source: International Monetary Fund 2009 (www.imf.org)



Figure 3:1 Map of Colombia (Lonely Planet Guidebooks 2007)

Colombia is the second largest producer of coffee globally after Brazil, and petroleum and coffee are the country's largest legal export products (Devereux 2009). The country stands as the world's number one producer of cocaine with roughly 80% of the global share. Even though several state initiatives to reduce the illegal production have been carried into effect, cocaine is still the main export product in Colombia (Thoumi 2002) and unofficially it has been estimated to surpass the total value of all legal national export combined (Store Norske Leksikon 2009). More than twenty percent of the population is employed in agriculture, and statistics from 2008 measures the unemployment rate to be 11 percent⁵.

It is estimated that the existing human population of what is today named Colombia was very high at the time of the arrival of the Spaniards in the beginning of the 16th century (Etter and van Wyngaarden 2000). The Spanish conquistadors entered a highly ethnically diverse territory, which is still a living characteristic of the Colombian nation. Their diverse roots makes the mixture of the European with the African and the indigenous more complete than any other country in the Andes region (Jenkins et al. 2004). Archeological records of several areas indicate that occupation densities were high and concentrated in the Andean and the

⁵ Source: CIA The World Factbook (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>).

Caribbean region, and findings maintain that many settlements in this area were permanent for more than 1500 years before the Spanish conquest (Etter and van Wyngaarden 2000). Independence from the Spanish Conquistadors was won in 1819, but the country did not gain its full independence until the Republic of Colombia was declared in 1886 after a half century in unity with Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela.

Most Colombians are of *mestizo* origins (here referring to mixed European and Amerindian ancestry, but literally meaning *racially mixed*) (Hooker 2005). The mestizos amounts for more than 50 percent of the Colombian population, while the indigenous population only adds up to approximately 800 000 individuals counting for less than two percent of the total national population (Hristov 2005).

3.1.1 Tourism in Colombia; “The only risk is wanting to stay”

This is the slogan used on the Colombian official tourism website, and can be read as a direct reaction to the many perceptions and references that people and nations have towards Colombia as a destination. “The campaign was created as a response to the great deal of questions raised at international fairs concerning the risks involved in visiting Colombia. From there, rose the idea of facing the problem of lack of knowledge about Colombia and changing the negative perception the world could have by underlining the positive”, it says on their web page (Proexport Colombia, 2009).

The insecurity and unstable situation in Colombia is one of the main reasons why tourism has not been as dominating here as in the rest of South America until recently. “There are more homicides in any given weekend in Cali or Medellin than in an entire year in Norway”, writes the guidebook *Rough Guides* in their introductory chapter to Colombia (Jenkins et al. 2004: 370). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) does not have any statistics or figures concerning international tourist arrivals in Colombia prior to 2002, probably due to the country’s instable political situation. As other governments, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway has, and still is, warning its citizens about the dangerous conditions in the country. However, Colombia’s current President Álvaro Uribe Vélez and his government has focused on promoting an improved national and civil security in the most populated cities and main places of attraction in the country. The last eight years since his election in 2002 have been characterized by a steady growth in tourism. According to UNWTO, “Colombia’s prospects look promising as there has been sustained progress in the political and economic situation and a sustained investment in both general and tourism specific infrastructure” (2009: 28).

Foreign tourist arrivals are predicted to have risen from 0.5 million in 2002 to 1.3 million in 2008 (UNWTO 2005, 2009). A possible explanation to this explicit rise of international visitors can be linked to an improvement in political stability where annual kidnappings in Colombia has fallen by 73 percent from 2002 to 2006, and assassinations by 37 percent in the same period (Hens 2007).

The national managing of tourism in Colombia is found under the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism, and this body of government is continually working to promote the country in attracting tourism, as well as foreign investments, exports and alliances. “Colombia is Passion” is their motto, and it appeals to the Colombians themselves as much as to international businesses and tourists. The motto strives to generate a sense of belonging and an emotional link to the country; “We Colombians should feel proud of having been born in this country and should show our passion for it by talking positively about the land and its people and by becoming the best possible hosts for our visitors” (Proexport Colombia, 2009).

3.1.2 The political and social situation in Colombia

Colombia is led by a constitutional government, and the Liberal and the Conservative parties founded in the mid 19th century have since then been the two main parties in Colombia. The tension and conflicts between the two parties and their supporters have been crucial ever since, and has led to extensive violence and civil wars in the country’s history. The last fifty years have been characterised by a prevailing conflict between government forces, left-wing insurgent guerrilla and right-wing paramilitaries, and the conflict was heavily enlarged in the 90’s due to cocaine trade. Even though Colombia has experienced a rising in international arrivals and economic growth through a strengthening of military forces and security operations in the country, the country is still violating human rights and neglecting the welfare and safety of the average Colombian citizen. The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) published January 2009 a report on the internal conflict in Colombia. The article holds the title “Few reasons for optimism” and fronts strong criticism of the Colombian government and their handling of the long- lasting conflict between the guerrilla movements, the paramilitaries and the Colombian army;

“Breaches of human rights and international humanitarian law are a part of everyday life in Colombia. The level of assaults and the willingness to commit them are among the most striking features of the Colombian conflict, and this goes for paramilitary groups, the FARC [Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia] and ELN

[Ejército de Liberación Nacional] guerrilla movements, and the Colombian army”
(NRC 2009:2).

The military strategies implemented by the government are seen as provoking even more violence and conflict instead of increasing national security and stability, and Colombia is claimed to be “the only country in the western hemisphere where millions of people are driven from their homes, terrorised or killed as a result of armed conflict” (NRC 2009:3). Amnesty International is reporting that between 3 and 4 million people have been forced to leave their homes because of Colombia’s long-running armed conflict, and their number of internally displaced people is one of the highest in the world (Amnesty International 2009, The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) 2006). NRC further reports that the number of internally displaced persons in the country continues to rise. With more than three million displaced persons in 2008, Sudan is the only country exceeding this number on a global scale (UNHCR 2009).

The national violence in Colombia originated long before the foundation of the guerrilla movement FARC in 1964. In the early nineteenth century, Colombia was in the hands of warring landowners and traders where political power was centred with regional local elites in a country with weak state institutions. NRC suggests that Colombia’s particular topography “makes conditions almost ideal for federalism” (NRC 2009:4). The fight for land was present in all corners of the country, and many landowners organized armed groups to terrorize and frighten peasant farmers. “La Violencia” lasting from 1948 to 1958 was ten years of explosive rise in violence and immense attacks, and are said to be the darkest chapters in Colombia’s history. The assassination in Bogota in 1948 of the liberal president candidate Jorge Eliécer Gaitan is generally viewed as the trigger that set off the huge outbreak of violence between Liberals and Conservatives. It resulted in open fights and conflicts between conservative and liberal supporters, often village against village, including liberal peasant guerrilla against the national army. Paramilitary groups, often with help from the national police-force, carried out massive massacres against the civil population, answered by counter-violence by guerrilla groups who were under liberal and later also communist influence.

La Violencia lead to the deaths of over 200 000 people and at least a million people were driven from their homes (NRC 2009). “It was a war of incredible cruelty”, Galeano (2009:103) writes, describing rapes of women, slaughtering of babies, skinning and scalping

of men, sadism, plunder and the destruction of entire villages. The political violence was (and still is) based upon a battle between the government and its opponents. One can also point to historical factors such as landowners' violence as a means to withhold and increase their landholdings, in addition to "right-wing publicity that an international communist conspiracy was at work in Colombia" (Crandall 2002:56). As a result, the ten violent years gave birth to the guerrillas who proclaimed social revolution over broad areas of the country where they later came to possess control (Galeano 2009).

Today the Colombian political situation reflects the same situation, where paramilitary refers to illegally armed groups considered right-wing, while the illegal armed groups considered left-wing (like FARC) are referred to as guerrilla. As mentioned, the country's production and trade of illegal narcotics like marijuana and opium and especially cocaine has greatly affected both the economic and social life of Colombians as well as the country's global reputation. Both the guerrillas and the paramilitary have been and still are heavily connected to the drug industry, it being their primary source of income (Thoumi 2002, NRC 2009).

Overall I have the impression that political support is publically and apparently given to the groups who are having the control in the area one lives on the basis of fear and security protection more than on ideological grounds. I have been told that sympathizers exist on both sides in the politics throughout the country, hoping and believing that armed rebellion and violence can better the lives of the many thousands living in poverty or political instability. The political situation in Colombia is highly complex and impossible to explain, simplify or give a complete account of in this chapter. Unlike most other countries experiencing civil war, ethnic or religious divisions are not the cause of conflict in Colombia. Neither is the drug-trafficking comprehended to be the core source of violence (Romero 2004). Colombia has in fact experienced great economic growth in this same period. Nevertheless, in 2005 it is estimated that 49, 2 percent of the population lived below the national poverty line⁶, and Colombia remains a country plagued with extensive civil war and state violence for at least the last forty years. Its humanitarian crisis is according to NRC (2009) one of the most extensive in the world.

⁶ Source: CIA The World Factbook 2009 (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>).

3.2 “Taganga: the fisherman village”

Taganga is situated 5 kilometres north of Santa Marta in the province of Magdalena by the Caribbean coast. The small village also borders Tairona national park in the north and east, but its only road connection is through the state capital Santa Marta. Taganga has traditionally been an important fishing village in the province, providing fish products to the markets in Santa Marta and neighbouring communities. It has been expressed anecdotally that the fish stock has been through a heavy decline the last decade due to over-fishing and the use of dynamite, but still it is the most important source of income next to tourism and provides the daily meals to a lot of Tagangeros and tourists. The image of being a fisherman village is frequently used in tourist advertisement and in attracting foreign visitors to observe a tradition being saved and kept alive for centuries.



Figure 3:2 Location of Taganga (Google Earth).

Being described as a fisherman village one can immediately get associations to a pre-modern way of organizing society. There have in fact been conducted several studies on the existence and persistence of poor fisherman villages in context to the globalizing ‘modern’ world (Béné 2003), to gendered division of labour in fishing communities (Busby 2000) and to the

romanticized and idyllic representation of such towns (Nadel-Klein 2003). In 2003, 26 percent of the Colombian population was living on less than 2 US dollars a day (The World Bank 2008). The poverty is also present and visible in Taganga, especially in the decreasing fishing community. “Most often, the reason behind absolute, if not relative poverty of small-scale fishermen is the lack of sufficiently attractive alternatives” claims Panayotou (cited in Béné 2003: 954). This is certainly also a truth in Taganga where there exist no agriculture or other industries except tourism.

The territory of Colombia was as already mentioned originally inhabited by indigenous groups, and Tairona in the northern Caribbean (also giving name to Colombia’s most famous national park) was one of the largest and most important cultures found in the country in pre Hispanic times. The Tairona culture was dominant in the mountain range of Sierra Nevadas de Santa Marta and in the neighbouring plains, including the village of Taganga, and was considered the most developed native culture (Kline 1983, McFarlane 1993). They were probably also the most technically advanced people in pre conquest Colombia, being experts in ceramics and gold working and having developed functioning irrigation systems for their agricultural cultivation of maize, yucca, chilli peppers, vegetables and cotton (McFarlane 1993). The coast-area was dominated by densely populated settlements, and the history describes a brutal and violent meeting between the Spaniards and the Indians before the newcomers succeeded to gain control. Already in the start of the 17th century the Tagangeros were hispanised to a large extent, speaking Spanish, devoted to Catholicism and having Spanish names (Saether 2005). Some native cultures in Colombia disappeared completely during the colonial period, while others like the Tairona still have direct descendants living in the country today.

Among the local inhabitants of Taganga one can mainly differentiate between native Tagangeros, immigrants from elsewhere in Colombia and foreign settlers. The grand majority of the native Tagangeros share the same ethnic background as *mestizos* like the majority of the Colombian people. The rest of the villagers are either Afro-Latinos or of European descendant. Even though Taganga was originally indigenous land, there are few if any Amerindians living in the town today. The segments of indigenous groups in Magdalena tend to live more north in areas like the Tairona National Park by the coast or in Andes mountain villages.

Tairona National Park has its south-western border with Taganga, and the village functions as a starting point to access the park by boat. All travel agencies in Taganga offer excursions and private transportation to the park, where an hour boat ride is a fairly new option, enabling the visitors to be transported directly to the picturesque beaches of the park. All the campsites are situated by the central coastline of the park, where one can hire hammocks, tents or more comfortable *cabañas* (small wooden houses). Being transported by boat is also a way to escape the entrance fee, which was originally paid by every visitor by the gates in order to substitute the environmental projects and maintenance of the park. Several travellers choose however to enter the park by land, which includes an hour bus ride from Santa Marta and one or two hours by foot through the park. Entering by foot gives you a ticket that symbolizes legal rights to stay in the park overnight, and is altogether a more economic option considering the high prices of the boat rides. Offering transportation by boat to the beaches of Tairona Park started some years ago by fishermen in Taganga looking for other means of income. As already mentioned, the fish stock is assumed to be in decline, and I was told that a lot of the fishermen have fully or partly left their former occupation to adapt to the growing tourists industry. Some also bring tourists back and forth to nearby beaches in between their morning and afternoon fishing.

3.2.1 Tourism in the periphery

The high seasons for tourism in Taganga are the Easter week, the months of June, July and August, and the Christmas holiday of December and January. Foreign budget travellers are the main visiting group and tend to visit Taganga all year around, while national tourists are dominant only in the Easter and Christmas holiday. Official numbers of tourism arrivals to Taganga do not exist, but it is a shared perception among the inhabitants that the arrivals are more numerous now compared to five or ten years back. At least the total amount of visitors is experienced to be higher today than in the past, even though some informants working in the beachfront restaurants had fewer customers today compared to earlier years due to a reorganization of the tourist industry. This was explained by the increase in tourist guides and organized excursions in Taganga who offered pre organized meals and destinations to tourists. The decrease of customers at the beachfront restaurants applied mostly to the segment of national tourists, who are the most frequent guests at these restaurants and additionally the group most plausible to attend organized day-tours as the typical backpacker tends to organize her/ his own time schedule and activities.

As one can see, there exist different modes of tourism in Taganga apart from backpacker tourism. Generally one can differentiate between two dominant tourist-groups; national tourists (middle-class families and couples) and international tourists (travellers of all ages, occupations and nationalities). Additionally Taganga attracts a huge quantity of artisans, mostly from South American countries, who are often characterized both by themselves and by other travellers as eternal travellers or vagabonds. Different facilities like restaurants and hostels are set up to meet the diverse preferences of the tourists visiting Taganga, and therefore an increase or fall in national or international tourism will be experienced differently by the Tagangeros according to the specific facility they offer the tourists. For example the diving schools had mostly international clients, while the seafront restaurants served traditional food and alcohol mainly to national tourists on short-time vacations.

Apart from the months of December and January as well as Easter holiday, backpackers are definitely the major group visiting Taganga. Mass tourism including pre organized package-vacations, luxury resorts and big hotels is not established in the village, and will in fact be very difficult to manage due to a substantial lack of infrastructure, portable water and proper drain pipes. Additionally the neighbouring big city of Santa Marta and the popular high-class destination of Rodadero (five kilometres south of Santa Marta) attract mass tourism which leaves Taganga to function as the more casual and rural destination in the region. Tourists visiting Taganga appreciate more the authentic beauty and relaxed atmosphere of the place than comfortable sun beds and swimming pools found elsewhere. Being surrounded by nature and hills and an apparently unaffected local life also adds to the feeling of witnessing and being part of an authentic Colombian rural lifestyle and society.

Looking at Taganga it is impossible and also irrelevant to academically *define* it as rural by using statistical standards. Woods (2005) is discussing the difficulties of finding and adopting valid qualifications for what is urban and what is rural, where every country tends to apply different definitions and standards. However, he seems to argue for an alternative way of dealing with the concept of rurality, namely that of the rural as social representation (2005:10-11). I seek to apply this alternative concept of rurality in order to comprehend rural identity as it is experienced by Tagangeros and connected to their village. This approach highlights the importance and relevance of the social spaces imagined by inhabitants in contrast to structural characteristics. Rurality thus first becomes interesting when it is identified by itself, i.e. by individuals perceiving themselves as being rural. In Taganga one finds peripheral and rural

links to the representation of the place, both by the people who live there and by visitors. In tourist advertisements and in guidebooks a clear rural image is conveyed where Taganga is often described as a small, authentic fisherman village. The local population of about 4 000 inhabitants definitely ascribes to rurality by Colombian standards, while the activity of fishing can be linked to traditional ways of earning money and living and to primary industry mostly located in rural areas all over the world. As Hall and Page put it, “popular conceptions of rural areas are based on images of rusticity and the idyllic village life” (2006: 224).

In this sense the label put upon Taganga and the Tagangan society, whether it is rural or urban and whether it is argued by themselves or by outsiders, can logically be connected to their self-representation and self-image. As we will see in Chapter 5, I personally understand an overall representation of Taganga as *rural* in connection to the society’s general dissatisfaction toward many social and cultural changes that have occurred the last decades. I will discuss representations and identities produced by visitors and the local Tagangeros themselves, and how this relates to how Tagangeros perceive the social and cultural impacts tourism has had on their society and their lives.

3.2.2 “Malecón Taganga”

From an interview with a man on the beach selling *ceviche* (traditional Peruvian dish of lemon-marinated seafood) I first got to know about “Malecón Taganga”, a project aiming at the recuperation of the beach and the seafront in Taganga. The project was initiated by the municipality in Santa Marta and was at that time expected to start any week. The inhabitants of Taganga were well informed about the project itself but not about the details and the possible implications that could be forced upon them in the future. This is to say that just about everyone I talked with in Taganga knew about the project but couldn’t quite tell me any details of the changes that would be done. I therefore had to go to the municipality myself, who gave me a detailed map over their project.

“Este tiene como objetivo y beneficio el buen uso del espacio público, y la recuperación ambiental y paisajística de las playas aledañas, como también el mejoramiento de la calidad de vida urbana para la comunidad nativa y flotante, así como una vía peatonal segura.”⁷

⁷ From the “Malecon Taganga” project description, FONADE (Fondo financiero de proyectos de desarrollo).

(“The purpose and benefit from this [the project] is the good use of public space and environmental and landscape recovery, in addition to an improvement of the quality of urban life for the native and visiting community, like a safe pathway.”)

The municipality in Santa Marta describes the project to improve the quality of the urban life of both natives and visitors, and make better use of the public space and beaches. Until this date, only roughly one fourth of the sea front has been used as a bathing beach (see Figure 3:3), and the municipality now wants to clean the rest of the beach area to attract more sun bathing tourists to the area, as well as to increase the general attraction of the village.



Figure 3:3 Part of the sea front area in Taganga, march 2009.

“Our goal is to improve the tourism in Taganga”, replied an employee at the municipality when I asked him about the agenda for the ‘Malecon Taganga’ project. “The improvement of local infrastructure will attract tourists as well as it will make the everyday life easier and better for the local Tagangeros”.

According to the project, the whole seafront area in Taganga will be cleaned, reorganized and replaced with new infrastructure and tourist facilities. This includes the many restaurants and stands/kiosks at the beach, the roads and the public space in general. The existing restaurants at the beach will be replaced with smaller kiosks to be designed identical, and they will not have room for as many guests or tables as today. Neither will any of the kiosks have bathrooms, but there will be built a public bathroom for employees, costumers as well as

sunbathing tourists. As for infrastructure, the road parallel to the seafront will be narrower and the sidewalk (the ‘malecón’) wider. The houses and shops fronting the sea will not be moved, but all the public space between the house front and the ocean will be reorganized to benefit the streetwalkers and the sunbathing tourists. On the actual beach, all fisher boats will be removed to a new small pier at the one corner of the bay. All the boats and fishing equipment will be gathered in one place, so that the rest of the bay can be used exclusively for swimming.

At the time of the fieldwork the project was said to start in April, but the actual date for the project had by then been delayed several times. By the present time of writing this paper, contacts in Taganga confirm that the project has started, but the actual physical changes involved have not yet been clarified.

3.2.3 Social and administrative organization in Taganga

Taganga is under the administrative control of the municipality of Santa Marta. There exists a local police station and a health centre in the village, in addition to private and public ground schools. Numbers from the municipality sets the population of Taganga to be 4 279 inhabitants (2004)⁸, and less than 37 % of the total population is said to be in working age that year. Of those inhabitants expected to be working (1556 persons), only 956 did actually have a job. It must be said that to get more updated information was difficult where both different sources on the internet and in travel guides present different numbers. It must also be mentioned that these numbers were presented together with the project description of the “Malecón Taganga”. One can question the coherence of presenting fairly low numbers in the population’s work-participation together with a development project like “Malecón Taganga” which is promising the full recovery of the town and provision of labour. Secondly it is also plausible that the specific department in charge of the project were seeking funds and support from their head office in the municipality. However, I still consider these numbers to reflect a situation close to today’s reality in Taganga. Only by being present in Taganga observing the daily life, one can see a lot of people if not unemployed at least working in the informal sector, like for example the many local artisans. Also the presence of many elders and children is visible.

⁸ Source: Censo comunidad Taganga, July 2004.

As further discussed in Chapter 5, Taganga experienced a shift from matriarchy to patriarchy in the mid 20th century. This included a shift in control and decision-making from the women of the village to the men, where the male members of the family gained economic and social control within every household. In the traditional Tagangan society, men were only concerned with fishing and bringing food to the dinner table. Women brought the fish to the markets and handled the family's income while taking care of children and the domestic duties in general. Similar forms of organizing fishing societies with distinct responsibilities for men and women are found across the globe, where both coastal Ghana (Overå 1998) and Kerala in India (Busby 2000) are described in academic literature. In both these cases, though, the position of women to sell fish at the markets and handle the household economy is still dominant despite their level of modernisation and outside influences. The loss of this traditional way of organizing the household in Taganga is talked about even today, and the long and nostalgic sense for earlier times are expressed in local songs and stories;

Hace falta afecto en el mundo, cariño y amor.

Bendición de la existencia, con alma de Madre Naturaleza,

En ti esta la bendición.

[...] En Taganga ellas son las que pueden. En Taganga mandan las mujeres.

En Taganga ellas son las que mandan. En Taganga mandan las mujeres.

(There is a lack of affection in this world, tenderness and love.

Blessing of the living, with the soul of Mother Nature.

The blessing exists in you.

In Taganga, they [the women] are the ones who can. In Taganga the women are in charge.

In Taganga, they are the ones who decide. In Taganga the women are in charge.)

This excerpt is taken from a song written by Rolando Sanchez, a local musician in Taganga playing almost every night in several tourist bars and restaurants or with other local musicians at the beach or in the streets at night. He is what one can call a legend in Taganga, both among the local inhabitants and spread by word of mouth in travellers' tales and stories. He migrated to Taganga along with his son some ten years ago, and the story says he fell in love with the fishing village and wanted to tribute the history and traditions of the Tagangan people. His songs reflect sympathy for the fisherman-families and the traditional Tagangan society. Rolando thus communicates the Tagangan traditions and heritage through his songs,

at the same time as his appearance witnesses modesty and a casual lifestyle reflecting the Tagangan self identity.

I was told that the shift from matriarchy to patriarchy happened in the moment when Taganga started modernizing with the arrivals of migrants and foreigners who built up businesses or negotiated in the drug-trade of the area. An explanation to Rolando's acceptance and admiration can hence be found in his appearance within the community. People in Taganga told me that Rolando was living without his own property for many periods in his life. His every-day presence in the streets always accompanied with his guitar and dressed in old clothing and plastic sandals, expresses a profound presence in the life of the average Tagangero and a lifestyle possible to identify with even for the most poor in the society. Unlike other Colombians migrating to Taganga, Rolando has adopted to the local traditional identity and lifestyle in stead of introducing modernity through business. In the forthcoming chapters we will recognize that the meanings the native Tagangeros express in their lives and identities are deeply connected to the past and to traditional values and practices. This is also a way for Tagangeros to identify insiders and outsiders in their own society.

3.2.4 "Tagangero Tagangero" – local identity

Regional differences and strong regional identity are highly present in the Colombian culture and self identity (Pollard 2000, Marks et al. 2006). Kline (1983) explains the great regional differences of Colombia by referring to the topographical variations of the country and the difficulty of travelling before the introduction of air transportation. Even today travelling by land, especially crossing the mountain ranges of the Andes and the Sierra Nevadas, can be very time-consuming and bus rides between mayor cities often last for more than a day. Due to this, contact between the various regions has been sporadic and rare in the past. The regional differences developed in early ages continues to differentiate between the Colombian population leaving "each [region] with its own cuisine, use of language or dialect, its own music and dance" (Matt Rendell in Marks et al. 2006: 33). Also contributing to the regional separateness of the Colombian people are the many years of national insecurity, where travelling even within your own province was considered dangerous less than a decade ago.

According to Kline, it is easy to identify the regional background of a Colombian by her or his way of speaking. Additionally, Kline claims that Colombians also tend to follow certain stereotypes of behaviour according to their geographical roots. While people from Bogota are

described as cold and legalistic and the *paisas* (people from the region of Medellin) as hard-working and serious, the *costeños* (people from the coastal Caribbean area) are “stereotyped as happy, carefree, capable of drinking large amounts of rum and dancing all night, but not capable of speaking a decent Spanish [...]” (1983: 3-4). One can clearly read the dichotomies portraying inhabitants of the inland versus the Caribbean coast (were *costeños* are referring exclusively to the people of the Caribbean coast and not the Pacific coast), and it has been claimed that attitude changes with altitude in Colombia. The *costeños* are understood to have a “more light-hearted approach than their more sober highland cousins”, and they are also accused for neither taking the Roman Catholic religion nor the Colombian politics as seriously as their neighbours from the Andean region (Pollard 2000: 155, Kline 1983: 4).

This differentiation between the regions in Colombia, especially between the *costeños* and the Andean region, is openly demonstrated and spoken about by all Colombians through jokes, tales, narratives and for explaining local societal conditions. As we will read further into the thesis, the Tagangeros themselves as well as other Colombians do agree on the typical characterisations put on the coastal population, and they also seem to be a legitimized source to behavioural explanations.

‘Tagangero Tagangero’ was a concept used frequently in Taganga for and by the native inhabitants themselves. It was generally used when it was important for the informant to directly differentiate and demonstrate identity- borders between the original inhabitants of Taganga and the immigrants from elsewhere in Colombia now living and/or working in the town. As the situation is today, many workers in Taganga commute to and from the village every day to sell their commodities or crafts. I also got told that the majority of the working force in Taganga has migrated from other (normally inland) cities in Colombia, settling in Taganga to take advantage of the growing interest and tourism in the area. Supporting the reputation of the Coastal Colombian’s inability to make business, *paisas* and other highland Colombians are representing almost all the business-owners in Taganga while the Tagangeros have not managed to establish functioning businesses. The use of ‘Tagangero Tagangero’ was however, and not surprisingly, applied when the informant talked about negative conditions in the Tagangan local society enforced by people from outside. A mindset entailing the dichotomy of us and the others was present, and it seemed to reflect a solidarity and unity among the ‘true’ Tagangeros and a united feeling of belonging to the place and to its attached history. The changes observed in the society was seen as a result of the immigration beginning some sixty years ago, and even though most of the native Tagangeros gain

advantages from the tourist industry, they also blame the newcomers for the losses and decrease in tradition and the traditional industry of fishing. An identity based upon regionalism and traditional ways of living is challenged by a new generation Tagangeros, who more than traditions, base their identity upon the stereotypical costeño and their life at a 'vacation paradise'. Traditional values have been lost, and modernity seems to be the determining factor to blame.

Chapter 4 Method

A quote by Leo Spitzer, an Austrian literary critic, is cited in Edward Said's *Humanism and democratic criticism* stating that "the humanist believes in the power of the human mind of investigating the human mind" (2004: 24). It may seem as an ironic statement. Spitzer was probably pointing to the paradoxical fact that researchers go out in field collecting data and interpret human actions and decisions, trying to discover the social meanings underlying it. Thereafter they reproduce other individuals' meanings they claim to have documented and observed while doing research, believing in the method of humans doing research upon other humans. But what are we to rely upon as researchers if not our own ability to think, interpret and understand meaningful societal connections? Without our own mind and mindset we are not able to carry out any exploration or understanding of other humans' minds, and therefore it is rather necessary to look upon our mind and our knowledge as tools to gain more knowledge. These tools are always coloured by our background and subjective perceptions (likewise to the knowledge it produces). However if we as researchers are aware of this important notion and treat our data more as subjective interpretation of a supposed reality rather than objective knowledge, I believe it is nevertheless possible and most important *fruitful* to conduct research in social science.

The importance of constantly reconsider our obtained knowledge and challenge existing knowledge structures in the academia must not be ignored. Pratt (1992: XI) asserts that "intellectuals are called upon to define, or redefine, their relation to the structures of knowledge and power that they produce, and that produce them". She here highlights the interrelationship between the researchers or scientists producing knowledge (and thus power structures), and the already existing knowledge influencing the knowledge being produced. Knowledge is subjective and changeable and constantly a subject for discussions, redefinitions and changing power structures in the academic community. In my own research project in Taganga, I have chosen to utilize the traditions and research procedures found in humanistic geography. This choice is made upon both my personal comprehension of science and additionally to how it suits my research topic. The humanistic tradition focuses upon a 'reality' like it is perceived by the people under study and highlights the meanings and understandings expressed by these informants.

4.1 Exploring senses of place – humanistic geography, existentialism and phenomenology

A humanistic approach to social geography seeks to “reconceptualise place in the context of human experiences of living in the world” (Holloway and Hubbard 2001: 67). This is to say, that a specific *place* and ones feelings and attachments to it are important in exploring and studying the human mind and collective behaviour. Humanistic geography, developed in the sixties and seventies, reacted against the logical positivism present in the geographical research and its tendency to minimize the living individual to a piece of statistics and rationality, i.e. the “quantification of geography” (Holloway and Hubbard 2001: 68). One wanted to introduce aspects of meanings, feelings and values to the science and focus upon individual behaviour. Instead of the urge to *explain* societal conditions, humanistic geographers seeks to *understand* the society and the people they study (Hansen and Simonsen 2007:65), where every individual is seen in relation to its surroundings.

“Humanistic method focuses on understanding the intricacies of human experience and ‘being in the world’ in an attempt to get behind abstract theorization and uncover the ‘true essence’ of people’s encounters with phenomena during their everyday lives.” (Holloway and Hubbard 2001: 71)

Two supplementary and fairly similar philosophies exist that cover the relationships between human beings and the world they live in; existentialism and phenomenology. The philosophy of existentialism stresses “the specificity and uniqueness of each individual’s experience of the world” (Holloway and Hubbard 2001: 69). Jean Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger are two philosophers arguing for the existentialism, where Heidegger’s call for existentialism takes its outset in the importance of ‘being in the world’ as opposite of just reflecting upon the world (Holloway and Hubbard 2001, Cresswell 2004). Existentialists claim that living in itself is the best way to experience reality and existence of both humans and physical objects (Holt-Jensen 2004). In other words it focuses upon the experiences of individuals to understand a phenomenon (Hansen and Simonsen 2007).

Phenomenology is highly related to existentialism in the humanistic tradition within geography. As Holt-Jensen puts it; phenomenology is “a philosophy that tries to capture the universal and general structures of the world as it exists in our minds” (2004: 224), where any understanding of a phenomenon is dependent upon how the individual experience it. Hansen

and Simonsen mention sight, memories and feelings as valuable experiences in understanding the conception of a place through individuals living there or in some other way being attached to the place. According to phenomenology there exist no separate “real” world external to human experiences, and every phenomenon actually comes into existence through humans experiencing them (Holloway and Hubbard 2001). This view is supported by Escobar claiming that “for phenomenologists, experience is located within relationships and between people, and is not produced solely by objective structures or subjective intentions” (2001: 150). Phenomenology is relevant in the theories of senses of place and meaningful places discussed in Chapter 1, where understandings of human feelings are connected to “the perceptions and experiences of place and the local constructions of particular localities” (Escobar 2001: 150). Places are constituted by activities, memories and expectations produced in our consciousness, and are for many phenomenologists or existentialists captured not only as an arena for the daily life but also as a producer of meaning to the daily life.

Critiques have been put forward against the overall simplification of the identity of places and the general experiences of a particular place. The critics point to the fact that every place in the world has multiple identities. When focusing exclusively on the individual perceptions and feelings toward a place, humanistic geography possibly “lacks a critical engagement with the power-laden differences of, for example, social class, gender, sexuality [or] ethnicity” (Holloway and Hubbard 2001: 113, Hansen and Simonsen 2007). Feministic theories in particular criticize the lack of power relations in the humanistic geography’s emotional experience of place. Concepts like home and local communities are idealizing and feminizing place without regard of different perceptions and experiences of the concept (Hansen and Simonsen 2007). As we have read in Chapter 2, Rose (1995) has developed different modes of understandings of senses of place which includes existing power relations and contrasting views of the same place.

However, the critiques fronted by social constructivists claiming that place is socially constructed by power relations meets counter-critique maintaining that several understandings of place may be utilized at the same time. Cresswell presents a view holding that society and social relations are inconceivable without place, saying in fact that “the social (and the cultural) is geographically constructed” (2004: 31). His view is logic; humans can not construct anything without being in place first. Then we can discuss the several concepts of place. In Cresswell’s view above, taking outset in the research of J. E. Malpas and Robert

Sack, he argues for one way of viewing place as something that exists prior to human meanings and structures, if only as a mere locality. “[T]he social does not exist prior to place”, Malpas (1999, in Cresswell 2004: 31) argues, “nor is it given expression except in and through place”. In other words, it is within the structure of place that anything social may arise. Later one can talk about another conceptualization of place that is, through the individuals occupying it, produced and structured by social relations. This view is then coherent to the standpoints in critical human geography pointing to the influences and powers of society. However for Sack, place is a force which can not be reduced to the social, the natural or the cultural. Rather, place is a phenomenon “that brings these worlds together and, indeed, in part produced them” (in Cresswell 2004: 31).

4.2 Interpretation of the life of others: double hermeneutics and constructivism

Every individual makes sense of, interprets and constructs his or her own everyday world. While doing research and trying to make sense of other people’s every day world, one has to apply these constructions from the information our informants give us. This is what Anthony Giddens terms double hermeneutics, where interpretation thus is “to offer a construction of the construction of the actors one studies” (1976, in Overå 1998: 32). Hermeneutics speaks for the possibility to understand meaning through interpretation and general methodology (Hansen and Simonsen 2007). The aim of doing research on others should be that our interpretations and representations correspond to their own social reality and their subjective meanings. How is this possible? How can we interpret meanings and understandings that are already interpreted by the informants themselves?

It is important in this regard to be aware of the social construction of knowledge. What we as humans and researchers assume to be objective knowledge and truth is in fact the result of different perspectives. Knowledge and truth are created and a product of discursive processes (Overå 1998: 33) and power relations, and while we interpret others we also judge and add personal branches of knowledge. The goal of knowledge is not to gather facts, as for the objectivist (Overå 1998), but rather to study how ‘facts’ are created, established and reproduced as valid in any particular society. This also applies within the ‘societies’ of social (and physical) science and research, where social processes and power relations within the academia are relevant and determining for the “content, form and status of the knowledge it

produces” (Overå 1998: 34). Every researcher embodies cultural and social capital, and every observation made in field is a result of personal decisions and selections, emphases as well as ignorance. Doing research is all about selectivity, which again can create complications for the validity of the research project. Selectivity involves everything from producing knowledge in accordance to what one *expected* to observe beforehand, choosing informants on the basis of presumed realities, or to respond to ‘truths’ and knowledge shared and emphasized by the academia and existing literature in stead of challenging them;

“It is the scientist’s knowledge about what is a problem and what counts as a solution, educated guesses about where to look and what to ignore, and highly selective, expectation-based tinkering with the material that guides them toward an ‘innovative’ result” (Knorr-Cetina 1981, cited in Overå 1998: 35).

Through self-reflexivity one can continuously act critical toward ones own selections, decisions and interpretations, but it is however impossible to be absolutely unaffected by ones background and obtained knowledge, whether it be personal or academic. In doing research one is dependent on applying existing academic theories and perceptions, and a main focus is often to actively use the knowledge and insights one has gained from exploring existing literature on the subject. As for my own project in Taganga, I utilize scientific knowledge about tourism and social action produced by researchers, trying to reveal to what extent these theories and proposed ‘truths’ are consistent with my own findings. The following sub-chapters will explore the process of gathering data material in Taganga, and the methodological choices and challenges I met during this process.

4.3 Statuses and roles in the field work

Taganga is a very small and lucid village. With its four to five thousand inhabitants, everyone living in the village knows each other and is even familiar with the workers migrating to Taganga every day. Taganga is geographically located in a valley surrounded by mountains. There is only one road connecting Taganga to the exterior world, namely the winding road crossing the mountain and leading to the big city of Santa Marta. In the face of this, no one arrives or stop by Taganga without intentions. The amount of visitors is limited, which thereby makes it easy to classify who are insiders and outsiders in Taganga.

From all people staying in Taganga you get judged and treated somehow differently according to which group of people you are spending your time or talking with. In this sub-

chapter I urge to clarify and share my reflections around what statuses and roles that exist in Taganga and by which I was personally connected to. All scientists develop and keep different roles and statuses in the areas and situations where they do research, and they are most likely to change back and forth according to the given situation. A successful participatory observation, claims Aase and Fossåskaret (2007: 61), is determined by the ability of the researcher to establish relations to its informants and to reflect upon the statuses put upon oneself in the research situation. To a certain degree it is possible to create and shape ones statuses and roles in the field, they claim, and this is also determining for the information made available for the researcher from the informants and the society in general.

Most statuses are attached to several formal and informal expectations and norms (Aase and Fossåskaret 2007). These expectations limit what is accepted in social setting, at the same time as they can liberate a researcher into private spheres of confidence and trust with its informants when the expectations are fulfilled. In this regard, it is preferable in participatory observation that both the informants and the researcher have more or less unanimous role-expectations to the researcher's status (Aase and Fossåskaret 2007: 63). In Taganga I arrived with some statuses and developed others, some of them intentional while others where placed upon me by the people I met. I here make a presentation of the different statuses I achieved during my stay.

4.3.1 Backpacker/tourist

This was my first status arriving Taganga, and I also partly kept this status throughout my stay. Talking with other travellers and exploring their experiences and ideas kept me in a role identical to theirs, even though they were familiar with my research. This is to say that the travellers accepted me either as a person with a traveller's qualities and earlier experiences, or as an ongoing backpacker with a research project. In the specific and current context I was seen as a researcher, due to my lack of recent travel and time schedule, but at the same time I had general conversations with my informants where the dialogues were based on our common experiences and understandings of travelling. This put me in a position of trust and fellowship towards my informants, and my own stories and tales from my time as a traveller inspired and functioned as a mind-opener to further discussions about this theme.

It is also obvious that the inhabitants of Taganga saw and understood me as a tourist before getting to know me. Nothing in my appearance could indicate that I was a researcher in the

field, and I even took part in many touristic activities and situations, like spending time on the beach or buying juice in a street-stand. I strongly remember being very eager to express and prove my positions as a researcher the first days and even weeks in the town, in a desire to escape the typical ‘gringo’-label and to be treated different than every other tourist. This of course turned out to be impossible, thinking about the huge number of Tagangeros I never got in contact with during my stay who obviously did not receive any indications that I was anything but a regular traveller passing by. But I also realised that in fact having the status as a tourist and visitor gave me a great opportunity to observe and personally experience how the interrelations between tourists and local inhabitants took place. I was personally subject to the approaches from the Tagangeros and other Colombians, and could therefore have a better starting point for understanding both sides of this relation.

Another factor withholding my status as a traveller or tourist was that long-term foreign visitors were commonly present and actually characteristic of the town of Taganga. Even though many local inhabitants or workers recognized me after several weeks and observed my presence over a long time, they had all reasons to believe that I was just another traveller having a stopover and relaxing in one place for a while along with the many others in Taganga.

However, my status as a researcher was also familiar for others than the individuals I presented my project to. I soon enough experienced the spread of word and rumour, and my project obviously touched a deep interest both from the Tagangeros as from the travellers themselves.

4.3.2 Researcher and long term resident

My own personal comprehending is that the local Tagangeros more than the travellers captured me as a researcher in Taganga. For them I was a relative long term resident doing research upon the society, while the travellers viewed me more as a master student combining my research and field work with personal interest and enjoyment. This is not to say that I had the impression that travellers did not take my project seriously, they were generally rather impressed by its relevance and of the underlying interests and importance of the study. At first many travellers were surprised by the possibility to conduct serious research upon a subject as ‘social’ and ‘informal’ as backpacking. Most of them got however immediately interested and engaged in my project after I had shortly explained my objectives.

In the eyes of the Tagangeros I went from being a tourist to be a researcher in the moment they got to know my reasons for staying in the village. Several times people introduced me to other friends as a student or researcher, eager to tell them about my project. In the process of constructing my status as a researcher it was also to my benefit that I had previously visited the village as a tourist, and that I was now back again for other purposes. I knew the village from beforehand and had a general overview, though limited, over the brief history of Taganga. I perceived this as an important factor for getting tolerated and respected by the local informants, in addition to helping me understand their realities and meanings of their place.

Probably my position as a researcher continuously got confused by my apparent physical and social characteristics as a backpacker (see 4.3.4), and my status shifted according to the specific social situation even by people who already knew me.

4.3.3 Artisan

A third social group of individuals who are neither considered locals nor tourists is the group of artisans who get to hold a quite special position in the Tagangan society. To identify them as travellers could also be suitable, but nevertheless not fully correct considering their status as workers in the village. I have had problems finding academic literature which focus on the presence of the many artisans at backpacker hotspots in Latin America and the fairly unique position they hold in the travelling culture as a whole. Without being discussed in my conversations and interviews with them, I still have the impression that the artisans in Taganga were treated and positioned as tourists or travellers by the local Tagangeros, while captured as locals or hosts by the tourists.

During my two and a half month in Taganga, there were always a lot of artisans around in the village. Many of them stayed there at least as long as I did, while others were passing by and only stayed for a week or so. The main majority of all the artisans were Latin, including some Colombians and a few Tagangeros. Generally they can be characterized by travelling without schedule or time-pressure, and they tend to stay longer in typical backpacker-hotspots to sell their handcraft. The diversity of their handcraft is not extensive; most of them make jewellery such as earrings and necklaces out of natural materials, although I also observed a few making crafts like hammocks, clothes and paintings.

The social encounter with an artisan can be very intense for backpackers visiting Taganga. The artisans are highly active in their approach to travellers and are definitely a substantial part of creating and setting the social atmosphere in the town. They are present everywhere in the public space and are working directly linked to tourism. As I will discuss in Chapter 5 about social meetings in my analysis from the interviews, the artisans maintain a special and often highly controversial relationship with the travellers. Some backpackers felt they were treated like ‘brothers’ with specific links to the vagabond and hippie culture, while others were treated exclusively as potential customers or ‘cash-machines’. The latter was the most evident in first-time meetings with the artisans, but every individual seemed to be treated differently according to looks, mode of travelling, social skills and so forth.

I was in the beginning treated as a potential customer and therefore a victim of obvious false friendliness and different seller tactics. Even after getting to know them and telling them about my position as a researcher, they continuously tried to sell me their crafts and placed me in the group of ‘tourists’ opposite to ‘us’ (the artisans) and ‘the Tagangeros’. Due to this assigned status, I got first-hand experiences of how it was like to be a tourist in Taganga, but I was also very interested in the social norms and understandings of the artisans which I until that time did not possess any entry to.

It then happened, more by a coincidence than plain strategy, that my hobby of crochet became an entrance to the world of the artisans. I simply started making swimwear for sale, and was immediately considered a friend and “allied” of the united group of artisans, though being the one doing the unusual mix of handcraft and research. My intentions for doing this work were simply to get to know more people and as a social activity to get my mind off the research occasionally. However I immediately came to appreciate my newly obtained status. From this moment and throughout my stay I had more or less daily contact with the artisans, and as a researcher I acquired a unique viewpoint of the relations the artisans made with both the tourists and the local inhabitants, in addition to observing the internal norms within the group itself. Even more interesting were the observations of how both the Tagangeros and travellers reacted and behaved towards me differently while having a visible status as an artisan. This notion is further discussed in the following subchapter.

4.3.4 Dilemmas regarding roles and statuses

The different roles I achieved in Taganga were developed and applied in relation to the several social groups in the Tagangan society. These roles were functioning and satisfying in their own means and when used separately from one another. Social personal dilemmas occurred however at moments when I was observed with a different role or status than ascribed to me by the informants in question. Particularly this became a dilemma after the moment I inhabited the status as an artisan in addition to being a visitor and a researcher. All the artisans were strongly united as a group even though there were new arrivals almost every day, and everybody quickly came to know each other by sharing experiences and stories from places and the road of travelling. They were characterized under the name “artisanos” both by other Colombians and by themselves, and can be linked to the cultures of cosmopolitans or world citizens. Hannerz describes cosmopolitanism to include “the coexistence of cultures in the individual experience”, though he maintains that selectivity may be used by cosmopolitans where “the individual picks from other cultures only those pieces which suit himself” (1990: 239). In Taganga, the group identity of artisans was based on shared values and lifestyles rather than nationality, and they clearly differentiated their own status from the statuses and appearances of tourists or backpackers. Even though the backpackers and the artisans shared the notion of travelling and exploring cultures and places, the artisans I talked to believed they did so in a purer and more self-fulfilling mode than any backpacker. Having a conversation or being in a social setting with a group of artisans, one would feel a strong sense of who belonged to the group and who did not. It was the artisans who set up the borderlines between themselves and the backpackers, and they used the others (the backpackers) to identify themselves for what they were not. These interpretations are however taken on behalf of the artisans I got to interfere and talk with. I can not subscribe these notions to every individual artisan as such, but more as an overall interpretation of the group mentality existing among the artisans I met in Taganga.

In light of these social borders, it thus became somehow a personal dilemma for my integrity at the moments when I met or engaged with both the backpackers and the artisans at the same time. Spending time with Western backpackers often included eating at fancy restaurants, enjoying a drink at an expensive bar or wandering the streets looking at the handicrafts; places and situations where artisans never engaged. Living with artisans and knowing local inhabitants in Taganga maintained my position with the artisans without social conflicts, but

nevertheless my position with one foot in each camp lead to a certain personal role conflict regarding how to react on the distancing and behavioural expectations from the artisans. Sitting with backpackers in a restaurant, it sometimes happened that Colombian friends and informants of mine entered the dining area and performed musical entertainment for the tourists, expecting some pesos before they left to continue in the next restaurant. It was unpleasant to feel obligated to tip my own friends, but at the same time I wanted to encourage other customers to support the local musicians and show solidarity and respect. I also supported the artisans in Taganga by buying some pieces of handcrafts, which was at no means the norm among artisans. The mix of my roles as a researcher and student, a tourist and an artisan therefore influenced my local status among the artisans, who practically perceived me as something in between.

The backpackers were much less preoccupied with my position as both a researcher and a part-time artisan, and the characteristic sense of inclusion and tolerance found among travellers in all corners of the world gave me no further role conflicts concerning my integrity among the backpackers. As a matter of fact, my involvement with the artisans and the local inhabitants in Taganga put me in the position to inform other backpackers about the town and place Taganga in general and about daily happenings, events etc. They were also in the position to meet and interact with local Colombians I presented them to.

4.4 Doing research in Taganga

The qualitative research methods I chose to subscribe in Taganga were basically interviews and conversations with informants together with participant observation of the daily life in Taganga. Kearns points out that “the goal of participant observation is developing understanding through being part of the spontaneity of everyday interactions” (2005: 195), and understanding also became an important aim of my unstructured and semi-structured interviews. The objectives for my research are not to make generalizations from a representative sample, but rather I seek a wide range of variation in the empirical data to further search for analytical categories and models that can capture this variation (Gustafson 2000: 9). Therefore, informants were chosen randomly in order to encourage such variation.

By observing and talking to the people in Taganga, I wanted to get a better understanding of their lives and to what they gave meaning. In other words, my main concern was to be present

in Taganga and try to understand what was important and the ‘real’ reality for the many people finding themselves in the village. As I interacted in the local community and became a part of the vibrant daily life instead of being an outside observer on the sideline, I came to know and in a certain way uncover many social values, norms and conditions together with my informants. In interviews informants could often confirm realities and conditions that I to a certain point had noticed in the society by observation, where they then had the chance to explain to me their reality of it in more detail or correct me if I had interpreted a situation wrong.

It is important to emphasize that observation in the field involves participating, both socially and spatially (Kearns 2005). Observing therefore involves being present, and “our bodily presence brings with it personal characteristics that mark our identity such as ‘race’, sex, and age” (Kearns 2005: 197). Especially in doing cross-cultural research such factors can be influential in the relations and trust established between the researchers and the informants. Throughout my research period in Taganga I continuously had to reflect and relate to my ethnicity as a white European as a possible obstacle for ‘meeting the informants on common ground’ more than to my sex as a female despite being in a continent coloured by *machismo*. By this I mean that during my interviews, the impression and sense of distance and cultural difference felt greater interacting professionally with the native Colombians than with travellers of different European and American nationalities, regardless of the informant’s gender in either group.

As already mentioned, I used three methods for collecting data in Taganga; interviews, observations and personal communication. I will in the following give a presentation of these three distinct methods.

4.4.1 Interview situations

I perceive my data material as information and meanings I have been presented to through conversations and informal interviews and I also believe that my informants experienced it this way. In many occasions these conversations took place without being expected or planned beforehand, and I rather quickly got used to the simple method of always bringing my notebook whenever I left my house. A casual chat on the street could turn into a useful interview-situation, and while having lunch a restaurant owner on the beach would often have interesting views on the development projects planned by the municipality or on his or her specific work situation. This is not to say that my interviews have all been a coincidence, but

that many of them can be characterised as informal. The benefits from this type of interviewing are several. Firstly, the atmosphere and social setting is relaxed and comfortable for both the interviewer and the informant, and for the informant the situation can be experienced as a sharing of meanings and a mind-opener rather than one person interviewing and asking direct questions to the other. Nevertheless, I applied a semi-structured procedure for my conversations and interviews, where it was possible to “redirect the conversation if it has moved too far from the research topic” (Dunn 2005: 88, on semi-structured interviewing).

If the interview situations weren't created naturally, for example by displaying interest after explaining my reasons for staying in Taganga, I simply presented myself and my project briefly to the respective informant and asked them if they had spare time for an interview. Overall, none that I can remember rejected being interviewed. Both travellers and local residents were truly interested and engaged in the essence of my project, and many of my informants actually thanked me afterwards for bringing them to reflect on the topics we discussed.

I did not make any contact with informants, residents or other persons situated in Taganga before I arrived Colombia. I had prepared an interview guide before arrival, but ended up not using it more than while transcribing my notes after every interview. I had 15 in-depth interviews with local residents living or working in Taganga, and 10 in-depth interviews with travellers. All together these interviews include 32 individuals who were active and present throughout the interview. Additionally I have made field notes and used comments by many other people being present or interfering in parts of the interviews.

My technique for ‘choosing’ informants quite randomly had some obstacles in my interviews with the local inhabitants in relation of getting a representative selection of the whole population of Taganga. My idea was that every single individual living in Taganga was potentially interesting regardless of their position or occupation in the town, and that every individual I interviewed should be listened to without being placed in a fixed category beforehand. This scepticism toward categorizations was influenced by humanistic and radical geography, where one stresses the uniqueness of each individual's experience and understanding of the world (Holloway and Hubbard 2001). Similarly Olwig and Hastrup (2007) have criticized the concept and study of ‘cultural areas’ focused upon by many anthropologists. They claim that studies of cultural areas are serving the purpose “to display

some similarity despite their [the cultures] individual unique character” (Olwig and Hastrup 2007: 2), which demonstrate an urge to classify and compare cultural units based on similarities rather than difference. Following Olwig and Hastrup’s view, I recognized the importance to grasp the uniqueness of the lives and meanings of every individual I met, and therefore not to choose informants based on their background or personal qualities like occupation, gender or age.

However, during my fieldwork my interest in talking with different social groups of the population increased as I gained more information about the society and in particular about the seafront project. It became important to me to talk with fishermen, restaurant-owners, day-to-day migrants and workers in the informal sector, among others, to get their points of view regarding specific questions and topics. I was reliant on specifically looking up different representatives from these social groups and could therefore not entirely base my gathering of data material on random meetings with informants.

4.4.2 Interviews with travellers and artisans

My interviews with travellers and artisans took place in a huge variety of geographical and social settings. I got to know merely all my informants in this group through random meetings in Taganga or through people I already knew beforehand. My approach towards this group was often based on acquaintance or friendship, and in many occasions I spent much time with them prior to an interview. To get to know my informants most often led to better and more fruitful dialogs, and spending time with them in informal settings formed part of this objective. It also happened that an interview situation was naturally created immediately after presenting myself and my research to people I got to talk with, who were interested in the subject and wanted to share their views.

In these interviews I also functioned like an informant, giving the travellers information about Taganga and specifically about the seafront project which I wanted to discuss with them. Sometimes I had to share some of my own points of view in order to keep the conversation going or to encourage the informants to continue talking, but in most situations I tried to avoid this.

Interviewing travellers included a lot of group- interviews, which allowed me to be less active and talkative than in one-to-one situations. The travellers seemed to enjoy the effects of this type of interview, and in addition I could focus more upon taking notes than leading the discussion. I allowed the informants to talk and discuss relatively freely about the chosen

subject for the discussion, but tried to follow up and introduce my topics of interests whenever the discussion got too far away from my subject of research.

4.4.3 Interviews with local residents

The interviews with the local Tagangeros can generally be described as more planned and subject-focused than my conversations with the travellers and artisans. This is due to two reasons. First to mention, the interviews with this group were normally more subject to concrete planning rather than coincidental meetings, even though the latter was also normal. I had a certain vision of the groups of locals I wanted to talk with, and for my study it was also important that I got to interview a variety of workgroups and people with different social positions in order to survey the compelling understandings and opinions existing in the internal Tagangan society. As already mentioned I had to actively seek out representatives from the different segments of the society and somehow work out who belonged to the distinct groups.

Secondly, I saw it reasonable to be more concrete both in my approach and in my questions caused by the situation of mostly one-to-one interviews with persons that for different reasons were not as free-spoken and open to me as the travellers. This is caused by several reasons. It is obvious that my background and personal characteristics have more in common with other tourists than with Tagangeros, which directs the conditions for somehow having a conversation from the same level of understanding and simply of understanding each other. In addition, I often approached the Tagangeros in their working-hours or in their work-place, which logically gave them less time to engage in a discussion or conversation.

This is not to say that these interviews weren't as fruitful as my interviews with travellers, rather I conceive the information I got from the local informants as both the most surprising, most detailed and most interesting of my total data material. They were very willing to share their views and opinions with me, and I experienced them as genuine engaged and interested in the matters I wanted to discuss. Additionally they gave me a lot of concrete information, which gave me the opportunity to investigate in specific phenomena such as the sea-front project more in detail.

4.4.4 Observation

Observation is not objective, whether it is participant or passive. One chooses *what* to see and secondly *how* to see it (Kearns 2005: 193), which means that our roles as researchers are as active in observation as during an interview. In participant observation, the researcher is part of and active in the social interaction that is being the subject of study (Aase and Fossåskaret 2007). One example is my participation in making and selling handcrafts among the artisans in Taganga. I was part of an important interaction among the artisans themselves and between the artisans and the buying tourists. Likewise I was also conducting participant observation when I was buying art crafts from the artisans, when I joined the backpackers in their search for souvenirs or in their social interaction of bargaining.

Besides, passive observation was conducted by observing the social norms and values being expressed in the interaction between a backpacker and a fruit-stand seller, or by observing what a typical day in Taganga involved in social activities for the tourists. In passive observation the observer has to interpret the situation or happening as it evolves to her or him from distance. One can interpret what is actually being said and done, additionally to body language, non- verbal expressions and appearance.

4.4.5 Personal Communication

By personal communication I refer to the countless discussions and conversations I had with people in Taganga outside the interview setting. The conversations were characterized as two-fold; both I and the other participant shared meanings and understandings with each other. These small ‘street- chats’ turned out to be crucial for my understanding of the Tagangan, as well as the traveller, society. From every individual I talked to, I got to comprehend better the collective feelings of both the inhabitants and the tourists in Taganga. Their diverse views on social and cultural phenomena diverged into a complex understanding of the interactions existing among people in the town.

I often introduced the subject of many of the discussions I shared with my informants. In many instances this simply occurred through explaining to people my objectives for being in Taganga. As already mentioned, the subject of my research was a subject that absorbed almost every backpacker and also many of the Tagangeros. On their own initiative they often wanted to discuss my findings or my work in a social and unstrained manner. It therefore did not take the form of an interview but rather a social setting were they (the informants) presented to me their feelings, understandings and hypothesis regarding tourism, while I

shared with them my objectives for the study as well as general trends among informants I had already spoken with. I must admit that this sharing of knowledge and understandings were not always conducted on equal terms. I was not, for example, to tell an informant about how other tourists perceived Taganga, if this was a question I was interested in asking her or him directly. In situations like this I normally disclosed the general trends *after* the informant had presented me his or her own meanings. My reason for this was to try to avoid influencing the informant's statements, thus making it more plausible that the informant expressed her or his genuine perceptions without comparing them to other statements.

Statements from informants were literally cited after permission from the informant in question, and always after an informal discussion with informants I asked every participant for permission to use the material for my thesis.

4.5 Ethical guidelines

*[...]You analyse to a fine point my art and music,
dance and composition,
horticulture and agriculture, pharmacology and technology.
Nothing escapes your keen eye and your pen records it
so that other aspirants to your elevated state
may draw on your findings and further explore the intricacies of me
...and perpetuate the invasion. [...]*

(From Barbara Nicholson "Something there is..." cited in Howitt and Stevens 2005:33)

The extract from the poem above express subaltern critiques of colonial research in how it has objectified 'others', and to how "Western science and scholarship have (mis)represented non-Western, indigenous, and subaltern people and groups" (Howitt and Stevens 2005: 32). It also illustrates the ethical responsibility and the need of prudence in how a researcher approaches a community or persons being part of a research project. In cross-cultural research one faces challenges and differences regarding ethnicity, class, linguistics, gender, race, sex, religion and ideology, among others. Ethical research in social sciences includes privacy protection, confidentiality, sufficient information to all informants, ability to withdraw from the project and informed consent (Dowling 2005: 20-22).

Aside from these conventional guidelines, one may also meet several moral considerations to be reflected upon. An example is the dilemma I met in Taganga interviewing and interacting with informants consuming drugs in my presence or otherwise confirming their use of drugs in Taganga. The use of drugs like cocaine and marijuana is illegal in Colombia like in other countries, but nevertheless it is a fairly common social activity in the country and in the region of South America in general, especially among backpackers. As a researcher I was forced to make a stand at an early point whether or not I was to tolerate, observe and behave neutrally to the use and sale of drugs by informants. The Research Council in Norway instructs every researcher to prevent serious future violations of the law through an obligation to report such instances to national authorities, like the police. At the same time, when doing social research one is automatically obligated to treat every informant with an oath of secrecy and confidentiality, both in order to protect every informant's security and well-being, but also, in my opinion, to obtain loyalty and trust with ones informants. At the bottom line I did not comprehend the use and sale of drugs in Taganga as a *serious* violation of the law in that specific context, given the relative small quantity of the dealing, though I must emphasize my personal disapprove of the practice. I chose to relate to the drug- dealing and drug-use as a social and cultural phenomenon obviously very integrated in relationships among Tagangeros and tourists, and therefore in interest of my field study. In respect of my informants I never expressed my personal opinions in this matter except in situation where I was directly encouraged or offered drugs, where a polite 'no thanks' would do.

Moreover also important, is the ethical implications of our own activities as researchers. Research is a dynamic social process that constantly creates new relations and issues (Dowling 2005), and merely everything we do in field may have consequences for the actors in the community. By choosing which actors to talk with and what knowledge to highlight, a researcher may disclose or even determine power relations in the community where one performs research. Further, the knowledge one produces in the research report or in my case, the thesis, is capable of changing or determining how people or societies discussed in the paper are comprehended (Dowling 2005), whether it is among ones colleagues, in the academic community or in the global world in general.

In geography and in the practice of all fieldwork in general, there exists a "one-way traffic of knowledge from the field (periphery) to the academy (centre) (Kearns 2005: 204). An interview situation, for example, is never a conversation between equal parts. The researcher

defines and controls the specific situation and is also the one who introduces the topics and reflect upon the aim and mode of questioning (Kvale 1996). The researcher and the informants occupy different 'speaking positions' as Dowling puts it (2005: 23), where they have different intentions, social roles and capacities, thus making their participation and role in the research project asymmetrical. The researcher always has a specific aim to carry out her or his project, while it is often imprecise what the informants will benefit or whether they will benefit anything at all. An ethical implication during my fieldwork in this respect questioned my ability to give something back to the Tagangan community. As a project concerned with vague and indefinable concepts such as place identity, social relations, cultural encounters and power structures, my own intentions of doing research sometimes felt both pretentious and meaningless. I quickly came to realize though, that my deepest potential for doing research in Taganga, in respect for what I could do directly for the Tagangeros, was my potential for opening the minds, thoughts and engagement of the local inhabitants as well as the tourists.

4.6 Methodological reflections and considerations

An interview with an informant in a social science research project has a prior goal to find the truths and meanings in the life world of the informant – “it is an attempt to get beyond mere opinions to true knowledge” (Kvale 1996: 20). It is suggested however that it is impossible to achieve objectivity because of the social nature of all research, and that qualitative research emphasize *subjectivity* and *intersubjectivity* because the methods involve social interaction (Dowling 2005). How is it then possible to gain true knowledge through subjective research? First of all it must be emphasized that having an interview with an informant can give you access to the life world and lived realities of that specific individual, in other words his or her personal true knowledge as opposed to universal knowledge. Secondly it is important that the researcher is aware his or her own position, the roles, norms and expectations attached to this status and the power relation existing between the researcher and the informant. Critical reflexivity involves that one is aware of the nature of ones involvement and the influence of social relations (Dowling 2005: 25-26). A simple choice as for example classifying ones informants, like I classified Tagangeros into native Tagangeros and immigrants, can further have complications and effects for how the informants reply on questions. These are of course nothing but assumptions from my side, but points to illustrate the importance of critical reflexivity and how ones own characteristics, societal position and relations can affect the data material.

4.6.1 Recording data

An audio recorder is the standard mean for recording information in qualitative approaches like interviews (Kearns 2005). In my project it seemed however difficult to use a recorder due to my sensitive mode of interacting with my informants. From the start of the fieldwork I therefore decided not to use an audio recorder, worrying that this would create a tenser and more 'authoritarian' interview situation. In fact I hardly applied the term interview when I approached my informants. Even though I always presented my project beforehand I wanted the data collection to take the form of a conversation of sharing of meanings rather than a questioning of informants.

This implied that all my data material originates from intensive writing of field notes and reports during and after every conversation with informants. Though time consuming, I made it a habit to sit down quietly after every interview situation and correct and supplement the notes I had made and reflect upon the information and statements I had been presented. I experienced this method to function very well, though occasionally it would have been rewarding to be able to rewind certain conversations to get more complete quotations. I still stick to the assumption that a recorder would have affected negatively the informal atmosphere me and the informants managed to create during our conversations. I also avoided being dependent on technology that has the possibility to stop working during the fieldwork by instead being accompanied with my pen and field diary. Every afternoon I made a digital copy of my notes on my computer and a memory stick in case my original notes would get lost or destroyed.

4.6.2 Language barriers

Additional to not using an audio recorder, I also chose to depend on my own knowledge of Spanish instead of being assisted by an interpreter. Knowing the local language is priceless in regard of doing social research and becoming an insider in the local community. Being considered an insider enables the researcher to establish a deeper contact with her or his informants and makes it easier for establishing trustful relationships. Obviously my ability to directly speak and converse with my informants made our understandings of each other and the exchange of meanings much easier. I was able to comprehend what the informants told me in a local setting, for example concerning local expressions which are often difficult to translate into another language. Additionally I could be sure that my questions were asked how I wanted them to be asked and that the informants' replies were not interpreted by a third

part before presented to me. Another point to emphasize is Latin American's fascination and friendliness toward foreigners who have made the effort to learn Spanish. It seems to illustrate a respect on behalf of the country one visits and I as researcher would probably not have enjoyed the openness and friendliness the Tagangan inhabitants offered me if I was accompanied with an interpreter.

Last but not least, being familiar with the local language made it possible for me to carry out observation in the society by listening to what was being said and understanding what was happening in the streets at all times. I would not have the same overlook and understanding of the Tagangan society and the Tagangan people without being able to listen, speak and interact as every other individual in the local community. I also distanced myself from the average traveller by speaking sufficient Spanish, which helped me obtain a role and status more favourable for my project. At many occasions I was not familiar with the significance of some words or expression my informants used, or alternatively I could not seem to find the words to express myself. In these situations all the Tagangeros were extremely helpful and amiable. By using other forms of expression or simply other words we always managed to understand each other, and I did not get the impression that linguistic problems caused any irritation or annoyance among my informants. It must nevertheless be mentioned that our different linguistic background and capabilities are opening up the possibility that I can have misinterpreted or misunderstood my informants' statements, or the possibility that some of my questions have been unclear or irrational for the receiver. This is of course possible in any research situation, whether the informant and the researcher share the same mother tongue or not.

Chapter 5 Patterns and differences of meaning

After reading my data material from Taganga, I realise I have been presented with a lot of both different and concurrent understandings. I choose to present the data material into subject categories, and will present and discuss meanings from both the local residents and the backpackers. However, I find it fruitful to first briefly present to the reader the statuses and roles I observed in Taganga, in other words a presentation of the different individuals and attached statuses a researcher or a given person finding him or herself in Taganga is likely to meet.

Among the Tagangeros one finds workers and owners of both restaurants, hostels, diving schools and small grocery shops along with fishermen, musicians and vendors of fruit or crafts in the street. From my understandings of the society there exist no dominating power relations or status hierarchies among the Tagangeros. As already mentioned the differentiation between native Tagangeros and migrants is clear but without any references to achieved status. Owners of diving schools, bars, restaurants, hostels and shops are almost exclusively of mestizo origin or foreigners, and the majority of them are additionally immigrants from other parts of Colombia. Fishermen are highly respected by all inhabitants for keeping the local traditions alive, though they receive very low levels of income. Opposite to other studies of fishing villages where fishermen often are looked upon as “members of low-status, marginalized households” (Béné 2003: 955), native Tagangeros seem to identify as belonging to the fishing traditions and to the fishery in itself instead of contrasting themselves to the industry. It seems the fishery functions as a symbol for identifying with the place and to unite as one people (see Chapter 6 for further discussion).

The artisans in Taganga are a mixed group when it comes to place of origin. A minority is from Taganga, Santa Marta or other neighbouring villages, while the rest are either foreigners or from other parts of Colombia. Almost all the artisans travelling past Taganga during my stay were of Latin American origins, though it also appeared some European artisans (Belgium and German). The artisans are however, how I perceive it, a very homogenous group when it comes to behaviour, norms, values, status and lifestyle. The use of drugs is extensive among artisans in Latin America, and also in Taganga. Considering narcotic drugs like marijuana and cocaine being extremely available and relatively cheap here, this may also

be a reason for the artisans staying for long periods in the town. Many backpackers I talked to expressed low tolerance and understanding towards the artisans in Taganga, additional to the fact that many travellers found them directly annoying and not trustworthy due to their offensive seller tactics. The most visible group of artisans were the ones who actively approached the visitors in town, and the artisans as a group therefore got a social reputation based upon these individual's behaviour. It is however not correct to claim that all meetings with the artisans were of a tense character. Many travellers established friendships with the artisans, focusing on their common interest and experiences of travelling, and the local population in Taganga seemed to have no specific conflicts with this segment of the Tagangan society.

The tourists in Taganga can be divided into groups of national tourists and foreign tourists (or *gringos*, originally referring to (American) 'white man'), though the Tagangeros do not seem to use any social discrimination referring to nationality. Some nationalities among the travellers, like for example the American or Israeli, have special reputations and stereotypes attached to them among the Colombians. However, I do not comprehend these reputations as determining the hospitality from the local inhabitants. Nationality actually seemed to be more important in the relationships established between travellers alike than between travellers and the Tagangeros.

5.1 Social meetings or exploitation?

Colombians are often characterized by travellers as one of the friendliest and warmest population in Latin America, and Taganga is by no means different. The *costeños* are famous for their parties, their smiles and a trouble-free mind, and both local residents and tourists told me that it was easy to establish cross-cultural relations. "Everybody is very friendly, it's like everybody knows everybody. It is like a family," was the comment from an Israeli male traveller. A Tagangan woman working in a small stand at the beach shared his view. "We are friends and we take care of them [the foreigners]" she said. "For example we look after their stuff at the beach so they won't get robbed" (Isabella, 32).

Some travellers told me concrete experiences where they felt they had met local Tagangeros on common ground; real social meetings. One afternoon in a hostel in Taganga I was having a casual conversation with two travellers, and one of them told us about his experiences that

same day. He described different Colombians he had met on the beach, and how they all surprised him by being so friendly. First he had met a couple from Medellin who just wanted to converse with him and practice their English. He remembered they had asked him if they were bothering him;

“It was so funny because they felt that they were bothering me! I said off course not. Because it didn’t feel pushy, I felt really comfortable. It was all like natural. They even invited me to stay with them in Medellin if I planned to go there, and I wouldn’t pay them anything!” (Christopher, Canada)

Later that day Christopher had met a local artisan who sold small paintings and started to talk with him. They had talked a while about his paintings and about art in general. Christopher showed him some stones he was carrying, and decided to give the artisan a piece of one stone. He told us that he had thrown the stone in the ground so it broke in two pieces.

“I did it because I just thought he would really appreciate it. And he really did. The way he reacted to me felt very pure. This was a good experience, and yea, it’s normal in Taganga.”

The small detail of the stone broken in two was obviously emphasized by Christopher to symbolize a notion of brother-hood and sharing, and according to my interpretation of the story, he had felt that they had been viewing each other on equal terms. The excitement in his voice also struck me as though he had achieved something, proving that simple friendliness and caring was more important than money and business in means of having a positive and real social meeting. All this symbolism Christopher attached to what actually took place can probably be viewed as an exaggerated romantization of cross-cultural meetings. Nevertheless it is crucial to remember as researchers to pay attention to phenomenon and happenings as they unfold for the actors involved and how they themselves attach meaningful observations and interpretations to their own experiences. My own interpretation of the situation is meaningless and also uninteresting without examining how the actors involved perceived the situation. To define this specific case as a real social meeting or not, I would have needed access to the perceptions of the Tagangan artisan as well which I unfortunately did not have. I am therefore in the position to only present the situation from Christopher’s point of view, which either way can illustrate as a valid example of the way backpackers create meaning and value to their travel experiences. The normal roles of host and guest (where the host either

wants to serve or make money on the guest) were in his view absent from the social relationship they had established.

Christopher's meeting with the Medellin couple is also interesting considering the social roles normally portrayed in meetings between tourists and natives. The "consumption of local culture" discussed in Chapter 2, is actually here twofold, happening from both sides. The couple is exploring and taking advantage of Christopher and his Anglo- American background to practice their English, while Christopher on his side gets the opportunity to get to know the Colombian friendliness and 'representatives' of the Colombian culture outside of the business sphere. Drawing lines from my own previous experiences from being a backpacker in South America, it can be somehow uncomfortable to be in a situation where the desire to meet local inhabitants on equal grounds is rejected or made difficult by a feeling that the other part objectifies you as solely a customer or a guest to be served. A backpacker often senses that behind every friendly conversation lays a hidden expectation from the native host to gain something.

This is not to say that a tourist does not possess a similar desire for a certain gain. Every social action has its purpose or goal, where we thus have to discuss different forms of capital. The Colombian couple can be viewed as *exchanging* their cultural value as natives for the purpose of cultural feedback (in the form of practicing a foreign language) from the tourist. At other settings, natives will exchange the possibility for authentic meetings with economic profit or sale, for example at a local market place. One can then ask if the exchange of social capital is a more authentic or real social relation than the exchange of economic capital. According to the guest or the traveller, this is probably the case. For the host, however, it will probably depend on the present needs, and whether it is the social or the economic capital which weighs the most in the actual social setting. Another important notion with the specific meeting presented by Christopher is that it occurs between two parts that are present in Taganga for the same reason; both the couple and Christopher are tourists. This fact further supports Huxley's (2004) assertion that equal social relationships, unlike the one between host and guest, makes it easier to establish 'real' meetings where the two parts share some common ground.

Another informant, Maxi, pointed to the differences between travellers in relation to whom the Tagangeros relate to the most. He described the meetings between the tourists and the

locals as always involving the opportunity to do business, even though friendship could come out of it. “It’s like first they try to get your money, but later they all want to be your friend”. He mentions his Argentinean origin as a determining matter in his positive relations to the Tagangeros. The *gringos* (here insinuating all ‘white’ tourists) are not able to establish the same relationship to the locals as him, “because I am a ‘latino’”, Maxi claimed. In his view, it did not matter if he did not share the same cultural background as the Tagangeros, due to the fact that they are from the same continent and share a Latin history. He explains that people in Taganga to a lesser extent try to sell him handcraft and souvenirs because of the fact that he is a Latin. It is obvious that he draws parallels between the position of not being a target for the sellers and his own possibilities to make real friendships.

However, not everyone agreed to the image of Taganga as a place to explore culture and meet and get to know the local inhabitants. A TV reporter from Germany expressed disappointment over the village, claiming the presence of too many backpackers and a lot of partying and drugs made it like any other travellers place;

“This is not cultural meetings in my opinion. You just meet hotel owners and souvenir or drug sellers. This is definitely one hundred percent a touristic place. Here you don’t meet the real local life of Colombia.” (Robin, 34)

Robin gives us a completely different understanding and impression of Taganga, contrasted to the harmonic and idyllic picture presented by my informants above. In the understandings of the social interaction he presents, tourism and the presence of backpackers are negative factors at a place for exploring the local community and local culture. Robin felt he missed the opportunity to discover the ‘real’ local life, pointing towards the lack of authenticity. This understanding of the relationship between the density of backpackers and the popularity of the tourist destination correlates with Westerhausen and Macbeth’s (2003) studies which acknowledge the negative impacts of too many backpackers in one place and thus the change in atmosphere at the place. Travellers arriving to Taganga will have more opportunities regarding to meet and interact with fellow travellers rather than to experience cross-cultural meetings with the local population. This can be connected to Cohen’s (2003) theories of the post-modern practices of backpacker tourism today. If it is so that the presence of too many backpackers in Taganga will reduce the possibility to experience ‘real’ meetings with the Tagangeros, then maybe the social and cultural opportunities of the backpackers lies in interaction within their own group?

In Robin's point of view, the important meetings can like this include meetings between two travellers, "anyone who can open my horizons". He says many people travel to get to know different cultures, but actually one learns more about oneself and one's home country; "and this is the good part of travelling, to exchange ideas and to think, reflect". Robin here serves us an important reflection. Are tourism researchers too preoccupied with the social and cultural meetings between host and guest and thus ignoring the meetings taking place between the tourists themselves? Is it not so that a meeting between backpackers also can be regarded as cross-cultural? As mentioned in the introduction, backpackers are no longer formed by exclusively alternative young people seeking to explore, understand and unite with an unknown culture. Rather they form a heterogeneous group of people from different parts of the world with different backgrounds, often seeking to develop oneself in order to "reflect upon their journeys in ways that produce images of self and identity" (Galani-Moutafi 1999: 205, Sørensen 2003, O'Reilly 2006).

Paul (USA) and Alexander (Austria) had similar views about cultural meetings, and claimed one had to partly leave the tourist status to get in real contact with local inhabitants. "You can leave the tourist status, which is important for both parts. This will make real meetings, by focusing on what is similar", Alexander suggested. Paul on his side believed that travellers should use and take advantage of their education and knowledge about the world to have positive meetings with local inhabitants; "one should talk with the people and they can learn something if they want to. This is real meetings." It seems like Alexander and Paul ascribe a criterion of an escape of the host and guest-roles to the notion of real cross-cultural meetings. The social meetings should not be based on economic benefits or business, but rather on sharing of ideas or knowledge and social capital.

Brad, a third traveller sitting with us, commented however that he didn't feel bad being a tourist, as a matter of fact he felt lucky. This was apparently a common view among other travellers. Travelling should not be seen as a burden and one should not feel guilty or responsible for the uneven levels of development and power mechanisms seen globally. The best thing to do for travellers was to try to understand the different life situations and societies they met on their way and bring their knowledge back home. How travellers can contribute positively, it was said, was to behave decent and be respectful for local traditions, laws and customs. Alexander also found it reasonable to try to lower the local inhabitants' desire to go

abroad and live like Europeans or North Americans; “Tell them both sides of your own country, also the negative, tell them that they really don’t have to go there. This is to make them feel better”.

These last comments from Brad and Alexander are very interesting. First of all, I comprehend Brad to be fronting a post-modern train of thought in relation to Cohen’s theories in tourism. Contrasting the modern ideologies of backpacking of escaping ones own societies where one feels alienated, Brad reflects a view where the Western tourist should not feel responsible for the economic, social and cultural world situation. In fact she or he should feel lucky and exploit the fact that they have the opportunity and freedom to go travelling and vacationing. That “travelling should not be seen as a burden” implies a hedonistic view contra-related to an ‘anti-tourist’ feeling (Welk 2004) sensed by earlier drifters and many backpackers even today. Following Brad’s understandings, it is accepted to enjoy a vacation and simply to have fun without feeling guilt by the uneven social and economic reality that one is actually part of demonstrating by being a tourist.

Alexander’s statement, however, illustrates a devaluing of the Western lives and societies and a wish to undermine ‘the other’s fascination with the West and the modern. This assertion supports the ideology of early drifters by undermining their home countries and the modern life in the West. From my point of view his statement can be interpreted in two different ways; on one hand, it demonstrates a naivety toward the lack of ability of the developing world to possess knowledge and judgement concerning Western societies and standards. The statement illustrates (degrading) sympathy and pity towards native people living in developing countries, most of them never in the position to afford even to travel to the neighbouring country. On the other hand, I believe Alexander tries to make a point that one place is not necessarily better than the other. I imagine he wants to put our high economic standards in the West up against our staggering cultural standards which are far more controversial (like family values, divorce statistics, violence, unhappiness, lack of spare time etc). Alexander’s opinions can be comprehended as sentiments of guilt for accepting the world’s social and economic difference. Brad on the other hand belongs to a more universalistic standpoint, viewing all individuals as interacting and living side by side united by sameness (Beck 2006) and thus having equal responsibility for the world situation.

5.2 From traditions and values to ‘easy money’: The belief and concept of changes in Taganga

“There were no roads, no electricity. Everybody were fishing or selling fish at the markets in Santa Marta. Everybody knew each other, and you could go out in the streets and sit down wherever with a neighbour and eat lunch.” (Victor, 60)

In this sub-chapter I aim to present the perceptions the local inhabitants in Taganga have toward tourism and the social and cultural changes they believe the industry has brought to the village. It is important to acknowledge the sentiments existing in Taganga within its local community in order to understand their hopes for the future and their behaviour and attitudes toward the stream of tourists and backpackers arriving Taganga.

5.2.1 The intrusion of ‘outsiders’, drugs and modernity

The quotation above is from a Tagangan street-seller when I asked him to describe Taganga when he was young, and it is a common description from adult and elder Tagangeros. They highlight the primitive and simple life in a town where you only found ‘real’ Tagangeros and where the impacts of modern life still were unknown. “Now the mentality has changed, from family values to ‘easy money’”, a chef from Taganga claimed. The family composition and traditional values have partly been lost with the new generations, highly caused by the presence of foreigners and ‘people from outside’ (common expression referring to Colombians settling in Taganga);

“Drug-trafficking was the beginning, and then the foreigners arrived and possibilities opened up for quick money and a different lifestyle. The children here go from being kids to adults very rapidly, they learn how to exploit and make money from the foreign tourist [...]. The national tourism started around the 80’s and 90’s where Colombians came to relax and enjoy the beach. Now however, the foreign tourists only care about sex, drugs and party. It is a destructive tourism in relation to values and the way of life for the Tagangeros. For example, the youth in Taganga get wrong and bad images of how the world is and how the foreigners behave, and compare their own life to this.” (Simon, 32)

A lot of my Tagangan informants told me that a central reason for the changes and loss of values and traditions is the heavy immigration of people from outside Taganga the last twenty years. Taganga used to be a very poor village, and when the tourism expanded and the

popularity and demand for land raised, many inhabitants sold their land and moved elsewhere. This is still a very common feature, and I got told that it is happening today to a higher extend than ever before. All the Colombians moving to Taganga in this period, from the 70's and onward, brought different traditions to the village.

It is a common understanding that the entry of alcohol, drugs and drug-sale are one of the main reasons to what Tagangeros perceive as negative social and cultural changes in their village. In the same decade as Colombians from outside started to migrate to Taganga, the town was also experiencing the arrival of the hippie culture from Europe and USA. It brought a lot of changes, for example the consumption of rum and marijuana which is very characteristic for the Tagangan population (as well as for the tourist scene) today. A restaurant owner gave me an illustrating metaphor of the troubles the Tagangan people experienced trying to adapt to these changes;

“These changes were very confusing and destroying for the population in Taganga. If you for example are a farmer living a healthy and simple life, the only thing you worry about is to have enough food and to survive, and you are happy. But then later you find gold or petroleum on you land, and you will become crazy because you have no idea what to do! This is exactly what happened here in Taganga, it was a disaster. All the money and the drugs that suddenly came into hand of normal people became too much to handle and created big disorder. People who previously worked in fishery, most of them analphabetic, had now access to ‘easy money’, and their needs and desires changed rapidly. It was like God arrived for one day, and then left the next...”
(Roberto)

Roberto told me how the drug business had appeared manageable and simple, but in reality it was quite the opposite and many inhabitants changed their lifestyle completely only to be unsatisfied and with expectations they could not meet. Also the shift from being a matriarchal society dominated by women to become a society with a totally different economical system (see 3.2.4), impacted the priorities of the households and affected the everyday life of all Tagangeros. “It was honestly better before with the women in control, because the men got confused and lacked capacity to handle their power and money, and also there was, and still is, a lack of proper education”, Roberto concluded. All the cultural changes described in the above paragraphs can be linked to what Pratt (1992) terms “transculturation”. It refers to “how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them

by a dominant or metropolitan culture” (1992: 6). It is describing the process which has taken place in Taganga where the native Tagangeros have adopted Western cultural institutions such as patriarchy and a monetary based economy.

The increased sale and use of drugs and alcohol has been a consequence of the changes in the Tagangan lifestyle and priorities. Worrying for the Tagangeros is the situation and future for young children and teenagers in Taganga and how they are being exposed to drugs in their home village. A Swiss mother settled in Taganga reflected upon the situation of her 12 year old son and the presence of drugs in Taganga; “It’s different from another city in the world, where you have to seek out the drug-sellers and communities to experience with drugs. Here in Taganga the sellers find *you* and you are already living right in the middle of the consumption.” Also a young woman working at the kitchen in a hostel told me that her sister considered moving away from Taganga with her ten year old son, due to the high presence of drug abuse in town. She claimed the local police are not doing anything to stop the selling and abuse of drugs, and that this is a critical issue in the local atmosphere of their town and not to mention in keeping the families together.

5.2.2 Loss of tradition and local identity

We have heard Roberto stating the disadvantages of modernity forced upon a local society by external actors or factors in his descriptions of how the drug trade entered the fishing village. Escobar (2001: 162) recognizes the sense of loss of traditional values and identity, as expressed both by Simon and Roberto in the beginning of this sub-chapter, “as the most immediate source of loss of territory” for many local communities across the globe. In his article discussing localization versus global forces in relation to place and culture, he mentions several other factors present in the loss of territory experienced by local communities across the globe. These include: a) loss of traditional production practices, b) state development policies oriented by purely external criteria, c) internal conflicts in the community, d) out migration, e) the arrival of people foreign to the region espousing the ethics of capitalism and extractivism, and finally f) the neoliberal opening to world markets. These are exact processes present in Taganga at this moment, wherein many villagers feel that it is intimidating and threatening their common local identity and shared heritage. First of all, the loss of their traditional production in fishery is in heavy decline, injuring their identity and heritage as fisher folks. Secondly both the arrival of outsiders starting up businesses in Taganga and state policies in the form of the Malecón project has put progress, business and a

money-oriented mentality to dominate the Tagangan everyday life. Contrasting objectives for the future of Taganga has led to internal conflicts (see 5.3), and the growth in tourism has made out migration necessary for some villagers, though earning good money by selling property.

The capitalist society and economic system is also criticized, both by Escobar himself and in statements made by Roberto and Simon. It is a common feature all over the world that with globalization comes capitalism, and capitalism has been endowed with such dominance and hegemony that “it has become impossible to think social reality differently” (Escobar 2001: 153). Gibson-Graham (1996, cited in Escobar 2001: 154) holds that capitalism is presented as “naturally stronger than the forms of noncapitalist economy” (like traditional economies or “Third World” economies), and that “all forms of noncapitalism become damaged, violated, fallen and subordinated to capitalism”. Escobar speaks for an orientation toward place-based localizing strategies, in the form of social movements, to cope with the challenges faced by local communities in their meeting with the global. He claims localization, as the defence of territory and culture, can be obtained by engagement with translocal forces such as environmental or anti-globalization movements, in order to bring the development of a locality down to local units of power and decision making. The Tagangeros, though, seem to lack social or political organization in order to bring the decision making and political influence down to a local level. The seafront project of the Malecón has seemed to make them aware of their weak political voices fronting the politicians in Santa Marta, but it did not become clear from my conversations with the Tagangeros if they intended to do something about this situation.

Erica (32) described to me how the daily life functioned in Taganga when she was a child. Men were fishing, women sold the fish on the markets and the exchange of food was common. She reflected upon the sudden change in the priorities of her neighbours; “If someone had rice then another one had some eggs, and together we survived. Now it is all about the money. Tourism has made a huge ambition to get more money”. The comment reflects nostalgia for how the Tagangeros have lost a part of their solidarity and ‘brotherhood’ towards each other. The ambition to constantly earn more money was mentioned in many occasions throughout my stay in Taganga and it seems to be one of the core points to explain the loss of their once shared identity and values.

Apart from changing values within the local population the last fifty years, the traditional industry is also in decline. The decrease in fishery is seen by the Tagangeros as an additional, and maybe the most substantial, loss of local identity. Always referred to as the fisherman village, this is soon starting to become a lie considering the many people sacrificing their family's fishing traditions and turning to tourism to make money for their family. "The fishermen have found it more economic to take tourists to Playa Grande and Tayrona (beach areas nearby), and many of them also carry back drugs in their boats which they sell in Taganga", a seller on the beach told me. The statement is of an accusing manner; the fishermen have been seen as Taganga's proud guardians of shared traditions, morality and values, and now also they are seen engaging in the modernity of tourism and in criminal activities like drug smuggling. Strong sentiments are unquestionably connected to the tradition of fishery. It was also a well known fact that the fish stock in the ocean had fallen drastically the last fifty years because of the use of dynamite in the fishery in addition to pollution from boats and industrial spillage from Santa Marta. This decline in fishery and the invasion of other industries will be further discussed and linked with place identity in 6.1, where this notion is put in context to similar studies of fishing villages elsewhere.

5.3 The seafront project: developing or destroying Taganga?

The seafront project is referring to "Malecón Taganga" presented in Chapter 3, and in this subchapter I want to explore the different understandings and perceptions of the project from the Tagangeros and the travellers in Taganga. Important to mention is the fact that all the local inhabitants and workers in Taganga knew about the project before I talked with them, although the information level among them was varying. Not surprisingly, none of my informants among the travellers had heard about the project, and I had to share my knowledge about it before I could receive their responses. This involves of course methodological implications, and there is a possibility that my way of presenting the project, or even just *by* presenting it, can have influenced their responses and reactions.

In chapter 2 I already mentioned that I first got to know about the project through an interview. It was my interview with Hector, a 22 year old fisherman living in Barranquilla, driving to Taganga beach almost every day to sell shrimps and ceviche. For him personally, the project was the equivalent of privatizing the beach and he assumed the municipality wanted to exclude all beach-sellers. He was worried he would no longer have access to his

work place, even though he was member of the Organisation for Vendors in Taganga. They had not received much detailed information from the organization, but it was a clear sentiment among the members that the effects of the projects could be determining for their future. Every time I talked with Hector again on the beach, he was curious if I had talked with the municipality in Santa Marta or knew anything more about the project, which proves the lack of communication and information between the municipality, the organization and its members.

The President of the Organization for Vendors in Taganga also used the term privatization to describe the aims of the project from the municipality. “According to the municipality it is legal” she answered frustrated when asked if this was possible in relation to the law. The term privatization was used by several Tagangeros connected to the vendors’ organization, and the negative connotations to the word seemed more meaningful for them than its actual definition. It became obvious that the term expressed a present worry among the Tagangeros working around the beach area concerning their prospects of keeping their jobs and income. They expressed anxiety for increased poverty due to smaller restaurants and fruit stands with less demand for staff.

There was also a deep concern with the physical development of Taganga; “We don’t want Taganga to become like a small city, it has always been a fisherman village and it is indigenous land”. They saw Taganga as separated from the rest of the modern world, something to be saved and protected;

For the future I would like a Taganga without asphalt. I don’t want any McDonalds or commercial malls, neither I want big buildings and hotels like they have in Rodadero. Why? Because this is a small village. Taganga is a popular and welcoming place for everyone who wants to visit us, either if you have a lot of money or not. I do not want this place to be like Monaco in France. (Roberto, restaurant owner)

In one interview it was said that the project would be a disaster and a big mistake put upon the local population. It got pointed to the expected increase in taxes and an organization of the tourism including foreign capital and investments. The local Tagangeros expect to be overrun by people from outside who want to make business. Sceptics of the projects claimed that all the promises of a cleaner and restructured Taganga only would be realised in the beach zone, which would be exclusively for the benefit and use of tourists and the tourist investors with

hotels and restaurants in this area. The Tagangeros already working by the beach fear they will be removed or excluded from their spot, and they have difficulties to understand how the same amount of people working in the restaurants and stands by the beach today will be able to get a fulltime job in the new restaurants the municipality have included in their project. They fear that Taganga will be like the neighbour tourist destination Rodadero, where they have big hotels and tall buildings. One girl (23) reflected upon the possibilities the project can attain in her village; “This is good [the project] in the means that it will open up for more employment, but this offer will not be as valid for the Tagangeros as for people from outside who see the opportunity to start business”. The lack of capital, experience and initiatives are constraints for the development of the native society of Taganga, and they fear their town will be over run by people from outside without respect or knowledge of their traditions and history and who will sooner or later force the Tagangeros to leave their own land.

Positive and optimistic expectations for the project were nevertheless fronted by some inhabitants in Taganga. Many workers in the tourist sector hope for and expect a considerable increase in the arrival of tourism, which they see as an opportunity to make tourism a secure source of income. An improvement in infrastructure and cleaner surroundings are also important for some local inhabitants, though usually the native Tagangeros mostly want to keep their village in the same shape and condition as it had traditionally existed.

The travellers I met in Taganga had quite homogenous attitudes towards the seafront project. Simply put forward, they all thought it would be destroying for the local atmosphere and attraction of Taganga, and they also expressed sympathy for the local inhabitants who had to adapt to the coming changes. To remove all the fisher boats to a small pier at the end of the beach seemed irrational to the travellers who considered the fishermen and their close presence to the everyday life of Taganga as the town’s primer symbol and attraction. Also the untidy, dirty and rocky beach was seen as the special charm of the place. Even though a lot of the travellers I spoke with complained about the imperfect swimming and sunbathing-conditions in Taganga, they all in fact agreed that this feature made the destination more authentic and unique. Arriving in Taganga made one feel like you arrived into a Colombian-style fisherman village where the local life in a certain way seemed independent of the tourist industry. It can be abstracted from many interviews that foreign travellers found the Tagangeros to be “one big family” where some of the travellers even found themselves to be part of it, due to a unique friendly approach from the host community. Observing the leave

and return of the fisher boats every morning and afternoon and bargaining about today's catch seemed to be important elements for the tourists in Taganga, and as the fishermen sold as much to restaurants and private households as to travellers preparing a barbeque at the hostel, this exact activity was by the tourists considered authentic and real.

A special point made by the travellers was additionally their assertion that a cleaner and organized Taganga without the evident presence of fishermen would be more or less identical to dozens of other beach destinations in South America. Taganga would lose its original reputation and attraction and would probably attract more visitors from the spectre of mass-tourists or national tourists. "Why does everything has to be perfect and throughout intentional all the time?" was the comment of an American traveller; "This place is messy and dirty, but people love it and there's a magic atmosphere around here I will never forget". Similar statements were also found by other travellers, and I interpret that western travellers find Taganga as a nature-oriented and relaxing get-away from the trend in functionalist and efficient utilization of space in their home countries. It was a shared view that the project most probably would result in an increase of the number of national tourist or mass-tourism arrivals, while the masses of arriving backpackers would decrease.

5.4 Constraints and opportunities: Different understandings of the place

A set question in all my interviews and conversations was to ask the informants to describe the place Taganga. I wanted them to tell me everything that came to their mind, physical descriptions as much as feelings for the place or the sense of local atmosphere. Before I start presenting the severe reflections upon Taganga as a hometown, as a tourist destination or simply as a place to be, I want to mention that the reflections and descriptions presented by my informants overall can be categorized into two categories; the place Taganga was either described as a 'place of constraints' or as a 'place of opportunities'. I have borrowed these two concepts from Eli Janette Fosso's (2004) study of youth migration from Norwegian outskirts and remote districts, where she explored which factors and relational meanings that made some teenagers migrate and others stay in their hometown. Even though most Tagangeros and travellers were able to discuss and reflect upon both negative and positive understandings of Taganga, every informant can be said to have a main focus on either the one or the other category.

5.4.1 Backpackers paradise

I will start by presenting the understandings and meanings capturing Taganga as a place of opportunities. My focus includes that a place of opportunities represents a positive engagement in the future of the place, emphasizing positive changes and development. Like in Fosso's study, the community represents "positive growing up conditions, close social relations, safety, peace and harmony" (2004: 125, my translation) which are positive factors for residents. Hector expressed the positive changes Taganga had gone through within the five years he had been coming daily to Taganga to sell ceviche on the beach;

"Five years ago, Taganga was ugly. Now it is beautiful. I like to work in Taganga, everything is pretty. It's a lot more beautiful here now than before, and also more money".

Maria, owner of a scuba diving school, is happy for the growth of tourists visiting Taganga the last years and she is positive that the arrival of tourists will increase even more, especially after the municipality in Santa Marta start their plan of recovering the beach and the infrastructure. Regarding the fact that a lot of Tagangeros are selling their land to foreigners or Colombians from outside Taganga, she sees it as a win-win situation; "The Tagangeros are happy about selling their land because they need the cash, and then they only move to another place around here". She also points to the fact that all the scuba diving schools, additionally to almost all the restaurants and running businesses in Taganga are owned by people that have immigrated to Taganga, and highlights their important contribution for economic development in the village.

Roberto also emphasized the importance of the foreigners in the town, despite his scepticism toward modernity and capitalism fronted in the previous sub-chapters. He claimed the many marriages between Colombians and foreigners had resulted in a lot of investments, and that these investments definitely have been overall determining for the Tagangeros not least in considering work opportunities. "In Taganga, no one had thought about organizing the tourism, and now all the businesses here are established by people from elsewhere, either foreigners or Colombian", he added. He himself was born in Taganga but it was his father from Barranquilla who established the restaurant over thirty years ago. Also the tourists arriving to Taganga are seen as an enriching factor in his point of view, especially the one who settles or stays for a while:

“They are really nice people, they’re almost like brothers [the foreigners settling in Taganga]. For them it is very important to take care of the nature and be environmentalists and things like that, and that’s very important for this place. Additionally they are very helpful to the community of Taganga and help us economically with different projects and funds. [...] They really wish for all Taganga to get forward and develop to something better. They want a better life for all the inhabitants, the best for everyone.” (Roberto)

One afternoon I got to talk with a retired fisherman sitting on the beach, watching his friends who were still in the business coming to shore with the day’s catch. He was optimistic thinking about the changes that had occurred in his home village over the years. He believed the level of children going to school had risen since he was a child, hoping that more people with basic education will create more possibilities for Taganga in the future. Also he claimed that there were a lot more professionals and educated persons living in Taganga now, like for example doctors and lawyers. “Earlier we were only fishermen, but now all kinds of people are settling here.”

In the category of looking at Taganga as a place of opportunities are also the majority of the travellers. The general view, as expressed by one British informant, is that Taganga is “a cool place to be, even though it’s a backpacker place”. Some travellers were even surprised that there weren’t as many backpackers there as expected. Hence similar to other studies (see Westerhausen and Macbeth 2003, Sørensen 2003, O’Reilly 2006, Cohen 2003 and Shaffer 2004 for further readings), many backpackers found it negative if a place attracted too many backpackers. Referring to the tourism research of Cohen (2003) and Huxley (2004) among others, a place will lose its authenticity with the arrival of many travellers, which will in turn lead to mass tourism. “The best is if a place has only a few backpackers and not a ton” an American male traveller told me. “Backpackers are the reason I like travelling, but also to meet locals”. This supports the research of Huxley (2004), where she points out that one factor that can limit the contact a traveller gets with the local host community is by meeting a lot of fellow travellers.

Betty (44) described Taganga as ‘the wild west’ compared to her home country Belgium where one has to ‘walk the line’ and behave decent to fit in the society. “In Taganga, no-one walks the line” she says, “everything is possible but nothing’s for sure”. She thinks Europeans do not realize this, that all the laws and restrictions in our western countries make people “unable

to breathe”. Itamar from Israel is positively surprised about Taganga. Back home he had heard many tales and stories from Taganga from other friends who had been travelling, and it turned out to be even better than expected. “Taganga has a very special atmosphere, very magic”, he says. “Everyone is friendly. Nothing could be better here, it’s already perfect”. He also comments that the village is a real backpacker place, but he links this to positive factors like the availability of music-scenes and the reputation of the *costeños* to party a lot. Itamar concludes upon the life realities of the Tagangeros and their ability to live modest lives:

“People here are very poor but so happy. That is what I find so amazing here in Colombia and especially in Taganga. [...] Truly, I am really jealous of them because they are able to have this mentality and can live this way of life and still be happy. I really would want to be born here and raised that way, but I’m too used to all my consumption and the capitalist society”.

5.4.2 “When you’re breaking the traditions is when you’re breaking up the village”

The quotation was the direct response from the Tagangero Imanuel (62) concerning what changes the last ten years had brought to Taganga, and illustrates Taganga as ‘a place of constraints’. The comment is demonstrating the significance of the changes that have occurred and the importance the Tagangeros attach to it. His friend, a street-seller of *arepes* (a type of corn-bread), supported his view and said that Taganga is “a very poor family of fishermen, who need to maintain their traditions to maintain their families”. I interpret the maintenance of traditions to be something vital for keeping the village of Taganga together and alive. The fishery tradition is considered as the core characteristic of the Tagangeros’ history and heritage, and is also the symbol of the town today when I ask both tourists and residents to describe the village. The Tagangeros seem afraid to lose their identity, though I am not certain if they grasp the importance of the fishery to retain their reputation and attraction from the backpacking tourists in their quest for authenticity.

Some of the travellers I met in Taganga could already observe the downfall in the fishing traditions. Paul (23) commented that Taganga “probably used to be a genuine fisherman-place and has now become a backpacker fisherman-place”, and points out that the genuine touch probably got lost with the hostels and bars. The reason why Taganga has become a backpacker-place is because of its size, he comments; “Taganga is small enough so the backpackers become dominating, compared to for example Cartagena where you will find a lot

more travellers but far less visible”. Alexander (33) is more deterministic in his view of Taganga;

“It’s going to be overrun; there are too many backpackers here. Everybody knows it is going to be blown up. First it will be too many backpackers, and then mass-tourism. It’s like Surfers Paradise [a backpacker hotspot in Queensland, Australia]...”

He states Taganga as quite a touristic place with disappointing diving opportunities compared to his expectations. He had heard stories from Taganga from eight years ago but everything seemed different now. “I would have liked to come closer to the Colombian culture, but here it is just party and nice girls” he concludes.

It is interesting and partly confusing the contrasting and different views of Taganga I have been served by the people I met there. While the fisherman from Barranquilla told me Taganga appeared more beautiful today compared to five years ago, others would tell me the exact opposite. Even though I am interested in highlighting difference and mapping multitude, some classifications of attitudes can however be observed in the statements of my interviewees. As a common feature, it seems that the native Tagangeros are more pessimistic in their view of their hometown, while ‘outsiders’ see the developments and changes in Taganga as positive. I will discuss further in Chapter 6 how the negative representations of Taganga by its original inhabitants may be linked to their feeling of loss of identity.

Tagangeros informed me about the special reputation Taganga had to deal with in relation to AIDS. The town is said to be overrepresented with AIDS within its population, and it got connected to the practice of what the Tagangeros themselves labelled prostitution or even prostitution of minor aged. Here it is important to clarify the significant meaning of prostitution in the local Tagangero context. I learned that the concept and practice of prostitution refers to the situations where local Tagangeros find foreign boy or girlfriends and engage in relations led by economic means (through dinners, excursions, gifts and so on). This view is especially shared among the adult population in Taganga, while the youngsters tend to be more liberal to cross-cultural intimate relations. The ‘deal’ in these types of relations is described as fun without obligations, where the richer part (the foreigner) pays for the poorer part (the Colombian) whenever they spend time together in exchange for intimacy and romance. ‘Minor age prostitution’ will then be when Colombian boys or girls of minor age have romances with foreigners, often pretending to be older than they in fact are. Some

travellers describe these intimate relations as prostitution as well, but mostly among travellers and young Colombians it is rather understood as a win-win situation for both parts who know very well the conditions and the underlying norms for these kinds of romances.

Foreigners and Colombians from elsewhere in the country who buy land in Taganga are also a source to scepticism and worry for some Tagangeros. Even though the newcomers often establish businesses and attract more investment, money and tourists to the village, they are also accused for pushing the native Tagangeros out of the society. A 26 year old kitchen-assistant at a hostel shared her worries in an interview;

“What is happening right now is that many Tagangeros are selling their land and properties to get money. Most of them have huge debt and daily expenses and see this as an easy solution. More than anyone, it is the foreigners who buy land, mostly to build up tourist facilities. It’s not calm anymore in Taganga, and I can’t even imagine how it will be in a couple of years.”

She explains to me that Tagangeros generally do not have enough capital to build up and establish tourist facilities themselves and in means for income they choose to sell property or houses, taking advantage of the increasing popularity of the area.

This brings me to another topic, explaining the lack of investments and established businesses by native Tagangeros. The costeños in Colombia are simply not believed to have the knowledge or the requiring capacities to do business. This seems to be characteristics familiar to both the Tagangeros themselves and other Colombians, and is related to the already mentioned reputation of the coastal population to be lazy people more interested in parties and enjoyment than working (see 3.2.4). “When Tagangeros try to establish businesses, they normally do not last very long because they don’t know how to operate them. This is simply something in the blood of the costeños”, a student from Taganga claimed. She emphasized on the limitations produced by their tradition and lifestyle of working with exclusively fishery or tourism; “They do not recognize that the tourist industry in Taganga only lasts for two months every year (referring to the national holiday and high season), and have not realized that an occupation like this does not make enough money for all year around”. An explanation to this assertion can be linked to the fact that a lot of the tourist facilities in Taganga are aimed to national tourists who only visit the town certain months a year. Only a small part of the

suppliers manage to attract backpackers who often have different taste and preferences than Colombian tourists.

Another informant from Barranquilla confirmed this description of the costal population in Colombia; “The costeños don’t like to work, they are lazy. The culture by the coast is totally different from the rest of the country. They close their shops whenever they feel like it, and don’t know too much about customer service.” She also referred to the alcohol consumption to explain the lack of local businesses. She claimed that every Tagangero has “drunk so much rum that no one can do business anymore” and even though they know what it takes they are not willing to do it. This image of the Tagangeros thus reflects the in-migrants own self identity, using others to identify themselves.

5.4.3 Future challenges

A very interesting meeting was an interview with a Swiss woman settled in Taganga for more than twelve years. Katrina (39) had established a bookshop and ran a hostel together with her Colombian husband who was also working as a fisherman. Eager to contribute to the local development she had started various projects and campaigns when she first arrived, trying to better the life situations of the most marginalized groups in the society, like single mothers and poor families. Katrina also started various projects involving the youth in Taganga directed at their common environmental responsibilities. She told me that she never received any help from her neighbours but neither any resistance. “It’s like they don’t care” she said, “I can do whatever I want and they accept that I am different with different ideas and values”. However, her practical engagement in the environment and in social help programs have stagnated the last years, due to reactions toward her personal involvement in private family matters, in addition to personal frustration over lacking engagement from other Tagangeros.

“Sometimes I feel really irritated, frustrated and angry with all the people and the ignorance here. It is ignorance towards the environment, because they know perfectly well not to throw trash on the streets.”

Her frustration and the lack of understanding and participation from other Tagangeros have impacted on her own engagement in social and ecological matters, but it is not so yet that she has given up. She embraces the arrival of more tourists in order to give the Tagangeros new impulses and for the mixing of different cultures. The tourism can be a way of opening the

mind of both host and guest, she thinks, and this is especially important for the children in Taganga who represent the future and the coming generations.

A lot of travellers viewing Taganga as a place of opportunities in touristic standards said to me that they had chosen to visit the village by recommendation from other travellers they had met on their travel or from friends back home. Travellers that did not get disappointed about the place when they first arrived often said that Taganga was even better than they had heard. Typical descriptions of Taganga are that of a genuine small fisherman village with a relaxed atmosphere and many travellers. Also the availability of marijuana and other drugs is known by word of mouth, and many of the travellers suggested this to be a reason for visiting for many travellers and also partly for themselves.

The notion of drugs and its presence in the Tagangan society is hence seen as a destroying and negative factor for the Tagangeros, while for the travellers it is seen as appealing and positive. I comprehend this as an important notion for the future challenges of the tourist place of Taganga and for the villagers and their future lives. The use and sale of drugs was not a topic in my questions for my informants, but the subject often occurred in interviews as in daily conversations. I was prepared on the presence of drugs in Taganga even before I arrived to the village, and it turned out that drugs are an important factor both in attracting visitors to Taganga, in the interactions between the locals and the guests, and in the notion of changes experienced by a number of native Tagangeros. During my fieldwork, I never looked up or observed situations where narcotic drugs were sold or bought in Taganga, even though I was approached several times by locals wondering if I was interested in buying 'mary-wana' or 'coca'. These approaches to tourist or foreigners took place mostly at the beach by sunset crowded with groups of backpackers, or in the popular touristic nightclub 'El Garage'. A decline of offer was normally accepted, though sometimes the drug dealer could be persistent. The abuse of drugs took place in private settings like hostel-rooms, in a bar's lavatories or in the outskirts of the beach. Sitting at the beach at night-time involved sporadic police controls and searches on individuals the police found suspicious.

When Tagangeros express worries for the presence of drug trade in the village it is directed to the young population in Taganga who may be tempted into drug misuse and illegal sales and partly toward the fractions of the local population today that is involved in the business either as salesmen or as abusers. It is hard to determine whether the presence of drugs in Taganga is

due to the demand from tourists alone or if the drugs made its appearance to stay already in the seventies and eighties when foreigners arrived and introduced cannabis. We know that coca has been grown for centuries in the Colombian Andes as part of the indigenous culture, and now some traders or farmers find profit in selling manufactured cocaine to tourists and residents in Colombia apart from smuggling the drug to Europe and North America.

Chapter 6 Analysing the senses of place in Taganga

I will in the following re-present and analyse the images, understandings, lives, cultures, identities and feelings I have been presented to by my informants. The representations derive from personal interpretation and are theoretically and analytically discussed in regard of sense of place and place identity.

6.1 A small picturesque fishing village?

Through its symbol as a small, picturesque fishing village, I comprehend Taganga for stimulating a romantic longing for the past and ‘the unattainable’ in both the local Tagangero and the tourist. Fishing villages are often seen to be traditional, poor and simple, which further can portray fishermen and fishing villages as stationary or irrational (in economic terms). Loss of traditional fishing industry and scepticism fronted towards ‘modernist’ changes (for example innovations in tourism) have academically been linked to loss of identity also outside the Tagangan context. In *Fishing for Heritage*, Jane Nadel-Klein (2003) observed a striking nostalgic call for traditional values in her research of a Scottish fishing community in decline. In Ferryden where she conducted her research, the local fishing traditions have had to succumb to the introduction of the oil industry. “Many fear that their way of life and their identity as fishers are doomed and will be forgotten”, Nadel-Klein argues, “that their villages, as meaningful places, will be absorbed into anonymity” (2003: 172).

The notion of *meaningful places* is important here. Agnew (1987, in Gustafson 2000) sees meaningful places to emerge in a social context and through social relations in order to give individuals a sense of place. Collective and individual memories are a vital part of the shared identity as fishermen and fisherman-families in Ferryden, which is synonymous with feelings presented to me by adult and elder Tagangeros. Nadel-Klein demonstrates how the villagers in Ferryden address and associate their identity with their place, as well as with their occupation. I find it striking how this reality in Scotland so similarly reflects the reality experienced by native Tagangeros. Being able to claim that they lived in a fishing village, and therefore to see themselves as fisher folk was at risk in Ferryden, and similar sentiments were expressed in Taganga in facing the increasing tourist arrivals.

Similar to the administrative power Santa Marta holds over Taganga, the big city of Montrose has always been in direct economical power over Ferryden. Like the Montrosians were the ones introducing the offshore industry to Ferryden, the municipality in Santa Marta is now right in the middle of constructing a new seafront in Taganga and thus inviting new segments of tourists to arrive. Nadel-Klein explains how the locals in the Scottish fishing village expressed tensions and hopelessness for not being heard by the authorities. The Montrosians on the other hand could not understand this irrational resistance to the “inevitable march of progress” (2003: 94) the oil industry in Ferryden represented. The exact same situation seems to be at stake in Taganga. The municipality office in Santa Marta desires growth in tourism arrivals for the inhabitants of Taganga, while the Tagangeros themselves feel unorganized and without a political voice in decision-making. As explained earlier in this thesis, I do not want to label the Tagangan society as either modern or traditional. Nevertheless it must be pointed out that the Tagangeros seem to embody several traditional values and mindsets in regard to how they evaluate economic progress versus preservation of the past, heritage and traditions.

This notion may in fact be linked to the condemnation of the global economic system of capitalism discussed in 5.2.1, where many inhabitants in Taganga long back to a pre-capitalist society not yet touched by modernity. Nadel-Klein (2003) sees the romanticising of one’s past as an implicit critique of progress. “The commodification of cultures and places occurs under the relentless expansion of market economies (with tourists as foot soldiers) from the global core societies into the periphery”, state Hall and Lew (2009: 147) in regard of the social impacts of tourism. They demonstrate how the impact of globalization in the face of tourism is that places and people become increasingly alike. Unique characteristics are disappearing, local traditions weakening and “consumerism is becoming the defining value of people and places” (2009: 147). We have seen how both the community in Taganga and in Ferryden is and have been reacting toward such social changes, linking their personal identity to local cultural identity.

The notion of ‘true’ native inhabitants is also alive in Ferryden. Already in the 1960’s, when Nadel-Klein came to the Scottish village for the first time, nearly one third of the total population was senior citizens due to heavy youth out migration. The inhabitants still remaining defined themselves explicitly as ‘true Ferrydeners’ in distinction to the ‘incomers’ from elsewhere (2003). It is obvious both in the Tagangan and Ferrydenian case that their identity is attached to *home* place and not just place of residence as an objective geographical

location. To belong to the villages' shared identity, it is determining that one has direct descent with the villages' original inhabitants, and in-migrants are perceived as outsiders lacking their shared cultural heritage. Thus the two cases in Colombia and Scotland demonstrate a borderline drawn between us and others as explained in 2.1 by Rose (1995) where groups of individuals sharing a common background produce certain identities connected to their home place. The native Tagangeros identify *with* their town when viewed as a symbol of traditional values and lifestyles, while at the same time identifying *against* Taganga as a symbol of tourism and modernity. One can say that Taganga is "integrating the local and the global, creating a 'global sense of place'" (Gustafson 2000: 6). No places are isolated, Massey (1994) argues, and Taganga here appears as a place of intersection where the local population does not identify with the global attributes of the place.

However, one notion challenging Rose' theories of sense of place is my impression that also the in-migrants in Taganga identify *with* the village. The immigrants in Taganga are identifying with Taganga on means of being a successful tourist magnet where their own work activities play an important role. Taganga is thus a place providing for the in-migrants' social and economical achievements. These are the exact same notions that make native Tagangeros identify against their home-town. They view the economic gain 'the outsiders' of the society have managed to achieve as something they have no chance of getting themselves. Even though many Tagangeros work in tourist facilities and are dependent on backpackers for their daily income, the backpackers along with other outsiders are at the same time comprehended as the main cause of the loss of traditions. The fishery is in decrease whilst tourism is increasing in magnitude, and tourism and modernity are easy to blame for the societal and cultural changes experienced the last decades. In addition, the in-migrants (both nationals and foreigners) are seen as more organized in business, while the 'true' Tagangeros lack political and workforce organization to be able to have any influencing power on their own lives. This notion was directly observed concerning the Malecón project.

One would suppose that national identity would be enforced and created at typical tourist destinations by identifying against foreigners and their culture. The Tagangan population consists of Colombians from all over the country, but they still share two important characteristics; they are all members of the same community and they all share the same nationality and national historic background. It does however not seem that a national identity

is valued at all in Taganga. The next sub-chapter will discuss any possible and logic explanation for this lack of a Colombian shared identity.

6.2 Linking local identities to a deterritorialized Colombian identity

“As people reconstruct and perhaps romanticize their own past, they create a reality that guides and motivates them in the present” claims Nadel-Klein (2003: 161). She maintains that the sharing of memories is a profoundly social experience, which thereafter creates and reinforces bonds between individuals and groups. The sharing of memories and a shared recognition of the past seems to be present in the local rather than in the national scale in Colombia, and from what has been presented in Chapter 3, I am eager to stress that this may be linked to the country’s violent history. With a civil war lasting for over fifty years as a result of a much older history of violence between conflicting social groups, no one living in Colombia today has ever experienced a nation in peace. The country has constantly been coloured by violence, insecurity and shifting political powers, where the civil population has not fully been able to trust its own government (neither local nor national). In especially rural areas, the control has been shifting between groups of the guerrilla or paramilitaries, and still is in several places.

Pécaut (2000) has written an article about Colombia and terror which highlights how the constant change of power and forced movement of the population has led to a deterritorialization of both the Colombian people and the political power. He points out that it is difficult to identify who is in charge in what areas. In later years, paramilitaries are found in areas traditionally controlled by guerrilla, while guerrilla similarly carries out attacks in domains of paramilitaries. Lunstrum (2009), in her article about the effects of civil war in Mozambique, also refers to the deterritorialization happening in Colombia in her investigation of the relations between territory and terror. She claims that the acts of terror conducted by the FARC or paramilitaries will “destroy or deterritorialize the lived and “everyday” spaces of the communities, terrorizing residents into fleeing and severing links between residents and their homes, land, and other resources” (2009: 887).

Lunstrum’s analysis of the effects of deterritorialization can from my point of view be directly linked to the Tagangan self identity. Even though the region surrounding Taganga is not experiencing serious political and territorial instability compared to other regions at the

moment, they have still faced national insecurity and violence throughout the country's history. I believe this unpredictability has made the Colombians relate and identify to a much higher degree with their local community than with their fellow national citizens. Different areas in the country have experienced totally different conditions and histories, and one small village to the next may support and be controlled by contradictory political actors or armed groups. I can imagine that the difficulty of uniting as a political state and superior government makes it impossible to unite as individuals as well. Thus, the native inhabitants of Taganga still identify themselves against the incomers from elsewhere in the country, because the immigrants do not share identical local background, traditions and values developed by the Tagangeros. To trust outsiders from different areas than oneself has also historically been a risk. Pécaut mentions the difficulty of recognizing 'the clandestine forces' that infiltrate ones settlement (2000: 135), additional to the risk of offering your support to one of the armed groups which puts you in danger of attacks from their oppositional enemy.

We recall from Chapter 2 that Edward Said has predicted a demolition of national identity due to globalization forces, human mobility and the establishment of alternative local, regional or global cultures. It seems that in the case of Taganga this might be happening due to increased cultural meetings in tourism and new social relations between the local and the global. I additionally suggest that the violent history of Colombia has made it more difficult for Colombians to share and identify with a national identity. If we go back to the value of shared memories in identity making argued by Nadel-Klein, it becomes obvious that experiences, history and the past in Colombia are most easily shared between individuals living in the same local community. Often, contact and networks crossing local communities have either been absent (due to the country's topography or the insecurity and danger entailed to public or private transportation) or of a conflicting manner (due to contradictory armed groups and drug-networks controlling infrastructure and communication between regions). Additional to the risk of kidnappings, robberies and the like, mobility (except forced refugee mobility) has not been high in Colombia. I believe therefore that local identities have been made even stronger due to the lack of a common national identity.

6.3 Capturing the cultures of Taganga

Tourism is a cultural phenomenon that "both impacts cultures and societies, and is shaped by cultures and societies", Hall and Lew (2009: 141) maintain. I would like to follow up with a

similar statement, suggesting that tourism is a cultural phenomenon where the *tourism culture* both impacts cultures and societies while simultaneously being part of the place-bounded culture existing at every tourist destination. This may be an ambitious statement, involving that the culture of tourism (or of tourists) existing at a travel destination actually are affected by themselves or alternatively of *another* 'set' of tourism culture. My point of making the statement is to emphasize that one specific culture can exist at several levels and in several geographical and hierarchical positions at the same time. It is similar to how we can utilize several concepts of place simultaneously, as we have seen John Agnew differentiate between place as a location, as a locale and as sense of place (see Chapter 2). I believe that both a local culture of tourism and a local Tagangan culture are present and rooted in a tourist destination like Taganga. A travelling culture is rooted to Taganga because of the constant presence of visitors in the town and because of the high numbers of travellers who have already visited and impacted the local culture and people. Additionally to differentiate between the cultures of the host and the guests, we can also differentiate between the cultures of the native Tagangeros and the in-migrants, who partly do not identify with each other.

The local culture (native and in-migrant) has developed through time and through the social meetings that have taken place in Taganga including that between travellers and local residents. For every individual who arrives in Taganga the local culture is to change or develop even further. This is not to claim that a culture evolves and develops exclusively through cross-cultural social meetings, but rather to highlight that the specific travellers that arrive to Taganga will meet and interact with a local culture already influenced by and with an identity connected to tourism. So when one discusses the social and cultural meetings between host and guest, one has to remind oneself that the travelling masses interact and meet cultures at specific destinations that by no means can be characterized as 'untouched'. In other words they are not authentic or traditional in the sense that one can reflect upon their status from before the arrivals of tourists even started. There are few if any researchers that study imagined cross-cultural meetings in tourism at places that have not yet been visited by any tourists. I am using perceptions, tales and memories from the pre-tourism era to tell something about how the Tagangeros understand the changes and impacts backpacker tourism has brought to their culture. However, I see the local Tagangan culture as it exists in the present as a culture of mixed influences and of a rather global character.

The difficulty of determining and defining cultures lies in the fact that cultures are “dynamic constructs that change through time and hybridize when exposed to contact and exchange with other cultures” (Warren 2003: 2). If the contact with other cultures is constant, this means it is constantly changing. I believe this is the overall case in Taganga. My informants have through their memories and tales from a different past demonstrated the changes the native culture of Taganga has gone through within the last fifty years. Fifty years ago one would find one local culture of mostly native Tagangeros in the village, while in my fieldwork I met several cultures present at the same location. I find it fruitful to distinguish between and define three dominating cultures present in today’s Taganga; the local culture of native Tagangeros, the travelling culture consisting of backpackers, and finally what I have chosen to label the encounter culture of everyone staying or being present in Taganga.

The local culture of native Tagangeros is alive foremost through local stories, traditions and memories. This culture functions as a local and important way of identifying within a group on the basis of excluding others (outsiders). The ‘shared beliefs and symbols’, as already described as defining a culture, are in this case the stories and memories of a different past and a pre- touristic local community. Throughout Chapter 5 we have witnessed strong feelings and nostalgia toward this past, in addition to a strong desire to carry on the symbols of the native culture to future generation, despite the threat posed by intruding cultural groups. The travelling culture (or the backpacker travel culture as Sørensen (2003: 850) determines it) consists of travellers and the general norms, values and symbols that are shared among them.

The encounter culture of everyone staying in Taganga is finally the culture that determines the specific cultural identity and belonging experienced by people present in the village at any moment. It is an ‘open’ culture, where new members are accepted on a daily basis while others may disappear when leaving for the next destination. It is also a culture where one can expect to find internal conflicting place identities, as its members originate from radically different backgrounds. Through memories though, travellers are able to re-create their cultural identity to this group. Every place has its own atmosphere, and the atmosphere of Taganga is as much formed by the travelling culture as by the local. The encounter culture is therefore meant to include everyone who identifies at one or the other level with Taganga as a place and as a tourist destination. Even though we have heard native Tagangeros expressing their feeling of loss of traditions and values once alive in the town, the same individuals have also expressed gratitude toward the encounters with the backpackers and proud sentiments over

their home town. Equally in-migrants find meaning with their work and life in a town developed to be a popular backpacker destination, and they have also embraced the place Taganga as their home and land. Even though they may not share memories and sentiments with native Tagangeros concerning the past and history, together they have nevertheless managed to gather as one unit to supply facilities and experiences to their visitors and engage with each other peacefully. Finally, we have heard backpackers feeling as being part of the Tagangan society, as they are 'one big family'. Many backpackers manage to identify with the local life in the village and contribute in daily routines and traditions, as for example buying fish right off the fisher boats.

6.4 Capturing the identities in Taganga

Tagangeros as well as Colombians are in a process of identifying as a host community and as a host nation. The backpackers are on their side facing challenges to differentiate themselves from the mass tourists. While culture is somehow collective, shared by a social group (in many instances also bound to a limited geographical area), identity and identification is more an individual and personal process, differentiating among human actors that may belong to the same culture. Within one cultural whole, to use a term applied by Olwig and Hastrup (2007), one can find multiple identities and senses of place (as already mentioned in Chapter 1). The process of identifying for every individual is however influenced greatly on the collective cultures and power hierarchies found at every place.

The identity making of everyone settled in Taganga, natives or in-migrants, has in the latest years been coloured by specific national and local conditions. I have already suggested the impacts made by the long-lasting presence of violence in Colombia on the differences established between native and outside identity. However all Colombians live currently under a national government which has improved the reputation of Colombia's security to a much higher degree than any government in the past has managed. The general belief that Colombia is now a safer country to stay and travel in has made more tourists arrive and Colombia is established as an up and coming tourist destination. Colombia is definitely in a process of social change, which is vital for how to identify as a Colombian citizen. In the local scene, the huge arrival of backpackers to Taganga the last five to ten years has forced the Tagangeros to relate and identify to the fact that they have become hosts. Overall they share a collective

identity as a host community, even though some Tagangeros more than others individually identify as hosts due to their occupation in the tourist industry.

Speaking of travellers, they are often seen as one homogenous group by the locals. Not even nationality or occupation seems to distinguish one traveller from the other in the eyes of the locals; they automatically belong to the same status and group identity. Personal qualities and characteristics are insignificant for the host community and everyone are treated more or less the same way. I want to suggest that this might be the explanation why there exist strong ties and identity-sharing among the backpackers. Because they are treated the same way by everyone they meet, they intuitively create shared identities based on both their behaviour and the expectations met by local inhabitants. We have seen in the previous chapter how some travellers I met in Taganga have clear definitions on what constitutes a tourist, a backpacker, a vagabond and so on. How they place themselves into one of these identities is further determinant by the behaviour of other individuals identifying with the same group. For example, the artisans in Taganga shared some common values and norms for how to travel and lead ones life, and to identify with this group (even though one actually did not make art crafts as was the case with Maxi from Argentina) one was expected to follow these norms of behaviour.

This constant process of identifying whether you are a backpacker, a vagabond, a traveller etc, or whether this matters at all, is the social nature within the travelling culture and in the meeting between travellers. As mentioned earlier in this paper, I believe it can be maintained that cross-cultural meetings also occur in the meetings between backpackers. Different travelling identities are being produced, negotiated, and reproduced constantly as it is with local host identities.

6.5 The bilateral image of the traveller

As we are getting close to the last pages of the thesis there is one last notion from the interviews and experiences in my fieldwork that needs to be analysed. As I discussed in Chapter 4 regarding dilemmas in the field, I experienced constant changes of statuses throughout my stay. These changes became dilemmas due to the expectations the native Tagangeros and especially the artisans had toward my role and person in the Tagangan community. I was more tolerated and accepted in my role as a researcher or an insider in the

community as opposite to when I engaged and spent time with backpackers. It strikes me that the reasons behind the rather strong expectations and attitudes from the artisans and the natives toward my statuses may lie in their sense of place and their strong ties to Taganga as a fisherman village. As illustrated in the previous sub-chapters, the native Tagangeros, and I believe also the shared identity and culture of the artisans, give meaning to Taganga as a place attached to traditional values, heritage and a 'modest' way of life.

Artisans desire to be recognized by poor economic means and an economic and modest lifestyle. In addition they tend to value traditional art and indigenous heritage which is visible in their own art craft. Taganga may therefore function as an imagined 'hometown' for them as a social group, where they identify with and respect the local Tagangeros by their way of leading their lives. This can be linked to my discussion of the use of staged authenticity in the Japanese travel industry in Chapter 1, where 'hometown' becomes a place to identify with rather than one's actual place of origins. When I asked Tagangeros to describe their hometown they focused upon characteristics typical for the traditional Tagangan lifestyle rather than today's reality coloured by modernism and tourism. Their identification with the town lay in its past and its traditions and values. Tourism, and hence also backpackers, were modelled as the intrusion of modernity and the elimination of heritage, shared identity and social values. Therefore both the native Tagangeros and the artisans identified *against* Taganga as a representation of a tourist destination. The native Tagangeros expressed desires to maintain and protect their traditions and traditional identities, and all individuals outside the boundaries of 'us' were experienced as threatening, including both the tourists, the in-migrants and hence myself when I inherited the status as a backpacker. The in-migrants, on the other hand, have embraced tourism and what might else come from modernity and have in this way managed to develop along with developmental 'modern' changes. However, also this group of the Tagangan society expressed worry and disapproval of the use of drugs connected to the backpacker tourism, and are thus able to see challenges met by modernity and an exposed community.

To summarize, the travellers were both embraced and blamed for the societal impacts they had on the local Tagangan community. Even though they met scepticism from native inhabitants and artisans, they nevertheless functioned as the livelihood for them. If it was not for the backpacking tourists, the place Taganga could not persist as it does today and the local population would have needed to find another source of living. The artisans would neither be

able to live their lives as they do if it was not for the customers found in the backpacker masses. The criticism fronted by these two groups is therefore only one part of a bilateral situation, where actually the backpackers function as their source of income at the same time as they are being apprehended as the responsible actors for 'the fall of the town'.

6.6 Taganga as a meaningful place

In the beginning of this chapter, Nadel-Klein demonstrates how the notion of meaningful places is important for the existence of local place identity. To relate this to Rose' (1995) theories, to identify *with* a place presumes that one comprehends ones own place as meaningful. Using place theories from Agnew (1987, in Cresswell 2004) and Gustafson (2000) discussed in Chapter 2, I will here analyse the different attributes to which my informants apprehended Taganga as a meaningful place. My analysis will be illustrated through two figures outlined from a figure originally presented by Gustafson (2000) in his article concerning meanings of place.

In the two following figures I have filled in the actual meanings of place expressed by my informants in accordance to Taganga as either a fisherman village (figure 1) or as a backpacker destination (figure 2). Both these views of Taganga can be looked upon as social constructions, which I will outline in the following pages. The various meanings of place have in my figures been categorized into three social groups; native Tagangeros, in-migrants and backpackers. The figure of Gustafson is hence utilized as a tool to figuratively illustrate how social groups in Taganga attach meaning to the village.

6.6.1 Taganga as a fisherman village

In viewing Taganga as a fisherman village I have included the place meanings of native Tagangeros and the backpackers. They are the two cultural units considering Taganga with the image of being a fisherman village, either as a physical or as a social representation. Taganga as a fisherman village is valid most through stories and memories of a different past, through an image served by guidebooks to tourists and through the native Tagangeros' self identity. The symbolism and values connected to fishery has thus become socially constructed in order to preserve the inhabitants shared identity and cultural past and to attract cultural tourism in the form of backpackers. I have through this chapter illustrated that native Tagangeros identify with their hometown as a fisherman village, whilst this image is also served to and by the travellers. Families still directly connected to fishery still exist in

Taganga though, and therefore it must also be valued as a physical attribute and not solely as a social construction. In-migrants in Taganga do not seem to identify with local traditions such as fishery, and are therefore neither in the position of giving meaning to Taganga through this image.

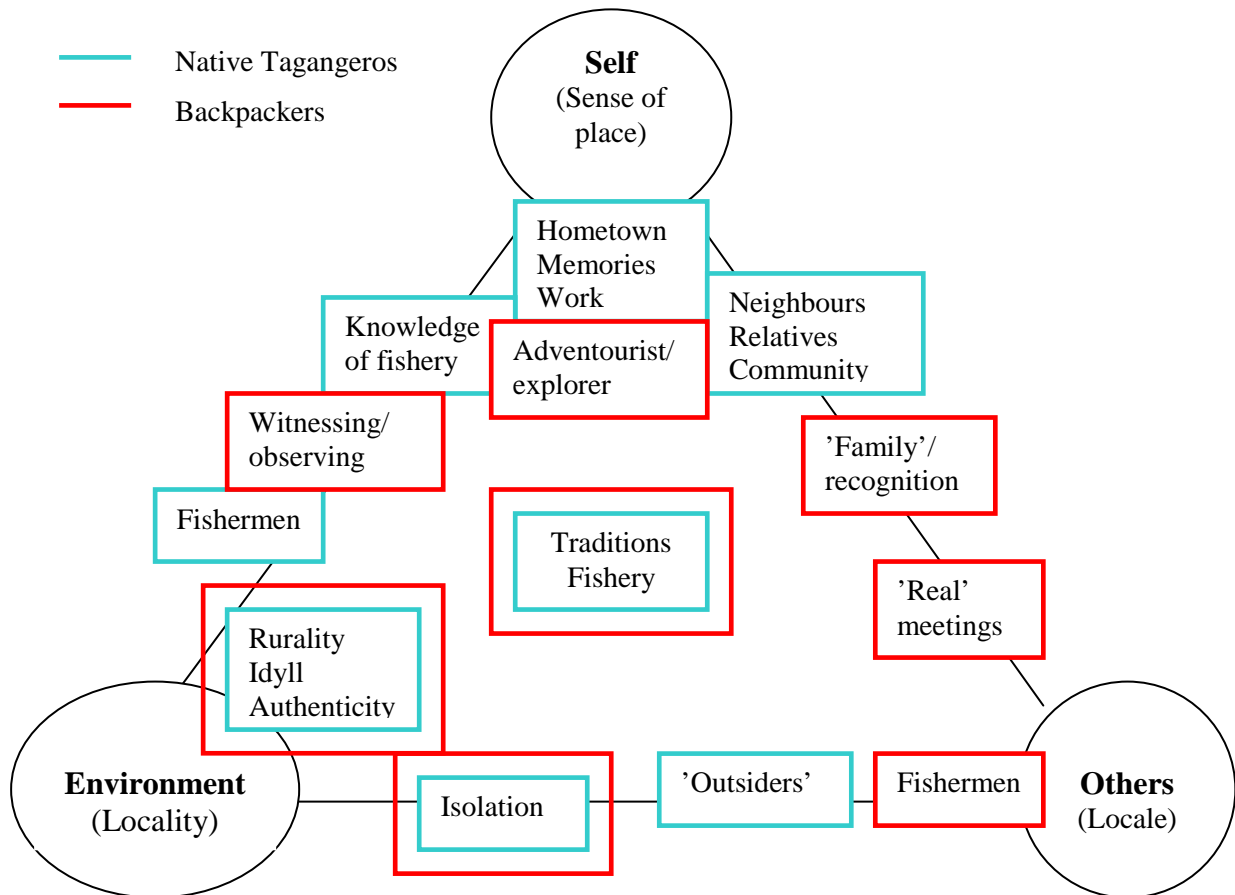


Figure 6:1 Meanings of Taganga as a fisherman village.

We can see that all meanings attached to Taganga are in this case centred around the Tagangan traditions of fishery. One can see that the native Tagangeros identify themselves as fishermen connected to their rural environment, whilst their relations to others constitutes of kinship, neighbours and community relations. People not considered as sharing their identity are seen as outsiders or intruders of the society, a society valued by its isolation and tranquil atmosphere. Backpackers also value Taganga as an fisherman village filled with traditions and rural isolation. Their self identity as explorers is demonstrated through their possibility to observe authentic cultural life and Colombian traditions, and they relate to others (the fishermen) through close ties (described as family) and through the valuation of cultural meetings.

6.6.2 Taganga as a backpacker destination

Taganga as a backpacker destination is similarly also a social construction, where particular meanings and values are attributed which appeal to and attract tourists. Valuing Taganga as a backpacker hotspot is valid for the social groups of backpackers as well as in-migrants living in Taganga.

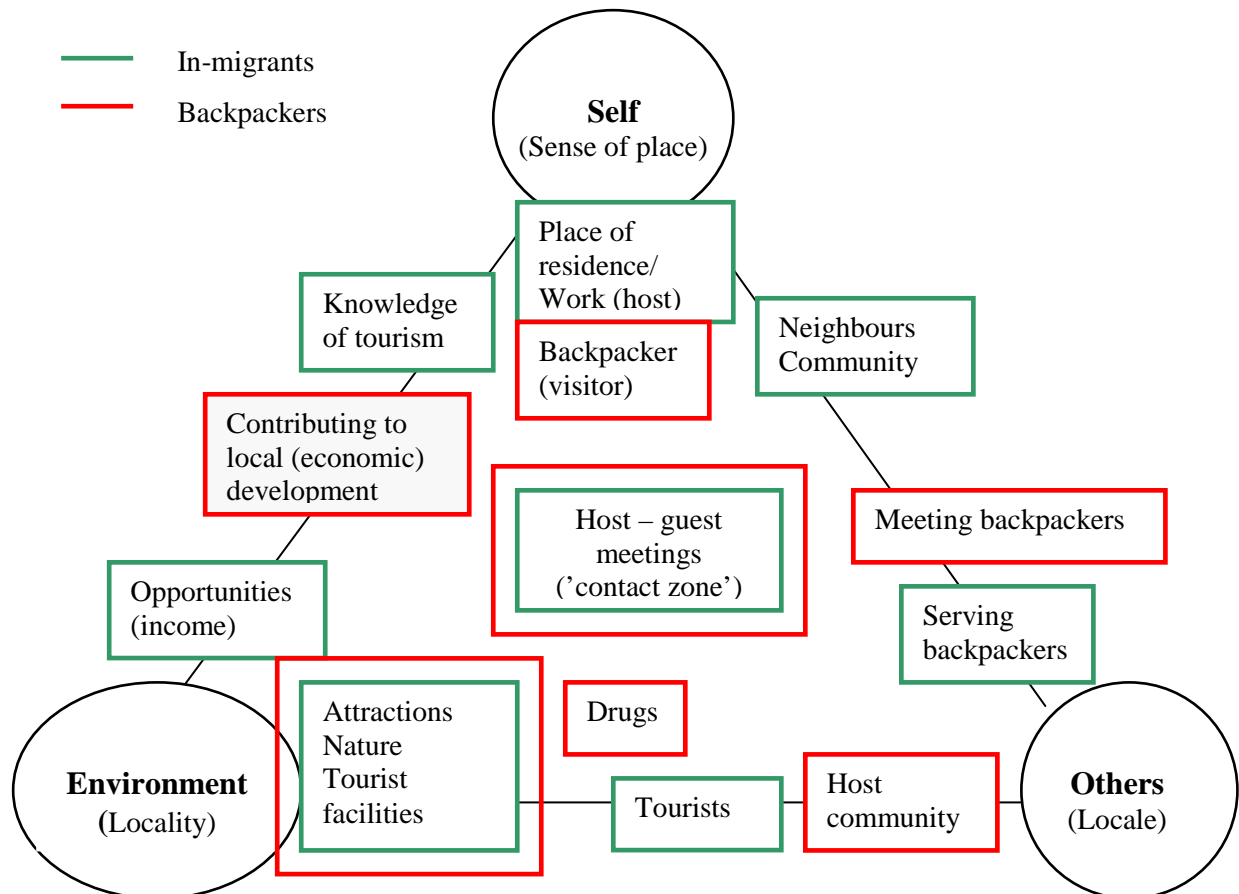


Figure 6:2 Meanings of Taganga as a backpacker destination

In this figure, the attributed giving meaning to Taganga is centred around the 'contact zone' where hosts and guests relate and meet (see 6.4). The in-migrants value and identify with Taganga through the opportunities tourism serves them and as their role as hosts. Their relations to others are also here through neighbours and community life, but additionally also through their job to serve and meet the demands from the backpackers. Likewise the backpackers expect and value the role of the others (hosts) for supplying their needs, as they are also aware of their own direct connection to the environment by contributing economically to the local development of the town. Viewing Taganga as a backpacker hotspot they expect and appreciate meetings with other backpackers, and the host community's supply of drugs is further seen as a valuable attraction.

6.7 A hotspot in the future?

Through the analysis outlined in the two last chapters it is possible to predict future prospects for Taganga concerning the development of tourism. “Malecón Taganga” stands as a prime example for the future plans Santa Marta and local authorities hold for the town. At the time of writing, Taganga has probably been developed with a new seafront area designed for the benefit of tourism and the local inhabitants working in this area. However, looking at the responds from the backpackers I talked to in Taganga one year ago, it will be interesting to pay attention to the course of tourist arrivals in the years to come. Will the tourist destination of Taganga change from being a backpacker hotspot to become dominated by national and package tourism? It is a relevant assertion, given the fact that backpackers in Taganga exclusively referred to the project in negative terms, believing that constructions and organized improvement of the environment will decrease the attraction of the place toward backpackers. The authenticity of the village will get lost and cleaner surroundings and infrastructure will further represent mass-tourism which the backpackers do not want to be associated with. One can however discuss the credibility of these utterances. Like Cohen has argued, backpackers today are representing incompatible ideals versus their practices. Even though backpackers in Taganga expressed frustration and scepticism toward the Malecón project, this might be derived from their shared ideals within the backpacker culture, and not from actual personal preferences. Additionally, I have earlier in this chapter argued that cultures are “dynamic constructs that change through time” (Warren 2003:2), supporting the possibility that the backpacker culture is adapting to new changes in tourism and diverge also internally as to what qualities at a destination are preferred.

The ability to adapt to changing societies and environments is however more crucial for the native Tagangeros. To be able to socially and economically benefit from the tourist industry, they have to find opportunities to actively enrol in the host culture. Being passive observers of the tourism taking place in their home village will eventually lead to forced out-migration due to lack of employment or to increasing prices on property and daily expenses. We have seen the native Tagangeros suffering from a loss of tradition and self identity connected to modernization, cultural changes and the continuous arrival of in-migrants, foreigners and backpackers. Their shared identity as fishermen and fisher-families is hence challenged by external forces threatening to diminish the cultural heritage of Taganga. At the same time, it is not clear whether the native population is blaming the backpackers directly for the socio-

cultural changes, or if the backpackers just serve as an illustration for modernity and an inevitable loss of the traditional society. With the words of a retired fisherman I met in Taganga, “changes are a natural part of existence, and modernity is coming up on us whether we like it or not”. Globalization and capitalism make societies interfere and dependent on each other and Taganga is no exception.

Lack of capital, know-how and political influence makes the Tagangeros vulnerable to authoritative decision making and shifting industries. One way of reacting toward the changes is through collective nostalgia and a longing for the past, which unfortunately will make the borderlines between the different cultures existing in Taganga even sharper. I believe that the native Tagangeros to a higher degree need to interact and cooperate with in-migrants who already have established tourist facilities, so that they unified can contribute and impact on the development of Taganga for a better future for all inhabitants.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

In Taganga I found myself reflecting upon my own possibilities to impact the life situations of my informants into something better. When all is said and done, what would finally be the outcome of my work and project? As introduced in the beginning of this thesis, my aim for the project was to analyse and question if and how the industry of backpacker tourism is a way to improve the life conditions of small communities in development, and thereby the social and cultural implications in this process. The goal was to find a future platform for both the tourists visiting Taganga and the Colombians inhabiting the village, a platform involving development and cultural protection of the village and the improvement of the living standards of the Tagangeros, both economically and socially. I realize, which I also honestly told my informants, that this thesis will probably only be read by some fellow students and employees at my department, and that my results will not directly impact or determine the future development of Taganga. What I do hope, on the other hand, is that my research has influenced the Tagangan community by introducing possibilities for the local inhabitants to reflect and perhaps start negotiation with the municipality about their future and about the future of Taganga as a tourist destination. The mobilization of multiple identities and desires is necessary and important in understanding a society that is complex and far from homogenous. The Tagangeros have created a shared identity and a backpacker destination through the illusion of a fisherman village and a simple tranquil life. This benefits to attract tourists, but at the same time it has also produced scepticism toward changes and modernism.

Returning to my main research question for this thesis, the arrival of backpackers and the development of tourist facilities have definitely produced social and cultural changes for the local Tagangan population. We have seen a resistance and scepticism toward these changes mostly from native Tagangeros with heritage anchored in the village. This has been explained through theories of place and identification, where memories, tales and traditions are vital parts for villagers to connect, identify, communicate and coexist together as a community. Theories from tourism have also been applied to understand and analyse the impact tourism masses have on a local community and what gains and disadvantages one can further expect.

Further we have seen that two different cultures existing and living in Taganga embody different place identities, reflecting the importance of recognizing different social

representations of place. While being part and living in the exact same community, in-migrants generally identified themselves as hosts at a tourist destination, while native Tagangeros identified as fishermen living in a traditional fisherman village. The identification symbolises the attachment to the place. Hence both the in-migrants and the native Tagangeros identified *with* Taganga as a place, though the place representations underlying these identities were different within the two groups.

Through two figures inspired by the research of Gustafson (2000) I have managed to illustrate that the culture of backpackers seems to identify with both these representations at the same time; while being aware of their presence in a backpacker hotspot they simultaneously value to observe and be part of authentic traditions and a Colombian fisherman culture. It can be read as symbolizing their modern ideals and post-modern practices discussed by Cohen (2003) in Chapter 2, both aspects giving meaning to the backpackers in their own way. To identify with Taganga as a fisherman village, the backpackers fulfil their demand of authenticity and their desires to explore the unknown and experience real meetings with other cultures. They do not see their presence as problematic for cultural practices or traditions, and are like this identifying *with* Taganga and its inhabitants. On the other hand, many backpackers also value facilities and possibilities presented by Taganga as a backpacker hotspot, in shape of parties, relaxing on the beach and meeting other travellers. The social representation of Taganga as a genuine hotspot for backpackers will at the same time make other backpackers identify *against* the place. These backpackers do not identify at all with Taganga as a fisherman village, referring to the social damages tourism and Western culture had caused.

Through my research I have demonstrated that both local and travelling cultures are highly complex, containing contradictory understandings, feelings and ways of comprehending place. Looking at the phenomenon of backpacker tourism, local inhabitants in Taganga have expressed both appreciation and condemnation, demonstrating the different life realities as well as power relations and conflicting identities being present in the town even before the arrival of backpackers. Tourism has perhaps made the distinctions between conflicting identities sharper, demonstrating borderlines drawn between us and the others as witnessed in the history of both colonisation, imperialism, immigration and at other tourist destinations. It is important to stress that these conclusions by no means can be generalized without further comparative studies at other backpacker hotspots and destinations. Nevertheless one can

assume that the findings presented in this thesis are typical also in other communities developing into popular backpacker destinations, especially in communities originally portraying rural lifestyles and production modes situated in less developed countries.

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