GLOBAL DISCOURSES, LOCAL VIEWS:
VISIONS OF VOLUNTEER ECOTOURISM IN GANDOCA, COSTA RICA

by

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CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION

ABSTRACT

Ecotourism has arisen as a popular strategy for merging conservation and development interests. This thesis contributes to the theoretical examination of ecotourism by adopting a discursive political ecology approach, which considers how ecotourism is variously constructed in global environmental discourses of 'nature', 'profit', and/or 'people'. The aims of this research are to analyze how on-the-ground actors conceptualize ecotourism and to compare these views to global discourses, using the case study of a volunteer ecotourism project in Gandoca, Costa Rica. A grounded-theory analysis of interviews conducted with project staff, ecotourists, park guards, and cabin owners reveals a broadly shared view of ecotourism that incorporates both the 'nature' and 'people' discourses, and stands in contrast to the nationally dominant 'profit/nature' view. These findings are significant because: 1) they offer a framework for understanding challenges and conflicts related to ecotourism development, and 2) actors' discursive constructions will have material consequences for ecotourism outcomes.

KEY WORDS:

ecotourism, volunteer, political ecology, environmental discourse, Costa Rica

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANAI	Asociación ANAI (Association ANAI)
ENGO	Environmental Non-governmental Organization
ICT	Instituto Costariccense de Turismo (Costa Rican Tourism Board)
INEC	Insistuto Nacional de Estadisticas y Censos (National Institute of Statistics and Census)
IUCN	World Conservation Union
MINAE	Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía (Ministry of Environment and Energy)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SINAC	Sistema Nacional de Areás de Conservación (National System of Conservation Areas
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Environmental discourses often structure discussions of environmental change. Dominant discourses articulate who *is* right and who *has* rights to environmental resources, identifying environmental problems, solutions, and the roles of specific actors in contributing to them. Many discourses originate at global or regional levels, yet their influence is felt in specific local contexts. Ecotourism, that segment of the tourism industry that claims to involve socially, economically, and ecologically 'sustainable' travel to natural areas, surfaces in multiple environmental discourses. This thesis aims to describe and analyze how a group of actors construct their views on ecotourism, and to consider how these views relate to global discourses of ecotourism. This topic is investigated through a case study of an ecotourism project managed by Asociación ANAI in Gandoca, Costa Rica. ANAI, an environmental non-governmental organization (ENGO), operates a sea turtle conservation project in Gandoca that attracts volunteer ecotourists to the community.

1.2 Ecotourism at the Crossroads of Conservation and Development

Discussions of international conservation and development have been gradually merging since the 1960s (Adams, 1998). The defining moment in this process is often cited as the 1987 publication of *Our Common Future* by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), the report that popularized the term 'sustainable development' (Adams, 1998; Escobar, 1995; Sachs, 1999). According to the WCED, sustainable development is "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p. 43). It has been widely noted that the term sustainable development is vague enough as to allow practically anyone to support it (Mitchell, 1997; Pezzoli, 1997), but it remains prominent in spite of, or perhaps because of, this ambiguity. Under the growing influence of sustainable development, groups including national governments, multilateral

aid institutions, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have tried to do one of two things: include the environment in development plans, or include concerns for human development in environmental work. ANAI, the ENGO examined in this thesis, presents an example of the latter.[1]

In the environmental arena, the sustainable development era has given rise to changes in conservation strategies. In response to numerous problems with state imposed conservation schemes that divorced environmental resources from the people who live with them, there has been a shift towards 'community-based' or 'new' conservation (Hulme & Murphree, 1999; Western & Wright, 1994). Hulme and Murphree (1999) identify three strands of 'new' conservation. First, it has been widely asserted that communities, not the state, should be the center of conservation activity. Second, the notion of sustainable development has engendered a shift in the conceptualization of conservation that allows resources to be used, so long as this use is sustainable (although this remains a contentious issue). Finally, the influence of neoliberal economic ideas has meant that conservation must compete with alternative types of resource use in the marketplace; conservation must offer economic incentives.

Ecotourism, an alternative kind of tourism that is purported to be sustainable travel to natural areas, is in many ways the progeny of the marriage between conservation and development. It promises to offer environmental returns, in the form of reduced environmental impacts and support for conservation activities, and to serve development, by providing greater local control and economic benefits. Touted as a small scale, environment and people 'friendly' form of tourism, ecotourism is often promoted as an alternative to the consumptive use of resources. The origin of ecotourism, particularly among scientific and conservation circles, will be explored in Section 2.2.3.

The United Nations, recognizing its 'global importance', declared 2002 the International Year of Ecotourism (UNDESA, 1998). The rhetoric of sustainable

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[1] For a critique of the former, i.e.sustainable development as promoted by development institutions, see Escobar (1995). For a review of the literature on sustainable development, see Pezzoli (1997).

development is employed frequently throughout the Manual for the International Year of Ecotourism produced by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in which ecotourism is referred to as “a sustainable development tool” and it is asserted that “ecotourism aspires in all cases to achieve sustainable development results” (UNEP, 2002, p. 2). Ecotourism is promoted by a wide variety of institutions, including multilateral aid institutions such as the World Bank, individual government agencies such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID), national governments, non-governmental organizations, and some tourism operators (Honey, 1999).

It is commonly observed that ecotourism has grown rapidly over the past fifteen years, although the exact size of the ecotourism market and its rate of growth are difficult to establish (Weaver, 2001). The World Tourism Organization (WTO) estimates that ecotourism represents 10 to 15 percent of global tourism (as cited in Weaver, 2001); given that the WTO recorded 714.6 million international tourist arrivals in 2002 (WTO, 2003), this is a substantial industry. Although definitive evidence is lacking, it seems likely that the growth rate of ecotourism is slightly faster than that of the entire tourist industry (Weaver, 2001). Cater (1994) suggests that the dramatic growth of ecotourism is evidenced by the approximate doubling in tourist arrivals and tourism receipts from 1981 to 1990 for several prominent ‘ecotourism destinations’ such as Belize, Costa Rica and Kenya. Regardless of the actual size of the ecotourism industry, ecotourism has certainly become the focus of much attention; in addition to the UN designated International Year of Ecotourism, there are an ever increasing number of organizations, university programs, and researchers devoted to the study of ecotourism (Weaver, 2001).

Ecotourists have been characterized by their age, gender, education, income, and geographical origins (Weaver, 2001). Ecotourists are typically described as older, well educated, and affluent (Fennell, 2002; Fennell & Smale, 1992; Hvenegaard & Dearden, 1998). Some studies find that more ecotourists are male (Fennell & Smale, 1992; Hvenegaard & Dearden, 1998), while others observe more females (Fennell, 2002). Weaver (2001) concludes that there has been a ‘feminization’ of ecotourism, with early

surveys reporting disproportionately high male representation and surveys since the late 1990s reporting a reversal in this trend. It is important to note that the gender, age and income of tourists may vary depending on the features of a particular ecotourism experience and how it is marketed (Weaver, 2001). This observation is certainly pertinent to this thesis, which analyzes an ecotourism venture that attracts young travelers on a small budget, in contrast to the 'typical' ecotourist reported in the literature. The case study used in this thesis also differs from most ecotourism experiences in that it is an example of volunteer tourism, a distinct kind of tourism that has only recently gained notice (Wearing, 2001b). Volunteer tourists engage in volunteer work while on holiday, in contrast to the vast majority of tourists who seek to relax and unwind. Volunteer tourism will be examined in Section 2.2.2.

The promise and problems of ecotourism, namely its potential to support both environmental conservation and local development and the difficulty of achieving these goals in practice, have been well documented by many authors (e.g. Boo, 1990; Cater & Lowman, 1994; Duffy, 2002; Honey, 1999; Weaver; 2001). Overall, the literature on ecotourism is dominated by two concerns: impacts (Mowforth & Munt, 1998) and how ecotourism should be defined (Blamey, 2001). Although some critiques of ecotourism have emerged (e.g. Duffy, 2002; Munt, 1994), rigorous theoretical examinations of ecotourism are still lacking. These themes will be explored in Chapter 2.

1.3 The Political Ecology Approach

In order to add to the theoretical examination of ecotourism, this thesis adopts a political ecology approach. The field of political ecology examines the socio-political context, conflicts, and consequences of resource use and environmental change (Bryant, 1992). These environmental changes and conflicts, as well as their consequences, are always interpreted and experienced in different ways by different social groups (Bryant, 1992; Rocheleau et al., 1996). There has been a recent attempt to understand how these interpretations and experiences inform, and are informed by, existing environmental

discourses (Peet & Watts, 1996). A discourse is “a constructed system of arguments, ideologies and interpretations that shapes social practices, affecting the way we see things and talk about them” (Hay, 2000, p. 187). Each environmental discourse offers its own version of ‘the truth’, identifying the causes and effects of environmental change, the actors involved, and appropriate strategies to be adopted.

Recent research has shown how environmental discourses function to define resource use and power relations at multiple scales (e.g. Adger et al., 2001; Bryant, 2000; Leach & Fairhead, 2000; Sundberg, 1998a, b), as will be discussed in detail in Section 2.3.3. It has also highlighted the need to consider the actors that produce and contest these discourses, recognizing both the agency of individuals and the discursive and material limitations of the context in which they are situated (Bebbington, 1996; Leach & Fairhead, 2000), a topic that is explored in Section 2.3.2.2. One of the largest problems associated with examining how discourses function in local contexts is the incongruence between the global and the local. Global discourses are often illegible at the local level, partly because they lack essential contextual detail (Adger et al., 2001). There is thus a need to understand how ideas promoted in an international or national arena are articulated at the local level (Sundberg, 1998b), a problem that this thesis will address with respect to ecotourism.

By adopting a political ecology approach, this thesis is an inherently geographical project. Geography is the ‘disciplinary home’ of political ecology, although it also has close ties to other disciplines such as sociology and anthropology. Both geography and political ecology share an interest in the complexities of human-environment interactions (Bryant & Bailey, 1997), because, as the eminent geographer David Harvey commented, “all ecological projects (and arguments) are simultaneously political-economic projects (and arguments) and vice versa. Ecological arguments are never socially neutral any more than socio-political arguments are ecologically neutral” (quoted in Sundberg, 1998a). Some authors have argued that political ecology will soon become ‘the status quo in human-environment research in geography’ (Walker, 2003). Geography is concerned with how the ‘lived dimensions of social life’ are continually constructed through both material

practices and discursive processes (Rangan, 2000). This thesis explores the meanings and 'lived dimensions' of ecotourism for a group of actors in Costa Rica. For geographers, questions of meaning are not considered in the abstract, but with respect to particular material and social conditions (Peet & Watts, 1993).

1.5 A Qualitative Case Study of Ecotourism in Gandoca, Costa Rica

This thesis employs a qualitative, case study approach. Qualitative methods are ideally suited to answering questions about the meanings, interpretations and explanations people associate with particular phenomena (Seale, 1999), while a case study is appropriate because meanings and discourses are necessarily constructed in a specific spatial and temporal context (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Although some political ecologists use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in their research (e.g. Bassett & Koli Bi, 2000; Fairhead & Leach, 1996), this thesis relies on qualitative methods as the most suitable for addressing the objectives of the research (see Section 1.6). Primary data were collected using semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analyzed following the principles of grounded theory. Methods of data collection and analysis will be detailed in Section 3.3.

Before outlining the specific objectives of the thesis it is necessary to understand the context in which they are being addressed. Gandoca, the case study site, is a community of approximately 100 people located on the southeast coast of Costa Rica. Founded approximately 50 years ago (Anger, 1989), its population is Spanish-speaking and of mixed latino and Afro-Caribbean descent. Gandoca is adjacent to the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge, established by the Costa Rican government in 1985 (ANAI, n.d.; SINAC, 2002). The refuge covers both marine and land areas, and includes biological features such as seagrass beds, coral reef, mangrove swamp, rainforest, and nesting beaches for the endangered Leatherback, Green, and Hawksbill sea turtles, all of which serve as attractions for ecotourists (ANAI, 2002a). The Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE), who have a local office in Gandoca, are legally responsible for the management of the refuge.

Asociación ANAI, a local NGO, has been working in Gandoca since 1978 (ANAI, n.d.). In 1985, ANAI began the Sea Turtle Conservation Project in order to help protect the three species of sea turtle that nest on Gandoca beach (ANAI, 2001). In its current form, the project brings approximately 300 to 400 volunteers (ecotourists) to Gandoca each year to help with sea turtle research and conservation activities. In addition, the project employs several local residents. Volunteers stay with local families, who provide their room and board; these families (or *cabineros*) have formed the *Asociación de Cabineros,* or Cabin Owners' Association. Thus key groups of actors in this study are ANAI, the volunteer ecotourists, the cabineros, and MINAE. The case will be described in greater detail in Section 3.2.

1.6 Research Objectives and Rationale

Past political ecology research has focused on describing environmental discourses at global, national, and regional levels (e.g. Adger et al., 2001; Bryant, 2000; Campbell, 2002a; Nygren, 1998), and examining their local contestation and the social and environmental effects of their policies in particular contexts (e.g. Leach & Fairhead, 2000; Sundberg, 1998). As observed by Bryant and Bailey, "it is important to appreciate discursive formations precisely because they have something potentially very interesting to say about the material practices of actors" (1997, p. 192). Ecotourism, situated at the crossroads of conservation and development, is increasingly common in both global environmental discourses and widely distributed local practices. Both global discursive constructions of ecotourism (Campbell, 2002a; Nygren, 1998) and the social, political, and economic complexities of local practices (Belsky, 1999; Young, 1999a) have been analyzed. However, a thorough consideration of how ecotourism is discursively constructed in a local context has yet to appear in the literature. This thesis aims to fill this gap.

Thus the three inter-related objectives of this thesis are:

- To examine how on-the-ground actors conceptualize ecotourism;
- To consider what kinds of coherence and/or conflict exist among different actors' perspectives, and;
- To consider how on-the-ground actors support or oppose global environmental discourses of ecotourism.

Ultimately, discursive political ecology aims to reveal a plurality of perspectives and to question whether the policy process accommodates these differing views and interests (Leach & Mearns, 1996). This thesis therefore aims to reveal a plurality of perspectives of ecotourism in Gandoca, Costa Rica. The manner in which actors construct their views and engage with global environmental discourses will have important material consequences in the form of the structure and outcomes of ecotourism projects. In order to better understand both the promises and problems of ecotourism, it is necessary to first understand the underlying views of the actors involved.

1.7 Thesis Organization

This thesis is organized into six chapters, beginning with this introductory chapter. Chapter II provides a review of the relevant literature pertaining to ecotourism and political ecology, to situate this research in an appropriate academic context and demonstrate its original contribution. Chapter III describes and provides essential background information for the case study site of Gandoca, Costa Rica, and then details the methods used in this research. The research findings related to actors' conceptualizations of ecotourism are presented in Chapters IV and V (see first objective); the views of the volunteer ecotourists are presented in Chapter IV and local actors' views are presented in Chapter V. These results are presented separately for three reasons. First, the volunteer ecotourists interviewed were all foreigners, while the 'local' actors were all either from Costa Rica or had very close ties to a local institution. Second, these two groups of respondents had different roles and experiences with ecotourism in Gandoca; the local actors represent the

'supply' side, while the volunteer ecotourists represent the 'demand' side of ecotourism. These distinct roles are referred to in the tourism literature as 'hosts' and 'guests' (e.g. Smith, 1989). Third, because of their different roles, the data collected from these two groups differed in some respects, necessitating separate analysis. The various actors' views of ecotourism are compared to one another and to global environmental discourses in Chapter VI (see second and third objectives). Chapter VI offers a discussion of the results presented in Chapters IV and V, and presents final conclusions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature on ecotourism, political ecology, and environmental discourses, establishing the academic background and context for the research and demonstrating its contribution.

2.2 Ecotourism

The literature review of ecotourism is organized into seven sections. Section 2.2.1 outlines various definitions and elements of ecotourism, and explains how the concept has evolved through time. Volunteer tourism, a type of (eco)tourism that is particularly relevant to this thesis, is briefly discussed in Section 2.2.2. Section 2.2.3 considers the various origins of ecotourism, while Section 2.2.4 offers a discussion of ecotourism impacts. Finally, a review of emerging critiques of ecotourism is presented in Section 2.2.5.

These topics are addressed for two reasons. First, in order to situate the discussion of local views that will follow in Chapters IV and V, it is necessary to understand what (volunteer) ecotourism is and where it originated. Second, in order to appreciate the value of a discursive political ecology approach to analyzing ecotourism, the main issues of concern in the existing literature on ecotourism, particularly impacts, must be presented.

2.2.1 Elements of Ecotourism

The relationship between tourism and environmental conservation has been studied since at least 1976, when Budowski (1976) proposed three possible scenarios: conflict, coexistence, or symbiosis. In a symbiotic relationship, Budowski suggested that tourism could provide support for conservation, which could in turn continue to attract tourists; such a relationship approximates the current idea of ecotourism. However, the term

'ecotourism' was not introduced to the English language academic literature until 1985, despite its existence as both a concept and a practice prior to that time (Weaver, 2001; Weaver, 2002). Although the term has been increasingly used since then, and much academic literature devoted to the topic, there is no commonly accepted definition of ecotourism (Ross & Wall, 1999; Wearing & Neil, 1999; Weaver, 2001). There are, however, several commonly cited components of ecotourism. In a review of twenty-five definitions of ecotourism offered in the literature, Sirakaya et al. (1999) identify the following underlying themes, in order of most to least common: environmental-friendly tourism; responsible travel; educational travel; low-impact travel; recreational and romantic trips to natural sites; contribution to local welfare; eco-cultural travel; sustainable/non-consumptive tourism; responsible-business approach to travel; community involvement; tourist involvement in preservation; buzzword; and contribution to conservation. Several of these themes are evident in two of the more frequently cited definitions of ecotourism. The first is a succinct version offered by The International Ecotourism Society (TIES), a non-profit organization: "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and sustains the well-being of local people" (TIES, n.d.). The second is a more extensive definition by Ceballos-Lascurain (1996):

> Environmentally responsible travel and visitation to relatively undisturbed natural areas, in order to enjoy and appreciate nature (and any accompanying cultural features – both past and present) that promotes conservation, has low visitor impact, and provides for beneficially active socio-economic involvement of local populations. (p. 20)

Consistent with these themes and definitions, and with the idea of ecotourism as it is discussed in this thesis, Honey (1999) identifies several essential features of ecotourism. Ecotourism involves travel to a 'natural' destination, relatively low visitor impacts, environmental education for both tourists and local people, support for conservation, benefits for and involvement of the local population, and a respect for local culture and rights (Honey, 1999).

Part of the confusion over the definition of ecotourism can be attributed to the concurrent emergence of several related terms since the 1980s, including alternative tourism, adventure tourism, nature-based tourism, and sustainable tourism. These terms are often incorrectly used interchangeably with ecotourism (Weaver, 2001). Weaver (2001) suggests that ecotourism is a subset of the broader category of alternative tourism that arose in the 1980s and 1990s in response to the negative sociocultural, economic, and environmental impacts of mass tourism. Such impacts include uneven distribution of economic benefits, economic leakage of profits from host communities back to transnational companies, deforestation, soil erosion, wildlife disturbance, and social and cultural degradation (Mowforth & Munt, 1998; Weaver, 1998). Mowforth and Munt (1998), while recognizing that there has been a growing awareness of the problems of mass tourism, do not believe that this is the reason for the growth of alternative tourism; instead, they suggest that the advance of new forms of tourism has simply been a continuation of colonial processes. In either case, the purported difference between mass tourism and alternative tourism is a concern for who benefits from tourism and who endures its negative impacts, a "shift in focus from the well-being of the tourist industry to the well-being of the host community" (Weaver, 1998, p. 31). Ecotourism differs from other forms of alternative tourism, such as cultural tourism, in that the natural environment or some component of it is the primary attraction (Weaver, 1998; Weaver, 2001). However, since the original introduction of the concept, ecotourism has evolved from a strictly descriptive term focused on the nature-based element of the tourist experience to a normative concept. It is now commonly accepted that, in addition to natural attraction(s), ecotourism should involve an environmental education component and strive towards sustainable management, primarily in the form of continued support for both conservation and local economies (Blamey, 2001). Sustainability is likely the most contentious component of ecotourism, largely because there exist multiple interpretations of what sustainability means and how it should be measured (Weaver, 2002). Arguments over sustainability

aside, the stated concern for the well being of local people and the sustainability of the activity means that ecotourism is more than just nature-based travel (Weaver, 2001).

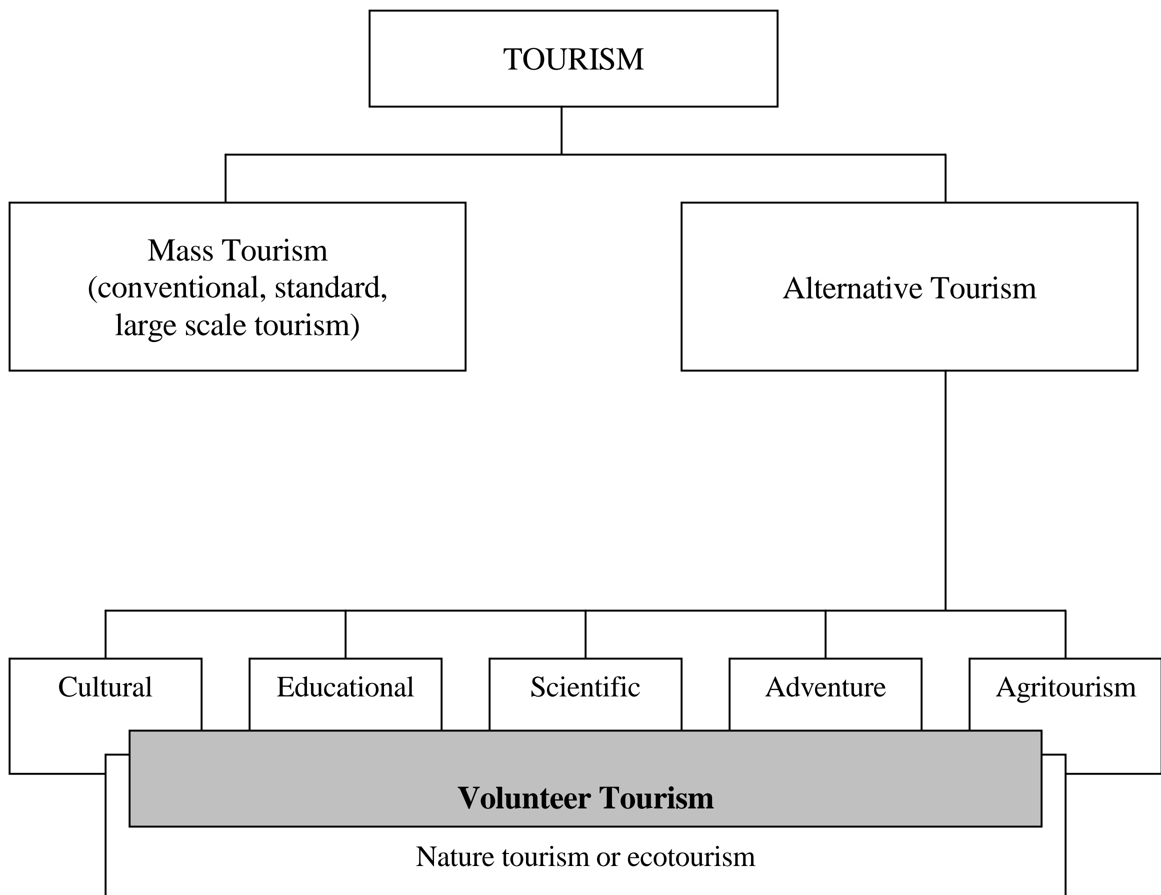
Several authors have sought to distinguish between different types of ecotourism. Orams (1995) recognizes a continuum from low human responsibility, where all tourism is ecotourism, to high human responsibility, where ecotourism would be impossible. Weaver (2001) describes a similar ecotourism spectrum, ranging from hard to soft ecotourism. Hard ecotourists have a strong biocentric attitude, a desire for meaningful environmental interaction, and tend to take specialized trips off the beaten path, whereas soft ecotourists have more superficial environmental attitudes, view environmental interaction as only one part of their trip, and tend to take pre-arranged trips on the beaten path (Weaver, 2001). Thus even if a precise definition of ecotourism were agreed upon, it is clear that ecotourism could encompass a range of activities.

2.2.2 Volunteer Ecotourism

A related form of tourism that has only recently been identified is volunteer tourism, another subcomponent of alternative tourism (Wearing, 2001b). According to Wearing, the term 'volunteer tourism' refers to tourists who "volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment" (Wearing, 2001b, p. 1). It is often, although not always, linked to ecotourism, as seen in Figure 2.1. Based on a case study of Youth Challenge International volunteers at the Santa Elena Rainforest Reserve in Costa Rica, Wearing (2001b) proposes that volunteer ecotourism projects offer the opportunity for educational exchanges between local people and tourists and encourage a shared sense of environmental stewardship. In this view, volunteer ecotourism offers the potential to be an ideal form of ecotourism. Duffy (2002), in contrast, found that volunteers with Coral Cay Conservation in Belize were more concerned with their own experience and self-development than with mitigating their negative impacts or gaining environmental education; she characterizes ecotourism as

'green greed'. Given the potential for volunteer ecotourism to fulfill the criteria of ecotourism as described in the previous section, the conflicting evidence of both its positive effects (Wearing, 2001b) and problems (Duffy, 2002), and its status as a "vital part of the growth of ecotourism" (Duffy, 2002, p. 64), it warrants further attention. This study will contribute to the nascent literature on volunteer ecotourism.

Figure 2.1: A Volunteer Tourism Framework



Source: Wearing 2001b.

2.2.3 Roots of Ecotourism

In addition to the confusion over various types of alternative tourism, ecotourism remains contentious partly because it has multiple sources. Ecotourism did not emerge uniformly and universally through the 1980s and 1990s; it arose in several places for a variety of reasons. Honey (1999) identifies four sets of actors at the root of ecotourism: multilateral aid institutions; developing countries; the travel industry and traveling public; and scientific, conservation, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) circles.

Beginning in the late 1960s, mainstream economic theorists gradually shifted their support from inward-oriented development models to outward-oriented strategies, emphasizing new 'growth sectors' such as export-oriented industries, nontraditional agricultural exports, and international tourism (Brohman, 1996). Among multilateral aid institutions, support for conventional tourism development in developing countries was high throughout the 1970s. The World Bank, for example, loaned an estimated $450 million to eighteen developing country governments for tourism projects from 1969 to 1979 (Honey, 1999). However, as criticism of the World Bank's support of environmentally destructive projects mounted, as the environmental damage associated with tourism development became clear, and as ideas of sustainable development infiltrated the Bank's rhetoric, this support for conventional tourism development declined while support for ecotourism grew (Brohman, 1996; Hawkins & Lamoureux, 2001; Honey, 1999). One of the main sources of funding for small scale ecotourism development has been the Global Environment Facility (GEF), jointly established by the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1992 (Hawkins & Lamoureux, 2001; Honey, 1999). Other aid institutions, such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) have also provided large amounts of funding for ecotourism development in their efforts to support both economic growth and environmental protection (Honey, 1999). McAfee (1999) argues that for institutions such as the World Bank and USAID it would seem that ecotourism, among other market-based approaches to conservation, offers an opportunity to

green their image while continuing with large-scale economic development projects, or business as usual.

As multilateral aid institutions began to tout the virtues of ecotourism, so too did developing country governments. Developing countries such as Costa Rica and Kenya are increasingly pursuing ecotourism as a national development strategy to supply much needed foreign exchange earnings. In the 1990s, nature-based tourism and ecotourism surpassed bananas in Costa Rica and coffee in Kenya as the largest foreign exchange earner (Honey, 1999). Less destructive than alternative forms of land use such as logging, cattle or agriculture, ecotourism is in some cases also more profitable (Honey, 1999). The case of ecotourism development in Costa Rica will be considered more extensively in Section 3.2.1.

The travel industry, although not the original source of ecotourism, was quick to adopt it (Honey, 1999). The industry is plagued by 'greenwashing,' making it difficult to differentiate between those companies who uphold the objectives of ecotourism, as discussed in Section 2.2.1, and those who simply label their product as 'green' or 'eco' as a marketing tactic (Honey, 1999; Ross & Wall, 1999; Weaver, 1998). Although many tourism associations have endorsed ecotourism and created accompanying codes of conduct, the industry remains largely self-regulated (Honey, 1999). There are, however, some tour operators that are motivated by a genuine interest in ecological and social responsibility (Honey, 1999).

The fourth root of ecotourism was scientific, conservation, and environmental nongovernmental organization (ENGO) circles, which would include ANAI, the organization discussed in this thesis. In contrast to the largely economic motivations of multilateral aid institutions, developing country governments, and the travel industry, ecotourism arose in conservation and NGO circles for primarily environmental reasons. Ecotourism has close ties to community-based or 'new' conservation, which in academic parlance has been called the counter-narrative to the traditional conservation narrative of parks and protected areas (Adams & Hulme, 2001; Campbell, 2002a). The traditional park

model demanded the exclusion of local residents and restriction of their livelihood activities, earning it names such as the ‘fences and fines’ approach, ‘fortress conservation’, and ‘coercive conservation’ (Adams & Hulme, 2001). In response to the numerous problems with the traditional model of people-free parks, both social and ecological (see Guha, 1989; Salafsky & Wollenberg, 2000; Wells & Brandon, 1993; West & Brechin, 1991), there has been a shift away from ‘fortress conservation’ towards strategies of community-based conservation that attempt to integrate conservation and development needs in both protected and unprotected areas (Adams & Hulme, 2001; West & Brechin, 1991; Western & Wright, 1994). Community-based conservation, in contrast to the traditional model, includes at least some of the following characteristics: “local-level, voluntary, people-centered, participatory, decentralized, village-based management” (Little, 1994, p. 350). Ecotourism has been a ‘shining light’ of the community-based conservation movement (Belsky, 1999), mainly because it seems to provide more incentives than other strategies, such as agroforestry, for local people to support conservation (Salafsky & Wollenberg, 2000). Ecotourism has therefore been promoted by conservation and NGO circles both in an effort to incorporate local people into conservation and in order to provide an economic alternative to more destructive practices such as logging, agriculture, and ranching (Honey, 1999). However, because parks and protected areas serve as the main attraction for ecotourists around the world (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1996; Honey, 1999; Lawton, 2001; Weaver, 1998), ecotourism can also support the traditional conservation model. Thus ecotourism in and around protected areas does not always follow a community-based conservation rationale, nor does it always adequately benefit local communities (Lawton, 2001). Moreover, some conservation experts may endorse ecotourism as a means of rhetorically engaging with community-based conservation while still supporting exclusionary protected areas (Campbell, 2002b).

The various sources of ecotourism, reasons for its support, and conflicting agendas behind its promotion are important to understand for two reasons: they are likely to inform local views, and they serve to explain the presence of ecotourism in multiple environmental

discourses, as will be addressed in Section 2.3.3.

2.2.4 Impacts of Ecotourism

Perhaps the largest area of ecotourism research is the investigation of impacts. This represents a continuation of past research into mass tourism; the study of the impacts of tourism development is "seemingly a favourite among academics, who list as many impacts as they can under three headings: environmental, economic, socio-cultural" (Mowforth & Munt, 1998, p. 88). Weaver (2001; 2002) addresses these three categories of impacts, noting that they apply to products that fulfill the key themes of ecotourism and not to products that use 'greenwashing' to sell a product that does not satisfy the criteria of ecotourism. Table 2.1 summarizes the range of possible impacts of ecotourism. Although the impacts of ecotourism in Gandoca are not formally evaluated as part of this thesis, it is important to understand impacts generally as a context for views of ecotourism.

Table 2.1: Impacts of Ecotourism

	Direct Benefits	Direct Costs
Environmental Impacts	• Incentive to protect natural environments • Incentive to rehabilitate modified environments • Provide funds to manage and expand protected areas • Ecotourists assist with habitat maintenance and enhancement • Ecotourists serve as environmental watchdogs	• Impacts of permanent environmental restructuring and generation of waste residuals • Impacts of tourist activities (wildlife observation, hiking, introduction of exotic species)
	Indirect Benefits	Indirect Costs
	• Exposure to ecotourism fosters environmentalism • Areas protected for ecotourism provide environmental benefits	• Effects of induced environmental restructuring • Exposure to less benign forms of tourism • Problems associated with the economic valuation of nature

Table 2.1, cont.

	Benefits	Costs
Economic Impacts	Direct Benefits	Direct Costs
	• Generates revenue and employment • Provides economic opportunities for peripheral regions	• Start-up expenses (acquisition of land, establishment of protected areas, superstructure, infrastructure) • On-going expenses (maintenance of infrastructure, promotion, wages)
	Indirect Benefits	Indirect Costs
	• High multiplier effect and indirect revenue and employment • Stimulation of mass tourism • Supports cultural and heritage tourism • Areas protected for ecotourism provide economic benefits	• Revenue uncertainties • Revenue leakage due to imports and non-local participation • Opportunity costs • Damage to crops by wildlife
Socio-cultural Impacts	Direct and Indirect Benefits	Direct Costs
	• Fosters community stability and well-being through economic benefits and local participation • Aesthetic and spiritual benefits and enjoyment for residents and tourists • Accessible to a broad spectrum of the population	• Cultural and social intrusion • Imposes an elite alien value system • Erosion of local control (foreign experts, in-migration of job seekers) • Local inequalities and internecine disputes
		Indirect Costs
		• Potential for local resentment or antagonism • Tourist opposition to aspects of local culture and lifestyle (e.g. hunting, slash/burn agriculture)

Source: Weaver (2001).

The findings summarized in Table 2.1 are corroborated by reviews of economic impacts (Lindberg, 2001), environmental impacts (Buckley, 2001), and social impacts (Wearing, 2001a) offered in the recently published *Encyclopedia of Ecotourism*. In addition, a sample of case studies in the literature, from both developed and developing countries, report many of these impacts. Negative impacts include trail erosion in parks (Farrell & Marion, 2001), behavioural disturbances in marine mammals, a feeling of 'loss of community', higher cost of living in ecotourism destinations, (Orams, 2002), loss of customs and values, increased social inequity, unreliable income, waste disposal problems, pollution, and noise and traffic problems (Weinberg et al., 2002). Positive impacts include environmental education (Orams, 2002; Tisdell & Wilson, 2002), employment, economic benefits and an improved standard of living (Orams, 2002; Tisdell & Wilson, 2002; Weinberg et al., 2002), protection of sea turtles and sea turtle nests (Tisdell & Wilson, 2002), and improved services and infrastructure (Weinberg et al., 2002). Because the impacts of ecotourism vary greatly from project to project (Doan, 2000), impacts must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis (Weaver, 2001).

This brief review of some of the literature related to ecotourism impacts demonstrates that, like mass tourism, ecotourism can have both positive and negative effects. The assumption that ecotourism is more beneficial for local people and environments must be questioned based on several factors: it is a Western model often imposed on developing countries; it has the potential to perpetuate local power imbalances; the economic benefits are often modest; the economy of scale is too small to allow for advanced 'sustainability practices'; it encourages more intrusive interactions between tourists and local people; it is perceived as an elite activity; and it often opens locations to more damaging forms of tourism (Weaver, 2001). Ecotourism as a category is not necessarily better than mass tourism (Weaver, 2001).

2.2.5 Critiques of Ecotourism

Early benevolent views of ecotourism and other forms of alternative tourism (Munt, 1994) have since yielded to more critical discussions. In addition to the recognition of the possible negative impacts of ecotourism, critical theoretical examinations of ecotourism have also emerged. One prominent critique accuses ecotourism of 'green imperialism' (Mowforth & Munt, 1998). The problem is that ecotourism seeks to engage people in the developing world in the production and defense of a specific, Western view of nature, and to make them responsible for the protection of the 'global environment' (Mowforth & Munt, 1998). Akama (1996), in his analysis of nature-based tourism in Kenya, identifies the privileging of western environmental values and scientific theories as a source of alienation of local people from the interconnected activities of tourism and conservation. If ecotourism provides social and economic benefits to local people, but continues to impose western environmental values and conservation mandates, then it will not necessarily solve the problems of its more exploitive predecessors. Describing ecotourists as *ego*-tourists seeking to build their own cultural capital, Munt (1994) compares the ecotourist's quest for primitive nature and authentic cultures to early colonial voyages of 'discovery and expropriation'. Even if ecotourism does not impose a particular, western view of nature, the juxtaposition of tourist and local perceptions of the environment is likely to reshape and challenge local interpretations of and interactions with nature (Vivanco, 2001).

A second critique, both of ecotourism specifically and sustainable development more generally, has focused on the role that ecotourism plays in the 'postneoliberal environmental-economic paradigm' (McAfee, 1999). McAfee (1999) uses the term 'green developmentalism' to describe the commoditization process through which capitalism expands its reach to offer nature the opportunity to pay for itself on the global market. Ecotourism is offered as an example of 'green developmentalism,' a market-based approach for the pursuit of both conservation and development. In this view, ecotourism is a covert attempt by multilateral aid institutions and Northern states to push neoliberal economic agendas and free market strategies on developing countries, while disguising

their efforts as environmentally sound local development (Duffy, 2002). These ideas will be discussed further in Section 2.3.3.

A third critique is that most ecotourism literature has focused on environmental and economic impacts, to the neglect of more nuanced understandings of social and political dimensions (Scheyvens, 1999). Suggesting that analyses need to move beyond a consideration of impacts to include ideas of power, control and distribution of costs and benefits, Scheyvens (1999) proposes an empowerment framework for evaluating economic, psychological, social, and political empowerment in the context of community-based ecotourism development.

This relates to a criticism of community-based conservation initiatives more generally, including some forms of ecotourism. The assumption that 'communities' will support conservation efforts if they derive benefits from them must be questioned, as conservationists rarely analyze the concept of community (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999). Conceptualizations of communities as small spatial units with a homogeneous social structure and shared norms, pervasive in the conservation literature, fail to capture local complexities that might be better understood through an analysis of local actors, the processes through which they interact, and the institutions that govern their relations (Agrawal & Gibson, 1999). The dearth of successful cases of community-based ecotourism (Scheyvens, 1999) might be partially explained by the lack of critical understanding of communities. For this reason, this thesis focuses on the local actors associated with ecotourism in Gandoca rather than the 'community' of Gandoca.

2.3 Political Ecology

The political ecology literature will be reviewed in four sections. First, a basic description of the field and the various approaches used within political ecology will be briefly outlined in Section 2.3.1. Second, a discussion of the analytical role of discourse theory in political ecology and analyses of environmental discourses more generally will be presented in Section 2.3.2, including a review of the key philosophical issues and debates.

The main findings of discursive political ecology will be presented in Section 2.3.3, and finally, the current state of discursive and political ecological analyses of ecotourism will be assessed in Section 2.3.4.

2.3.1 Introduction to Political Ecology

Political ecology is a multidisciplinary field that has its roots in neo-Marxism and political economy, and has been influenced more recently by social movements theory and poststructuralism; Bryant and Bailey (1997) explain the history and evolution of the field in detail. Political ecology is concerned with human environment relations, a central theme of geography. It is distinct in that it views the environment as politicized, environmental change as inherently political, and pays particular attention to the roles of and power relations between a variety of actors at multiple scales (Bryant & Bailey, 1997). In an earlier description of political ecology, Bryant identified "three critical areas of inquiry: the contextual sources of environmental change; conflict over access; and the political ramifications of environmental change" (Bryant, 1992, p. 13). Concerned that political ecology shares only similar areas of inquiry rather than a well-developed underlying theory, Peet and Watts (1996) proposed that an engagement with poststructuralism and discourse theory would strengthen this emerging field of study, as will be discussed in Section 2.3.2.

Bryant and Bailey (1997) identify five approaches to political ecology: environmental problems, regional political ecology, socio-economic characteristics, actors, and concepts. These approaches are not mutually exclusive, and are often used in combination (Bryant & Bailey, 1997). The first approach has been to frame analyses in terms of a particular environmental problem, such as soil erosion, deforestation or water scarcity, then to investigate the web of social, economic and political factors, functioning at various scales, that serve to create, control, or otherwise affect the problem. Hecht and Cockburn (1989), for example, used this approach in an earlier study of the deforestation of the Brazilian rainforest, in which they discredited the popular explanation of Amazonian

deforestation as the result of irrational peasants engaging in unsustainable slash and burn agriculture. Instead they illustrated how it was the product of complex interactions among various actors, including the state, who was offering incentives to 'develop' the region, indigenous groups, landless peasants, and cattle ranchers, all of whom were trying to assert rights to land, international development interests, who were offering loans for large scale development schemes in the region, and environmentalists, who were generally opposed to any kind of new human activity in the area (Hecht & Cockburn, 1989).

The second approach, which takes a regional perspective, examines the interrelated ecological problems of a region while addressing how these are related to its political characteristics. Applying this approach in a First World context, Walker (2003) argues that environmental conflicts in the rural American west can be best understood in terms of inter-related regional factors, including: a shift in expressions of capitalism from production (ranching, timber) to consumption (rural-residential economy based on aesthetic amenities); ex-urbanization and gentrification; the expansion of high-tech industry in rural areas; deeply entrenched regional environmental ideologies; and the role of the federal government via its extensive land holdings.

The third approach places an emphasis on socio-economic characteristics, such as gender, class or race. Analyses focus on how the effects of environmental degradation, access to resources and power in decision-making vary among social groups. Marginalized social groups typically endure greater environmental hardships, in part because they must struggle to assert rights to resources and to gain access to decision-making processes. The cases presented by Rocheleau et al. (1996), collected under the label of feminist political ecology, consider "gender as a critical variable in shaping resource access and control" and demonstrate that environmental knowledge, rights, responsibilities and politics are gendered (Rocheleau et al., 1996, p. 4). Okoko (1999), for example, contributes to an understanding of gendered knowledge and gendered environmental rights and responsibilities in a case study of women and the environment in Nigeria. She effectively shows how local environmental knowledge is gendered, how environmental rights (to land)

and responsibilities (for sustaining livelihood activities) are gendered, and how these are connected to the products of larger social, economic, and political structures, such as oil field development (Okoko, 1999).

Actor-oriented studies, which constitute the fourth approach, examine the "interests, characteristics and actions of different types of actors in understanding political-ecological conflicts" (Bryant & Bailey, 1997, p. 23). This is the method chosen by Bryant and Bailey for their review of the field, because it allows scrutiny of multiple, inter-connected scales from the local to the global and underlines the political, namely the interaction of actors with respect to resources. Brown and Rosendo (2000) use this approach to examine the 'institutional architecture' of extractive reserves in the Brazilian Amazon. They show how various institutions, including state agencies, NGOs, and regional rubber tapper groups, form shifting alliances to serve mutual interests, yet also experience conflicts because they ultimately have very different objectives and worldviews (Brown & Rosendo, 2000).

The final approach identified by Bryant and Bailey is 'concepts'. By concepts they are referring to the different ways in which actors conceive of environmental problems, and how these different conceptions give rise to discourses that operate to sanction certain actions while condemning others, and to benefit certain actors while disadvantaging others. This thesis employs a combination of this final approach, as discussed further in Section 2.3.2 and 2.3.3, and an actor-oriented approach.

2.3.2 A Background to Environmental Discourses

Human-environment interactions are never neutral; ecological change is likely to have socio-political consequences, while socio-political change often affects the environment (Bryant & Bailey, 1997). Political ecology addresses this interrelationship of ecology and politics, examining how different social groups interpret and experience environmental change and conflict (Bryant, 1992; Rocheleau et al., 1996). Within political ecology, there has been a recent attempt to understand how these interpretations and

experiences inform, and are informed by, environmental discourses (e.g. Bryant, 2000; Peet & Watts, 1996). The impetus for turning to discourse was the recognition that environmental conflicts are "as much struggles over meaning as they are battles over material practices" (Bryant, 1998, p. 87). Although this 'discursive turn' only occurred in political ecology in the early 1990s, discourse theory has influenced the social sciences more generally since the 1970s (Bryant, 2000). Within geography, for example, Barnes and Duncan (1992) examined the importance of understanding discourses in the study of landscapes. They offer a thorough definition of discourses as:

> Frameworks that embrace particular combinations of narratives, concepts, ideologies and signifying practices, each relevant to a particular realm of social action. … Discourses are both enabling as well as constraining: they determine answers to questions, as well as the questions that can be asked. More generally, a discourse constitutes the limits within which ideas and practices are considered to be natural; that is, they set the bounds on what questions are considered relevant or even intelligible… Thus discourses constitute standpoints that are defined largely by their relationship to other discourses. (Barnes and Duncan, 1992, p. 8)

Environmental discourse is the formalized discussion of environmental change and conflict. Each environmental discourse offers its own version of 'the truth', identifying the causes and effects of environmental change, the actors involved, and appropriate strategies to be adopted. In this poststructuralist view, "truths are statements within socially produced discourses rather than objective 'facts' about reality" (Peet & Watts, 1996, p. 13).

A related concept that is often employed by political ecologists is the narrative (Adger et al., 2001). A narrative is a sub-component of a larger discourse, and is essentially a story with a "beginning, middle, and end (or premises and conclusions, when cast in the form of an argument) and revolves around a sequence of events or positions in which something happens or from which something follows" (Roe, 1991, p. 288). Environmental narratives present scenarios of environmental change, explaining what will

happen unless certain actions are taken, or what the appropriate strategy is in any given environmental situation. As stories, they often cast actors in archetypal roles such as hero, villain or victim (Adger et al., 2001). Narratives are difficult to challenge, even when their underlying rationale has been shown to be flawed, precisely because they have explanatory and descriptive power (Roe, 1991). Roe (1991) contends that while it is important to question the reasoning of dominant environmental narratives, a counter-narrative must be offered in its place in order to effect change. Environmental policies often rely upon the 'received wisdom' of dominant environmental discourses and narratives (Leach & Mearns, 1996), and can only be changed when there is a new narrative, or explanation of cause-effect relationships, to support them. Environmental discourses and narratives are at the heart of discursive political ecology, and can be better understood by exploring the philosophy underlying this area of inquiry.

2.3.2.1 Discourses and the Social Construction of Nature

Discourse theory is based upon poststructuralism, a philosophical school of thought most closely associated with the French social theorists of the 1970s and 1980s (Peet & Watts, 1996). Perhaps the most influential figure was Michel Foucault, who originated the idea of discourse as it is currently used in political ecology (Bryant, 2000). For Foucault, discourse consists of both "the serious speech acts of experts" and the rules that determine what can be said and accepted as truth (Peet, 1998, p. 201). There is no absolute truth, only the truths produced by various discourses. Language is therefore viewed as constitutive rather than reflective of reality. Examinations of environmental discourse rest on "the contention that language matters, that the way we construct, interpret, discuss, and analyze environmental problems has all kinds of consequences" (Dryzek, 1997, p. 9). In any society there will always be several competing discourses, each with their own set of truths and system of knowledge, although there will be an overall regime of truth which determines whether any given discourse is permissible. Discourses are therefore reflections of power relations; those with power assert their discourses, thereby determining what will

count as truth and knowledge for all of society. Foucault reverses the truism that knowledge is power, claiming “that only those in power have the right to say what is knowledge” (Norton, 2000, p. 240). However, because power necessarily implies resistance, no discourse goes unchallenged (Brown, 2000, p. 31). Within Western societies, Foucault identifies scientific discourse as the predominant producer of truth (Brown, 2000). Therefore the two key concepts at the foundation of discursive political ecology are 1) knowledge is not a mirror image of ‘reality’ but a social construction, and 2) knowledge, truth and power are inter-related in complex ways, such that it is impossible to separate them. The task of the discursive political ecologist is “to map the ways in which knowledge and power may inter-relate so as to mediate political-ecological outcomes” (Bryant, 1998). The concept of power is discussed in more detail in Section 2.3.2.2.

A key concept that is derived from this philosophical position, and that informs discursive political ecology analyses, is the social construction of nature. This concept is at the centre of one of the most controversial debates in the social sciences. Those in favour of the constructivist position do not suggest that nature does not exist; on the contrary, they argue that there exist multiple contested natures, each one inseparable from its social, cultural, historical and geographical context (e.g. Cronon, 1995; Escobar, 1999; Macnaghten & Urry, 1998). This position does not deny the existence of the biophysical realm, asserting only that any vision of nature is always also social and cultural (Escobar, 1999). Other authors vehemently oppose the social construction of nature argument (see Gandy, 1996; Soulé & Lease, 1995). The concern seems to be that if nature is only a product of culture and language, rather than an independent entity with its own agency, then the ability to advocate for environmental protection is undermined (Eden, 2001). However, as Bryant (1998) points out, the aim of social constructivist arguments in political ecology is rarely to deny the existence of environmental problems, but rather to demonstrate that how these problems are identified and depicted is a political process.

Taking an intermediary position, Batterbury et al. (1997) recognize the value of the insights that have been provided by those adopting a constructivist approach, but insist that

research must still contend with biophysical 'reality' of the environment. They note: "environmental *processes* are external to human experience, but environmental *problems* are perceived differently and at varying rates by different communities" (Batterbury et al., 1997, p. 128, italics in original). To this it should be added that proposed environmental *solutions* are also perceived differently. This thesis examines a case study of sea turtle based ecotourism; at issue is not the existence of sea turtles or the processes affecting them, but the perceptions that local actors have of ecotourism as a conservation 'solution' to the 'problem' of sea turtle decline.

2.3.2.2 Discourses, Actors, and Power

Recent research has shown how environmental discourses help to define resource use and power relations at multiple scales (as will be reviewed in Section 2.3.2.3). However, it is also important to consider the actors that produce and contest these discourses. According to Bryant and Bailey (1997), the key actors to be accounted for in a political ecology approach are the state, multilateral institutions, business, environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGOs), and grassroots actors. When examining these actors, both the agency of individuals and the discursive and material limitations placed on them must be recognized (Bebbington, 1996; Leach & Fairhead, 2000). Too much emphasis on discourse "absolves the actors involved of consciousness, intentionality and responsibility" (Leach & Fairhead, 2000, p. 36), while too much emphasis on actors risks overlooking broader issues of how discourses function to define problems and the roles of actors (Leach & Fairhead, 2000). Discussions of discourse need to be wary of 'discursive determinism', and to account for the variety of ways in which discourses are "reproduced, resisted, or reworked" in specific contexts (Moore, 2000, p. 658). Thus, although most contemporary analyses of discourse are based on the ideas of Foucault, many authors reject the Foucauldian vision of discourse as monolithic and deterministic; discourse is viewed as 'powerful but not impenetrable' (Dryzek, 1997).

Any discussion of actors, and how these actors interrelate with one another or to a particular discourse, must address the issue of power. Power is a key concept within political ecology, generally referring to the attempt by any actor to exercise control over the environment of other actors (Bryant & Bailey, 1997). There are four main ways that an actor may attempt to exert this kind of power, including both material and discursive types of control. First, an actor may attempt to control the access of other actors to environmental resources. Second, an actor may determine where pollution occurs, and thus control the quality of other actors' environment. Third, an actor may control the distribution of support, particularly state financial support, to particular environmental projects. Finally, an actor may attempt to indirectly control the environment of others through discourse, by regulating ideas and the 'public transcript' (Bryant, 1997; Bryant & Bailey, 1997). Just as it is important to understand modes of control, it is also important to understand resistance, the counterpart of domination. Although power may become concentrated among dominant institutions and actors, it is never in their hands exclusively; power is never a one-way process (Bryant & Bailey, 1997; Few, 2002; Peet & Watts, 1996). Neither is power a permanent feature of any particular actor; rather, it is embedded in social relations between actors (Few, 2002).

2.3.3 Environmental Discourses and Political Ecology

Many authors have begun to employ environmental discourses and/or narratives as an analytical tool in their research, and although they do not all explicitly identify their work as political ecology they can be positioned within the field. Several authors have sought to critique global environmental debates using a discursive approach. Adger et al. (2001) identify two prominent environmental discourses, a global environmental management discourse and a populist discourse, and demonstrate how these discourses structure discussions of four environmental issues: deforestation, desertification, climate change, and loss of biodiversity. The dominant managerial discourse blames local people, poverty, and overpopulation for environmental degradation and suggests that the solution

to environmental problems lies in international environmental agreements and regulations, market-based incentives, compensation payments, and technology and knowledge transfers (Adger et al., 2001); environmental problems have local roots and demand global solutions (Rangan, 2000). In contrast, the alternative populist discourse targets the imbalance of power perpetuated by postcolonialism, globalization, and capitalism as the root of environmental problems, identifying social justice, the protection of local rights, and the empowerment of local people as the long-term solutions to environmental problems (Adger et al., 2001); in this view, environmental problems have global sources and require local solutions (Rangan, 2000). Focusing on the manner in which global-local connections are articulated in these discourses, Rangan observes that they are both guilty of fetishizing the notions of 'global' and 'local', ignoring regional contexts and histories.

Other authors have examined discourses operating at a national scale; because they are particularly relevant to this thesis, three Costa Rican examples are presented here. Nygren (1998) describes the influence of four prominent discourses – environmentalism for nature, environmentalism for profit, alternative environmentalism, and environmentalism for the people – on debates over how to achieve sustainable development in Costa Rica. She separates discourses based on three factors: their underlying imperative, their aims, and their strategies for environmental problem solving (Nygren, 1998). In the view of 'environmentalism for nature,' the problem is deforestation by peasants, which can be solved by establishing protected areas that exclude people. Proponents of 'environmentalism for profit' also view the problem as deforestation and biodiversity loss, but suggest that the solution lies in market-based approaches, including the promotion of ecotourism, bioprospecting (the search for useful genes and organisms), and alternative forest and agriculture products. 'Alternative environmentalism' presents the problem of environmental destruction in Costa Rica as a result of the dominance of the North and environmental exploitation in the name of capitalism, suggesting the solution is a return to traditional lifestyles in 'harmony' with nature. Finally, 'environmentalism for the people' discusses the problem of environmental degradation, which adversely affects peasant

livelihoods, as the result of the complex interaction of state policy, land tenure issues, and international agricultural commodity production. The solution offered by this discourse combines agroforestry and local empowerment to meet the needs of local people while protecting their resource base.

In a similar type of inquiry, Carriere (1991) focuses on three nexuses in Costa Rican environmental politics: the capital accumulation nexus, the social reformism nexus, and the eco-development nexus. The capital accumulation nexus, whose proponents include two major political parties, business and agricultural lobbyists, and some governmental institutions, promotes neo-liberal economic development strategies that encourage the growth of non-traditional exports. The social reformism nexus rejects this strategy, pushing instead for economic diversification while ensuring that all citizens have access to land and therefore livelihood opportunities. Its supporters include socialist political parties and unions, rural social movements, and those governmental institutions that are concerned with land titling and rural development. In contrast to Nygren's profit and people discourses, Carriere finds both the capital accumulation nexus and the social reformism nexus to be relatively unconcerned with the environment. This may be because Carriere was basing his analysis on the Costa Rican situation in the late 1980s, when the environment had yet to become fully integrated into mainstream development discourse (Campbell, 2002a). Finally, the eco-development nexus consists of some governmental institutions, such as the National Parks Service, a few environmentally conscious members of the main political parties, environmental NGOs, and environmental departments at the two major universities. This nexus is divided between those who promote exclusionary protected areas and those who advocate for a more socially just kind of environmentalism more consistent with Nygren's 'environmentalism for the people' or 'alternative environmentalism'. Carriere notes that the capital accumulation nexus is the most dominant, while the eco-development nexus is the least powerful. However, given that the environment has been incorporated into the capital nexus since the time of Carriere's

original analysis, most tension is between the more dominant capital accumulation (profit) nexus and the less influential social reformism (people) nexus.

Using the concept of narratives in her analysis of Costa Rican wildlife conservation, Campbell (2002a) discusses the role of the traditional conservation narrative, which advocates exclusionary parks and protected areas, in contrast with the new counter-narrative, which promotes both the sustainable use of wildlife and community-based conservation. Campbell refers to the frameworks of Carriere and Nygren described above in her analysis of these narratives. The traditional narrative supports Nygren's environmentalism for nature discourse and the first strand of Carriere's eco-development nexus, while the counter-narrative is more consistent with environmentalism for the people or a combination of the social reformism and the second strand of the eco-development nexuses. However, both of these narratives have also been used to promote the environmentalism for profit discourse or the capital accumulation nexus. The traditional narrative of protected areas, while seemingly driven by an ecological imperative, can also be used to advance economic causes insofar as profits from ecotourism are viewed as dependent on the presence of parks for tourists. Similarly, the counter-narrative of sustainable use, initiated to support the use of wildlife by local people, has been co-opted by the bioprospecting industry to support conservation in the name of research for genetic materials that will profit the pharmaceutical industry (Campbell, 2002a). The powerful national and international interests behind the 'environmentalism for profit' discourse have not promoted the community-based conservation strand of the counter-narrative because it has no direct link to increased profits (Campbell, 2002a). That two or more different discourses can employ the same conservation narrative and associated conservation strategies, but for different purposes, illustrates the complexity and difficulty associated with deciphering discourses and connecting them unequivocally to material practices. In Costa Rica, it appears that the nature/eco-development discourse overlaps with the profit/capital accumulation discourse in some respects and the 'people/social reformism discourse in others, similar to the managerial and populist discourses described by Adger et

al. (2001). Thus, if the work of Adger et al. (2001), Nygren (1998) and Carriere (1991) is considered together, there seem to be three prominent discourses that can be captured under the headings ‘nature’, ‘profit’, and ‘people’. These discourses, and the role of ecotourism in each of them, are summarized in Table 2.2. Most discursive literature situates ecotourism firmly within the ‘profit’ discourse (e.g. Duffy, 2002; McAfee, 1999; Nygren, 1998), although its links to the ‘nature’ discourse via parks and protected areas (Campbell, 2002a) and the ‘people’ discourse via community-based conservation (Belsky, 1999; Campbell, 2002a) have also been established.

In addition to mapping the contours of environmental discourse at global and national levels, discursive political ecology research has also investigated how discourses translate into environmental policy and material practices in specific locales. In their analysis of several communities in West Africa, Leach and Fairhead (2000; Fairhead & Leach, 1996) examine the operation and effects of a deforestation discourse consistent with the dominant managerial discourse outlined by Adger et al. (2001). Descended from colonial times, this discourse is constantly reproduced through Western scientific analyses, legal and institutional arrangements, and economic structures (Leach & Fairhead, 2000). International forest cover statistics are used to establish deforestation as a fact; these statistics take an ‘original’ forest cover as a baseline and measure declines from there, invoking an image of pre-colonial time when forest was abundant and human populations did not threaten its existence. Policies based on this discourse include the restriction of shifting agriculture, restriction or even prohibition of bush fires, and the reservation of forest patches combined with restrictions on the felling of certain tree species (Fairhead & Leach, 1996).

Table 2.2: Environmental Discourses and Ecotourism in Costa Rica

Discourse	Aim	Supporting Actors in Costa Rica	Strategies	Role for Ecotourism?
Environmentalism for Nature	Environmental protection	Some governmental institutions, environmental NGOs, and universities	Interventionist authority	Ecotourism depends on 'pristine wilderness', justifies its legal protection
Environmentalism for Profit	Capitalization of nature	Some governmental institutions, two main political parties and business lobbyists	Neoliberal globalization	Ecotourism is one way to make conservation profitable
Environmentalism for People	Local-sensitive development	Socialist political parties and unions, rural social movements and some governmental institutions	Idealist grassroots participation	Ecotourism provides income to meet local human needs while protecting resources

Adapted from: Adger *et al.* (2001), Carriere (1991), and Nygren (1998).

Fairhead and Leach (1996) challenge both the 'received wisdom' of the deforestation discourse and the policies it has borne. Using a combination of aerial photos, historical archives, and ethnographic interviews of local inhabitants, the authors demonstrate how the agro-ecological practices of local people have actually generated forest around their settlements, in a landscape otherwise dominated by savanna (Fairhead & Leach, 1996). The contribution to forest growth made by local people has remained invisible under the deforestation discourse for several reasons (Fairhead & Leach, 1996; Leach and Fairhead, 2000): local activities, such as the burning of underbrush necessary to crop production and forest generation, were construed as destructive, not productive, and rooted in local ecological ignorance; villagers may often adopt the language of deforestation when speaking with outsiders, in order to seem cooperative where there is the potential for external aid to the community in the form of a school, roads, or other benefits; and finally, there is the problem that local people may interpret the policies designed to prevent deforestation as representative of state or international efforts to impose authority and control land for economic or other reasons unrelated to the environment. The diversity of local responses to the deforestation discourse and policies illustrate the difficulty of characterizing the relations between discourse and local practice, while the hegemony of a discourse and its associated policies, in spite of evidence against its validity, underlines the importance of questioning the 'received wisdom' of dominant environmental discourses.

In a similar study in Côte d'Ivoire, Bassett and Koli Bi (2000) also used mixed methods to analyze the dominant desertification discourse asserted by the World Bank and national government agencies. Using aerial photo interpretation, vegetation transects and household surveys, they questioned the scientific status of the desertification discourse, and presented findings that illustrate a contrasting 'land-user discourse' that claims forest cover has actually increased in the region over the past thirty years. Echoing the findings of Fairhead and Leach, they conclude that one of the main reasons for the persistence of the dominant desertification discourse is that it enables its proponents, including the state,

NGOs, and aid institutions, to assert control over the Ivorian savanna (Bassett & Koli Bi, 2000).

Focusing more explicitly on the role of NGOs in discourse promulgation, Sundberg (1998a; 1998b) explores the conservation discourse promoted by environmental NGOs in the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala and how it is manifested in biophysical changes in the landscape. Conservation discourse in this region establishes a cause-effect relationship that blames Guatemalan migrants for widespread deforestation, owing to their inappropriate agricultural practices and ecological ignorance (Sundberg, 1998a). Despite the existence of evidence countering this scenario, it remains the inspiration behind local NGO conservation and development projects. Sundberg (1998a; 1998b) suggests that as each of the more than 30 NGOs in the region stakes claim to a specific area and implements its vision of an appropriate solution to this 'problem', comprised of agro-forestry, non-timber forest products, or sustainable forestry, the resultant landscapes "reflect NGO conservation and development goals rather than the aspirations of local people" (Sundberg, 1998a, p. 405). Sundberg thus makes the vital connection between discourse and material practice.

2.3.4 Ecotourism and Political Ecology

Given the increasing prevalence of ecotourism and its popularity with a variety of actors at scales ranging from the local to the global, it is fitting to subject it to a political ecology analysis. Yet only a few studies critically examine tourism (Stonich, 1998) or ecotourism (Belsky, 1999; Young, 1999a; 1999b) using a political ecology approach. Both Belsky (1999) and Young (1999a; 1999b) reveal the complicated political and social processes that underpin local involvement in ecotourism development.

Belsky (1999) considers the case study of Gales Point Manatee, Belize. Initiated in 1992 by a group of Americans, the Gales Point Manatee ecotourism project was established primarily to support the conservation of two endangered species, the manatee and the hawksbill sea turtle, although it was also promoted as a development tool to raise local

income (Belsky, 1999). It was essentially a community-based conservation project, with development included as a means to achieve conservation objectives, not as an end in itself. The foreign project team established four new local organizations to manage various aspects of the project; by 1994, just two years after the inception of the project, only two of the groups were still operating, with organization membership concentrated in ten households (Belsky, 1999). A survey conducted in 1994 found that ecotourism provided a primary or secondary source of income for only 28% of the 77 permanent households in the community; for 72% of households, hunting and selling bush meat, wage labour, remittances from abroad, or selling fish and agricultural products were the most important sources of income (Belsky, 1999). Not only was ecotourism income not evenly distributed throughout the community, it was concentrated among the richer households. Only those residents with access to capital could afford the entry cost of boats or accommodation amenities such as plumbing and electricity; for the poorest members of the community, participating in ecotourism is not really an option (Belsky, 1999). By the late 1990s, ecotourism in the community was contributing to intense social conflict and economic hardship. Problems included: conflict between those who benefited from ecotourism and those who did not; conflict between those who supported wildlife conservation for its links to ecotourism and those whose livelihood still depended on fishing and hunting; declining numbers of visitors, resulting in loss of income and difficulty repaying loans; and loss of political and financial support for the project following a change in national government (Belsky, 1999).

Young (1999a; 1999b), in a study of gray whale based ecotourism development in Baja California Sur, Mexico, also found a politically complex situation. Although ecotourism presented an opportunity for non-consumptive use of the gray whale, Young discovered that preexisting social conflicts over access to marine fisheries had simply been transferred to whale ecotourism, and had intensified in the process. In a region where most communities are relatively new, robust community resource management institutions had been lacking, and did not simply spring up with the advent of ecotourism. Moreover, the

seasonal distribution of tourism income combined with the concentration of foreign-owned tourism operators in the area means that the economic benefits from ecotourism are not sufficient to deter consumptive use of heavily exploited marine resources (Young, 1999).

There has also been some work that considers the discursive constructions around ecotourism. Campbell (2002b) explains how conservation experts at three sites in Costa Rica have adopted ecotourism as a means of changing their discourse while maintaining previous practices. By using the language of a new conservation counter-narrative, particularly the concept of community-based conservation and ecotourism, experts appear to be concerned with local livelihoods as well as conservation. Yet by promoting ecotourism they are able to continue to support restrictive parks and protected areas, the 'tools' of the traditional narrative, because parks are key ecotourist attractions (Campbell, 2002b).

2.4 Summary

Although there is no widely accepted definition of ecotourism, its key elements have been established. Ecotourism emerged through the 1980s and 1990s, among a variety of interest groups, and is now a significant industry. Most ecotourism research to date has focused on 1) definitions of ecotourism, and 2) the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural impacts of tourism. However, critiques have begun to surface that analyze the 'green imperialist' aspects of the industry and its role in the promotion of a neoliberal economic agenda. Ecotourism continues to be promoted, particularly by conservation experts, despite mounting evidence that it is not the panacea it was once believed to be (Belsky, 1999; Campbell, 2002b).

Given the preoccupation in the ecotourism literature with definitions and impacts, and in spite of a growing number of critiques, a strong theoretical grounding is lacking. The study of ecotourism could benefit greatly by employing theoretical insights from other disciplines (Fennell, 2001). Although the focus of human geography research has "shifted from examining the impacts and causes of environmental change, to understanding how

different actors and groups within society adapt, mediate and negotiate change" (Brown & Rosendo, 2000, p. 35), this shift has yet to infiltrate the study of ecotourism. In an effort to aid in this project, this thesis will draw on political ecology, a multi-disciplinary field that is well suited to the study of tourism (Stonich, 1998) and ecotourism (Belsky, 1999; Young, 1999a; 1999b).

The review of the political ecology literature included several key findings. First, it explained the various approaches that constitute political ecology, and presented brief examples of each. Second, it explored the key concepts and philosophical premises underlying the field, including poststructuralism and the social construction of nature, the importance of balancing discursive determinism with actors' agency, and the role of power in political ecology. Third, it discussed the key findings of discursive political ecology, including current understandings of the influence of environmental discourses at a global and national scale, as well as the interaction of discourse and practice in particular locations. Finally, it considered the current treatment of ecotourism in the political ecology literature. What is lacking is a consideration of what environmental discourses of ecotourism are present among a set of local actors, and how they are being deployed, remade and/or contested. As Honey observes, "at its core, ecotourism is about power relationships and on-the-ground struggles" (Honey, 1999, p. 394). This thesis will therefore contribute to the literature by examining how on-the-ground actors engage with environmental discourse in constructing their views of ecotourism. It will add to a growing literature that uses political ecology to analyze ecotourism, and a nascent literature on volunteer tourism. A key project of discursive political ecology is "to understand the conceptualization and political consequences of conservation and development programmes through an investigation of the discursive practices of their principal advocates" (Neumann, 1997, p. 560). If a better understanding of the challenges for achieving 'ideal' ecotourism is to be developed, it would be helpful to apply this political ecology approach to the study of ecotourism, in order to understand how local actors

envision ecotourism, how their conceptualizations relate to prominent environmental discourses, and what the implications of these are for ecotourism outcomes.

CHAPTER III

SITE DESCRIPTION AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides essential background information, describes the case study site, and discusses the methods of data collection and analysis used to generate the results discussed in Chapter IV and V. While the methods of data collection are discussed in Section 3.3, it is important to note that background information obtained during research interviews is presented in Section 3.2 and referenced according to the interview code (e.g. A1 or A2).

3.2 Site Description

This section describes the study site of Gandoca, Costa Rica, including the socio-economic characteristics of the country, the region, and the community, the non-governmental organization (NGO) Asociación ANAI, and the ANAI Sea Turtle Conservation Project.

3.2.1 Costa Rica – An Ecotourism Destination

Costa Rica is a democratic republic of approximately 3 800 000 people (INEC, 2001), situated between Nicaragua and Panama on the Central American isthmus. In contrast to other Central American countries that have been plagued by civil war and unrest, Costa Rica has a reputation for peace marked by the abolishment of the military in 1948 and the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to President Oscar Arias Sánchez in 1987 (Evans, 1999; Molina & Palmer, 2002). From 1950 to 1978, Costa Rica experienced rapid economic growth, fueled largely by the earnings of its two largest agricultural exports, coffee and bananas (Molina & Palmer, 2002). This was also an era of dramatic social improvements (Molina & Palmer, 2002); Costa Rica is still renowned as "one of the least impoverished countries in the Third World" (Evans, 1999, p. 1), and boasts a relatively

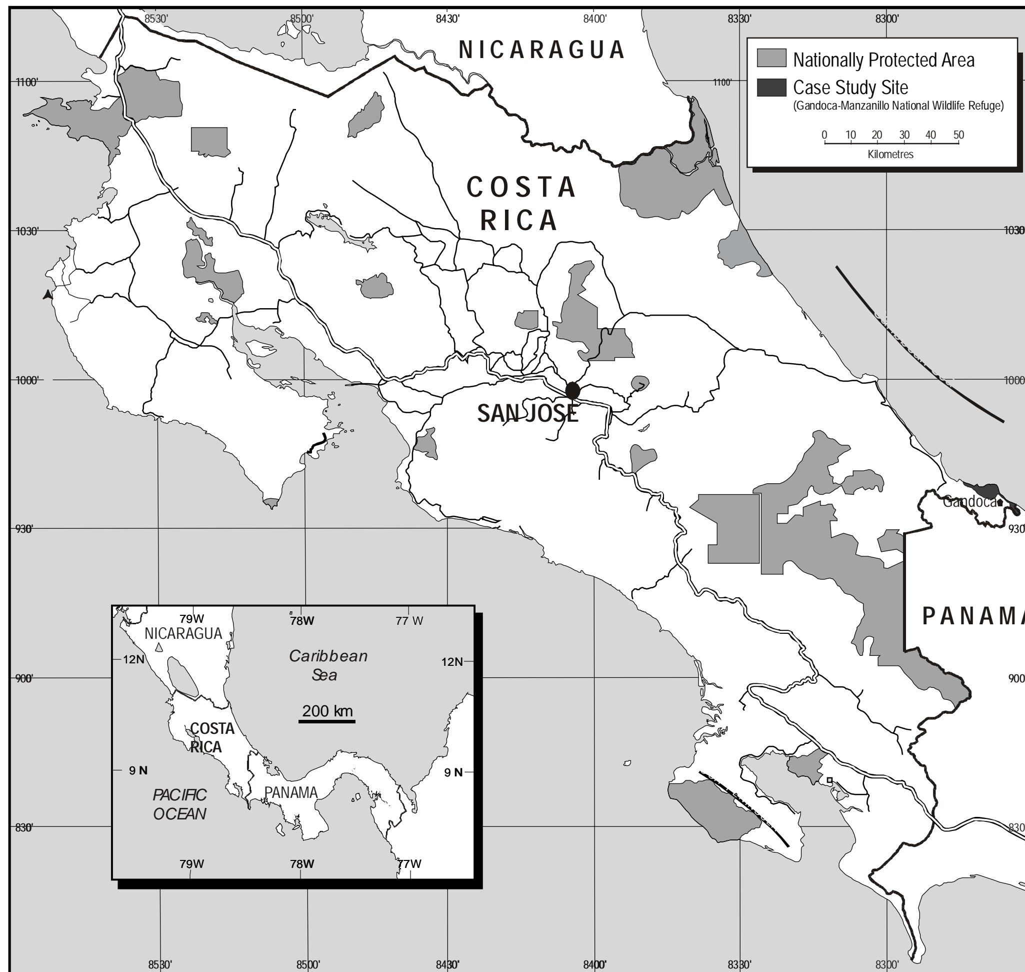
high per capita income, life expectancy, and literacy rate (Evans, 1999). However, the global economic slump of the late 1970s in conjunction with a sharp decline in the international price of coffee and a large national debt pushed the country into an economic crisis in 1980. As a result, Costa Rica was forced to implement the structural adjustment programs of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) during the 1980s (Molina & Palmer, 2002). The IMF programs encouraged, among other policies, a shift towards non-traditional exports and industries, including tourism (Molina & Palmer, 2002). From 1992 to 2001, the number of international tourist arrivals almost doubled; in 2001, Costa Rica recorded over one million international tourists (ICT, 2001). By 1997 tourism had surpassed coffee and bananas as the largest foreign exchange earner, generating $700 million in valuable foreign currency (Evans, 1999).

In addition to its peaceful reputation, political stability, and relatively high standard of living, Costa Rica's appeal as a tourist destination is also closely linked to its lauded park system (Weaver, 1998). Despite having the highest rate of deforestation in Central America by the late 1980s, the government of Costa Rica had managed to establish an extensive network of parks and protected areas (Evans, 1999; Molina & Palmer, 2002). Currently, 28% of Costa Rican territory is under some form of legal protection (Evans, 1999; See Figure 3.1). In a survey of international tourists conducted during the high season (February/March) in 2000, it was found that 70.7% of vacationers to Costa Rica had visited at least one national park or protected area (ICT, 2000). Tourism in Costa Rica has been promoted as the 'industry without chimneys' and *'oro verde'* (green gold) (Evans, 1999), and advertised under the slogan 'No Artificial Ingredients' (ICT, 2002). Although not all tourism to Costa Rica is ecotourism, Costa Rica is widely regarded as 'one of the world's model ecotourism destinations' (Weaver, 2001).

3.2.2 Gandoca, Costa Rica and its Surroundings

Costa Rica is divided into seven provinces, with each province further divided into smaller political units called cantons. The community of Gandoca is located in the canton

Figure 3.1: The Location of Gandoca and Protected Areas in Costa Rica



Source: Cartographic Section, Dept. of Geography, UWO, 2003.

of Talamanca, in the province of Limón, on the southeastern coast of the country (see Figure 3.1). In socio-economic terms, Talamanca is the poorest region in Costa Rica (ANAI, n.d). It has a literacy rate of 84.6%, well below the national average of 95.2% (INEC, 2001), and the lowest population density in the country, at 9 people per square kilometer (INEC, 2001). More than half of Talamanca's communities still have no access to basic services such as roads, telephones, or electricity (ANAI, n.d). In the case of

Gandoca, the road into the community was built in the early 1980s, while electricity arrived in 1998. There is still no phone line or potable water source; families rely on poor-quality well water or rain water.

Talamanca is also the region of Costa Rica with the highest level of biodiversity, and includes several significant biological features such as rainforest, wetlands, coral reef and mangrove forest (ANAI, 2002a). The community of Gandoca is adjacent to the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge, a protected area that was advocated by Asociación ANAI and established by the Costa Rican government in 1985 (ANAI, n.d.; ANAI, 2002a; SINAC, 2002). The total size of the reserve is 9 449 ha, covering 4 436 ha of marine area and 5 013 ha of land (MINAE, n.d.). Its biological features include seagrass beds, part of Costa Rica's only coral reef, the only remaining mangrove on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast, manatees, dolphins, 358 bird species, three species of monkeys, and nesting beaches for the endangered Leatherback, Green and Hawksbill sea turtles (ANAI, 2002a; MINAE, n.d.).

Many residents of Talamanca grow food for subsistence and hunt and fish where possible. The three main economic activities in the region are forestry, tourism, and agriculture (ANAI, n.d.). In Gandoca specifically, the main economic activity is tourism from the ANAI sea turtle project, as discussed in Section 3.2.4, while the largest single employer of Gandocan residents is the nearby banana plantation. Most local residents practice some form of subsistence agriculture and/or animal husbandry, although none have an exclusively subsistence-based livelihood. The main cash crop in the area was cocoa until the early 1980s, when it was devastated by disease; many people left Gandoca at that time to seek livelihood opportunities elsewhere (ANAI, n.d.).

Gandoca currently consists of approximately 30 households. Unlike other Costa Rican communities that are often built around central structures such as a church or a school, Gandoca's households are distributed along a 5 km stretch of gravel road. The residents of Gandoca are of mixed origin; there are families from Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama, El Salvador, as well as Costa Rica. Some families are recent migrants, having

arrived in the past five to ten years, while others have been in the area for 30 years or more. Recent arrivals include several families who have lived in the vicinity for many years, but have only recently built houses on the road in order to be closer to amenities such as the school for their children (various interviews 2002). Although there is a road into Gandoca, access is difficult because the road is often washed out during rainy periods, there is no public transportation, taxis are prohibitively expensive, and very few local people own vehicles. A few families run *pulperías*, small stores that sell snacks, beer, and basic necessities; aside from these, the nearest place to buy other goods is Sixaola, a town 20km away.

Most communities in Costa Rica are overseen by an *Asociación de Desarrollo*, or Development Association, which is essentially the municipal government. Elected locally, the Development Association manages local infrastructure, initiates projects, and represents the interests of the community; local Development Associations are under the authority of the *Dirección Nacional de Desarrollo de la Comunidad* (DINADECO), the National Direction of Community Development (Costa Rica, 1977). Gandoca has not had a Development Association since 2000, when it dissolved amidst interfamilial conflicts and accusations of theft (A2, C2, C4, C6, M2). Explanations for the problems encountered by the Association and reasons for its dissolution vary from person to person, and are discussed further in Chapter V.

Although the Develpoment Association is not currently functioning, there are several other organizations active in Gandoca. The Association of Sustainable Development of Gandoca-Manzanillo (ADESGAMA) is a community-based organization that was started by Asociación ANAI but is now operated independently by a group of local residents. It began as a community credit fund dedicated to providing small loans to local residents for ecotourism-related activities, such as building or upgrading tourist accommodations, and received a start-up grant from the Global Environmental Facility, operated through the United Nations Development Programme Small Grants Programme in Costa Rica, for the period 1997 to 2001 (UNDP, 2003). MINAE, the Ministry of

Environment and Energy, is the governmental agency responsible for managing national parks and protected areas. There is a MINAE office in Gandoca, with two full time staff responsible for administrating, managing, and upholding the laws and regulations related to the Gandoca-Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge, including the prevention of poaching (the killing of turtles or collection of their eggs). ASOGUINAGA, The Association of Nature Guides of Gandoca, is the group of tour guides trained and authorized to lead small groups of tourists on excursions into the rainforest or lagoon. They will also take tourists who do not volunteer with ANAI onto the beach to see nesting turtles. The Cabineros' Association provides accommodation for ANAI volunteers, as discussed in Section 3.2.4. These organizations are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Organizations in Gandoca

Organization	Affiliation	Staff/Members	Responsibilities and Activities
Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE)	National Government	2 full-time staff in the Gandoca office	• Management of the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge, including law enforcement
Association of Sustainable Development of Gandoca-Manzanillo (ADESGAMA)	Local organization founded by Asociación ANAI	Less than 10 local members	• Micro-credit for ecotourism-related activities • Received start-up grant from the UNDP/GEF
Association of Nature Guides of Gandoca (ASOGUINAGA)	Local organization	Approximately 15 local members	• Tour guides are trained and authorized to lead tours into rainforest, lagoon, and to see turtles
Cabineros' Association	Local organization	Approximately 10 local members	• Provide room and board for ANAI volunteers

In addition to these groups, Asociación ANAI, an NGO devoted to sustainable development activities in the Talamanca region, is another prominent organization in Gandoca. ANAI is discussed in detail in the following two sections.

3.2.3 Asociación ANAI

Asociación ANAI is a Costa Rican NGO that was formed by three American scientists and a Gandocan resident in1978, and exists to "help the people of Talamanca design and implement a strategy linking socio-economic development, cultural strengthening and biodiversity conservation" (ANAI, 2002a). When it was founded in 1978, ANAI took its name from the New Alchemy Institute, or *Asociación de Nuevas Alquimistas Internacional* (ANAI) in Spanish. However, upon formal incorporation as a Costa Rican non-profit organization in 1984, the full name was dropped and the organization became known simply by its acronym, ANAI (ANAI, n.d.). ANAI's main areas of work include: agriculture and agro-ecosystems; sustainable forest management; work in the marine and coastal environment; protection of natural areas; eco-tourism; education; creation and strengthening of grassroots organizations; functioning as an intermediary organization, and; interactions with local and national organizations (ANAI, n.d.). The highlight of ANAI's work in the marine and coastal environment is its Sea Turtle Conservation Project, which will be discussed in the following section. ANAI employs approximately fifteen staff members, and with the exception of three founding members, the ANAI staff and Board of Directors are all Costa Ricans, including several Gandocan residents (ANAI, 2002a). ANAI has offices in the capital, San Jose, and in Hone Creek on the Caribbean coast. There are also several 'field facilities', including a field station in Gandoca that is managed by the local director of the Sea Turtle Conservation Project.

ANAI is a particular kind of NGO, what Carroll (1992) calls an intermediary NGO or grassroots support organization (GS0).[2] A GSO provides services and support to local

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[2] Carroll (1992) discusses both intermediary NGOs in general and ANAI specifically.

disadvantaged groups and "forges links between the beneficiaries and the often remote levels of government, donor, and financial institutions" (Carroll, 1992, p. 11). ANAI both initiates its own projects and provides support to existing community groups, but always with the stated intention of helping these projects to become independent and self-sufficient (Carroll, 1992; A1). ANAI staff members describe ANAI as a 'catalyst' for the development of local groups, stating that ANAI's role in each project or group may be short term or long term, but that ultimately it should be a temporary rather than permanent part of the process (A1; A2). ANAI has assisted the creation and evolution of more than fifteen grassroots conservation and development organizations to date (ANAI, 2002a). As Carroll (1992) notes, this type of activity distinguishes the organization from many other intermediary NGOs that simply seek to prolong their involvement.

The annual budget of ANAI peaked in 1992 at $750 000, but has declined in recent years to an average of $450 000, partly because competition for funding has increased as the amount of funds available has decreased (ANAI, n.d.; A1).[3] Most of the funding for the organization comes from international donors, including governmental agencies of Sweden and the Netherlands, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and the Nature Conservancy, as well as many other smaller donors (ANAI, n.d.; ANAI, 2002a). Although it has diverse funding sources, ANAI obtains grants and loans on a project-by-project basis and, like many other NGOs, is constantly searching for funding to support its programs (Carroll, 1992; A1). The most difficult organizational elements to fund are core costs such as salaries and administrative costs and on-going projects that have already received several years of support (Carroll, 1992; A1; A2).

3.2.4 The ANAI Sea Turtle Conservation Project

Gandoca beach is the nesting site of three species of sea turtles: the leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*), the green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*) and the hawksbill

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[3] All dollar values in this thesis are given in US dollars.

(*Eretmochelys imbricata*) (ANAI, 2002a). These species are listed as endangered (the green turtle) and critically endangered (leatherback and hawksbill) by the IUCN (IUCN, 2002), and are also included on the Costa Rican list of endangered animal populations (MINAE, 1998). In 2001, there were 744 known leatherback nests, 15 hawksbill nests and 12 green turtle nests on Gandoca beach (ANAI, 2001). Until the early 1980s, only a few local residents knew Gandoca beach as a turtle-nesting site. However, at that time several banana companies renewed operations in the area and a new road facilitated access to the beach, enabling outsiders to harvest turtles and turtle eggs (ANAI, 2002b; C8). ANAI estimates that in the early 1980s over 99% of Gandoca's turtle eggs were harvested annually (ANAI, 2002b). Since 1992, it has been illegal to possess, hunt, fish, or extract any species, including its products, that is included on Costa Rica's list of reduced or endangered animal populations; it is therefore illegal to hunt or collect the eggs of any species of marine turtle that nests on Costa Rica's beaches (ANAI et al., n.d.; Costa Rica, 1992; MINAE, 1998).

In order to prevent egg poaching and thereby protect sea turtle populations, ANAI began the Sea Turtle Conservation Project in 1985, the same year that the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge was established (ANAI, 2002b). Initially this project entailed beach patrols by one ANAI staff member who sought to discourage the poaching of turtle eggs. In 1990, the Sea Turtle Conservation Project incorporated two new elements; formal research activities were initiated and volunteers began to come to work with the project (ANAI, 2002b).[4] (The project has since expanded to include work on other beaches, but the majority of the project's efforts are devoted to Gandoca beach and for the purpose of this thesis the Sea Turtle Conservation Project will refer only to the work in Gandoca). The project's research and volunteer activities extend from the beginning of March until the end of July, the duration of the leatherback nesting season. In 2001 a total of 303 volunteers came over this five month period, each staying for an average of 19 nights (ANAI, 2001).

[4] The terms volunteer, volunteer ecotourist, and ecotourist are used interchangeably to refer to the individuals that visit Gandoca *and* volunteer with ANAI's sea turtle conservation project while there.

Approximately two thirds of these volunteers were women and one third were men. The volunteers came from a variety of countries, including the U.K. (24%), U.S.A. (21%), Canada (12%), Costa Rica (12%), Switzerland (8%), Denmark (7%), Germany (4%), plus a number of other European (9%) and non-European (3%) countries (ANAI, 2001). Volunteer data for 2002 are not yet available, although they were relatively similar (A3, personal communication).

Volunteers are responsible for assisting project research assistants with monitoring the turtle nest hatcheries, patrolling the beach at night, and recording measurements of nesting turtles, among other activities (ANAI, 2002b). In 2002, the project employed five local research assistants (all males between the ages of 17 and 23) and six unpaid international research assistants to lead volunteer groups and coordinate their work. Figure 3.2 shows a group of volunteers on the beach with a leatherback turtle, assisting with data collection and egg relocation.

Volunteers currently pay a registration fee of $25 as well as the cost of food and lodging (ANAI, 2002b). In 1994, project volunteers began to stay with two local families; by 2002 there were seven families participating in the project (A2). These families have formed the *Asociación de Cabineros,* and are responsible for managing and organizing the room and board for the project volunteers. Volunteers are divided evenly among all cabin owners, and each family charges the same rate of $14 per day for room and board, except for the campground at $6 per day (food not included). Each family that participates in the project therefore earns approximately the same amount of money each year. However, income from volunteers is earned only during the five-month leatherback nesting season. Other local economic benefits include: the salaries paid to local research assistants; taxi fees paid to local drivers for transportation to and from the main road; money spent on beer and snacks at the local store; fees paid to tour guides for excursions into the lagoon or rainforest; and money spent on local handicrafts and souvenirs.

Figure 3.2: Volunteers Working with a Leatherback Turtle

Source: ANAI, 2002a.

ANAI (2001) estimates that the total income from room and board alone was $62 062 in 2001. This estimate could rise to a gross value of approximately $90 000 when all additional benefits are considered (A2, personal communication; consistent with researcher's estimate). Following the logic of 'new' conservation that promotes the provision of economic incentives for conservation, ANAI proudly notes that the rising economic benefits of the project have corresponded with a declining poaching rate. Over the past seventeen years the poaching rate has dropped from 99% to an estimated 4% in 2001 (ANAI, 2001). While this may be true, it is important to note that the economic benefits of the project are not necessarily distributed among former poachers; the

correlation between increasing economic benefits and decreasing poaching should not be construed as a cause-effect relationship.

This project may be considered to be ecotourism because several key elements are present: the main attractions are natural; there are local economic benefits; local residents are involved with the project; the project provides support for conservation; and there is some environmental education for both tourists and local people. Similarly, the volunteers must be considered to be tourists because they match the definition of an international tourist set forth by the World Tourism Organization (WTO) as "a visitor who travels to a country other than that in which he/she has his/her usual residence for at least one night but not more than one year, and whose main purpose of visit is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the country visited" (quoted in Hall & Page, 2002, p. 69). Since international volunteers pay to travel to Costa Rica and to participate with the ANAI project, and are not compensated for their efforts, they qualify as tourists.

It is important to note that not all visitors to Gandoca are volunteers with the ANAI sea turtle project. Occasionally other tourists do visit the town, and even take guided tours to see nesting turtles or other ecological features. It is to these other visitors that local respondents refer when making comparisons between volunteers and other tourists (see Chapter V). However, because Gandoca is difficult to access and off the 'beaten path', the vast majority of international tourists that come to Gandoca are volunteers with the ANAI project.

3.3 Research Methods

This research employs a qualitative, case study approach. Qualitative methods are ideally suited to answering questions about the meanings, interpretations and explanations people associate with particular phenomena (Seale, 1999), while a case study is appropriate for investigation of phenomena, such as community-based ecotourism, that are rooted in specific spatial and temporal contexts (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). The ANAI Sea Turtle Conservation Project in Gandoca, Costa Rica presents an instrumental case study (Stake,

2000), in that it is interesting in and of itself, but especially as a means of understanding views of ecotourism. It is a small-scale, community-based ecotourism project that attracts volunteers, the kind of project that Wearing (2001b) suggests has the potential to be an 'ideal' form of ecotourism. In addition, the project has evolved from a strictly conservation activity to an ecotourist project, and those involved with the project have now had several years of experience with ecotourism. At a national scale, the existence and influence of various environmental discourses and narratives in Costa Rica has already been established (see Section 2.3.3), and Costa Rica is regarded as a preferred ecotourism destination. Thus this case offers an 'opportunity to learn' about (volunteer) ecotourism and environmental discourse, the criteria Stake (2000) proposes is most important for case selection in qualitative studies. The case was not decided a priori, but 'found' (Ragin, 1992) as part of the research process. The researcher began with an interest in several organizations and communities in this region of Costa Rica, then identified and focused on the ANAI project in Gandoca through experience and interaction with individuals there (see Harper, 1992).

3.3.1 Data Types, Sources and Collection

Primary data were collected through 55 in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with 61 people from June to August, 2002. These interviews included: 10 ANAI staff members (A1 to A10), 11 cabina owners from eight families (C1 to C8), two employees of the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) (M1 and M2), 15 volunteers (V1 to V15), one ecotourism network coordinator (O1), and 20 local residents from 18 households. However, the views of local residents are not analyzed in this thesis because 1) the research was focused on the views of actors engaged with ecotourism, and 2) there were practical constraints on the translation and transcription of the interview data (see Sections 3.3.1.1 and 3.3.3.2). Therefore a total of 36 interviews were conducted and analyzed as part of this research; a list of the volunteer interviewees and local interviewees are included in Appendices A and B, respectively, identified by their interview code (e.g.

A1, C3, M2).[5] In four cases, interviews were conducted with two respondents rather than just one. The volunteers V2 and V15 were a couple traveling together, so they were interviewed together. Because they both participated equally and substantially in the interview, their responses were analyzed separately. In some cases, however, their quotes are presented as a single comment rather than as a dialogue for the sake of readability and consistency. In the remaining three cases, interviews were conducted with two members of a cabinero family (C1, C6 and C7). However, because one member of each pair tended to dominate discussion, and only one answer was provided for each interview question, these interviews were treated as a single respondent.

In addition to conducting research interviews, the author also engaged in participant observation from June to August 2002, and collected documents relating to conservation and tourism in Gandoca and Costa Rica.

3.3.1.1 In-depth, Semi-structured Interviews

This thesis aimed to capture the views of ecotourism held by actors in Gandoca, based on their own experience. In order to collect data that illustrate these various views, in all their complexity, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted. In-depth interviews are the appropriate method to use because they offer participants the chance to describe their experiences and the meanings they attach to those experiences (Patton, 1990; Valentine, 2001). A semi-structured interview format (Hay, 2000) or what Patton (1990) refers to as the 'general interview guide approach' was used. In this style of interview a list of key questions or issues, but not an inflexible, standardized set of questions, is established beforehand. This interview format enables the researcher to ensure that certain topics are addressed by all research participants, which is essential for comparison, while still maintaining the flow of spontaneous conversation, the flexibility to pursue unanticipated topics broached by the participant, the option of probing respondents for additional

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[5] The letter portion of each interview code refers to the respondent's actor group, e.g. A=ANAI, C=Cabinero, M=MINAE, O=Other, V=Volunteer.

information, and the ability to tailor questions to suit a particular individual (Patton, 1990). Examples of key topics that were addressed in the research interviews are: threats to and conservation strategies for sea turtles; the ANAI sea turtle conservation project; tourism; institutions, including government agencies and non-governmental organizations; and livelihood strategies. The interview guides used for each group of actors can be found in Appendices C, D, E, and F.

All interviews were conducted by the author in either English or Spanish, and tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed, in order to ensure complete data collection and to avoid the distracting and possibly compromising nature of verbatim note taking (Patton, 1990). As Johnson (2002) notes, tape recording in-depth interviews is essential if interviewees' words and perceptions are to be captured; handwritten notes alone provide inferior data.[6] Interviews were conducted in several places, usually in the interviewee's home or office or at the ANAI field station. Although interview locations were not always ideal from the researcher's perspective, often due to background noise, they were chosen for the convenience and comfort they offered interviewees (Warren, 2002). Several translators assisted in the translation and transcription of Spanish interviews after the fact, in order to ensure that the researcher's limited Spanish abilities did not unduly compromise the quality of the interview data. The limitations and problems of language restrictions and translation are discussed in Sections 3.3.3.1 and 3.3.3.2.

Purposeful sampling was used to identify research participants that presented 'information-rich cases,' (Patton, 1990, p. 169). In contrast to random sampling, where the researcher desires a representative sample that can be generalized to a defined population, purposeful sampling allows the researcher to identify those individuals that will provide the richest information for the study, information that cannot be obtained as well from other potential participants (Maxwell, 1996; Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) identifies sixteen types of purposeful sampling; the one that was used in this study is criterion sampling. Criterion

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[6] Despite the emphasis on thorough data collection through tape recording and transcription of interviews, it is important to avoid "the reification of the transcript as synonymous with the interview" (Poland, 2002, p. 636). Data (i.e. the interview transcript) are viewed as a construction rather than representation of 'reality', as discussed in Section 3.3.2.1.

sampling was used to identify those actors that have 'potential influential capacity' (Horochowski & Moisey, 2001) with respect to ecotourism in Gandoca. These included: local representatives of the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE); ANAI staff; cabin owners (cabineros); turtle volunteers/ecotourists, and a representative of the *Red de Ecoturismo de Talamanca* (Talamanca Ecotourism Network). All of the MINAE staff, cabin owners, and ANAI staff members in Gandoca were interviewed, except for three local ANAI Research Assistants who declined to participate in the research. The fifteen volunteers that were interviewed were chosen based on: 1) an established social rapport with the researcher, which generally enables interviews and improves the respondent's candor (Duffy, 2002), and 2) a minimum stay in Gandoca of at least one week, preferably more. Volunteer interviews were undertaken over a two-month period such that the sample included both mid-season volunteers and end of season volunteers. Mid-season volunteers, who visited Gandoca during the peak of turtle nesting season, saw many turtles, while end of season volunteers often did not see any turtles.

Residents of Gandoca were also interviewed. Given the small size of the community, exhaustive sampling was used. All local households were identified, and a total of 18 interviews were conducted. Four houses were missed, either because the residents were unwilling to be interviewed or because an interview could not be arranged, for reasons such as absentee residents or residents' long working hours. However, these interviews with local residents were not analyzed as part of this thesis for two reasons: 1) the research was focused on those actors who have 'influential capacity' for ecotourism in the community, and 2) due to practical constraints, it was not possible to translate and analyze all of these interviews.

In qualitative research, the validity and value of the results are related to the richness of the information gathered, not the sample size; as a result, there exists no clear guideline for determining an appropriate sample size (Hay, 2000; Patton, 1990). The more important concern is assuring representativeness of possible viewpoints, "to understand the range of variation of experience and perspective" (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002, p. 103), which

was hopefully achieved by interviewing most ANAI staff members, both of the local MINAE staff members, all of the cabina owners, and sixteen volunteers.

3.3.1.2 Participant Observation

In addition to interviews, participant observation was also employed. Participant observation activities included living with a family in the community, going on tourism excursions, and attending meetings of local residents, the cabin owners' association, and ANAI volunteers, among others. Participant observation was used to complement and support the interview process in three ways, as outlined by Young (1999a). First, it yielded insights that assisted in the formulation of questions for interviews. Second, it facilitated relationships with local residents, volunteers, and ANAI staff, which were essential to building trust and eliciting permission to conduct interviews as well as more candid responses. Finally, participant observation offered the opportunity to confirm or question the information gained through interviews. Participant observation and interviews are not separate activities, but mutually informative methods (Jorgensen, 1989). It is important to note, however, that in this research the interviews are the primary source of data, while participant observation plays a supporting role. This is appropriate given that the research focuses on identifying and comparing perspectives among particular groups of respondents as much as interactions in the specific research setting (Warren, 2002). General features of participant observation as identified by Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) and the researcher's specific activities are shown in Table 3.2.

The researcher, in identifying herself to the community as a researcher and explaining her purpose and interests, was overt rather than covert or 'participant-as-observer' (Jorgensen, 1989). Each researcher must establish an appropriate combination of participation and observation according to their situation (Jorgensen, 1989; Robinson, 1998). In this study, the author participated more actively in volunteer activities than in local activities, partly because participation in the former was facilitated by shared language and cultural references.

Table 3.2: Features of Participant Observation

Features of Participant Observation	Activities of Researcher
Living in the context for an extended period of time	Spent 2 months in Gandoca and a total of 3 months in Costa Rica.
Learning and using local language and dialect	Spoke Spanish (at an intermediate level) and learned local expressions and relevant vocabulary
Actively participating in a wide range of daily, routine, and extraordinary activities with people who are full participants in that context	Lived and ate with a local family, attended local social events such as barbecues, dances, birthday parties and community meetings, and attended the annual end-of-season ANAI celebration
Using everyday conversation as an interview technique	Casual conversations were used to learn more about the community and people's lives, although in-depth discussion of research topics was usually reserved for formal interviews
Informally observing during leisure activities	Attended local soccer games and socialized with both local people and tourists.
Recording observations in field notes, usually chronologically	Recorded observations and notes in a journal, usually at the end of each day.

Source: Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002, p. 4.

3.3.1.3 Other Sources of Documentation

Supplementary documents were gathered from various sources, including the ANAI office and the ANAI web site, the local and national MINAE offices, the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC), the Costa Rican Institute of Tourism (ICT), and the Costa Rican office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). These documents pertain to the ANAI turtle project, Asociación ANAI, tourism in Costa Rica, the Gandoca-Manzanillo Wildlife Refuge, the National System of Protected Areas (SINAC), and national demographic data. They serve both to add contextual detail and to deepen

understanding of the discourses surrounding conservation and tourism in Costa Rica and Gandoca.

3.3.2 Data Analysis

This section describes the methodological approach and techniques used to analyze the interview data. Although initially inspired by discourse analysis, the research employs a modified grounded theory approach.

3.3.2.1 Grounded Theory

The purpose of this research is to investigate the ideas and discursive structures used by different groups of actors to conceptualize ecotourism, and to compare these across groups as well as to broader environmental discourses. In this context, the question of how to analyze textual data initially seemed to lead to discourse analysis. According to Taylor (2001), various approaches to discourse analysis in the social sciences differ in whether they view language as a topic in itself or as a resource to study other topics, and whether they focus on the process of language or the content. However, regardless of the approach used, there is always a strong focus on language, and how ideas are represented rather than the ideas themselves. This research differs in that it is the ecotourism-related categories, problems, roles and relationships, not the detailed language used to describe them, that are primarily of interest. As Warren (2002) notes, a discourse analyst would view a qualitative interview as a 'speech event', in contrast to a more substantive approach in which the interview is used to understand "the meaning of respondents' experiences and life worlds" (Warren, 2002, p. 83).

An alternative approach more suitable for this research is grounded theory. Grounded theory methods, pioneered by Glaser and Strauss in their publication *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), offer "systematic inductive guidelines for collecting and analyzing data to build middle-range theoretical frameworks that explain the collected data" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 509). Employed widely across the

social science disciplines, grounded theory methods are less commonly used in human geography, at least explicitly (Bailey et al., 1999), although they have recently become increasingly used in environmental research (Oreszczyn & Lane, 2000), some of which falls under the geography umbrella. The original impetus for the development of grounded theory methods was a desire to challenge the hegemony of quantitative research and to elevate qualitative methods to a position of equal standing (Charmaz, 2000; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In order to do this, Glaser and Strauss sought to systematize the processes of data collection and analysis, and to shift away from the quantitative rhetoric of verification to a discussion of generation of substantive theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The main elements of a grounded theory approach include: collection of qualitative data primarily through interviews, document collection, and participant observation; conceptual coding of data; theoretical sampling; writing theoretical memos; concurrent data collection and analysis; and constant comparison (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss, 1987). In contrast to many other research methodologies, data analysis does not follow data collection but begins as soon as the first data are obtained. As gaps become apparent in the emergent theory, data are collected specifically to fill these gaps: this is theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss, 1987). The process of constant comparison refers to the comparison of: 1) different individuals' views; 2) different pieces of data from the same individual; 3) different incidents; 4) data to the categories in which they are coded; and 5) different categories (Charmaz, 2000).

Since their creation, grounded theory methods have evolved in two directions: constructivist and objectivist (Charmaz, 2002). This thesis adopts a constructivist grounded theory approach, which involves viewing data analysis as constructing an interpretation of the data rather than revealing the inherent meaning of the data (Charmaz, 2002). In this view, grounded theory methods "do not ensure knowing; they may only provide more or less useful tools for learning" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 677). It is assumed that data are the result of a particular interaction between the researcher and research participants; it is the task of the researcher to interpret these constructions of reality

(Charmaz, 2002). Contrary to the views of some other authors, who suggest that grounded theory analyses offer preliminary results to be tested with quantitative methods (e.g. Hunziker, 1995), it is the view of the author that the results of this research should stand alone; it would be neither necessary or appropriate to test these results quantitatively. The results are, however, displayed quantitatively (see Chapters IV and V), in order to illustrate the relative frequency of different views. The key distinction is that no claim to representativeness is made.

3.3.2.2 Thematic Coding of Data

Grounded theory analyses begin with the coding of data. Coding in a grounded theory approach occurs in three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss, 1990). The first step, open coding, involves a close examination of the data to identify concepts and categories. In the second step, axial coding, the researcher looks for connections between categories. Finally, during selective coding, the researcher identifies a central category or concept and relates all (or most) other codes or categories to it in a research narrative (Strauss, 1990).

During the first step in a grounded-theory analysis, the interview transcripts are coded according to categories derived inductively from the data (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Patton, 1990). Coding is a means of generating ideas about the data, involving both organization and analysis; codes are names used to represent a theme or set of related ideas that the researcher identifies in the data (Coffey & Atkninson, 1996; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999). As Strauss (1987) notes, the emphasis is on organizing not just the data but also the ideas about the data that emerge during analysis. Codes vary in their degree of abstraction, from terms used by the respondents to more analytical terms used by the researcher to describe a type of response (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Jackson, 2001; Patton, 1990). For example, in terms of codes developed in this research to analyze volunteers' motivations, the code 'travel/holiday/location' consisted of terms used by the interviewees,

while the researcher used the term 'altruism' as a code to describe all responses reflecting the respondent's desire to do something good or helpful.

Although all codes used in this thesis were developed based on the interview data, this was not a strictly inductive approach. Given that the data are responses to interview questions, the codes often correspond to interview questions and are therefore linked to the theoretical interests of the researcher, a not uncommon occurrence (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). As LeCompte and Schensul (1999) note, to suggest that qualitative data analysis can involve a strictly inductive or deductive approach is an oversimplification, as most analyses incorporate elements of both. Coding is an iterative process; initial codes were redefined and modified and new codes developed as data analysis progressed, until the codes were comprehensive and coherent and all data accounted for (see Crang, 2001; Robinson, 1998). During initial coding, the researcher compared each text unit (a sentence or paragraph of an interview transcript) to all preliminary codes to see if it might fit, while simultaneously evaluating the preliminary codes to decide whether they provided an appropriate fit to the data, and developing new codes as necessary (after Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Once the coding scheme was stable, all data were recoded to fit the final codes (see Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The final coding schemes used to analyze volunteer data and local respondents' data are included in Appendices G and H, respectively.

The codes developed in this research are hierarchical, with more specific, detailed codes embedded within the more general ones (see Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). For example, volunteer perspectives on the purpose of the turtle conservation project might be coded by the most general code 'ANAI', then by the intermediate code 'purpose of project', and finally by a specific code such as 'conservation' or 'community development'. Not only can codes be nested within one another, but they may also overlap or intersect (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Text units of interviews were often linked to more than one code, as respondents tend to discuss more than one idea at a time (see Crang, 2001). It is also important to note that the codes developed in all research projects "denote

researchers' ways of asking and seeing as well as participants' ways of experiencing and telling" (Charmaz, 2002, p. 689).

3.3.2.3 Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis and NUD*IST

Although many qualitative researchers still rely on the cut and paste method of coding data, either manually or using a word processor, there are now many computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDA) programs available to aid researchers in the analysis of qualitative data (Peace, 2000). In order to accomplish the coding described in the previous section, the researcher used the program NUD*IST. NUD*IST is classified as a 'code-based theory builder' program because it supports theory building by enabling coding and retrieval of data and the construction of a coding classification system (Weitzman, 2000). The use of CAQDA software enables and simplifies the coding and recoding of data, the storage and retrieval of records of the coding process, and the visual display of the coding scheme (Peace, 2000). NUD*IST was used in this research for the storage and organization of interview data, for coding data, and for the construction of a coding scheme. The researcher accomplished all of these tasks with the aid of the program; that is, the analytical work was still done by the researcher, not a computer (contrary to the fears of some critics; see Weitzman, 2000). Once all data had been coded, the researcher used NUD*IST to prepare reports that showed all data attached to each code. These reports were read carefully and compared to original interview transcripts, allowing the researcher to ensure that coding was comprehensive and to make adjustments or additions to the coding or coding scheme where necessary.

3.3.2.4 Memo Writing and Presentation of the Analysis

Once the initial coding scheme has been established and open coding completed, the next step is axial coding. At this stage, the researcher looked for connections and relationships within and between codes, for patterns and themes as well as contradictions or negative exceptions (see Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Grounded theory methods include the

use of memo writing to aid in the elaboration of ideas, concepts, and categories that emerge through the axial coding process (Charmaz, 2001; 2002; Struass & Corbin, 1990). In memo writing, the researcher focuses on the properties of the codes and develops ideas about them, writing about the ideas as they emerge (Charmaz, 2002). Memos are prose explaining what the code is about (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). The goal at this stage of the analysis is to be spontaneous and open, exploring as many ideas as possible about the data while grounding them in 'illustrative interview excerpts'; the memos created at this stage later serve as the basis for a more formally written report (Charmaz, 2002). Memo writing was used in this research, although it was not treated as a distinct phase of the writing process. Instead, the original memos simply developed into the final analysis presented in the following chapters. In keeping with the grounded theory approach, the results presented in Chapters IV and V are organized around key concepts derived from the data, with extracts from the research interviews presented to illustrate the links between data and analysis (Charmaz, 2001). The verbatim quotes serve either as typical examples of or exceptions to central themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2000), and were selected based on 1) how well they communicate the central idea of a code, and 2) an attempt to include multiple voices representing all actor groups.[7]

3.3.3 Study Limitations

This research encountered several limitations, both during and after fieldwork. These limitations are discussed in this section, in addition to other factors that may be better viewed as shaping, rather than limiting, the research. While there is generally room for improvement in any research project, significant changes, such as the use of a translator in the field instead of post-field, would have resulted in a different, but not necessarily better, research outcome.

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[7] As noted by Baxter and Eyles (1997, p. 508), "it is reasonable to expect some discussion of why particular voices are heard and others silenced through the selection of quotes".

3.3.3.1 In-field Limitations

There were several in-field limitations and influences on data collection. With respect to research interviews, an interviewer should ideally be able to: demonstrate a good understanding of the interviewee's circumstances; be familiar with relevant terminology and situations; use language that is appropriate to the interviewee; be capable of probing superficial responses; be prepared to ask specific questions about unforeseen topics; and tailor questions to suit the respondent (Robinson, 1998). For those interviews conducted in Spanish, all of these abilities may have been compromised to some extent due to the researcher's imperfect Spanish language skills. Overall, interviewees' responses indicate that they understood the questions asked, although perhaps more information or better information would have been obtained if the researcher had greater proficiency in Spanish. Of course, language cannot be separated from the larger cultural context, and language was not the only difference between the researcher and interviewees. It is important that researchers not impose their own linguistic and cultural assumptions when working in another culture (Warren, 2002), although it is often difficult to prevent this from happening in practice, despite the best intentions of the researcher. The limitations of language and translation will be further discussed in Section 3.3.3.2, while the influence of the particular cross-cultural interaction that occurred in this research will be examined in Section 3.4.

The use of a tape-recorder may have also affected interviewees' responses. As Warren (2002) notes, the use of unfamiliar technology may be intimidating for respondents and make them reluctant to share information, particularly on sensitive subjects. In this case, some respondents were initially uncertain about the tape recorder, but seemed reassured once its function was demonstrated. None of the respondents refused to allow the interview to be recorded.

One of the tenets of the grounded theory approach is that data collection and analysis should occur simultaneously; the grounded theory that emerges through data analysis should inform subsequent data collection (Charmaz, 2001). In this case, it was not

possible to begin analyzing the data until after data collection was complete for two reasons: the computer that was to be used for in-field transcription failed, and it was not possible to translate Spanish interviews at the time. Although in-field data analysis and preliminary theory development may have resulted in the modification of subsequent interviews, it is unlikely that any additional interviewees would have been identified. Furthermore, although interviews were not formally analyzed in the field, field notes and preliminary reflections on interviews were still used to identify emerging areas of interest and to modify subsequent interviews accordingly.

3.3.3.2 Post-field Limitations

Two major limitations were encountered once data collection was complete. The first problem encountered in translating and transcribing the tape-recorded interviews was poor sound quality. Interview settings were often less than ideal, and various background noises (such as barking dogs, roosters, crying children, loud music, rain on metal roofs, and crashing ocean waves) obscured the words of respondents for portions of some interviews. This problem is not uncommon (Crang, 2001), but unfortunately results in the loss of data. In most cases, however, it would not have been possible to arrange an alternative time or location for the interview, and it was decided that it was better to have incomplete data from an interviewee rather than none at all.

The second problem was the translation of Spanish interviews. Although the researcher conducted the interviews in Spanish, her language skills were not proficient enough to allow accurate translation of the interviews. Four translators, fluent in both English and Spanish, were employed in the translation and transcription of Spanish interviews into English. Differences in ability and style between translators may have affected the comparability of interview transcripts, although this would likely be more problematic if a fine-grained discourse analysis were to be used. In addition, none of the translators were present in the field site, and therefore lacked contextual awareness that may have improved their understanding of interviewees' responses. Of course, any

problems with language and translation are in addition to typical errors associated with transcription, such as hearing 'confrontation' instead of 'consultation' (Poland, 2002). The researcher attempted to minimize potential inaccuracies in translation or transcription by carefully reading all final transcripts and comparing them to notes made on the interviews when they were conducted, checking to see if transcripts matched the researcher's understanding of what was originally said.

3.4 Reflexivity

"Think about they ways in which you, your positionality, your historical and geographical contexts connect with the place/culture you are going to work in" (Skelton, 2001, p. 94). Before going to Costa Rica, it was necessary to consider how I would be received as a young, white, female, Canadian student.[8] It was important that I be able to present myself as a researcher rather than a tourist, and yet I was not different in any significant way from the other tourists in the community, most of whom were young, white students from North America or Europe. The role assigned to a researcher by the host community will be based on a pre-existing set of possible cultural understandings of outsiders (Ryen, 2002). In the case of Gandoca, the vast majority of foreign visitors have been tourists/turtle volunteers, although a few foreign researchers have also visited the community in the past. My perceived role in the community was likely a combination of these two types. In some ways my research was facilitated by the fact that the community had already had significant exposure to foreigners, and was accustomed to their presence.

It was important that I distinguish myself as 1) not a volunteer, and 2) someone interested in social issues rather than the biology and conservation of sea turtles, primarily so that respondents would not expect that I wanted to hear a particular view of the ANAI project or sea turtle conservation. I attempted to do this by avoiding the conservation work on the beach and by attending meetings of local groups that were not otherwise attended by

[8] Following academic convention and the style of most political ecology work, this thesis is written in the third person, with the exception of Section 3.4. To avoid absurdity, reflexivity is discussed in the first person.

tourists: whether either of these actions succeeded in building my identity as an independent 'researcher' in the view of local people is uncertain. The central point, as noted by Barnes and Duncan (1992, p. 3), " is that when we 'tell it like it is' we are also 'telling it like we are,'" a point that should be seen as underlying the results presented in Chapters IV and V.

3.5 Ethical Issues and Approval

This research received ethical approval from the University of Western Ontario Review Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (see Appendix I). In order to respect the rights and privacy of the research participants, oral consent was obtained from all interviewees prior to commencing the interview. Oral consent is considered to be more appropriate than written consent forms in cases where respondents may feel threatened rather than protected by written consent forms (Warren, 2002), or, as in the case of Gandoca, where literacy cannot be assumed. Following the logic of informed consent, the purpose of the project was explained to interviewees prior to asking for consent or conducting interviews. However, Warren (2002) has observed that it cannot be assumed that respondents will fully understand the purpose of the research as it is explained to them. Recognizing this, the researcher attempted to avoid misunderstanding, and to gain *informed* consent, by answering any questions posed by the respondents and discussing the research on more than one occasion prior to the interview, giving the respondent the opportunity to reflect on their understanding of the research and to consider whether s/he wanted to participate.

3.6 Summary

This thesis considers the case study of a volunteer ecotourism project in Gandoca, Costa Rica. The 'on-the-ground' actors involved with this project are ANAI, MINAE, the cabineros, and the volunteers. Primary data relating to the views of these actors were collected through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, conducted over a three-month

period from June to August, 2002. The researcher also engaged in participant observation over this time period, which served to facilitate and reinforce the data collected through interviews. The research interviews were analyzed using a constructivist grounded-theory approach; as part of this analysis, data coding was accomplished using the CAQDA software NUD*IST. Results should be understood as a product of the author's interactions with research participants.

CHAPTER IV

VOLUNTEERS' VIEWS OF ECOTOURISM IN GANDOCA

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the study findings related to volunteers' views on conservation and tourism in Gandoca are presented. Volunteers' perceptions are reported in seven sections: Section 4.2.1 discusses volunteers' motivations; Section 4.2.2 presents the volunteers' opinions on the purpose of the ANAI sea turtle project; the volunteers' self-definition as tourists is discussed in Section 4.2.3; their recognition of the elements of ecotourism are reported in Section 4.2.4; Section 4.2.5 describes the positive and negative aspects of their experiences as volunteers; their perspectives on tourism development in Gandoca are explained in Section 4.2.6; and finally, their visions of community and local people are presented in Section 4.2.7. The list of volunteer interviewees and their characteristics is included in Appendix A; each volunteer interviewee was assigned a code from V1 through V15 inclusive. The perceptions of local actors, including ANAI staff, MINAE staff, and the cabin owners ('cabineros') are considered in Chapter 5. In its examinations of volunteer views of ecotourism, this chapter party fulfills the first objective of the thesis, to examine how on-the-ground actors conceptualize ecotourism.

4.2 Motivations

Similar to the volunteer ecotourists described by Wearing (2001b) and Smith (2002), the volunteers in Gandoca were motivated by several factors: altruism, both generally and specifically in relation to turtles and/or conservation; a desire to travel; cultural exchange, including language learning and home stays with families; professional development, as part of a school requirement or for work experience; and the ANAI program specifically, because of a desire to see turtles, the flexibility of the ANAI program, and its low cost relative to similar programs. These motivations are summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Volunteer Interviewees' Motivations

Motivation	Number of Respondents (n=15)	Interviewees
Altruism	13	V1, V2, V3, V4, V6, V7, V8, V9, V11, V12, V13, V14, V15
Travel/Holiday/Location	11	V2, V3, V6, V7, V8, V9, V10, V11, V13, V14, V15
Professional Development	8	V1, V2, V5, V6, V11, V12, V14, V15
Desire to see a Turtle	7	V2, V5, V7, V8, V9, V10, V12, V15
Culture/Language Learning	5	V1, V8, V9, V10, V11
Right Time and Place, Flexibility of ANAI Project	3	V1, V6, V8

Altruistic motivation is perhaps the defining characteristic of volunteer tourists, in comparison to other tourists, as it is altruism that motivates volunteers to do 'work' while on vacation. Thirteen of the fifteen volunteers interviewed expressed a desire to 'help' or 'do something good'.

> "I feel responsibility as a human to do what I can. And I'm here also for very self-serving reasons, just to have the wonderful experience of it, but I'm glad that I'm also doing something that contributes towards a very worthwhile cause, what I think of as a very worthwhile cause" (V4).
>
> "I wanted to come somewhere tropical like this, and the idea of being able to do something good at the same time seemed better than just traveling around doing nothing really. So I thought I'd try to do some good while I'm here" (V7).

It is important to note that the volunteers are not actually altruistic in the strict sense of the word, as the volunteers also experience personal benefits and rewards from volunteering. Altruism is defined as "regard for others as a principle of action; unselfishness; concern for other people [or animals]" (Pearsall & Trumble, 1996, p. 39). However, all of the volunteers who cited some form of altruistic motivation also mentioned

one of the more ‘selfish’ motivations (Travel/Holiday/ Location; Professional Development; Desire to See a Turtle; Culture/Language Learning), except for V4, who still recognized that her involvement in the project was self-serving (see V4 quote above).

The second most commonly cited motivation for visiting Gandoca was travel, holiday, or location. Of the 10 volunteers who were motivated by both altruism and travel, seven were motivated primarily by altruism while only three viewed their altruism as secondary to the overall holiday. In the following quotes, V6 illustrates the former and V11 the latter.

> “I didn’t come here to be a tourist, I came here to be a volunteer, and to work…but I want to see the rest of Costa Rica” (V6).

> “As a tourist, I really wanted to come to Latin America… I wanted to go to Latin America this summer and just travel around” (V11).

The third most common motivation, mentioned by 8 of the 15 respondents, was professional development. Some volunteers were participating in the ANAI Sea Turtle Project to fulfill a specific educational requirement, while others viewed the experience as helpful for making future academic or job decisions, or as a ‘CV builder’. Those volunteers who were volunteering as part of an educational requirement often emphasized that participating in the ANAI project offered valuable practical experience as well.

> “If I want to work on a conservation project properly, will I be able to hack it? It was a test to see if I would be able to stand the pace, if I would be bothered to get up at 12 at night and go and patrol for 4 hours on the beach or if it would be too much. So it was kind of a test for me, to see when I get out into doing it properly, how will I fare, and would my enthusiasm be enough to keep me going. So I probably won’t be doing this, but something along these lines” (V6).

Seven of the 15 respondents also cited ‘seeing turtles’ as an important, if not principle, motivation.

> “I had heard that to see the turtles nest it’s something very great that moves you a lot and so I wanted to see that” (V10).

> “I just really, really wanted to see some turtles, I love turtles” (V5).

Five of the respondents mentioned cultural exchange and/or language learning and practice as a secondary motivation for their trip.

> "[I decided] to stay with the family because I wanted to be with the inhabitants, to get more into the life here" (V10).

> "I also want to learn to speak Spanish, and [it was] a great opportunity to live with a family and learn some Spanish" (V11).

Finally, three of the respondents were attracted by the flexibility, cost, or timing of the ANAI turtle project. However, this is a specific motivation for choosing this particular project over other sea turtle volunteer projects, conservation volunteer programs, or vacation options, and not a general motivation for engaging in volunteer ecotourism.

Overall, the volunteers' motivations correspond with the key ideas of ecotourism. They are motivated by a desire to travel and to see sea turtles, the key natural attraction, as well as secondary cultural attractions. Most importantly, the volunteers' altruism and desire to do 'something good' while on vacation is consistent with the idea that ecotourism should provide support for conservation and the local community. For the volunteers this is a specific goal, not something inadvertent. Although volunteer motivations are not the primary focus of the thesis, it is important to understand them as the context for volunteer perspectives on tourism and conservation. Smith (2002) offers a more thorough review of the motivations of volunteer ecotourists at another sea turtle project in Tortuguero, Costa Rica.

4.3 Purpose of the ANAI Sea Turtle Project

As part of the effort to understand how volunteer ecotourists in Gandoca conceptualize ecotourism, the volunteer interviewees were asked to identify the purpose of the ANAI sea turtle conservation project. All of the interviewees (n=15) cited conservation as a purpose of the project. For some respondents, sea turtle conservation was the only purpose they recognized. However, 7 of the 15 respondents also identified community benefits as a purpose of the project, and two respondents recognized research as a purpose. These results are summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Volunteers' Views of the Purpose of the ANAI Sea Turtle Project

Purpose	Number of Respondents (n=15)	Interviewees
Conservation	15	V1, V2, V3, V4, V5, V6, V7, V8, V9, V10, V11, V12, V13, V14, V15
Community Benefits	7	V1, V3, V4, V8, V12, V13, V14
Research	2	V4, V5

> "The purpose is to save the turtles" (V10).

> "[The purpose is] to help in any way possible to conserve the number of, I guess mostly leatherback turtles, because the majority of them are leatherbacks, and to keep up numbers, as far as I'm aware. And to keep people out of the area, so that they can nest as naturally as possible" (V9).

Six of the respondents who mentioned community benefits saw them as an equally important or secondary purpose of the project.

> "Well the purpose is to protect the sea turtles, and to extend their existence I guess. But another purpose of it is to benefit the community I would think, to give them a little money and to help them to develop" (V1).

> "I think [the purpose is] saving the turtles. I would need to think about it, but I think it's saving the turtles, and trying to make people here live in a sustainable way… Saving the turtles is clearly the priority, but the point on the community is important, very important" (V8).

> "I think it's a combination of two different things. First of all I think it's sustainable development. In a community like Gandoca sustainable development is very, very important, especially as a national park, to have people living near the ocean and actually not taking the eggs, not selling them, not eating them, and to find another income… that they earn their living in roundabout ways through the turtles, I think it's amazing. And the second thing that I think the purpose of the project is, you know saving the turtles, trying to do everything that we can to have the best hope for the turtles in the future" (V12).

One of the respondents stated that the provision of community benefits was actually the primary or most important purpose of the project.

> I guess it kind of has two purposes; one is the environmental side of helping an endangered species. For me, what I think is more important, is the aspect of helping the community, and the fact that I feel like, from the people I've talked to, I get the impression that the project really does help the economy of the community a lot, and they're grateful to have it here because it does bring them a lot of money… So I think that both to help the community and the environment" (V3).

The volunteers therefore conceptualize the ANAI project first and foremost as a conservation project. However, there is also some recognition of the value and importance of community involvement and economic benefits, a key element of ecotourism. Of the seven respondents who allude to the importance of integrating local economic benefits and development with environmental conservation, four of them mention the idea of sustainability or sustainable development (V4, V8, V12) and/or tourism (V4, V12, V14), although none claim that the purpose of the project is tourism.

4.4 Volunteers or Tourists?

Although the volunteers' status as tourists may have been evident to the researcher (see discussion in Section 3.2.4), it was important to understand how the volunteers view themselves, particularly since they view the project principally as a conservation project rather than as a tourism venture. In response to the question "Do you think volunteers are tourists?" eleven respondents said yes and four said no. The reasons the volunteers gave for classifying themselves as tourists (or not) are summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.3: Volunteer Interviewees' Self-definition as Tourists

Are volunteers tourists?	Reasons	Interviewees
Yes (11/15)	• Foreign visitors • Pay for experience • Travel in addition to volunteering • Want to see something new (e.g. turtles) • *Special kind of tourist*	• V1, V2, V3, V15 • V1, V2, V8, V10, V15 • V1, V2, V7, V10, V11, V15 • V2, V15 • V1, V2, V3, V4, V5, V7, V8, V10, V11, V14, V15
No (4/15)	• Work • Befriend local people	• V6, V9, V12, V13 • V9

The eleven respondents that viewed themselves as tourists emphasized that they are a special kind of tourist, while four others refused to classify themselves as tourists. All interviewees therefore noted that there is a difference between volunteers and (other) tourists; for some it is a difference in type (volunteer tourist or other tourist) while for others it is a difference in kind (volunteer or tourist).

Interviewees were also asked to describe the differences between volunteers and other tourists. According to the respondents, the features of volunteers that distinguish them from other tourists include: work; altruism and caring; a desire to learn; local involvement; lesser need for amenities; and longer length of stay. These responses are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Volunteer Perceptions of Differences Between Volunteers and Tourists

Differences Between Volunteers and (other) Tourists	Number of Respondents (n=15)	Interviewees
Altruistic and caring	9	V1, V2, V4, V5, V7, V8, V12, V13, V15
Local Involvement	7	V3, V6, V9, V10, V11, V13, V14
Work	6	V1, V2, V3, V4, V6, V15
Lesser Need for Amenities	4	V6, V7, V11, V12
Desire to Learn	3	V1, V10, V12
Longer Length of Stay	2	V10, V12

Twelve of the respondents mentioned work and/or altruism, the defining features of volunteer tourism, as distinguishing features of volunteers. They referred to these features as the reason for classifying volunteers as a special kind of tourist or for removing volunteers from the tourist category altogether. Thus for many respondents the question of whether or not volunteers are tourists seemed to hinge on the issues of work and altruism.

> "I'm not here to be a tourist, I'm here to do good stuff and to work and I think that's true, once you're here people accept you not as a tourist – or as a tourist but not only as a tourist, you're also something else" (V11).

> "Well, I mean if you're touring, I don't really think of you as working or in any way contributing to the area you're in, and somehow by contributing that somehow always takes you out of the tourist category. As a tourist, if you're just passing through, you're just there to enjoy and not give much back, not to put your sweat or blood or anything in… I realize that in a lot of my travels here I am a tourist, but certainly while I was volunteering here I had somehow taken myself out of that category, but I guess I am a tourist here" (V4).

> "I didn't come here to be a tourist, I came here to be a volunteer, and to work" (V6).

It is interesting to note that respondents categorize volunteering as a special kind of tourism, or as something separate from tourism, based on their own attributes and intentions rather than those of the project. They emphasize their altruism and caring, their interaction with local people, their lesser impacts, their contribution to conservation, their interest in learning, and their lesser need for amenities. This emphasis on the characteristics of volunteers was most evident in the responses of four interviewees (V2, V7, V8, V15) who noted that even though they classify volunteers as tourists, this classification depends upon whether the primary motivation of the individual volunteer is travel or altruism.

> "I mean, the thing is we came for a reason for ourselves, and to do some volunteering, I'm sure there are other reasons. I think it depends; people have different agendas, don't they? Some people come here to stay for a week to see turtles and stay in a nice place and see a bit of Costa Rica and that sort of thing, but then there are people like [V10] who every single holiday she has she does something to save the world, and I don't think that's quite tourism" (V15).

> "A lot of volunteers come here just to work [with] the turtles, but a lot of them do come just to travel around, and it's part of their holiday" (V7).

Although none of the respondents identified tourism as the main purpose of the ANAI project (as discussed in Section 4.3), 11 people were willing to identify themselves as a special kind of tourist and therefore indirectly identify the ANAI project as a tourism activity.

4.5 Recognizing Elements of Ecotourism

Regardless of whether interviewees viewed the purpose of the project as tourism, or were willing to self-identify as a tourist, all respondents recognized that the ANAI project is a form of ecotourism either explicitly or implicitly. Respondents were asked to discuss the positive and negative aspects of the ANAI project and of tourism in Gandoca. In doing so, they identified five elements of ecotourism: local economic benefits, support for conservation, environmental education, community involvement in the project, and tourism as an alternative to the consumptive use of turtles and their eggs. These ecotourism elements are presented in Table 4.5, organized according to whether or not the respondent explicitly mentioned ecotourism.

Table 4.5: Volunteers' Recognition of the Elements of Ecotourism

Respondents' Identification of Ecotourism	Elements of Ecotourism Identified				
	Local Economic Benefits	Support for Conservation	Environmental Education	Tourism as Substitute for Consumptive Use of Turtles/Eggs	Community Involvement in Project
Explicit – Identify Project as Ecotourism	V1, V2, V4, V5, V8, V15	V1, V2, V4, V5, V8, V15	V1, V2, V8, V15	V2, V15	V1
Implicit – Recognize Elements of Ecotourism	V3, V6, V7, V9, V10, V11, V12, V13, V14	V5, V7, V10, V13, V14	V6, V9, V10, V14	V3, V6, V12, V14	V10, V12, V13
n=15	15 of 15	11 of 15	8 of 15	6 of 15	4 of 15

The researcher was careful to avoid using the term 'ecotourism' in interviews, unless the respondent first mentioned it. Nonetheless, six respondents described the project as ecotourism unprompted (V1, V2, V4, V5, V8, V15). One respondent seemed uncertain

about the definition of ecotourism, and initially said that the project was not ecotourism; in the end, however, she decided that it was.

> "I didn't think of this as ecotourism at all … This, to me, is just an environmental conservation project… If this is considered ecotourism, this would be one great example of how tourism supports conservation. I don't know the definition of ecotourism, but if this is it, it would be a great example… But the term ecotourism implies – is that what this is? This is ecotourism, people coming in as volunteers" (V4).

Other respondents were more confident in labeling the project as a form of ecotourism.

> "I'd say this project is complete ecotourism" (V1).
>
> "It's like a new genre of tourism, isn't it, this is ecotourism" (V2).
>
> "They [local people] are making money from the ecotourism… it benefits them and the turtles" (V5).
>
> "I think it is an advanced form of ecotourism. We pay to do something that we like to do… I'm 100% in favour of ecotourism, that's why I agreed to pay the money they asked from me. I am coming to work but I don't mind paying because I know it's the way ecotourism works" (V8).

Only one respondent introduced the term ecotourism but then refused to include the ANAI project under this label. This respondent was adamant that volunteers were not tourists, and therefore could not view the ANAI project as a form of ecotourism. He does still recognize some of the elements of ecotourism in the project, but chooses the label 'sustainable development' in place of ecotourism (see Table 4.3).

> "It's sustainable development, it's not ecotourism, because I don't know if it would be the same project if it was ecotourism, if you built a hotel or something… I think the project is much better the way it's set up, because it's more long term, it's more personal, for the people who do the volunteer work, it's amazing, because they're just here to have a good time and to protect the turtles" (V12).

Although they did not use the term ecotourism, the other nine respondents still recognized the same key elements of ecotourism as shown in Table 4.3.

All of the interviewees recognized that the ANAI sea turtle project brings economic benefits to Gandoca.

> "I get the impression that the project really does help the economy of the community a lot, and they're grateful to have it here because it does bring them a lot of money" (V3).
>
> "The volunteers who come in… it's a great source of income" (V9).

Despite the fact that all volunteer interviewees were aware of the economic benefits of the project, only seven respondents identified the provision of local benefits as an actual purpose of the project (as discussed in Section 4.2.2). One volunteer, who spent several months in Gandoca, suggested that many volunteers had only a superficial awareness of the importance of the local economic benefits of the project, and that a better understanding of their role as tourists only develops after an extended period of time in the community.

> "I didn't appreciate what this project had done until I was here for about a month, when I realized that actually the most important thing that the project did was to bring volunteers, in terms of – the fact that volunteers are coming, bringing money, brining outside interest here, they bring the value. And I didn't realize that that was kind of why it was here and that that's what it's for. And I don't think that you can grasp that unless somebody sits you down and tells you, if you're just here for a week… but yeah, they're tourists" (V1).

However, it may be that some volunteers do fully realize the importance of economic benefits, but incorporate this into a conceptualization of the project as community-based conservation rather than ecotourism. Several volunteers firmly supported the notion of integrating conservation with economic development, and viewed the ANAI project as an ideal way of doing conservation rather than as ecotourism per se, as illustrated in the first two quotes below (V3, V10). Other volunteers believe that the economic benefits local residents derive from volunteers indirectly supports conservation by providing an alternative to the consumption of turtle eggs, and explicitly describe this as a kind of ecotourism, as shown in the third quote below (V2 and V15).

> "In places like Costa Rica, where it is one of the few places left with a lot of natural resources, anything we can do to not deplete them and use them in a more positive manner is good. Because I think it's hard when people say to locals 'you can't cut down these trees even though your children are starving', because if your children are starving you're going to do whatever you can and not worry about the long term effects 100 years from now… this is a way to get both sides, to help the environment and feed the children, to simplify it a lot" (V3).

> "I definitely think this is the only way for anything to work in the environment… is to involve the inhabitants, to make it so that the protection of the animal, nature, the environment, that it goes with the development of the people… What I like in this project here is that they get the people involved, so they earn a living by having the turtles here, so then they know you don't have to poach because if you poach then there won't be any turtles and they won't have any way of living. So this is a good way to make it" (V10).

> "The local community seems to get an awful lot out of the project… The financial incentives of this project, over poaching eggs, are much greater. It's also an alternative – it's now a bigger resource

> than the turtles, so it is an alternative resource… It's not just brining money in, but it's giving people the opportunity to make their own money as well… It's good that the money does actually go into the community, quite obviously, and I think there must be a million ecotourism operations where it's somebody who lives a thousand miles away who operates it and get the money off it, and no one in the area gets anything" (V2 and V15).

The volunteers seem to have a widespread recognition of the elements of ecotourism in the ANAI sea turtle conservation project. However, this does not necessarily mean that volunteers define the project as ecotourism; they may view it as an ideal form of conservation, or as a conservation project that also provides a source of income for local residents.

4.6 Experiences of Volunteers

When asked to describe their experience in Gandoca, or to comment on positive and negative aspects of the ANAI Sea Turtle Conservation Project, volunteers offered a range of responses. In assessing their experiences, most volunteers focused on tourism-related features such as services, amenities, and ecotourism attractions such as the turtles, cultural exchange and education. Positive and negative aspects of the volunteer experience, as reported by interviewees, are summarized in Table 4.4.

Those things that volunteers highlight as positive and negative aspects of their experience are indications that it is indeed an ecotourist experience. They enjoy interaction with the natural attraction (turtles), experiencing local culture, meeting other people (both tourists and local people) gaining environmental education, and the combination of hard work and 'roughing it' with relaxation. The interviewees that noted the physical hardships – working at night in hot, humid conditions and bug bites – also tended to say it was 'all worth it'; surviving these basic conditions is as much a positive as a negative aspect as it enables the work with turtles and experiencing the local way of life.

> "Well, it's quite physical, the work, and really unsuitable hours, which is hard, and working with heat and mosquitoes is very hard, but above that, everything is worthwhile when you see the turtles, everything is worthwhile, so it has generally been a really good experience" (V5).

> "I like sort of feeling like I'm part of the village… it's good that it's not a tourism place and you are roughing it a bit, camping and living with local families" (V7).

Table 4.6: Positive and Negative Aspects of Volunteer Interviewees' Experiences

Positive Aspects	Number of Respondents (n=15)	Interviewees
Interaction with turtles	6	V2, V5, V6, V11, V12, V15
Social Interaction	5	V3, V5, V7, V11, V13
Helping with conservation	5	V4, V5, V7, V12, V13
Cultural/Language Exchange	5	V2, V3, V11, V13, V15
Education	4	V6, V8, V11, V13
Relaxing	4	V3, V5, V6, V13
'Roughing it', hard work	3	V5, V6, V7
Psychological Benefits (broaden mind, self-esteem)	2	V11, V12
Negative Aspects	**Number of Respondents (n=15)**	**Interviewees**
Feel unneeded, 'used'	7	V2, V7, V9, V10, V11, V13, V15
Language barrier	6	V2, V5, V7, V9, V14, V15
Physical hardship	4	V3, V5, V11, V12
Did not see turtles	4	V2, V7, V10, V15
Lack of activities and/or amenities	3	V4, V7, V13

It is also interesting to note two of the negative aspects, 'feeling unneeded/used' and 'not seeing turtles'. In 2002, there were many volunteers present in July, at the end of the sea turtle nesting season. Several volunteers did not see any turtles during their stay in Gandoca, and mentioned in their interviews that they felt unneeded, that their presence was

not vital to the conservation work of the project, and that there wasn't enough for them to do. For some volunteers the key issue was seeing a turtle, while for others it was a matter of feeling that their presence was necessary for the conservation work; this is illustrated in the two quotes below.

> "If you came here just because you wanted to see the place, you would be very happy with it, but the point is that I came to see the turtles, and if you haven't seen them then you go back… not quite happy. But still, if you had just come to know the area, to see the forest, like you would go to any other park, then it would be nice. So it's just because you have come here for the turtles, if you haven't seen a turtle then you're a bit angry" (V10).

> "I don't feel like I've really been helping personally, which is somewhat of a disappointment… Of course I want to see one [a turtle], but I don't think it's necessary… If I was the only other person here and they needed me for patrol, and I didn't see one turtle, that would be enough. Just to know that I needed to be there" (V9).

Two respondents that were interviewed together (V2 and V15) were particularly disgruntled, both because they had not seen a turtle and because they felt extraneous.

> "It's just a shame that this is the only time we could come, we couldn't come earlier. And we could only stay for a week. We were restricted as to what we could do, so maybe coming here at the end wasn't a good idea, really. I mean if people said to me that they were going to go to this project, I would say maybe but not at this time. It's a bit of a let down, really… I mean obviously ANAI are keen to get people in because of the money that the local people get, but at the same time, there's not actually that much for them to do. I guess I feel, when I'm here, well effectively I seem to be squeezed for the community, in a way, like the taxi ride, and the tours, and everything is quite like… get what money you can out of it, and I think that's fair enough really. But I do think… Yeah, I don't feel like I came and helped out turtles, I feel I came and gave same money. It's not like I felt that when we were out patrolling, 'oh god, I'm glad I'm here, they need me'. There was one night, if we had gone out, they had 7 people to take every single measurement. I mean you don't need 7 people to go on patrol, the reason that there's 7 people is because they want to see turtles. Well, I understand that because we're desperate to see a turtle, but at the same time, we've basically spent the week thinking 'they don't need us at all'. We haven't actually done anything useful" (V2 and V15).

Seeing turtles and fulfilling the need to help with conservation are clearly important aspects of the volunteer experience, and influence the tone and content of volunteers' views of other aspects of the project.

4.7 Perspectives on Tourism Development in Gandoca

Volunteer interviewees were asked to discuss the issue of tourism development, and to reflect on what they would or would not like to see happen in Gandoca over the next five to ten years. Five of the 15 respondents said that they would like Gandoca to stay 'as is', while the other 10 respondents were willing to consider minimal, controlled development. These responses are displayed in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Volunteer Views of Tourism Development in Gandoca

Development in Gandoca	Number of Respondents (n=15)	Interviewees
Stay 'as is'	5	V2, V4, V10, V14, V15
Minimal, controlled development	10	V1, V3, V5, V6, V7, V8, V9, V11, V12, V13

Most respondents associated the idea of tourism development with large hotels, and were against the construction of hotels in Gandoca. Several of the interviewees that want Gandoca to stay 'as is' emphasized this point.

> "I'd like it to stay the way it is, I wouldn't really want any more tourism development, because you would have hotels and restaurants and things like that. Yeah, I'd like to see it stay as it is… any more tourists here, and I don't think it would help the turtles. If I came back in 5 years time and saw hotels and stuff like that I'd be pretty disappointed, and I would think ANAI wasn't doing their job properly. So yeah, stay like it is" (V7).
>
> "I wouldn't like to see it become – I wouldn't like to see this road become full of hotels with tour groups coming down here and things like that because I think that would be detrimental to the community… Because it is a beautiful place and it's got lots of – there are beautiful things here and I think it would be such a shame if it just became a big beach resort… [It is] nice to have somewhere that's like this, that has been this way or similar for a long time" (V1).
>
> "I would not want to see big hotels or anything like that… I came here to live with a family, so I use the same bathroom and shower as them and OK, it's not in good shape, but it's what they use… OK, maybe the shower and the bathroom could be a bit better, things like that, but not more than that, just simple, keep the road like that, dirt, no paved road, keep it the way it is" (V10).

One respondent wanted improved infrastructure and amenities, to add to his personal enjoyment and experience, but no other development or increase in the number of tourists.

> "I'd like to see proper telecommunications. It's really bad… And maybe a proper road, because it's really hard to get in and out. But I wouldn't want to see big hotels, or development on the beach. This number of people is just right, I think if you had more people then the tranquility of the place would go, and that's one of the biggest attractions" (V13).

Three interviewees considered the need to weigh the potential positive and negative aspects of tourism development (V3, V4, V9). They recognized the economic benefits that tourism brings the community and the value of environmental education, but were concerned about the potential negative environmental impacts of increased tourism.

> "I would hope that if I came back in 10 years it [Gandoca] wouldn't have changed too much, because I don't want Gandoca to become another place like the [other tourist] beaches [in Costa Rica]. But at the same time, the place I'm staying has all these rooms, and the only people staying there are me and [another volunteer]. So I'm sure that it would be good for the guy running it if there were a few more tourists, so he could get just a little more money. So I mean I guess I would hope that people would continue coming, and maybe the tourism industry would grow a little more, just to boost the economy, but that that wouldn't have to affect the feel of the place. Which I don't know if that's possible, to get them both" (V3).

However, the majority of volunteer respondents (12 of 15) were concerned only with the potential negative environmental impacts of tourism development (V1, V2, V5, V6, V7, V8, V10, V11, V12, V13, V14, V15). It was this concern for the environment, not local incomes, that informed their view of tourism development.

> "Yeah, I think it [tourism development] would be fine. As long as it doesn't interrupt too much the environment around here or the beach and all that. I mean… I'm not sure exactly how it would affect the turtles. Right now the turtles don't seem to mind, but I don't think hundreds of people should be going back and forth on the beach, so maybe a little bit of development but not masses" (V11).

One respondent even downplayed the economic benefits of tourism development, deciding that environmental degradation was a greater concern.

> "Bad things [about tourism development] are for the environment, because they have to build houses or hotels which means they cut the forest… It might be better for the people who live here. I don't know if they really need it here, because they live well, they have a good way of life, so I think it would be more bad than good" (V14).

For two volunteers, their concern for the environment had more to do with the value of the environment as a tourist amenity than with notions of environmental conservation (V3, V13).

> "I think if you had more people then the tranquility of the place would go, and that's one of the biggest attractions" (V13).

When asked whom they thought was in charge of tourism in Gandoca, respondents identified ANAI, MINAE, and/or local residents, or responded that they did not know. These responses are shown in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Volunteer Views of Responsibility for Tourism

In Charge of Tourism	Number of Respondents	Interviewees
ANAI	6	V2, V3, V8, V10, V13, V15
MINAE	6	V1, V2, V8, V9, V12, V15
Do Not Know	6	V4, V5, V6, V7, V11, V14
Local Residents	3	V1, V10, V12

Six respondents identified ANAI as (one of) the organization(s) responsible for tourism, primarily because it is through ANAI that the volunteers arrive in Gandoca.

> "I guess because most people who are tourists come through ANAI, ANAI would be in charge, because they're the people from who you find out where to stay. I mean I haven't seen any other hotels or pensions around here where you can stay, so I would say it's them that governs who comes" (V2).

> "The main tourism that takes place in Gandoca is volunteering for the project… So it's ANAI that's in charge of tourism here" (V8).

Although an equal number of respondents identified MINAE as responsible for tourism, they were not as familiar with MINAE or their role in tourism.

> "I actually don't know who would be in charge of tourism, I guess the people at the station when you first come into town [MINAE]… I would assume that they're in charge" (V9).

> "Offiicially it's MINAE that' in charge [of tourism], but I see very few of them… So the authority is MINAE but MINAE doesn't really organize it" (V8).

One interviewee pointed to the issue of local ownership. Despite his own preference for minimal development only, he recognized that ultimately tourism development is the prerogative of the local residents.

> "This isn't my home, this place doesn't belong to me, no matter how much I have a connection with the place, it doesn't belong to me, it's not my place in terms of ownership to say what happens to it and what doesn't. So if the community wants to make it a big hotel place with guided tours to see the turtles of Gandoca then that's what they want to do and that's the way they want to play it" (V1).

The manner in which volunteers envision the local community, and their rights and benefits, is central to their conceptualization of ecotourism (or tourism and conservation).

4.8 Visions of Community and 'Local People'

Eleven of the 15 volunteer interviewees discussed the topic of local motivations for being involved with the ANAI project; 10 of them identified money and/or conservation as the two possible motivating factors, as shown below in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Volunteers' Views of Local Motivations

Possible Motivation for Working with ANAI	Number of Respondents (n=10)	Interviewees
Money	10	V1, V2, V6, V7, V8, V11, V12, V13, V14, V15
Conservation	4	V2, V12, V13, V15

Some respondents perceived the motivations of local residents to be based entirely (or almost entirely) on money.

> "I think turtles are their cash cow… there's definitely money behind it all" (V6).

These volunteers were concerned that if there were no economic benefits from the project that the local residents would no longer support turtle conservation.

> "I would say [their motivation is] money. I don't think it's a conservation issue. If they're interested in conservation it's because they want to preserve the project as a money making scheme… if the money wasn't there they may return to their old way of poaching, that's just the way I feel" (V1).

> "They are involved because they get the money, but if the money was to go away I'm not sure if the turtles would be saved, because the relationship is based on money" (V8).

A few volunteers suggested that local residents might have just economic motivation or both economic and environmental motivations, but similar to the volunteers quoted above, hoped that there was some environmental motivation and genuine support for turtle conservation.

> "I presume they must care about the turtles if they work to conserve them. It could just be because it provides them with a source of income, but I think that grows on you, when you're conserving, the more you conserve the more you understand and the more you feel for the project and for the creatures you're protecting… Of course it would be better if they were motivated by environmental interest, then if the money runs out people would still be inclined to do it" (V13).

> "If they have a passion for the turtles because they're worried about their survival then that's going to… filter down through the community to the kids, generation after generation. However, if it's just a means to an end financially, then without the policing of it… it's likely they will collect eggs again. I think you hope that they're doing it for a bit of both" (V2).

Another volunteer was less concerned about the possibility of residents returning to the consumption of turtles and their eggs in the future, believing that local residents had developed support for turtle conservation by economically benefiting from the project.

> "People are going to make choices that benefit them economically. People need to make a living, that's just the way it is. And so by having this project here, and by having the program support the people, it's just a wonderful situation… So I guess through economics, or through the benefits that they receive economically, then they start to see that it's a great resource and they need to protect it. And I think they feel glad that they're doing both" (V12).

Finally, one volunteer considered local motivations to be irrelevant to the success of the project.

> "The work gets done, either way, and it's a wonderful cause, whatever people's motivations are for putting in time and effort" (V4).

At the root of volunteers' perceptions and concerns regarding local motivations seemed to be their views of local environmental values. Most interviewees had very positive impressions of local residents, characterizing them as friendly and hospitable; none of the respondents reported strong negative views of local people. However, several of

them were still concerned with a perceived lack of local environmental awareness (V1, V6, V7, V8, V10).

> "Very few [local] people have even seen turtles, and to me that just seems incredibly mad, they haven't seen the reason why all this money is here, basically, and it's something culturally different I think that they're not interested in turtles… it just seems mad" (V1).

> "I find it sad that people in the community here just get the money but don't really get involved more deeply and they are not really becoming conscious of the importance of what is going on here… I'm not sure if a person here has seen a turtle, and that's a bit shocking, isn't it? They've received volunteers for 15 years, they can see that people travel from all over the world to come here and see that, and they never make efforts to go to the beach on patrol and see turtles… If the project had to stop, I'm not sure if the local community is conscious enough to carry on saving the turtle… I think this country commercializes itself very well. I don't know what agency has been working on it, but the image it gives of itself is much better than the reality. In Gandoca, definitely, people need to learn much, much more [about] their environment" (V8).

In the views of these volunteers, it is not sufficient that local residents no longer consume turtle eggs; in addition to realizing an economic benefit in the conservation of sea turtles, the volunteers would also like local people to acquire an environmental consciousness mirroring that of the volunteers.

4.9 Summary

Overall, the volunteers seem to view ecotourism in Gandoca as a sea turtle conservation project that provides local benefits. Volunteers are motivated by a desire to do something good, namely assist in sea turtle conservation. In their view, the primary purpose of the ANAI project as conservation, while local benefits are secondary. Although tourism is not mentioned as a purpose of the project, the majority of volunteers are willing to identify themselves as a special kind of tourist. Furthermore, all volunteers recognize key elements of ecotourism in the ANAI project, whether or not they explicitly identify the project as ecotourism. Volunteers described both positive and negative aspects of their experience, thereby underlining the importance of seeing turtles and contributing to conservation. The role of environmental concerns in volunteers' conceptualizations of ecotourism was expressed both in their qualified support for minimal tourism development and their view of local motivations.

CHAPTER V

LOCAL VIEWS OF ECOTOURISM IN GANDOCA

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of 21 research interviews conducted with ANAI staff and volunteer research assistants affiliated with the turtle project in Gandoca (A1 to A10), local representatives of the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) (M1 and M2), the cabin owners or '*cabineros'* (C1 to C8), and one regional ecotourism professional working with Gandocan residents (O1). These interviewees are not all residents of Gandoca, nor do they necessarily share similar characteristics (age, education, motivations, role in ecotourism) as in the case of the volunteers discussed in Chapter 4. However, they all represent the supply side of ecotourism in Gandoca, either as conservation professionals or providers of tourist services, and are therefore discussed together in this chapter. They are referred to as 'local respondents' to distinguish them from the foreign volunteer ecotourists, although they are not all from Gandoca or even from Costa Rica. A complete list of these interviewees and their characteristics is included in Appendix B. It is also important to note that not all interviewees provided data for all of the topics discussed in this chapter; some questions or topics did not apply to all interviewees, while in some cases respondents did not offer relevant data, or data was lost because of poor sound quality of interview tapes. The number of interviews in which relevant data were provided is noted for each section.

The results of these supply side interviews are discussed in seven sections. In Section 5.2, local opinions on the purpose of the ANAI sea turtle project are presented. Views of volunteers as tourists and elements of ecotourism are discussed in Sections 5.3 and 5.4 respectively. Perspectives on the distribution of the economic benefits of ecotourism are considered in Section 5.5, while Section 5.6 outlines perspectives on tourism development in Gandoca. View of community cohesion and conflict as they

related to ecotourism, conservation, and development in Gandoca are discussed in Section 5.7, and finally, challenges for ecotourism and the ANAI sea turtle project are included in Section 5.8. The chapter concludes with a summary of these findings and how they offer a local view of ecotourism in Section 5.9.

5.2 Purpose of the ANAI Sea Turtle Project

The conceptualization of ecotourism in Gandoca is related to how the purpose of the ANAI sea turtle project is envisioned. When asked to explain the purpose of the project, the local respondents mentioned the same three purposes as the volunteers: conservation, research and community benefits. These responses (n=14) are displayed in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Local Views of the Purpose of the ANAI Sea Turtle Project

Purpose	Number of Respondents (n=14)	Interviewees
Conservation	11	A2, A4, A5, A6, A8, A9, A10 C1, C4, C5, C6
Community Benefits	10	A2, A5, A6, A9 C1, C2, C4, C5, C6 M1
Research	3	A10 M1, M2

All of the ANAI respondents who discussed the purpose of the sea turtle project mentioned conservation; A4 and A8 mentioned conservation only, while A2, A5, A6 and A9 mentioned both conservation and community benefits and A10 referred to both conservation and research. In all of these cases conservation was seen as the primary or one of the primary purposes of the project.

> "First is the species. As a biologist, the species, the animal, or the place to be conserved, is what is important to me. The second is to involve the community, and this is a big aspect… to involve them economically, culturally, and… politically" (A5).

> "The purpose is conservation, really. To conserve the species as much as we can" (A4).

When both conservation and community benefits were discussed, they were seen as interconnected. These ANAI respondents viewed community benefits as a means to or a result of sea turtle conservation, as explained by A2 and A6.

> "[The main objective is] to save turtles…There were two possibilities for organizing the Gandoca project. One way was to get money and put up a field station, with lots of bedrooms, and all the volunteers who would come to Gandoca we would put them there and we [ANAI] would make the money. It meant a lot of money for us. The other way was to put the volunteers in the community, and those families who were poaching turtles' eggs would be frowned upon by the volunteers. And we figured there would be a slow influence of the volunteers over the poachers… we felt this would slowly change the mentality of the people in Gandoca. So we chose the second option. We decided that instead of making money for ANAI, we should put the money in the community so that the community would make money" (A2).

> "The purpose is the protection of turtles. And all the benefits that the community has have been a direct result of the turtles. The turtles are the central purpose of ANAI, in Gandoca" (A6).

One ANAI respondent (A10) referred to both conservation and research as the purposes of the sea turtle project.

> "What is the purpose of the project? To increase the number of leatherbacks, and if possible the hawksbill and green turtles. And to be more successful each day… ANAI does research, research more than anything… If ANAI wants to research, it has to conserve in order to do research, because how can you do research if you have nothing to research? So they are linked" (A10).

The MINAE staff also viewed the purpose of the ANAI sea turtle project as research, with M1 mentioning community benefits as well. The reason for the distinct MINAE view is related to their position as administrators of the Gandoca-Manzanillo wildlife refuge. MINAE has legal authority over all activity within the refuge and responsibility for conservation work; ANAI must apply to MINAE each year for a permit to conduct research with the sea turtles (M1).

> "We [MINAE] are involved in everything that has to do with conservation in the refuge, but we have groups like ANAI that work specifically with the turtle research… [ANAI is] a foundation and they are in charge only of the turtle research… That is ANAI's role, the turtle research. MINAE is the top authority on a national level in terms of environmental protection, ANAI works specifically in research" (M2).

> "[ANAI is] dedicated specifically to the research of the leatherback turtle more than anything. They have brought many benefits to Gandoca. They bring the volunteers, that is how the cabineros make

money. If the research ANAI is doing weren't being done there would be no… many people come to see the turtles thanks to the research ANAI has done. They have helped Gandoca a lot" (M1).

Finally, of the five cabineros who discussed the purpose of the ANAI project, all five mentioned community benefits and four respondents also mentioned conservation. For this group, conservation and community benefits seem to be equally important.

"The purpose is conservation of the turtle. To bring in money, bring volunteers. To help people help themselves because many people live on the money volunteers bring in" (C1).

"They [ANAI] protect the turtles and they give jobs to a lot of people. They are in charge of bringing tourism to the cabins" (C5).

One cabin owner discussed the purpose of ANAI as an organization rather than the sea turtle project specifically. In her view, the purpose of ANAI is to benefit people throughout the province of Limón.

"The purpose is not to benefit [ANAI] itself, it benefits many communities. ANAI has helped in many ways… When I first arrived, ANAI helped out with money for farms, cattle, agriculture, but it did not work out… It is a community benefit, they share with many people in Talamanca and the province of Limón" (C2).

Of the three purposes of the ANAI sea turtle project discussed by local respondents, research was most strongly supported by MINAE, ANAI viewed conservation as primary and community benefits as secondary, and the cabineros viewed conservation and community benefits as equally important purposes.

5.3 Volunteers or Tourists?

As was the case for volunteer interviewees, local respondents did not identify tourism as a specific purpose of the project although they did acknowledge community benefits. Local interviewees were therefore also asked if they considered the volunteers to be tourists. All twenty-one local respondents provided their opinion on the status of volunteers; thirteen said that volunteers are tourists, while eight stated that volunteers are not tourists. These responses, as well as the reasons given for classifying volunteers as tourists (or not), are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Local Interviewees' Views of Volunteers as Tourists

Are volunteers tourists?	Reasons	Interviewees
Yes (13/21)	• No reason given • (Foreign) visitors • Pay for experience • *Special kind of tourist*	• A1, A10 C7 • M1, C6 • C3, C4 M2 • A2, A7 C1, C2, C3, C4, C6, C8, M1
No (8/21)	• Work • More involved with, respect for community • Spend less	• A3, A4, A5, A6, A9 C5 • A8 • O1

Of the ANAI respondents, four people considered volunteers to be tourists while six people did not. Similar to the volunteers, five of the six respondents who did not classify volunteers as tourists cited the work they do with ANAI as a factor that distinguishes them from tourists. Although they may recognize the similarities between them, ultimately they refuse to identify volunteers as tourists.

> "Tourism is totally different from volunteering. People who go to volunteer, anywhere, they go to work, with love, for something that is being lost, that is disappearing. And the tourists, no, they come to see something they like, and they only come to see the things they like… Volunteers come to work for something that is being lost… so it's totally different, but in some ways maybe they are similar" (A4).

> "Volunteers are different from tourists, they come here and they specifically want to work… It's a job. Independent of the fact that they may be visiting the country, coming to Gandoca means working, even if it's volunteer…. The tourist comes, 'oh how pretty the beach is, I didn't like it, I'm leaving'. They're two different things" (A6).

However, four ANAI respondents did view volunteers as tourists; two respondents did not offer a particular reason for this view (A1, A10), while the other two respondents indicated that volunteers are a special kind of tourist (A2, A7).

> “Are volunteers tourists? Yes, they’re tourists” (A10).
>
> “Yes [volunteers are tourists]. Not all of them but the majority. It’s a special kind of tourism” (A2).

In contrast to the divided views of ANAI respondents, seven of the eight cabineros categorized the volunteers as tourists. One of these respondents did not explain the reason(s) for this view, but the other six respondents stated that volunteers are a special kind of tourist, either because they have different objectives or because they are treated differently.

> “Yes of course [volunteers are tourists]. But they have different objectives than other tourists. But they pay like other tourists” (C3).
>
> “My concept of a tourist is anyone who leaves his house for a trip is a tourist. And I think they are volunteer tourists, because they come to help protect the turtles and to leave money in the community” (C6).
>
> “Yes [volunteers are tourists]. They are received as tourists but with other considerations” (C8).

Only one cabinero did not believe that volunteers are tourists; similar to the ANAI respondents, this cabinero emphasized the fact that volunteers do work.

> “No [volunteers are not tourists], they are people who come to work whereas tourists come to enjoy” (C5).

Both of the MINAE representatives viewed volunteers as tourists, although M1 was reluctant to do so. At first he refused to call volunteers tourists, but then conceded that they are a different kind of tourist.

> “Volunteers pay to work and conserve. Tourists pay for their food, their lodging. They don’t come to work, they come to be taken here or there. Volunteers work. I can’t call them tourists because tourists don’t work, tourists sightsee. Volunteers are a different kind of tourist. They’re tourists because they come from elsewhere. It’s a different category; they come with a different mindset… I place them in two very different categories” (M1).

"Yes [volunteers are tourists]. Even though they come as volunteers, they contribute to the economy of the community… so yes, economically they function as tourists in the sense that they benefit the community" (M2).

Although there were mixed views regarding whether or not volunteers are tourists, all but one of the local respondents indicated that there are differences between volunteers and (other) tourists. The differences outlined by these interviewees are listed in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Local Perceptions of Differences Between Volunteers and Tourists

Differences Between Volunteers and (other) Tourists	Number of Respondents (n=21)	Interviewees
Work	13	A1, A3, A4, A5, A6, A9, A10, C1, C2, C5, C8, M1, M2
Altruistic and caring	8	A1, A2, A3, A4, A7, A8, A10, C6
Spend less money	7	A1, A4, A5, C2, C8, M2, O1
Desire to learn	6	A4, A5, A9, A10, C2, C4
Local Involvement	2	A8, A10
Smaller impact	2	A7, A10
Volunteers need less comfort	1	C3
No difference	1	C7

Many respondents mentioned more than one difference. For several respondents the differences were inter-related; volunteers spend less and are charged less because they contribute through their work with the project and come to learn.

"Volunteers are students who come to learn from the community, see the system, get to know Costa Rica and they have an interest in caring for the turtles. They are more highly regarded and are charged less. The tourists don't work; they want to see turtles and go, they want to sightsee. They are all tourists but the higher consideration is given to the volunteers working with the project" (C2).

> “[Volunteers are] very different, as different as different can be. They’re different because their vacation is working on something that is of interest to them in exchange for having that experience, in exchange for being a tourist, that’s a very cheap way of being a tourist… They’re at the very, very lowest end of the scale, but what they do as tourists is at the top of the scale of how useful it is… Usually tourists are valued in terms of how much money they leave, that’s the measure – how many days they stay, and how much they spend per day. The way to value the tourists that go to Gandoca and work on the turtle project or other volunteer projects is a completely different valuation. The amount of money they bring in is important in the general scheme of things, in terms of creating livelihood for local people, but the value that they are putting into the process is huge and it has to do with how they spend their time” (A1).

As a group, local respondents do not view the ANAI sea turtle project as just another tourism venture. Eight of twenty-one local respondents did not classify volunteers as tourists, and nine of the thirteen who did identify volunteers as tourists qualified this position by describing them as a special kind of tourist. Local respondents view volunteers as special and different because they come to work, are altruistic, are interested in learning, are more involved locally, and spend less per person than other tourists.

5.4 Recognizing Elements of Ecotourism

The local respondents recognized the same elements of ecotourism as the volunteer respondents. Four of the twenty-one local interviewees identified the ANAI project as an example of ecotourism, while the remaining seventeen interviewees identified elements of ecotourism, but either did not explicitly mention the term ‘ecotourism’ or did not apply the term to the ANAI project. The local interviewees’ responses are summarized in Table 5.4.

Those who identify the project as ecotourism explain that it can be considered ecotourism because it provides support for conservation. One ANAI respondent indicates that ecotourism and sea turtle conservation are synonymous in Gandoca (A2). Another ANAI interviewee was critical of ecotourism as a label, pointing to its frequent misuse, but indicated that the ANAI sea turtle project is a genuine form of ecotourism (A1). One of the MINAE staff members views ecotourism as one of several distinct elements of the project (M1).

> “To me, the right term here is ecotourism. That is, first I’m an ecologist who is going to relax, and I’m going to visit a place where I won’t hurt the environment or the culture. … For us, ecotourism is the same thing as conserving turtles in Gandoca” (A2).

> "Very little ecotourism in any way has anything to do with eco, other than the fact that people go to natural places. It doesn't in any way support eco, and it doesn't support local people. And we wanted to do that, both of those things" (A1).

> "The project is diverse. There is ecotourism, research, control and protection. It does not simply involve going to the beach to observe the eggs, it involves the cabins, the arrival of tourists, and the guides. It's a broad project…" (M1).

Table 5.4: Local Recognition of the Elements of Ecotourism

Respondents' Identification of Ecotourism	Elements of Ecotourism Identified				
	Local Economic Benefits	Support for Conservation	Community Involvement	Tourism as Substitute for Consumptive Use of Turtles/Eggs	Environmental Education
Explicit – Identify Project as Ecotourism	A1, A2, M1	A1, A2, C2, M1	A2	A2, M1	A2, C2, M1
Implicit – Recognize Elements of Ecotourism	A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, A10, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, C8, M2, O1	A3, A4, A5, A9, A10, C2, C3, C4, C5, C7, M2, O1	A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, C3, C5, C6	A4, A6, A5, A8, C4, M2	A6, A9, C8, M2
n=21	21 of 21	16 of 21	11 of 21	8 of 21	7 of 21

The second MINAE representative does not directly identify the ANAI project as ecotourism, although he does identify tourism in Gandoca as ecotourism, and classify project volunteers as tourists.

> "We have been working with Gandoca and neighbouring communities to educate people about the advantages they have in terms of conservation of the environment, the flora and the fauna. Why? Because we are involved in working with ecotourism… Gandoca has to think about ecological

> tourism. We have to invite tourism by conserving nature… In the future, we need to develop ecotourism more in Gandoca" (M2).

One respondent, although he does not use the term ecotourism, describes the ANAI project as a unique kind of tourism.

> "I think that[it is] tourism, not tourism in general, but an ecological, volunteer tourism, there isn't an exact term" (A3).

Another ANAI interviewee recognizes local attempts to further develop ecological tourism in Gandoca, although she does not point to the ANAI project specifically as ecotourism.

> "They [local residents] are trying to develop tourism, an ecological tourism, and to learn about tourism, so at the same time that they welcome tourists that are interested in protect areas and conservation, they will learn and protect" (A5).

Similar to the volunteers, all of the local respondents recognized the economic benefits of the project and more than two thirds (16 of 21) acknowledged that the project provides support for conservation. Many respondents repeatedly emphasized both the importance of the economic benefits of the project and the link between tourism and conservation throughout their interviews. One ANAI respondent underlined the importance of this link by expressing a desire to assign a clear economic value to each sea turtle conserved.

> "What I would like to see is… to assign a number to a turtle, how much is it worth… So that turtle was seen by 20 volunteers, that was the reason the volunteers were here. How much money does each turtle bring for the community? This number would be important to know, because people understand numbers" (A3).

Although each 'saved' sea turtle may not have an exact price tag attached to it, it is clear that local respondents still appreciate the link between economic benefits from tourism and conservation. One ANAI respondent clearly viewed this relationship very seriously, in spite of responding jokingly.

> "In the case that the turtles disappear, all that money will disappear, and if there are no turtles there won't be any volunteers… the volunteers come for the turtles. So if there aren't any turtles, why would they come? To see me? I don't think so, I'm not that pretty to look at" (A4).

The income provided by volunteers is one of the few sources of cash income for most of the cabineros, who otherwise rely on some subsistence agriculture and small amounts of income from selling coconuts, cattle, pigs, chickens, or other products.

> "Once the project is finished we have to work in agriculture and wait for our cattle to be ready to be sold. The tourists pay right away and that is a big advantage" (C2).

Because the economic benefits of ecotourism are so important to local livelihoods, the distribution of these benefits is a paramount concern.

5.5 Distribution of Economic Benefits of Ecotourism

There are three aspects to the distribution of the economic benefits of ecotourism in Gandoca. First, since the sea turtle project only operates five months of the year, there is a temporal aspect to the benefits. As noted by C2 in the preceding section, the cabineros have to rely on other sources of income in the months when the project is not operating. Second, there is the matter of benefit sharing among community members. This thesis only considers those local residents who actively participate in, and therefore benefit from, the ANAI project. For this reason, it is only possible to consider their views of community distribution of benefits; the views of all local residents cannot be assessed. Finally, the distribution of benefits among the cabineros who work with the ANAI project is important to consider, and was discussed by several local interviewees.

Rather than let volunteers choose their own accommodation, the cabineros currently assign a person to distribute the volunteers equally among the cabins, ensuring that each cabin owner will have the same number of volunteer-nights over the course of the season. For those who discussed this system (n=8), two conflicting views were evident. Four respondents felt that this was a matter of fairness, believing that all cabineros should benefit equally from the ANAI volunteers (A3, C5 C6, M2). In contrast, two respondents felt that the volunteers should be able to choose their own accommodation, thereby benefiting those cabineros who offered the best amenities (C1, C3). In the quotes below, A3 represents the former view and C3 the latter.

> "[Before] there was a problem here with the person in charge of volunteers, he was distributing volunteers to his family and friends, he wasn't sending volunteers to other cabins. So we looked for a way to coordinate the volunteers, so that a person that wasn't from the community, sent by ANAI, would be in charge of fairly distributing volunteers, to avoid having one family making all the money… [someone] is in charge of distributing volunteers in an equitable manner" (A3).

> "We talked about distributing the volunteers equally and that is not right. If a volunteer comes and doesn't like their lodging they should be able to leave, but they have to stay. I don't agree with that" (C3).

One respondent did not agree with the equal distribution system, but also recognized that it is important to prevent the accrual of benefits to only one or a few families (A7).

> "I would change… the fact that volunteers need to be distributed evenly among all the cabin people. I think they should be allowed to pick the place they want to stay… I think if we want to prevent a monopoly of cabineros then it's the best thing we can do… so I guess that's alright" (A7).

Finally, one respondent supported the right of the cabineros to decide for themselves how they want to distribute the volunteers (and therefore benefits), but felt that there were flaws with the current equal distribution scheme.

> "It's a socialist decision in a capitalist system. It's peculiar, but it's their decision. They all want the same number of volunteers in order to get the same income… I think it's fine because it allows everyone to get the same income, but there are problems. They themselves should demand that a portion of the income should go to improve the conditions of the bad cabins… because it's unfair for the volunteers, who pay the same amount whether they stay at [the nicest cabin] or [the worst cabin]" (A2).

A few cabineros have invested substantially in their cabins and facilities, yet they do not have the opportunity to make more money from the volunteers. However, some other families do not feel that they can afford to invest in their facilities, although they would like to. This issue is discussed further in Section 5.8.

5.6 Perspectives on Tourism Development in Gandoca

Local respondents overwhelmingly supported some form of tourist development in Gandoca. Seventeen of the nineteen interviewees who commented on tourism development in Gandoca supported minimal, controlled development, as shown in Table

5.5; only two respondents wanted Gandoca to stay ‘as is’. Nine respondents also emphasized the importance of maintaining local ownership and control of tourism. One respondent was against any kind of development or infrastructure improvement in Gandoca, preferring that Gandoca stay as it is.

> “I wouldn’t like to see it more civilized, to see more roads built on natural land to facilitate tourism… I’m against that. I understand people need to have easier access, but a balance needs to be found. I would prefer it to remain the way it is” (A8).

Table 5.5: Local Views of Tourism Development in Gandoca

Development in Gandoca	Number of Respondents (n=19)	Interviewees
Stay ‘as is’	2	A8, A9
Minimal, controlled development	17	A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A10, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, M1, M2, O1
Maintain local control	9	A2, A4, A6, A9, A10, C4, C6, C8, O1

However, the dominant view was that Gandoca should seek minimal, carefully controlled development. Most respondents supported improvements to facilities and infrastructure, a greater number of tourists, and an increase in tourism outside of the turtle-nesting season, apart from the ANAI project.

> “It [tourism development] would be really good, but with a limit. Tourism is devastating, it causes problems. Not the volunteers, but tourism tourism, the ones that come and go. It would be important for the community, because it generates income, but only up to a point, because in quantities out of control it would be problem, like has happened in many other places” (A3).

> “In the future I think it will be possible to build nice cabins, to attract more tourists… What I would like to see is more money coming in so that we can lead more comfortable lives, to have enough in case of illness, for transportation. There are many things we need… I think tourism could be developed for the whole year” (C3).

There was some variation in the reasons behind respondents’ views of tourism development. The cabineros were most concerned about increasing economic benefits, while ANAI and MINAE respondents were most concerned about preventing potential

negative environmental impacts associated with increased tourism. A few respondents also mentioned the need to control tourism development so as to prevent negative social and cultural impacts on Gandoca. These views are shown in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Local Concerns for Tourism Development

Concerns for Tourism Development	Number of Respondents (n=19)	Interviewees
Increase Economic Benefits	11	A10, A6, C1, C2, C3, C4, C5, C6, C7, M1, O1
Prevent Negative Environmental Impacts	9	A2, A3, A4, A6, A7, C6, M1, M2, O1
Prevent Negative Social Impacts on the Community	3	A9, C2, C6

In addition, nine respondents also underlined the importance of local ownership and control over tourism development. They are strongly against the development of foreign-owned businesses or large hotels that would take benefits away from local residents.

> "Ideally? The tourist business in the hands of the local people – everything, everything that has to do with tourism: arts and crafts, the souvenir shops, local people providing all the services for tourists, such as bicycles, canoes, kayaks, horses, tours to the lagoon, to the mountain, to the turtles… everything in the hands of the locals… that would be my ideal tourism. What's my nightmare scenario? Big hotels in Gandoca, a kind of development like in Puerto Viejo or Cahuita [nearby towns], where the Gandoquenos would be the employees of the big hotel owners. Because then the development is not in the hand of Gandoca, it's in the hands of others" (A2).

> "In the future, let's say if a foreigner comes here and builds cabins, what will the people in Gandoca do? They will suffer, because a person with a lot of money will build nice cabins, and the tourists will go to the nice cabins. But that's what I don't want to happen here. In the future, I think it will be possible to build nice cabins, to attract more tourists, and that the same people from the community should be the owners of the cabins, not foreigners" (C4).

In spite of this widely shared view of small-scale tourism development in the hands of local people, there were very mixed views regarding who has responsibility for tourism. Fifteen respondents commented on who they thought the group in charge of tourism was, with seven of these respondents naming multiple groups; these opinions are shown in Table 5.7. Seven of the eight cabineros interviewed discussed responsibility for tourism.

Interestingly, none of them viewed themselves as responsible, while five of the seven identified ANAI as the group in charge of tourism.

> "I think that ANAI should improve everything, starting by bringing more volunteers and tourists as well to the community" (C6).

Table 5.7: Local Views of Responsibility for Tourism

In Charge of Tourism	Number of Respondents (n=15)	Interviewees
Association of Guides	8	A10, A2, A3, A4, A8, C4, M1, M2
ANAI	6	A10, C1, C2, C3, C5, C6
MINAE	5	A2, A3, A4, M1, M2
All Local People	3	A2, C7, M1
Cabineros	3	A3, A8, M2

However, only one of the six ANAI respondents viewed ANAI as the group in charge of tourism, with the remaining five identifying every group but ANAI. Everyone who identified MINAE said that they are responsible for rules, regulations, and monitoring associated with tourism, but recognized other local groups as responsible for tourism management and development.

5.7 Views of Community Cohesion and Conflict

Differences of opinion with respect to tourism and conservation, particularly in terms of who has rights and responsibility for these activities, are a source of conflict in Gandoca. All of the local respondents except for two international research assistants (nineteen of twenty-one respondents) discussed the problem of intra-community conflict in relation to one or more of the following groups: ANAI, MINAE, the cabineros, the Development Association and local families.

There has not been a Development Association, the local government in Gandoca, since 2001 (A2, M1). According to several respondents, the Development Association dissolved because there were accusations of theft and conflict between two groups of residents that could not be resolved (A2, C2, C4, C6, M2). Several respondents identified the ANAI project as one source of conflict, suggesting that some community members believe that the Development Association should manage the project, particularly the ecotourism aspect, while others, including the cabineros, believe that ANAI should continue to be responsible for the project (A2, A9, C5, C6, M2).

> "It [the Development Association] consists of one very large family and it does not work well. The Association is for their benefit only and not the community's. That is why we don't work well with the Association. We have formed an association of cabineros because the Development Association does not want to help us" (C2).

> "They [the Development Association] want to take over the project and they can't because they are not prepared. They don't have an office with paid workers taking or making phone calls. They don't know whether people are coming or not like ANAI does… The Association wants to take over the project… they want to handle the money. They are crazy because they can't, it's too difficult… We are fighting so that ANAI continues working" (C5).

Conservation is a related source of conflict; there are those who benefit from conservation because of its relation to ecotourism, and those who are against conservation because they view it as limiting their livelihood opportunities. This opposition to conservation is perceived as being directed towards ANAI and MINAE as well as those local residents who benefit directly from ecotourism.

> "Not everyone is in favour of ANAI. All the people who are living from natural resources, they are the ones against it… they do not agree with tourism. It [the wildlife refuge] is being protected because of tourism. It is a source of income. These people live from the turtles' eggs, they sell them" (C8).

> "Many people here in the community are poachers. They like to hunt wild animals, and everyone who goes hunting, they're angry because they know MINAE will prohibit it, and people feel uncomfortable with MINAE being present. People that don't hunt or anything like that don't see it that way, they see it [conservation] as a good thing" (A4).

In discussing these conflicts, seven respondents noted that they are a hindrance to the development of the community generally and tourism specifically (A2, M2, C3, C4, M1, M2, O1).

"The Development Association plays a dirty role, that is how I see it and feel about it. They would play an important role if they did what they're supposed to… there are internal conflicts and that leads to a bad image of tourism here. It doesn't look good. The most important thing is to discuss the problems and be able to arrive at a solution… If there is discord we cannot move forward. We have to move in the same direction. Many do not see it that way. They have selfish purposes so there are divisions within the community. A community divided does not work" (C3).

"Gandoca is a little bit more difficult to work with than other communities. They should work together, but they don't because there are so many power struggles and infighting… It's difficult to work in a community where people don't get along… If the community were united it would be better for Gandoca. If they want to be a tourist destination they have to work together, the whole community. They need to organize and stop fighting. They can achieve many things if they unite" (O1).

5.8 Challenges for the ANAI Sea Turtle Project and Ecotourism in Gandoca

Local respondents recognized several challenges for management of the ANAI sea turtle project and ecotourism development in Gandoca. In addition to the problem of intra-community conflict discussed above, interviewees also mentioned the challenge of bringing enough ecotourists (both volunteers and other tourists), the need to improve amenities, the lack of local training and skills, and the difficulty of securing adequate funding for the sea turtle project. In total, fifteen local respondents discussed these challenges; their views are displayed in Table 5.7.

Table 5.8: Local Respondents' Views of Challenges for Ecotourism in Gandoca

Challenge	Number of Respondents (n=15)	Interviewees
Improve Amenities	11	A1, A2, A4, A5, A7, C1, C3, C5, C6, M1, O1
Lack of Skills	8	A1, A2, A4, A5, C2, M1, M2, O1
Community Conflict	7	A2, M2, C3, C4, M1, M2, O1
Enough Ecotourists	6	A1, A3, C5, C6, C7, M2
Adequate Project Funding	2	A1, A2

Eleven of the local respondents discussed the need to improve amenities, including accommodation, food, tourist activities, telephone, and transportation. Three of these respondents suggested there was also a need to find funding to enable the cabineros to improve their facilities (A4, C3, O1), whereas four respondents believed that these improvements are simply a matter of individual cabin owners reinvesting in their business (A1, A2, C6, M1). These contrasting views are illustrated in the quotes below.

> "Tourism is a source of income that allows us to survive, but we need to offer accommodations to make tourists feel comfortable. We need to offer more suitable and hygienic conditions. In that respect Gandoca is a little bit behind. We don't have the resources to build safe and secure accommodations" (C3).

> "Some families, I don't know, they don't invest in their business, in a new bathroom, I don't know what they spend their money on. They're not interested in improving their facilities, that's something very important. Each day you have to improve your facilities" (C6).

The lack of local skills and training was another challenge discussed by eight of the respondents; they identified problems such as poor knowledge of business management and customer service, inability to speak English and communicate effectively with tourists, lack of self-motivation, and a need to improve the skills of the tour guides. Six respondents highlighted the need to attract more volunteers and other ecotourists to Gandoca.

> "The challenges are many. One of them is getting enough tourists, ecotourists, ecovolunteers, to really make a difference in people's incomes and people's lives, so that they do want to continue doing it… So we need to keep a high enough flow of ecovolunteers and tourists, hopefully around the year, that's what a lot of people want, to make this something that's not a 5 month source of income but it's a 12 month source of income or a 10 month source of income. That's one of the challenges, getting enough people to go there, to want to go there" (A1).

Finally, the difficulty of securing adequate funding for the sea turtle project was discussed by two of the ANAI respondents. This problem is related to both the short-term nature of funding for conservation and development projects and the view that ecotourism is a business and not a conservation project deserving of funding.

> "Ecotourism [as it] is normally practiced [does not have] very much importance at all for either sustainable development or biodiversity conservation. I think it's just a business that uses the environment, that's what most ecotourism is… If [ecotourism is] developed by local people for local people, for protecting the environment, for community development in a way that's sustainable… then it does have great potential. That's what we're working on. That requires a subsidy, it doesn't just happen. It's the other thing that just happens… I think most of the sources of financing see it

> [ecotourism] as a business, and if someone wants to get involved in this business they should invest in it. To do the type of work we're doing has not been easy" (A1).
>
> "Our problem now is that the turtle project of ANAI is getting less and less money, because the majority of international NGOs give funding only for one, two, three years. And it's hard to have 4 or 5 sponsors and to run every year to try to get new ones. That's our problem. This year we have an economic crisis on our hands. That's the reason why not all our employees are getting a good salary, and this crisis will be even worse next year" (A2).

It is notable that only two ANAI staff members were aware of the problem of acquiring sufficient funding for the project.

5.9 Summary

Local respondents' views of ecotourism incorporate concerns for both the environment and local livelihoods. The main purposes of the ANAI project are seen as conservation and community benefits, with ANAI emphasizing the former and the cabineros the latter. Volunteers tend to be viewed as either a special kind of tourist or as conservation volunteers (i.e. not tourists), and are distinguished from other tourists based on their altruism and work with the turtles, among other characteristics. Although only four local respondents used the term ecotourism explicitly, all respondents recognized at least one key element of ecotourism in the ANAI project; respondents particularly highlighted the local economic benefits and support for conservation that it provides. The equal distribution of economic benefits among cabineros was generally supported, although the conflicts between this system and the business aspects of ecotourism were noted. There was wide support for carefully controlled ecotourism development in Gandoca, with special emphasis placed on the need to maintain local control and ownership. In discussing ecotourism development, both the need to limit environmental impacts and to increase economic impacts was mentioned, with ANAI emphasizing the former and the cabineros the latter. However, responsibilities for the control and management of tourism are not clearly understood or agreed upon. Challenges for ecotourism development in Gandoca include the need to improve amenities and skills, attract a sufficient number of ecotourists, maintain adequate project funding, and especially, resolve intra-community conflict.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

This final chapter has three inter-related purposes. The first purpose is to fulfill the second and third objectives of the research, namely to consider what kinds of coherence and/or conflict exist among different actors' perspectives, and how the various actors support or oppose global environmental discourses of ecotourism. (The first objective of the thesis, to examine how on-the-ground actors conceptualize ecotourism, was realized through the presentation of respondents perspectives on the ANAI sea turtle project, as outlined in Chapters IV and V). The second purpose is to demonstrate how the research findings fit with the ecotourism and political ecology literature reviewed in Chapter II, and to outline the specific contributions of the thesis. Finally, this chapter will conclude with recommendations for future research that arise from the discussion.

6.2 Comparing Views of Ecotourism in Gandoca, Costa Rica

In this section, the views of the volunteers, ANAI, MINAE and cabineros will be compared both to one another, by the topics addressed in Chapters IV and V, and to the environmental discourses that were outlined in Chapter II.[9] The three discourses prominent at a national scale in Costa Rica are the 'nature', 'profit', and 'people' discourses, which frame environmental discussions in terms of environmental protection, the capitalization of nature, and local human development, respectively (see Section 2.3.3 and Table 2.2 in particular).

[9] The total number of research respondents was 36, but not all respondents addressed all topics; the number of respondents who addressed a given topic is therefore noted in each section of the discussion. The individual respondents who discussed each topic were listed in Chapters IV and V.

6.2.1 Purpose of the ANAI Sea Turtle Project

In establishing the Sea Turtle Conservation Project, the aim of ANAI was "to conserve the nesting colonies [of sea turtles] through a collaborative process that would also contribute to an improvement in the quality of human life in Gandoca" (ANAI 2002a). The official mission of the organization as a whole is "to help the people of Talamanca design and implement a strategy linking socio-economic development, cultural strengthening and biodiversity conservation…[and] to seek the emergence of a truly grassroots process within the local community" (ANAI, 2002a). The research respondents echoed these objectives, identifying conservation, research, and community benefits as the three purposes of the ANAI Sea Turtle Project. Conservation was the most commonly cited purpose, mentioned by twenty-six of twenty-nine respondents, followed by community benefits (17 of 29), and research (5 of 29). The volunteers and the ANAI staff most strongly supported conservation as a purpose, while the provision of community benefits was recognized as a purpose by some members of every group interviewed (volunteers, ANAI, MINAE, and the cabineros). Although two volunteers and one ANAI respondent identified research as a purpose of the project, it was emphasized most strongly by the MINAE respondents. There was thus some variation among the groups in terms of how frequently each purpose was identified, but consistency in the identification of the same three purposes by both volunteers and local respondents.

If research and conservation are considered to be two parts of a larger environmental objective, then respondents identify dual purposes of the ANAI project: environment and local development. The environmental purposes of the project fit in with the 'nature' discourse, while the development purpose (community benefits) is a strand of the 'people' discourse. The 'nature' discourse appears to be most strongly supported; by identifying the purpose of the project (or one of the purposes) as conservation, the majority of respondents are underscoring the importance of the project in achieving environmental protection. Ecotourism in this view is for nature. However, there is also support for the 'people' discourse; more than half of the respondents identified community benefits as one

of the purposes of the project (only one respondent (C2) identified community benefits as the only purpose of the project). This view of the project corresponds with an understanding of ecotourism as a means of supporting local livelihoods. Protection of resources, in this case sea turtles, is therefore important because it is the source of local benefits. Thus the views of the purpose of the ANAI project seem to demonstrate a merging of the 'nature' and 'people' discourses, with the 'nature' discourse being more dominant. The project tends to be viewed more as a conservation project that provides local benefits than as a local development project that provides environmental benefits.

6.2.2 Volunteers or Tourists?

All of the respondents offered their opinion on whether or not they view volunteers as tourists. Of the thirty-six respondents interviewed, twenty-four said that volunteers are tourists and twelve said that they are not. Although no one identified tourism as a purpose of the project, two thirds of the respondents still viewed the volunteers as tourists. Interestingly, a greater proportion of volunteer respondents viewed themselves as tourists (11 of 15) than did local respondents (13 of 21), although similar reasons were given by both groups for viewing volunteers as tourists (foreign, pay, special kind of tourist) or not (work, altruism, local involvement). There was a greater difference in opinion between the ANAI staff and the cabineros than between the volunteers and all local respondents. As discussed in Chapter V, six of seven cabineros viewed the volunteers as tourists, whereas only four of ten ANAI respondents did. This reflects their roles with the project: the cabineros are directly involved in the provision of tourist services, primarily room and board, and therefore see the volunteers as tourists, whereas the ANAI staff work with the volunteers on the sea turtle conservation aspect of the project.

In considering all of the responses, there appeared to be a range from viewing the volunteer as complete tourist to not viewing the volunteer as a tourist in any way. This range was captured at three points in the coding scheme: yes the volunteer is a tourist (4 of 36), yes the volunteer is a *special kind* of tourist (20 of 36), and no the volunteer is not a

tourist (12 of 36). All but one of the thirty-six respondents recognized (a) difference(s) between volunteers and (other) tourists. Four differences that were cited by both volunteers and local respondents were work, the altruistic nature of the volunteers, their desire to learn, and their local involvement. In addition, the volunteers mentioned that they had a lesser need for amenities and longer length of stay than other tourists, while the local respondents also noted that volunteers tend to spend less money than other tourists and have a smaller impact. There are thus broad similarities in how volunteers and local respondents view volunteers in relation to other tourists.

The tendency to take volunteers out of the tourist category, or to qualify them as a special kind of tourist, was explained most commonly by their work (19 of 36) and their altruism (17 of 36). There are three points worth discussing further with respect to these features of the volunteers. First, altruism was the motivation most commonly cited by the volunteers. By helping hands-on with sea turtle conservation, the volunteers are fulfilling the objective of their vacation just as another tourist might fulfill his/her objective to relax on the beach by going to an all-inclusive resort. In this sense, they are not fundamentally different from other tourists. Moreover, the volunteers are not strictly altruistic since they also benefit from the experience by traveling to a new place, interacting with turtles, gaining work experience, completing an educational requirement, or experiencing cultural/language exchange. It is for reasons such as this that Duffy (2002) called ecotourism ‘green greed’ and Munt (1994) coined the term ‘ego-tourism’ to express the selfish nature of ecotourism, because tourists’ ‘selfless’ contributions to local communities and environments are actually self-serving attempts to build their own cultural capital.

Second, the work that the volunteers do with the turtles might contribute to conservation, but the volunteers as a group do not necessarily have lesser environmental impacts than other tourists. Only two of thirty-six respondents suggested that this might be the case. In contrast, one respondent indicated that volunteers are not concerned with their environmental impact, similar to mass tourists.

> “Why do I think they’re tourists? Because they use plastic bottles, they leave trash behind, they don’t ask the cabin owners about their waste water or to take care of the garbage, etc. Some of them go to

> the beach to pick up the trash, but the majority doesn't care. They like the experience with the turtles" (A2).

The volunteers' intention might be to do 'something good', but whether this intention extends to all aspects of their experience, or actually ensures positive impacts, is unclear.

Third, the volunteers have a smaller economic impact than other tourists precisely because they help with sea turtle conservation work on the beach, as noted by seven of the local respondents. The volunteers' work on the beach, and the fact that they are charged a cheaper rate because their work is perceived as valuable, is actually a feature of the ANAI project rather than of the volunteers. Yet many respondents still focused on the altruistic nature of the volunteers for doing this work.[10] Also, even though the ANAI project is much cheaper than other volunteer conservation projects, many volunteers still complain that the cost is too high (personal observation, A2, A5). The cabineros, on the other hand, would like to earn more money from ecotourism. Therefore, even though many respondents, both volunteers and locals, highlighted the altruistic nature of the volunteers, this altruistic intention does not necessarily translate into greater economic or lesser environmental impacts.

The emphasis on the volunteers' work and altruism stems from a need to distinguish this particular ecotourism venture as better than other forms of tourism. That the volunteers would want to differentiate themselves from other tourists is not surprising; tourists who perceive themselves as environmentally and culturally sensitive are wary of the label 'tourist', and often seek to construct their experience in non-tourist terms (Wearing, 2001b). Thus the volunteer respondents were quick to point to the negative impacts of mass tourism and to classify themselves as different from (and better than) mass tourists, even though none of them discussed attempts to mitigate their own negative impacts; that they had better intentions seemed to be the critical factor for the volunteers.

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[10] This may, of course, be a result of the phrasing of the interview question "How are volunteers different from (other) tourists?" However, respondents had the opportunity to discuss the structure of the ANAI project at other points in the interview, and still emphasized the work done by volunteers.

There was an interesting trend among the local views of the differences between volunteers and tourists. Of the thirteen interviewees who mentioned work, seven were ANAI staff, two were MINAE staff, and four were cabineros. However, seven of the eight respondents who mentioned altruism were ANAI representatives. The volunteers' work was broadly recognized, but their altruism was highlighted by ANAI. It is possible that volunteers and ANAI respondents share this view of volunteers as altruistic because it relates to their view of the project as conservation; the volunteers are seen as doing something good for the environment, not just work on the beach.

The mixed views among volunteers and local respondents as to whether or not volunteers are tourists, and the perceived differences between volunteers and other tourists, illustrate a tension between the 'nature' and 'people' discourses among these actors. By identifying volunteers as a special kind of tourist or not tourists, and emphasizing their altruism and work, respondents draw attention to the environmental function of the volunteers. Volunteers are different from other tourists because they care about and contribute to conservation; ecotourism therefore serves to protect the environment, as in the 'nature' discourse. The seven local respondents who discussed the smaller economic impact of the volunteers in comparison to tourists recognized a balance between the ecotourism for 'nature' and ecotourism for 'people' discourses. The volunteers provide an essential contribution to local incomes, but also contribute to conservation efforts through their work with the turtles; local respondents are willing to compromise economic benefits in exchange for a better kind of tourist that contributes in other ways.

6.2.3 Recognizing Elements of Ecotourism

One of the objectives of this research was to determine how the various actors involved view the ANAI sea turtle project as an example of ecotourism. For this reason, the researcher never introduced the term ecotourism. It was important to determine the respondents' own views, including whether or not they chose ecotourism as a label. As previously discussed, twenty-four of the thirty-six respondents identified volunteers as

tourists; of these twenty-four, ten respondents used the term ecotourism or ecotourist in reference to the ANAI project. These ten respondents included six volunteers, two ANAI staff members, one MINAE representative, and one cabinero. Although ecotourism was mentioned more frequently by volunteer respondents than by representatives of the other groups, it cannot be concluded that ecotourism as a label is greatly preferred by the volunteers. In addition, the label ecotourism was used with varying degrees of confidence and enthusiasm; clearly, the term did not mean the same thing to all of the respondents who used it.

More important than the use of the term ecotourism for understanding respondent's views was the description of elements of ecotourism. As outlined in Chapter II, there are several commonly identified features of ecotourism in the literature, including support for and involvement of the local community, support for conservation, and environmental education. All of these features, as well as the substitute of tourism income for the consumptive use of turtles and their eggs, were mentioned by the respondents. The local economic benefits of the project were mentioned by all 36 of the respondents. The second most commonly mentioned feature among both volunteers (11 of 15) and local respondents (16 of 21) was support for conservation. In fact, the only noticeable difference between volunteer and local views was that a greater proportion of local respondents mentioned community involvement than environmental education, while the reverse was true of the volunteers (as shown in Tables 4.3 and 5.4). Since most of the environmental education of the project is directed towards training volunteers in sea turtle research and conservation, it is not unusual that the volunteers highlighted this aspect of the project more than other respondents. In terms of the recognition of commonly cited elements of ecotourism in the ANAI project, volunteer and local respondents had very similar views. Moreover, whether or not the respondents used the term ecotourism, their view of the ANAI project corresponded with typical descriptions of ecotourism.

Although there is coherency between this view of the ANAI project and the literature on ecotourism, there is also underlying tension between competing discourses.

The widespread recognition of the importance of local economic benefits and community involvement suggests support for the 'people' discourse; ecotourism (even if it isn't labeled as such) should provide income to meet local human needs. However, support for the 'nature' discourse is also indicated by the strong emphasis on the support for conservation provided by the project; ecotourism should also serve to protect the environment. Notably, the 'profit' discourse surfaces for the first time in the view that tourism is an economic alternative (substitute) to the consumptive use of turtles and their eggs. Although the respondents seem to view economic benefits as serving local livelihoods (the 'people'), the view of turtles as a commodity to be sold on the market (either the black market for turtle eggs or the tourism market) is evidence of the encroachment of the 'profit' discourse.

6.2.4 Perspectives on Tourism Development in Gandoca

The perspectives of respondents with respect to tourism development in Gandoca further added to their vision of ecotourism. None of the respondents favoured large-scale tourism development in the form of large hotels or resorts; they were definitely against mass tourism development in the area. In fact, seven of thirty-four respondents (five volunteers, two locals) favoured the other extreme, suggesting that Gandoca should stay 'as is'. The remaining respondents (ten volunteers, seventeen locals) supported minimal, controlled development in Gandoca. Although a greater proportion of local respondents favoured some form of tourism development, the views of the volunteers and local respondents were fairly similar with respect to the desired scale of tourism development.

However, there was some variation among the groups of actors in their main concerns for tourism development. As shown in Chapter IV, the volunteers were preoccupied with a concern for the potential environmental impacts of increased tourism to Gandoca. For twelve of fifteen volunteers, the environment was their only concern; for three of the volunteers, the potential environmental impacts had to be weighed against the economic benefits of increased tourism. The ANAI respondents had a somewhat similar view; of seven ANAI interviewees who discussed the reasons behind their view of tourism

development, five were concerned with the environment. Both of the MINAE respondents also mentioned a concern for preventing negative environmental impacts; one of them expressed support for an increase in economic benefits as well. The cabineros, on the other hand, were most concerned with increasing the economic benefits of tourism in Gandoca. Seven cabineros wanted to see an increase in tourism-related income, while only one cabinero conveyed concern for limiting environmental impacts. Also, two of the three respondents who were concerned with preventing adverse social impacts were cabineros. Thus although there initially appears to be broad agreement over views of tourism development, there is actually an important difference between the cabineros and the other actors. For the cabineros, tourism development should be carefully controlled in order to ensure that economic benefits accrue to local people, not outsiders, and to prevent unwanted social impacts. For the volunteers, ANAI, and MINAE, carefully controlled tourism development is more about controlling and minimizing environmental impacts.

Even if a commonly shared vision of tourism development was established, there remains the question of who is responsible for guiding this development. The respondents identified multiple parties as responsible for tourism in Gandoca, including ANAI, MINAE, the Association of Guides, the cabineros, and local people more generally. While it is certainly possible, even desirable, for these groups to share responsibility for tourism, what is interesting is how the views of each group compare. The volunteers did not have a clear idea of who was in charge; for those who had an opinion, most pointed to ANAI or MINAE, with a few identifying local residents. The cabineros, who fully support locally owned tourism development and greater economic benefits, do not take responsibility for this development; instead, they designate ANAI as responsible. Yet only one ANAI respondent agreed with this position. Most of the ANAI respondents assigned responsibility for tourism to the Association of Guides, MINAE, the cabineros, and other local residents – everyone but ANAI. The MINAE staff viewed themselves as sharing responsibility with the guides, cabineros, and local residents; MINAE ensures that rules and regulations are followed, while the local actors manage tourism.

The different reasons given for supporting no or minimal, controlled tourism development, together with these contrasting views of responsibility for tourism, present additional evidence of tension between the ‘nature’ and ‘people’ discourses in Gandoca. Strands of the ‘people’ discourse were apparent in several places: widespread opposition to large-scale development; the cabineros’ interest in increasing their economic benefits from tourism; and the support of both the cabineros and ANAI for local ownership of tourism facilities. All of these views fit quite well with the local-sensitive development endorsed by the ‘people’ discourse. The ‘nature’ discourse also emerged in two places: in the strong concern of ANAI, MINAE, and the volunteers that tourism development not impact on the environment, and in the view that MINAE, the state authority responsible for environmental protection, should exercise control over tourism. It was not uncommon for respondents to incorporate both the ‘nature’ and ‘people’ discourses into their views of tourism development; the respondents did not rely consistently and exclusively upon one of the discourses. For example, the reluctance of the cabineros to accept full responsibility for tourism development may indicate that they do not fully embrace the ‘people’ discourse. It also demonstrates that these national discourses are not prescriptions for views at the local level; although the ‘people’ discourse promotes ‘local-sensitive development’, it does not specify how this should be achieved. The cabineros may ‘talk the talk’ of local control, ownership, and benefits, but they are limited by their lack of training, access to infrastructure, and resources to ‘walk the walk’ themselves; they therefore rely on ANAI for assistance. This dependence on ANAI seems to be evidence of material limitations more than an appeal to a particular discourse.

6.2.5 Views of Community

Views of a community-based ecotourism project are necessarily related to views of community. The volunteer and local views of community cannot be directly compared because, owing to their different positions as visitors to or residents of Gandoca, they were not asked the same questions nor did they offer similar data. It is still informative to

contrast their views, and to establish the ties between perceptions of Gandoca as a community and environmental discourses.

The volunteers' views of local motivations were discussed in Section 4.8. A few volunteers thought that local residents have or might have some environmental motivation, but the dominant view was that local residents have economic motivations for working with the ANAI sea turtle project. Several volunteers expressed concern that without the economic benefits of the ANAI project local residents would not support turtle conservation. These volunteers were not satisfied that the cabineros cooperate with the conservation project; they also wanted them to share the same environmental motivations as the volunteers, independent of any monetary benefits. Although many of the volunteers recognized and endorsed the provision of benefits to local residents, some of them believed that these benefits should be coupled to greater local enthusiasm for sea turtle conservation. In this case, it appears that in exchange for their support for the 'people' discourse, volunteers would have liked local residents to support the 'nature' discourse. In addition, the volunteers' perceptions of local motivations construed local involvement as profit rather than livelihood oriented; this was evident in volunteer views of the project as 'their cash cow' (V6) or 'a money making scheme' (V1). Thus when volunteers expressed support for local economic benefits, they constructed their view following the 'people' discourse, but when they saw local benefits as problematic they shift to the 'profit' discourse. The environmental aims of the 'nature' discourse were clearly the priority of most volunteers.

The views of community articulated by the local respondents, as discussed in Section 5.7, pertained to conflict among groups of local residents. Although the cabineros discussed conflicts with other residents of Gandoca whose views are not presented in this thesis, it is still important to note that there is a perceived conflict. This conflict does not follow the logic of global environmental discourses, which suggests that supporters of the 'people' discourse will oppose the authority of the state promoted by the 'nature' discourse and the power of international business interests behind the 'profit' discourse. In contrast

to the type of conflict predicted by the environmental discourses, the most prominent conflict in Gandoca, according to the local respondents, is between the cabineros and the Development Association. Much of this conflict seems to center around ANAI and control of the sea turtle conservation project, particularly the economic benefits of the project. Intra-community conflict related to ecotourism development is not unusual, and has been analyzed by other political ecologists (Belsky, 1999; Young, 1999b); the significant point in the context of this thesis is the misfit between global discourses and the perception of community conflicts. Adger et al. (2001) have argued that local environmental change cannot be understood through the lenses of global environmental discourses; these discourses are similarly unable to explain local conflicts.

6.2.6 Links Betweeen Volunteer Motivations and Experiences

The motivations of the volunteer interviewees were very similar to the motivations described by Wearing (2001b) for another group of volunteer ecotourists in Costa Rica, and included altruism, travel, professional development, desire to see a turtle, cultural exchange/learning, and right time and place. Altruism, or a desire to do something good, was the most commonly mentioned motivation for participation in the ANAI project. It included both general altruistic motivations to do something good or worthwhile and altruism aimed specifically at helping with sea turtle conservation or environmental protection. There is an interesting link between this altruistic motivation and 'feeling unneeded or used' and 'not seeing turtles', two negative aspects of the volunteer experience. Although only a few volunteers discussed frustrations with not seeing turtles and feeling unneeded, these feelings are worth remarking on because they highlight the nature of the volunteers' altruism and views on tourism. While they may recognize the importance of local involvement and economic benefits, and may even note that their presence is aiding conservation simply by providing an alternative source of income to turtle poaching, the volunteers still really want to see turtles and to actively aid in the conservation work. The volunteers' direct support for conservation, through their work on

the beach with nesting turtles and protection of nests, is an essential element of this volunteer ecotourism experience. The volunteers' support for other elements, such as local economic benefits, may be contingent upon the satisfaction of their need to see turtles and personally contribute to their conservation. Wearing (2001b) notes that ecotourists, regardless of the type of tour they take or the amount of money they spend, are united in holding high expectations of their interaction with nature. Using the example of whale watching, he further suggests that tourists recognize the potential disappointment of not seeing a whale, and are not entirely disappointed if their high expectations are not met. In this case, however, it appears that volunteers are indeed greatly disappointed if their expectations of seeing a turtle and helping with turtle conservation are not met. Moreover, this disappointment can affect their views of other aspects of the project.

This finding indicates that although there is evidence of a merging of the 'nature' and 'people' discourses in the volunteers' views, ultimately their support for the 'people' discourse is subordinate to their support for the 'nature' discourse. Volunteers extolled the value of conservation that involves and benefits the community, but also felt 'squeezed for the community' (V2) if they were not personally satisfied that they had helped with the conservation work.

6.2.7 Local Challenges for Ecotourism Planning and Management

Equal distribution of benefits is one sign of local empowerment according to Scheyvens (1999), and is often lacking in ecotourism developments (Belsky, 1999). One of the more remarkable aspects of the ANAI project is the decision made by the cabineros to distribute the economic benefits of the project equally among all families involved. One ANAI respondent described this as a 'socialist decision in a capitalist system' (A2), identifying a dilemma that pervades the ANAI project: is it a business or not? Among the cabineros, the answer to this question is unclear. Some cabineros believe that they run a business; the volunteers are customers who should be able to choose their own accommodation, and profits from the business should be reinvested to improve facilities

and offer a better product. Others are less inclined to support this view; they believe that the cabineros are in it together and should therefore benefit equally. Some families have fewer resources available for reinvestment than others, and feel they should not be penalized for this. There are also some local families that do not benefit at all from the ANAI project, either because they live too far from the beach to be able to take in volunteers or because they no longer participate due to unresolved conflicts with the Association of Cabineros (various interviews). Thus the economic benefits of the project are distributed equally among those families who are members of the Association of Cabineros, but not equally among all families in the community.

There are two links to environmental discourse evident here, both problematic. First, there is an interaction between the 'profit' and 'people' discourses. The aim of the cabineros is clearly to meet their own needs and to improve their livelihood opportunities, consistent with the 'people discourse', not to generate a large ecotourism business. Yet ecotourism is, at least in part, a business. The influence of the 'profit' discourse surfaces in questions of whether the cabineros should operate a 'free market' for accommodation and to what extent they must reinvest in their facilities. It remains to be seen how the Association of Cabineros will evolve, and whether they will continue with collective action or move towards competition and individualism. How the cabineros view the purpose and distribution of profit says much about whether ecotourism is for 'profit' or the 'people'. Second, the role of the 'environmentalism for the people' discourse in framing local realities is clearly limited by its generic treatment of the 'people'. Although simplified representations of 'the people' or 'community' might have strategic value in advocating for policy change at a national or international level (Li, 1996), these discursive simplifications do not serve to illuminate local situations. Despite evidence of support for the 'people' discourse among the cabineros, this discourse does not add critical insight into local conflicts or challenges related to ecotourism development.

The discursive framework is more helpful in understanding the challenges for ecotourism in Gandoca that arise at a larger scale, beyond the community. Two ANAI

respondents who have management positions within the organization discussed the problem of generating funding for the sea turtle project, a problem that can be understood as the result of a clash of discourses. One respondent established the ANAI position as a combination of the 'nature' and 'people' discourses, then contrasted this with the 'profit' discourse underlying the views of donors.

> "If [ecotourism is] developed by local people for local people, for protecting the environment, for community development in a way that's sustainable… then it does have great potential. That's what we're working on. That requires a subsidy, it doesn't just happen… I think most of the sources of financing see it [ecotourism] as a business, and if someone wants to get involved in this business they should invest in it. To do the type of work we're doing has not been easy" (A1).

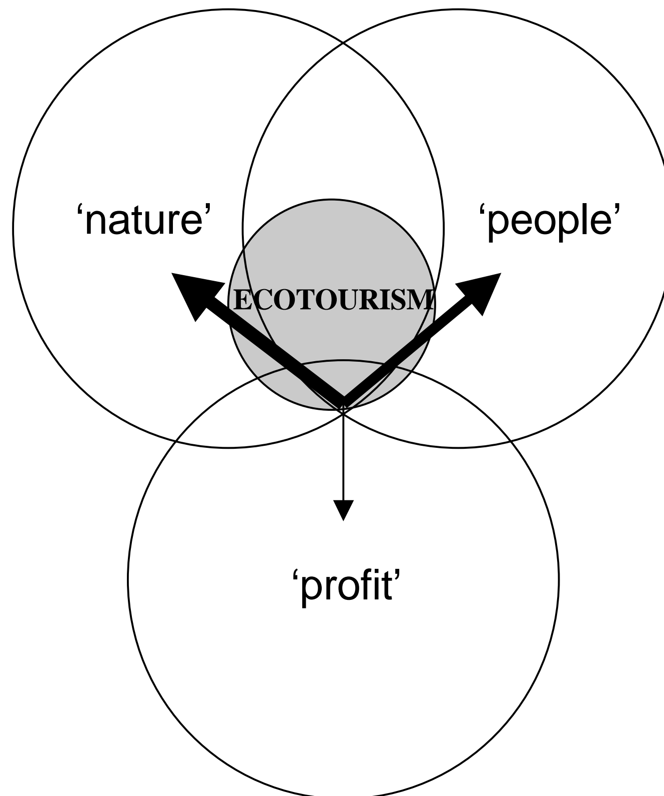
Aside from $19 per volunteer that is kept by ANAI for administration costs, the remaining economic benefits of the project are distributed directly to local residents. ANAI must fundraise the remaining costs of operating the project, including salaries for local research assistants and equipment. This decision to direct most income from the project to local residents was a strategic choice designed to cultivate local support for the project and for conservation (A2). ANAI promotes a blend of the 'nature' and 'people' discourses in Gandoca, but must cope with the practical challenge of attracting sufficient funding for the continuation of the project in a funding arena where ecotourism is perceived as an expression of the 'profit' discourse.

6.2.8 A Summary of Ecotourism and Environmental Discourse in Costa Rica

The results presented in this thesis showed broad consistency in the conceptualizations of ecotourism held by the actor groups, although there were a few important instances where opinions differed among them. The respondents' views were shown to have the strongest links to the 'nature' and 'people' discourses; the 'profit' discourse was less evident, and usually surfaced in tension with the 'people' discourse. Overall, there seemed to be slightly more support for the 'nature' than the 'people' discourse, and least support for 'profit'. Figure 6.1 illustrates the relationship between ecotourism and these three environmental discourses in the views of actors in Gandoca,

Costa Rica, showing both discursive overlap and tension. There is not one, fixed view of ecotourism but a multiplicity of dynamic views, informed by ever shifting discourses.

Figure 6.1: A Schematic of Ecotourism and Environmental Discourse in Gandoca



6.3 Contributions of the Thesis

The main contributions of this thesis are: 1) to an improved understanding of ecotourism and volunteer tourism, and 2) to an understanding of the interaction between conceptualizations of ecotourism and environmental discourses, and therefore to the discursive political ecology literature more generally. These contributions are discussed in the following two sections.

6.3.1 Volunteer Ecotourism as an Alternative

Consistent with representations in the literature, research participants distinguished volunteer ecotourism in Gandoca as an alternative to mass tourism, with some going so far as to remove the experience from the tourism category altogether. In doing so, the respondents focused on the intentions and motivations of the volunteers, rather than their impacts or the structure of the ANAI project. If definitions of ecotourism should be based partly on tourists' intentions (Blamey, 1997), and it is possible to segment the ecotourism market in Costa Rica by tourists' motivations (Lumsdon and Swift, 1998), then this emphasis on the altruistic intentions of volunteers supports the identification of volunteer (eco)tourism as a distinct type of tourism.

Wearing (2001b), in the first in-depth exploration of volunteer tourism, suggested that it has the potential to be a very positive form of tourism, benefiting tourists, host communities and the environment. For Wearing, the true test of a volunteer tourism project is whether it moves beyond the typical, commodified tourism experience to a level of genuine exchange between 'hosts' (local residents) and 'guests' (volunteers). He proposed that volunteer tourism projects can be positioned along a continuum from commodified (least desirable; resembles typical mass tourism) to decommodified (most desirable; benefits for and involvement of local residents, communication of local views and practices to volunteers), and identified his case study of the Youth Challenge International volunteer program in Costa Rica as an ideal form of decommodified volunteer tourism. This 'ideal' designation was based on the extensive interaction between volunteers and the environment and between volunteers and local residents, the involvement of and benefits to the local community, and the conservation ethic underlying the program; these features were established primarily through an analysis of volunteers' views (Wearing, 2001b). Thus Wearing's view of ideal volunteer ecotourism would coincide with the 'nature' and 'people' discourses, but run counter to the 'profit' discourse; he suggests that the potential of volunteer tourism to provide an 'ideal' alternative to mass

tourism is closely tied to its ability to operate outside of a profit/loss context (Wearing, 2001b).

In an analysis of a volunteer ecotourism project in Belize managed by Coral Cay Conservation, a UK based charity, Duffy (2002) found that it was the opposite of Wearing's ideal, as it replicated the problems of mass tourism through both its program structure and the behaviour of volunteers. There was much local resentment of the project, based on a perceived lack of benefit sharing with the local community, lack of contribution to conservation efforts, and distaste for the excessive drinking, drug use, and sexual activities of the volunteers (Duffy, 2002). These local views stood in sharp contrast to the organization's claims to provide "resources to help sustain livelihoods and alleviate poverty through protection, restoration and management of coral reefs and tropical forests" (quoted in Duffy, 2002, p. 65). For Duffy, the positioning of ecotourism within the 'profit' discourse was taken as a given; her explanation of the problems of the Coral Cay volunteer program was based on a critique of the 'profit' discourse. Thus, although she incorporated local views into her analysis, she did not explore their discursive connections.

This thesis has contributed to the literature by presenting and comparing the views of all actors involved in a volunteer ecotourism project, and linking these views to broader environmental discourses. Ultimately, it is the policies and structure of a given volunteer program that will determine where it lies on the commodification continuum (Wearing, 2001b). In this sense, the ANAI project is particularly notable in that almost all of the economic benefits of the project are distributed directly to the community, in contrast to the case of Coral Cay Conservation, for example, where most benefits accrue directly to the NGO (Duffy, 2002). In addition, the cabineros who participate in the ANAI project decide how to distribute the benefits themselves. Based on its local involvement and benefits, contribution to conservation, and interaction between volunteers and local residents, the ANAI sea turtle project seems to be positioned at or near the 'ideal' end of Wearing's continuum of volunteer tourism. Moreover, this positioning can be understood as a positive construction of the 'nature/people' discourses and rejection of the 'profit'

discourse through actors' views. The material outcomes of the project, in the form of economic benefits and conservation activity, are linked to the discourses underlying the views of the actors involved. The challenges to achieving 'ideal' volunteer ecotourism were also revealed, and included gaps between volunteer intentions and experience, differences in opinion among actor groups regarding tourism development and management, perceived differences in environmental consciousness between volunteers and local residents, and conflicts related to tourism management and benefits. Currently, Gandoca "reflects visions of ideal ecotourism" (Campbell, 2002b, p. 319), but the challenges of maintaining the ideal are likely to become more pronounced as tourism in Gandoca develops. The theoretical contribution of this thesis is the framing of these challenges as the outcomes of both overlap and tension between the 'nature', 'people', and 'profit' discourses (see Figure 6.1), and the discussion of how various actors align their interests discursively.

6.3.2 Ecotourism, Environmental Discourse and Political Ecology

The views of ecotourism constructed by respondents during the research process, and the relationship between these views and broader environmental discourses, offer several insights into understanding ecotourism and discursive political ecology. The research demonstrated an interesting contrast between the relative prominence of the three discourses at the national level and evidence of their support at the local level. Previous research on environmental discourses in Costa Rica indicated that the 'profit' discourse is most influential at the national level, followed by the 'people' discourse, with 'nature' as the least influential (Carriere, 1991). However, this hierarchy was proposed in the early 1990s, prior to the increased presence of the environment in all three discourses, and must be revised accordingly; the 'nature' discourse is now more powerful in Costa Rican politics than 'people' (Campbell, 2002a), and wields the greatest influence when it is aligned with 'profit', as in Adger et al.'s (2001) global managerial discourse. In the case of Gandoca, however, the 'profit' discourse was the least prominent, while the 'nature' and 'people'

discourses were both quite strongly supported. This discrepancy between the national and the local occurs because discourse does not exist independent of time and space; it must be circulated and reproduced in specific contexts by specific actors. The relative absence of the 'profit' discourse in Gandoca is likely linked to the absence of actors who have underlying business interests. When local respondents voiced concern over the possibility of outside actors developing tourist facilities in Gandoca, their awareness of and resistance to the 'profit' discourse was evident. Ironically, the marketing of Costa Rican ecotourism at a national and international level, by supporters of the 'profit' discourse, can serve to draw ecotourists to Gandoca. As one volunteer noted:

> "I was very interested by… Costa Rica, because it has this reputation for being the best country in the world for conservation efforts, and I wanted to see that… There is a quite a big government effort, in communication about the environment… I think this country commercializes itself very well. I don't know what agency has been working on it" (V8).

The research findings of actors' views in Gandoca can similarly be contrasted with past discussions of how ecotourism fits into the three discourses. Most of the literature has situated ecotourism firmly in the 'profit' discourse (Campbell, 2002a; Duffy, 2002; McAfee, 1999; Nygren, 1998), although it can also been linked to the 'nature' (Campbell, 2002a) and 'people' (Campbell, 2002a; Belsky, 1999) discourses. In the neoliberal economic logic of the 'profit' discourse, nature must be traded on the free market; if foreign ecotourists are willing to spend more to visit a site than could be earned by farming or logging it, for example, then the most efficient (and therefore best) way to use the site is by establishing an ecotourism venture (McAfee, 1999). Following the dictum 'use it or lose it', ecotourism is one way to transform nature into a profitable commodity (Nygren, 1998). In terms of global discourse, Duffy (2002) explicitly positions ecotourism within this 'profit' discourse, not the 'people' or 'nature' discourses, as does Nygren (1998) at the national level in Costa Rica. Campbell (2002a) recognizes the role of ecotourism in the 'profit' discourse in Costa Rica, but argues that it is also closely tied to the 'nature' discourse because of the links between ecotourism and protected areas. In this sense the 'profit' and 'nature' discourse overlap, as ecotourism to protected areas supports both

economic and environmental agendas. Actors in Gandoca, insofar as they view ecotourism as an overlap between the 'people' and 'nature' discourses more so than 'profit' and 'nature', offer evidence that questions any attempts to pigeonhole ecotourism in the 'profit' discourse. This is not to say that ecotourism does not align with the 'profit' discourse as suggested by Duffy (2002) and Nygren (1998), only that it can also fit quite well with a blend of the 'nature' and 'people' discourses.

As illustrated in Figure 6.1, this thesis has shown how ecotourism is positioned at the nexus of the 'profit', 'nature', and 'people' discourses in local discursive constructions. In Gandoca, as elsewhere, ecotourism is widely supported because it is a common means to different ends. Thus the research findings reaffirm the need to understand how discourses are used in overlapping ways, and what the consequences of such overlap might be (Adger et al., 2001; Hulme & Murphree, 1999). In practice, actors may not separate discourses following a logic of either/or, but incorporate elements of multiple discourses in a 'both…and…' framework (Hulme & Murphree, 1999). The conceptualizations of ecotourism constructed by actors in Gandoca seemed to incorporate strands of both the 'nature' and 'people' discourses, such that ecotourism was constructed as both an environmental conservation strategy and a means of local development. Certainly it is possible to support both of these goals, as did the majority of respondents. However, this discursive win-win formula begins to unravel when actors reveal different priorities (e.g. different concerns and objectives for tourism development), or conditional support for one discourse or another (e.g. volunteers must satisfy their need to help with conservation in order to support local benefits). This is a concern because, as Brown and Rosendo have suggested, actors such as ENGOs and organized groups of local residents, "may interact in the short term, [but] generally long-term stable alliances are unlikely" (Brown & Rosendo, 2000, p. 46). Although actors may work together temporarily, their shared strategy disguises their different objectives (i.e. environmental conservation vs. livelihoods), which ultimately proves problematic (Brown & Rosendo, 2000). Belsky (1999), for example, found extensive socio-political conflicts in a community in Belize where an ENGO had

established an ecotourism venture as a conservation strategy. Currently, the actors involved in ecotourism in Gandoca appear to have broadly similar views of ecotourism, although there is some evidence of differences; whether they will be able to work together in the long term may depend upon whether they maintain sufficiently common objectives.

Discursive overlap at an international level has also had consequences for Gandoca. The UNDP, an actor typically associated with a global managerial (‘profit/nature’) discourse (Adger et al., 2001), has recently incorporated the ‘people’ discourse into its policy statements and funding strategy. This is evidenced by the channeling of funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to community organizations, through the UNDP Small Grants Programme (UNDP, 2003). One beneficiary of such funding is ADESGAMA, a community credit fund in Gandoca that offered loans to the cabineros to improve their ecotourism services. The policy of directing funding to community organizations such as ADESGAMA is largely the result of the inroads the ‘people’ discourse has made in the international policy arena; in the recently published *Rural Community Tourism Guide*, sponsored in large part by the UNDP in Costa Rica, the Gandoca project and other rural tourism initiatives are described as “an example of harmony and integration between the conservation of natural resources or protected areas, and the development of local communities” (UNDP, 2002, p. 15). International discursive shifts clearly have very real, material consequences in places like Gandoca when they result in the distribution of funds to community organizations.

> “The fact that the GEF has existed has been one of, has been the single most important source of funds, without that there would be virtually nothing” (A1).

The amenability of ecotourism to multiple discourses may have made it especially appealing to the UNDP and GEF, who have provided extensive support for community-based ecotourism initiatives in Costa Rica (UNDP, 2003). Global institutions such as the UNDP and the GEF can construct discursive ‘win-win-win’ (‘profit/nature/people’) strategies because they do not have to make any on-the-ground trade-offs between these

differing views. However, the direction in which discursive claims and funding practices of global actors such as UNDP will evolve in the future remains to be seen.

Ecotourism, by virtue of its positioning at the intersection of multiple discourses and thus its capacity for being molded into different discursive constructions at a local, national, and global level, is distinct from other discourse policy outcomes. In both West Africa (Leach & Fairhead, 2000; Fairhead & Leach, 1996; Basset & Koli Bi, 2000) and Guatemala (Sundberg, 1998a; 1998b), dominant environmental discourses were shown to prescribe conservation policies that were incompatible with local residents' views and interests. In the case of Gandoca, the cabineros embraced ecotourism; even if their view did not exactly match the views of ANAI, MINAE, or the volunteers, ecotourism was viewed as compatible with their interests. Whether this finding would extend to other local residents that are not involved in ecotourism is impossible to say, and would certainly be worth exploring.

The advantages of a studying ecotourism using a discursive political ecology approach are: 1) it explains the widespread support for ecotourism, from GEF boardrooms to homes in Gandoca; 2) it draws attention to underlying differences between actors involved in ecotourism; and 3) it offers a theoretical framework for understanding potential challenges and sources of conflict related to ecotourism development, moving beyond a strictly impacts approach.

6.4. Recommendations for Future Research

A number of recommendations for future inquiry may be made based on the findings of this thesis. First, there is a need to better understand the role of ENGOs in volunteer ecotourism. In the case of Gandoca, ANAI made a conscious decision to structure the sea turtle project such that the economic benefits of bringing volunteers to the community would accrue primarily to local residents (A2). This can be contrasted to other examples of volunteer ecotourism where most of the benefits remain with the NGO (e.g. Duffy, 2002). Given that "conservation volunteer movements are a significant force in the

development of ecotourism" (Duffy, 2002, p. 68), the strong link between volunteer ecotourism and ENGOs (Smith, 2002), and the proliferation of ENGOs over the past twenty years, in even the most remote communities (Brosius, 1999; Fisher, 1997; Price, 1994) there is a need to better understand the full range of opportunities and constraints for these ENGOs in developing volunteer programs, and the links between discourse and program structure. In the case of ANAI and Gandoca, most aspects of the program structure, including both those aspects controlled by ANAI and those controlled by local residents, are in keeping with the 'nature/people' discourse that underlies ANAI's organizational mission. Are there similar consistencies between the discourse and practice of other ENGO-managed volunteer ecotourism ventures, or does the discursive malleability of ecotourism enable other ENGOs to attract 'do-gooders' without doing good for the communities in which they operate? To what extent are programmatic decisions based on funding availability, and therefore on currently in vogue global discursive constructions? Environmental non-governmental organizations working in community-based (volunteer) ecotourism offer the opportunity to trace discursive links, transformations and influences from the local to the global, and the global to the local.

Second, it would be interesting to explore the connections between intentions/motivations and impacts, both for volunteer ecotourism and other types of ecotourism. Many research participants highlighted the altruism of the volunteers, but whether or not this altruism translated into a better tourism outcome for the community was unclear; the economic and conservation benefits of ecotourism in Gandoca are more likely a result of the structure of the ANAI project than of the volunteers' altruism. A better understanding of the relationship between intentions and outcomes would serve to better define ecotourism and to inform communities or ENGOs that are contemplating engaging with (volunteer) ecotourism.

Third, it would be fruitful to combine a discursive approach, as in this thesis, with other aspects of political ecology work. Belsky (1999), for example, evaluated the distribution of the costs and benefits of ecotourism in a community in Belize, and analyzed

links between local ecotourism development and national socio-political conditions. It would be helpful to articulate the relationship between views and impacts, at both a local and regional scale, to better understand the factors encouraging or preventing local participation in ecotourism. It would also be informative to include all local residents in such an analysis, to understand the extent to which differences in practice (i.e. participation in ecotourism) can be understood as differences in views. The intra-community conflict alluded to by the local respondents suggests that ecotourism development is fostering competition and conflict, which may or may not be legible through the discursive framework outlined in this research.

Fourth, ecotourism in Gandoca appears to have a gendered aspect, as it is primarily women who work in the provision of services for volunteers (e.g. cooking, cleaning). This corresponds with the findings of Belsky (1999), and suggests that a there is an opportunity to undertake a feminist political ecology analysis of ecotourism that would more thoroughly consider how gender acts to shape participation, views, roles and politics.

Finally, there is an opportunity to link Wearing's (2001b) analysis of volunteer tourism as a self-development process to the discursive approach taken in this research. Wearing (2001b) suggests that volunteers who participate in an 'ideal' volunteer ecotourism program will acquire and/or develop their environmental and social consciousness. Volunteer interviews in this study were conducted towards the end of a volunteer's stay in Gandoca; it would be interesting to compare the views of volunteers before and after their participation in the program, to consider the extent to which the volunteer experience influences their discursive constructions of ecotourism. Do volunteers simply adopt the discourse of ANAI, as has been suggested may occur at another ENGO volunteer program in Costa Rica (Smith, 2002)? Or is the volunteer experience an opportunity for ecotourists to (re)construct their views of ecotourism? An investigation of this topic would have implications for understanding the dynamic nature of actor-discourse interactions.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

LIST OF VOLUNTEER INTERVIEWEES

Interview Code	Sex	Age	Nationality	Occupation	Length of Stay
V1	m	21	British	Student (History and Modern Language)	12 weeks
V2*	m	22	British	Student (Marine Biology)	1 week
V3	f	20	American	Student (Psychology and Education)	1 week
V4	f	19	American	Student (Political Science and Psychology)	1 week
V5	f	26	British	Student (Animal Care)	2 weeks
V6	f	24	British	Student (Animal Care)	2 weeks
V7	m	20	British	Student (Photography)	2 weeks
V8	m	24	French	Program officer with an environmental organization	4 weeks
V9	f	22	American	Student (English Literature)	2 weeks
V10	f	38	French	Journalist	2 weeks
V11	f	18	American	Student (high school)	3 weeks
V12	m	26	American	Science Teacher	3 weeks
V13	m	22	Singaporean	Student (Engineering)	1 week
V14	f	22	French	Unemployed (has biology degree)	4 weeks
V15*	f	22	British	Unemployed (has biology degree)	1 week

*V2 and V15 were interviewed together, as they were a couple traveling together.
All volunteer interviews were conducted in English.

APPENDIX B:

LIST OF LOCAL INTERVIEWEES

Interview Code	Affiliation	Position	Language of Original Interview
A1	ANAI	Management	English
A2	ANAI	Management	Spanish
A3	ANAI	Management	Spanish
A4	ANAI	Local Employee	Spanish
A5	ANAI	Management	Spanish
A6	ANAI	International Research Assistant	Spanish
A7	ANAI	International Research Assistant	English
A8	ANAI	International Research Assistant	Spanish
A9	ANAI	Local Employee	Spanish
A10	ANAI	Local Employee	Spanish
C1*	cabinero		Spanish
C2	cabinero		Spanish
C3	cabinero		Spanish
C4	cabinero		Spanish
C5	cabinero		Spanish
C6*	cabinero		Spanish
C7*	cabinero		Spanish
C8	cabinero		Spanish
M1	MINAE	Park Guard	Spanish
M2	MINAE	Park Guard	Spanish
O1	Talamanca Ecotourism Network	Coordinator	Spanish

*Indicates that there were two participants in the interview.

Any additional information about local respondents would reveal their identity, and is therefore not included.

APPENDIX C:

VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part A: Background

- Name
- Nationality
- Age
- Occupation – if student, which subject(s)/degree(s), is this program related to school

Part B: Involvement with the Project

- How long are you staying in Gandoca altogether? How long have you been here so far?
- How much money are you spending here?
- How did you find out about the project?
- Why did you come? What about the project attracted you?
- In your opinion, what is the purpose of the project? (if they mention local benefits, why is this important)
- Why is sea turtle protection important, generally and to you personally?
- What is the cause of sea turtle decline? (globally and in Gandoca specifically)
- Who is in charge of (turtle) conservation in Gandoca?
- What are good and bad aspects of the project? – in terms of conservation, social/economic impacts, their personal experience
- Do you consider yourself to be an environmentalist? Why or why not?
- Do you consider local people to be environmentalists? (How does your environmentalism differ from that of local people?)
- What has been your experience with local people? (both those involved and not involved with the project)
- What is your impression of relations between ANAI and local people?

Part C: (Eco)tourism

- Are project volunteers tourists? How are they similar to/different from other tourists?
- What do you think about tourism in Gandoca?
- What are good things and bad things about tourism in Gandoca?
- Who is in charge of/organizes tourism in Gandoca?
- How does tourism support (or not) conservation in Gandoca?
- What do they think about tourism development in Gandoca? (Volunteers, other tourists, amount of tourism, types of activities, etc.)

APPENDIX D:

ANAI INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part A: Background, The Job

- Full name, age, occupation
- For how long have you been working with ANAI?
- Describe job – what do you do?
- Why did you decide to take this job/work for ANAI?
- What are the benefits and challenges of the job? (likes and dislikes)
- What is your educational background?
- What do you plan to do once you have finished working here?

Part B: Protected Area/Resource

- Why is this Refuge a protected area?
- Do local people benefit from resource protection? Could they benefit more?
- Who is in charge of conservation in Gandoca?
- Why is sea turtle protection important? (generally, to you personally)
- What is the cause of sea turtle decline? (globally and specifically in Gandoca)
- (What are your opinions on poaching and poachers?)
- Who is in charge of the turtle conservation project?

Part C: Institutions and the Community

- What are your impressions of Gandoca as a place to live?
- Describe your relationships with local people (those involved and not involved with the project)
- Impressions of MINAE
- What does MINAE do in Gandoca?
- What is the relationship between MINAE and the community?
- What is the relationship between MINAE and ANAI? (working, etc.)
- Why is ANAI working in Gandoca?
- Good things and bad things about ANAI/the turtle project, what would you change
- Does ANAI contribute to/help the community? How?
- Is local involvement with the project important? Why or why not?
- Have you observed any conflicts in the community related to turtles, their conservation, or the project?
- Does ANAI contribute to conservation in Gandoca? How?
- What would happen if ANAI stopped working in Gandoca (if the project ended)? (social, biological, economic aspects)

- Have you worked with other ENGOs or turtle conservation projects? If yes, how does ANAI compare?

Part D: (Eco)tourism

- Why do you think tourists come to Gandoca?
- Do you think local people benefit from tourism? How?
- What are good things and bad things about tourism in Gandoca?
- Who is in charge of/organizes tourism in Gandoca?
- Are project volunteers tourists? How are they similar to/different from other tourists?
- Why do volunteers come to Gandoca?
- Do you and the volunteers share the same reasons/motivation for working with turtles or are they different?
- What are the benefits and challenges (good and bad things) about working with volunteers?
- How do volunteers affect the community? Good and bad.
- Does tourism contribute to economic development in Gandoca? How?
- Does tourism contribute to conservation in Gandoca? How?
- Overall, what do you think about tourism in Gandoca?
- How would they like to see tourism develop in Gandoca? (Volunteers, other tourists, amount of tourism, their role in it, support, types of activities, etc.)

FOR MANAGEMENT POSITIONS:

- Why did you decide to work for an environmental NGO, or how did you end up here?
- What kind of challenges to and opportunities are there for you personally in working for an ENGO?
- What kind of challenges and opportunities are there for the organization as a whole?
- Have these changed over time, or are they changing?
- What kind of outside influences are there on ANAI'S approach to its programming objectives? (E.g. things like political atmosphere at different levels (local, state, national), general public opinion on environment, availability of resources)
- What kind of internal influences are there on ANAI'S approach to programming objectives?
- Leadership within organisation, changes in staff, board of directors membership, membership activity and levels, member feedback to organization
- What kind of relationships, if any, does ANAI have with other conservation organizations, and do these impact on types of priorities ANAI pursues?

APPENDIX E:

CABINERO INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part A: Household and General Livelihoods

- Household structure: number, sex, age, educational levels
- Do you own your land? If yes, have you always? If no, who does?
- Have you always lived here? If not, for how long have you lived here, and where did you live before Gandoca?
- Livelihoods: What economic activities are undertaken by members of your household? Which are most economically important? (How interviewee's household earns a living)
- Ideally, what kind of job/livelihood would you like to have (or see more of in Gandoca)?
- What are the most important economic activities in the Gandoca (generally), and how have these have changed over time?
- Opportunities and constraints on livelihoods/jobs in the village
- What are good and bad aspects about life in Gandoca?
- What is the role of and what are the successes/failures of the development association in Gandoca?

Part B: Protected Area/Resource Use

- How has protection changed resource use (in general and for you personally)? What is allowed/not allowed, compared to before the Refuge existed?
- What do they think about the Refuge and resource protection? Good things and bad things.
- Is there anything you would like to do that isn't permitted in the Refuge?
- Story of establishment of Refuge (when, why, who was involved...)
- Why are resources protected?
- Who benefits from resource protection? Do local people? How could they benefit more?
- Who is in charge of conservation in Gandoca?
- Is sea turtle protection important? Why or why not? (generally, to you personally)
- What is the cause of sea turtle decline? What is the solution? (in Gandoca)
- Who is in charge of the turtle conservation project?

Part C: Institutions

- Impressions of MINAE
- What does MINAE do in Gandoca?

- What is the relationship between MINAE and the community? (Or with you personally).
- Impressions of ANAI
- History of ANAI involvement in Gandoca? When did they arrive, what do they do (have they done in the past)?
- Why is ANAI working in Gandoca?
- Good things and bad things about ANAI
- Does ANAI contribute to/help the community? How?
- Does ANAI contribute to conservation in Gandoca? How?
- What would happen if ANAI stopped working in Gandoca (if the project ended)?

PART D: Involvement with Turtle Project

- What is the history of your involvement with the turtle project? (How long, in what capacity/ies, what have been their experiences)
- Why did you become involved with the project initially?
- How does the cabinero association work? Good and bad aspects.
- What is the relationship between ANAI and the cabineros?
- What are the benefits and challenges of hosting volunteers?
- How do you envision your future association with the project? (How long, capacity, degree)
- Income from volunteers? Cost of hosting volunteers?
- What is your relationship with the volunteers? Good and bad aspects.
- What do you do in the months when there are no volunteers? (August to February)

PART E: (Eco)tourism

- What do you think about tourism in Gandoca?
- When did tourists first start to come to Gandoca?
- Do you benefit from tourism? How?
- Do other people in Gandoca benefit from tourism? How?
- What are good things and bad things about tourism in Gandoca?
- Who is in charge of/organizes tourism in Gandoca?
- Are project volunteers tourists? How are they similar to/different from other tourists?
- How do volunteers affect the community? Good and bad.
- Does tourism contribute to economic development in Gandoca? How?
- Does tourism contribute to conservation in Gandoca? How?
- Does everyone in the community agree on tourism?
- How would they like to see tourism develop in Gandoca? (Volunteers, other tourists, amount of tourism, their role in it, support, types of activities, etc.)

APPENDIX F:

MINAE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part A: The Job

- Describe job – what do you do? (different activities, how much time on each)
- Why did you decide to take this job/work for MINAE?
- What are the benefits and challenges of the job? (likes and dislikes)
- What are the challenges and opportunities for MINAE, generally and in the Gandoca office/area specifically

Part B: Protected Area/Resource

- What is the purpose of the wildlife refuge? Why is the refuge (and its resources) protected?
- How has protection changed resource use – what is allowed/not allowed?
- How did protection of resources come about – do you know anything about the formation of the refuge?
- Why is resource protection important – generally and to you personally?
- Why is sea turtle conservation important – generally and to you personally?
- Who is in charge of conservation in Gandoca?
- Who is in charge of the turtle conservation project?

Part C: Local People

- What is your impression of the community of Gandoca?
- What is the relationship between MINAE and local people? (Poaching, other law breaking, cooperation, Comite Zonal…)
- Who benefits from resource protection?
- Do local people benefit from the Refuge and resource protection? How?
- Do you think that local people could benefit more from the Refuge? How?
- Are there negative aspects of resource protection for local people? What are they?
- How are local people involved in decision making in the Refuge?
- What does the Development Association do? (What did it formerly do? Why did it fall apart?)
- How is working in Gandoca similar to or different from your past work in other protected areas in Costa Rica? (particularly with the community)

Part D: ANAI

- Impressions of ANAI

- History of ANAI involvement in Gandoca, how has this changed over time?
- Why is ANAI working in Gandoca?
- What do you think are good things and bad things about the ANAI project?
- How does ANAI contribute to development activities in Gandoca?
- How does ANAI contribute to conservation activities?
- What is the relationship between ANAI and MINAE, and how has this changed over time?

PART E: (Eco)tourism

- What do you think about tourism in protected areas generally, and specifically in the G/M Refuge?
- When did tourists first start to come to Gandoca (the Refuge)?
- How many tourists come each year? (estimate… including volunteers?)
- Who is in charge of/manages tourism in Gandoca?
- How does tourism contribute to economic development in Gandoca?
- How does tourism contribute to conservation in the refuge?
- What does MINAE do to support/monitor/manage tourism in the Refuge?
- Do they consider volunteers (ANAI/MINAE) do be tourists? How are they similar to or different from other tourists?
- What do they think about future tourism development in Gandoca? (numbers, types of activities, institutional involvement….

APPENDIX G

CODING SCHEME: VOLUNTEER RESPONDENTS

- Identity
  - Gender
    - Male
    - Female
  - Age
  - Nationality
  - Occupation
    - Student
    - Other
  - Environmentalist
    - Yes
    - No
    - Volunteering as act of environmentalism
    - Environmental rhetoric – sust.devpt, ‘Western’ lifestyles, human arrogance, etc.

- Motivation
  - Altruism – ‘do something good’ - conservation or general volunteerism
  - Travel/Holiday/Location
  - Professional Development – educational requirement, job experience
  - Desire to see a Turtle
  - Culture/Language Learning
  - Convenience - Right time and place/Flexibility of ANAI/Low cost

- Volunteer Experience
  - Positive Aspects
    - Social interaction
    - Helping with conservation
    - Interaction with turtles
    - Cultural/Language Exchange
    - Education
    - Relaxing
    - Feeling of accomplishment
    - Providing local economic benefits
    - Rural, ‘roughing it’ setting

  - Negative Aspects
    - Language barrier
    - Environmental/physical hardships
    - Lack of activities, things to do
    - Did not see turtles
    - Lack of amenities
    - Feel unneeded
    - Lack of education/information
    - Loneliness
  - Length of Stay
  - Accommodation
  - How was opportunity discovered
    - Internet
    - School
    - Word of mouth/personal contact
    - Book of Volunteer Opportunities
    - Advertisement (magazine, etc.)

- Tourism in Gandoca
  - Volunteer as Tourist
    - Volunteers ARE tourists
      - Foreign
      - Pay
      - Short stay
      - Volunteering one part of larger vacation
      - Want to see something new (turtles, tropics, etc.)
      - Yes, but special kind of tourist
    - Volunteers ARE NOT tourists
      - Volunteers do work
      - Volunteers want to learn
      - Befriend local people
      - Altruistic
    - Volunteers are SOMETIMES tourists
      - Depends on motivation (turtles vs. travel)
      - Tourists once outside of Gandoca
      - Depends on point of view (local people see them as tourists, but volunteers do not see themselves as tourists)

- Differences between volunteers and other tourists
  - Work
  - Altruism/caring
  - Volunteers have smaller impact
  - Volunteers want to learn
  - Volunteers are involved in community, befriend local people
  - Volunteers do not need as many amenities (# or quality)
  - Length of Stay
- Benefits of Tourism in Gandoca
  - Economic
  - Conservation
  - Cultural Exchange
  - Infrastructure Development
- Negative Impacts of Tourism in Gandoca
  - None
  - Social
  - Environmental
  - NO negative envt impacts
- Ecotourism
  - Gandoca IS ecotourism
    - Explicit (mentions 'ecotourism')
      - Community Involvement
      - Local Economic Benefits
      - Environmental Education
      - Conservation
    - Implicit
      - Community Involvement
      - Local Economic Benefits
      - Environmental Education
      - Conservation
      - Tourism as substitute for consumptive use
  - Gandoca IS NOT ecotourism
- In charge of tourism in Gandoca
  - Local people
  - ANAI
  - MINAE
  - Multiple people/groups
  - Don't Know
- Development of tourism in Gandoca
  - Gandoca should stay 'as is'
  - Minimal/controlled development OK

- Tourism generally
    - Benefits
        - Economic
        - Environmental
    - Negative Impacts
        - Social
        - Environmental
- Local People
    - Volunteer interaction with and perceptions of local people
        - Positive aspects
        - Negative aspects
    - Local environmentalism
        - 'Different' environmental values
        - Lack environmental awareness/knowledge
        - Yes, are environmentally aware/knowledgeable
        - Some people are envt aware
        - Don't know
    - Motivation to work with project
        - Money
        - Conservation
        - Both money and conservation
    - Volunteer awareness of community conflict
- ANAI (sea turtle project)
    - Management
        - Managed well
        - Personal/local style of management
        - Poorly managed
        - Conservation Success
    - Purpose of Project
        - Conservation
        - Research
        - Community Development/Economic Benefit
    - Community Involvement, Relations (with ANAI)
        - Don't know/uncertain
        - Community involvement essential, important part of project
        - Community-ANAI relations are good
        - Community-ANAI conflicts
        - Local Involvement could be better
    - Education
        - Local education – lack of, ineffective
        - Tourist/volunteer education – good
        - Tourist/volunteer education – lack of, needs improvement

- Sea Turtles
    - Why conservation is important
        - Scientific reasons (‘endangered species’, scientifically interesting, ecosystem argument – all species important)
        - Moral reasons (humans don’t have right to destroy nature/have responsibility to protect it)
        - Symbolic (turtles = flag species)
        - Legacy for future generations (so children/grandchildren etc. can see them)
        - Source of income for local residents
    - Why populations are/have been declining
        - Don’t really know/feel uncertain about their answers
        - Local human factors
            - Poaching
            - ANAI mismanagement
            - Coastal development in Panama
            - Poaching NOT a significant factor
        - Local natural factors (erosion, changing currents…)
        - Global human factors
        - Global natural factors
    - Use of turtles and/or turtle eggs
        - Never OK
        - OK in the past, or in the future once populations have recovered
        - OK for ‘indigenous’ communities
        - Not needed because of income from tourism
        - Necessity, understandable
    - In charge of sea turtle conservation in Gandoca
        - ANAI
        - MINAE
        - Local people
- MINAE
    - Unaware of who MINAE is/what they do
    - MINAE not a visible presence
    - MINAE doesn’t do their job properly

APPENDIX H

CODING SCHEME: LOCAL RESPONDENTS

- Identity
    - # in family
    - #Years in Gandoca
    - Originally from…
    - Title to land?
        - Yes
        - No
    - Education (of family members)
    - Livelihood Activities
    - # Years working with ANAI

- Tourism in Gandoca
    - Volunteer as Tourist
        - Volunteers ARE tourists
            - No reason given
            - Foreign
            - Pay
            - Yes, but special kind of tourist
        - Volunteers ARE NOT tourists
            - Volunteers do work
            - Involved in community
            - Spend less
        - Differences between volunteers and other tourists
            - Work
            - Altruism/caring
            - Volunteers have smaller impact
            - Volunteers want to learn
            - Volunteers are involved in community, befriend local people
            - Volunteers spend less
            - No differences
    - Benefits of Tourism in Gandoca
        - Economic
        - Conservation
        - Cultural Exchange, Social

- Negative Impacts of Tourism in Gandoca
    - None
    - Social
    - Environmental
- Ecotourism
    - Gandoca IS ecotourism
        - Explicit (mentions 'ecotourism')
            - Community Involvement
            - Local Economic Benefits
            - Environmental Education
            - Conservation
        - Implicit
            - Community Involvement
            - Local Economic Benefits
            - Environmental Education
            - Conservation
            - Tourism as substitute for consumptive use
    - Aspects of Ecotourism
        - Distribution of benefits
        - Gender aspects
        - Business aspects
- In charge of tourism in Gandoca
    - Local people
    - ANAI
    - MINAE
    - Multiple people/groups
    - Group of tour guides
- Development of tourism in Gandoca
    - Gandoca should stay 'as is'
    - Minimal/controlled development OK
    - Locally owned devpt only

- Aspects of Community
    - Descriptions of Gandoca as a place
        - Positive aspects
        - Negative aspects

- Conflicts
  - Family power struggles – Development Association
  - Conflict and ANAI
  - Conflicts exist (vague)
  - Conflict and MINAE
  - Conflict resolution
- Environmental consciousness
- Development Needs

- ANAI (sea turtle project)
  - Purpose of Project
    - Conservation
    - Research
    - Community Development/Economic Benefit
  - Reason for working with ANAI
    - Economic
    - Like the work
    - Turtles
    - Work experience
  - History of project
  - Future Management of Project
    - ANAI
    - Local people
  - Challenges for Project
    - Enough volunteers
    - Local capacity, services
    - Funding
    - Lack of leadership
    - Education
  - If ANAI left/the project stopped, what would happen…

- Sea Turtles
  - Why conservation is important
    - Scientific reasons ('endangered species', scientifically interesting, ecosystem argument – all species important)
    - Moral reasons (humans don't have right to destroy nature/have responsibility to protect it)
    - Symbolic (turtles = flag species)
    - Legacy for future generations (so children/grandchildren etc. can see them)
    - Cultural, Economic reasons

- Why populations are/have been declining
  - Don't really know/feel uncertain about their answers
  - Local human factors
    - Poaching
    - Coastal development in Panama
    - Poaching NOT a significant factor
  - Local natural factors (erosion, changing currents…)
  - Global human factors
  - Global natural factors
- Use of turtles and/or turtle eggs
  - OK if populations stable
  - Luxury, not necessary
  - Would still like to use them
  - Local rights to resource
  - Not needed because of income from tourism
  - Tradition
  - Complex balance of human/turtle needs
- In charge of sea turtle conservation in Gandoca
  - ANAI
  - MINAE
  - Local people
  - Multiple parties

- Conservation in General – the Wildlife Refuge
  - Advantages of refuge
  - Disadvantages of refuge

- MINAE
  - MINAE does a good job
  - MINAE could do a better job
  - Description of MINAE's work

APPENDIX I

ETHICS APPROVAL FORM

VITA

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