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TRANSFORMATIONS OF TOURISM IN THE COLCA VALLEY – NEW ACTORS AND NEW PATTERNS OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Abstract: The article presents history and dynamics of tourist movement in the Colca Valley. Analyzing results of field research conducted in 2003 and 2007 the authors describe main changes in the attitudes of local inhabitants and authorities towards tourism and identify their character. Tourist activities based on the Colca Canyon natural attractions, remaining under total control of external tour operators since the eighties and perceived as a burden in the area, are seen now as a possible important factor of local development. New bottom-up initiatives are spreading in the Colca localities supported by NGOs and a public development program. Patterns of more sustainable tourism emerge and local culture is turning into an important element of the Colca tourist product.

Key words: tourism, local development, local actors, empowerment

Colca Valley, located in the southern Peru, between 3400 and 4200 meters above the sea level, is one of the major tourist attractions of the region, famous for years as the location of the deepest canyon of the world. Situated just 160 kilometers north of Arequipa, accessible by public transport, it is an important destination for tourists visiting the colonial monuments of the city and eager to see the region's countryside. Tourist activities appeared in the valley only in the eighties

of the 20th century. Till recently they have been fully controlled by tour operators from Arequipa and tourism was not bringing benefits to local inhabitants. Local authorities did not see tourism as a factor of local development. The situation is changing now. Several new local initiatives pretending to 'take over' part of tourist services are emerging. Empowerment of local authorities and leaders can be observed and new patterns of tourism seem to be developing. The authors pretend to identify main factors of change.

The article is based on the field research concerning development of local tourism, conducted by Bogumiła Lisocka- Jaegermann in july of 2003, and by both authors in july and august of 2007 in the towns of Chivay and Cabanaconde. Inventory of tourist infrastructure done in 2003 was repeated in 2007. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with local inhabitants, including small – scale entrepreneurs, local leaders and municipal authorities. Observation of changes that took place between 2003 and 2007 was an important part of the research, as well as the analysis of documents of local institutions and NGOs.

HISTORY AND DYNAMICS OF TOURIST MOVEMENT IN THE COLCA VALLEY

Tourist movement started in the Colca Valley in the eighties. One of the impulses that helped to attract it was related to the arrival of an expedition of Polish students from Cracow, known as Canoandes'79. The Polish kayakers run down the Colca River and claimed that the canyon was the deepest one on Earth. Their first trip and the following expeditions sponsored by National Geographic gave fame to the place. The first tourists that appeared in the beginning of the eighties were mainly foreigners interested in seeing with their own eyes the deepest canyon of the planet. Canyon towns and villages were not prepared for hosting visitors. The access was difficult and only Chivay, the biggest town of the canyon and the capital of Province of Caylloma was capable of catering for them with its one hostel ran by locals. Owing to the fact that the region was not part of any of the offers of travel agencies, the Colca Valley remained undiscovered for the mass tourism. There was no promotion system and all the information, that appeared in newspapers, magazines or guides, was aimed at individual tourists, drifters and explorers according to Cohen's classification (Cohen 1972).

It was not until the late eighties when the situation changed due to the big irrigation project, Majes, which consisted of supplying dry areas of the Colca Valley with water from the river Majes. This investment not only enabled construction of an efficient system of irrigation which led to the increase of yield, but it also forced the regional authorities to connect major villages and small towns on both sides of the valley with a road. This has had direct consequences for tourism. The landscape changed visibly, the scenery became richer and more colorful, but above all, the communication network improved and therefore, more alternatives for tourists appeared. Some accommodation facilities built for the personnel employed in the project were transformed into tourist lodging. Further improvements in the transport infrastructure especially modernization of the road linking Arequipa and Chivay not only reduced by half the time of getting to Chivay, but also resulted in an increase of number of public buses trips from Arequipa. The situation of the Colca Valley, and specially, Chivay, its symbolic capital, changed dramatically with increasing numbers of tourists getting there daily. In 1985 Chivay had one hostel and a couple of restaurants catering to truck drivers, in 1988 there were 12 hostels (Córdoba 2003) and in July 2003 over 20, offering lodging to more than 100 visitors. Table 1 illustrates dynamics of tourists' arrivals to the Colca Valley during the last ten years.

Table 1.
Dynamics of tourists' arrivals to the Colca Valley

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
January		1542	2421	2911	2977	3156	3051	3252	4802	5862	6920
February		304	2113	2708	2533	2528	2668	2896	4251	4765	5539
March		1049	1736	2669	2642	3750	3166	3428	6801	5926	6372
April		1970	2471	4090	3911	3700	4966	6070	5667	8985	9728
May		1815	2270	3530	4121	4832	5232	6116	5177	9247	10009
June		1934	2724	3692	3618	3596	4479	6152	8340	8188	
July		4251	5882	6889	6113	7913	8199	13093	13803	14615	
August	1682	4475	6813	7902	8393	11093	9850	13913	15691	17333	
September	1889	3088	4992	5686	6091	6770	7261	9045	10769	11 964	
October	2081	3576	5241	5935	6297	7766	8180	10488	12137	14484	
November	1269	3000	4271	3450	4778	5203	6269	7690	9291	10505	
December	1272	2054	2349	2984	3431	3784	3984	5411	6859	6812	
TOTAL	8193	29058	43283	52446	54905	64091	67305	87554	103588	118686	

Source: Autocolca's official statistics, June 2007

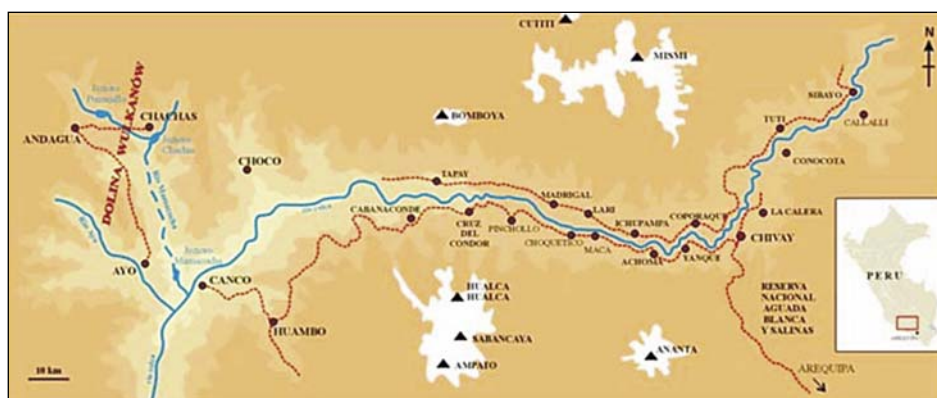


Fig. 1. Colca Canyon.

Source: Bębenek S. 2007

Local public institution – Autocolca (*Autoridad Autónoma de Colca*) was created in 1986 as a direct response to the situation. It was responsible for protecting the Colca Valley from negative impacts of tourism, as well as for its promotion. In 1997 Autocolca introduced a „*boleto turístico*”, obligatory entrance fee to the area of Colca Canyon. In the first year „*boleto*” cost 2 US dollars and in 2007 its price reached 10 dollars. Apart from being the source of revenue, „*boleto*” became also a tool of gathering statistics on tourist inflow to the canyon. In spite of Autocolca’s efforts tourism remained under the control of travel agencies from Arequipa. Tourists arrivals concentrate in the town of Chivay and Cruz del Condor – a view point over the canyon situated close to Cabanaconde, where condors have their nests and can be spotted and photographed every morning. Tourists usually leave aside other attractions or places, seldom stopping on their way in order to admire landscape of elaborated agricultural terraces. An average trip to Colca begins at 9 a.m in Arequipa. Buses stop on the way to Chivay crossing the Natural Reserve Salinas Aguada Blanca. Tourist have lunch in a selected restaurant in Chivay, and spend the afternoon in hot pools la Calera, some 3 kilometers away. Next day they depart at 6 a.m. to Cruz del Cónдор in order to see the birds in the morning, come back for lunch to Chivay, stopping on the way in order to see the landscape or visiting a colonial church in Maca. After lunch they leave for Arequipa. Tours stick to the left margin of the canyon and visitors do not interact much with the locals, beside buy-

ing souvenirs from women who wait for them in la Cruz. Interview conducted by Córdoba (2003) in 9 localities along the valley showed differences of opinion between inhabitants of Chivay and the remaining 8 villages: Tuti, Maca, Achoma, Yanque, Coporaque, Lari, Madrigal an Ichupampa. 26,6% of the interviewed in Chivay saw tourism as a source of work, and 60% saw no benefits from tourism. The corresponding numbers in Achoma were 3,5% and 75%, and in Yanque 0,7% and 83% respectively (Córdoba 2003, p. 84).

FACTORS OF CHANGE IN THE COLCA

Research conducted in 2007 in Chivay and in Cabanaconde showed changing attitudes towards tourism. The global discourse on rural tourism and ecotourism as factors of sustainable local development (Lisocka-Jaegermann 2004) has reached Colca. It is present in Autocolca's strategies (Autocolca 2006), and municipal authorities' plans¹. People have become more aware of economic benefits that tourism might give them. Non-governmental organizations present in the region² help to develop local initiatives aimed at the improvement of the quality of life of Colca peasants. Such initiatives have become very popular in the last few years in the area thanks to financial assistance from the state embodied in the Sierra Sur Program, created in order to support private economic activity of local inhabitants. The program supports people setting up an association provided they have a coherent plan in the form of a project. Sierra Sur, according to different criteria, can help with up to 80% of the initiative's budget. In this way Sierra Sur has helped many local residents in different fields of activities (related to tourism, education, agriculture and others). The Association of Local Guides³ in Chivay is one of the most successful examples of such venues. It has been set up as a private initiative of few mountain guides, who wanted to make real use of their professional knowledge in an official and legal way. Some of them have been

¹ Interviews conducted in Chivay and Cabanaconde in August 2007 by B. Lisocka-Jaegermann

² Center for the Study and Promotion of Development (DESCO) is among the strongest one working in the area Since 1985 (Rubina 1996)

³ www.colcatrek.com

trained by the NGO already mentioned – DESCO. Their idea was to gather guides from Colca region and create local competition for big foreign agencies. Those guides would not only organize trekking on their own, but also work for local travel agencies and for particular groups of visitors or individual tourists. In certain cases, they can also be subcontracted by agencies from Arequipa or Cuzco.

Another important associations related directly to tourism is the Association of Hotels, Restaurants and Alike (AHORA) situated in Chivay and run by local people. Although AHORA has its equivalent in the scope of the country being part of a bigger organization, the Peruvian Association of Hotels, Restaurants and Alike, the Colca branch doesn't receive any funds or other type of financing from the outside. It is solely maintained by contributions of its members and is formed by local hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and other private companies related with tourism activity.

As it has been mentioned Chivay is concentrating tourist activities in the canyon and the most popular trips do not reach other localities of the valley. Some of the local association funded in the canyon villages such as Cabanaconde, Tapay or Pinchollo aim at the creation of new patterns of tourism, especially that tourist agencies from Arequipa have already initiated organization of trekking trips along the canyon. The more aware inhabitants, especially local guides notice negative impacts of mass tourism on nature and landscape, due to its concentration on the left margin of the canyon and uncontrolled flow of vehicles along its only unpaved road. Alternative forms of tourism are seen as environment friendly and potentially more beneficial for the local communities. Beside classical trekking trips some forms of ecotourism and rural tourism are being discussed under the name of '*turismo vivencial*', The concept implies deeper contact with the place and its inhabitants, and participation in the local everyday life. New forms of visits could attract visitors even to the most remote localities not accessible by road, as well as to the ones that remain on the margin of the present day tourist flow. The idea of '*turismo vivencial*' can be sustainable and coherent, but it requires significant investments in the tourism infrastructure. Basically, it is absolutely necessary to adjust the traditional local houses, which very often lack basic facilities such as hot water, showers, toilets. This process will take time and money and probably it will be impossible to succeed without help of authorities. '*Turismo vivencial*' can serve as a way of activating

the unemployed and also it can improve the standard of living of the inhabitants. Ampato, local travel agency situated in Chivay, tries to combine '*turismo vivencial*' with other forms of tourism, especially those associated with sports and more active way of spending free time. Ampato organizes different types of trekking with support of local people, who give accommodation to tourists. But in fact, it is not only accommodation, but also a possibility to observe how the locals live that is so tempting for foreigners. It seems a direct response to a changing needs of the tourist market. In view of the diversification of offers and activities, also canyon's local agencies try to answer to this demand. On the other hand, local development discourse has also changed significantly, which forces not only inhabitants, but also the authorities to implement at least some premises of the idea of sustainable development. Furthermore, it seems worth stressing that local organizations, such as the travel agency Ampato mentioned above, try to avoid middlemen and include only local resources in their activity. They hire local guides, use local transport and accommodation, treating it as an element of the idea of sustainability – a way of activating local people while protecting the environment.

All the ideas mentioned above are clearly present in Cabanaconde, situated deep in the valley but linked by direct bus with Arequipa. Interest in transforming the town in an important tourist center is expressed by local authorities, entrepreneurs and inhabitants. Lodging installations have grown significantly since 2004. In summer of 2007 a new hotel was opened and there were two more under construction. Modernizations of two old hostels was on the way. Some of the town street were being paved, and several local initiatives aimed at tourism could be observed. Local authorities have claimed Juanita, also known as "The Ice Maiden", an Inca frozen mummy discovered on the top of Mount Ampato in 1995 by Johan Reinhard. It is on display in Arequipa Archeological Museum and has turned in a major tourist attraction. The mayor of Cabanaconde has demanded her return claiming she belongs to her people and started to build a specially designed museum. The controversy has already attracted attention to Cabanaconde. It would be difficult to ensure the necessary facilities for the continued preservation of Juanita including laboratory where testing of the state of the mummy could be conducted, however the idea of bringing the mummy is an important impulse for the local inhabitants. Juanita would attract visitors coming to Cruz del Condor

– instead of going back to Chivay they could continue the trip along the valley to Cabanaconde. Municipality plans to prepare an exhibition on local peasant culture that would be on display in the new museum. One of the authors interviewed a group of women – owners of small bars and restaurants in Cabanaconde, catering to locals, that sought a way to attract more tourists to the place and make them participate more in the local everyday life. They were trying to get support from the municipality and the local parish. Tourist that get to Cabanaconde usually just sleep there –early morning they trek down the canyon and come back by dawn, leaving the place the next day in the early morning bus to Arequipa. Hotel owners organize their stay – including food and guides, so the tourist nearly do not contact local people.

Observation and interviews conducted in Cabanaconde showed that migrants coming from the Colca valley are becoming important actors in local economic life (Gelles 1998, 2005). They invest in hotels adapted to foreign tourist needs and in new services such as internet café's. They are aware of possibilities alternative tourism forms can bring to the valley. Migrants finance annual local *fiesta* and support the events organized by municipality for the children and the elder. They act through the Asociation of Migrants from Cananaconde in the United States and in Spain, dating from as early as 1983. The ongoing discussion between the migrants and the local inhabitants is taking place on the village's website created by the former and accessible to the latter thanks to the internet café operating on the main square of the village opened in 2005.

Within the interviews with authorities and inhabitants, new attitude towards local nature and culture was observed in 2007. Heritage and traditions – were the two terms often repeated and interpreted as important elements of local identity and attractions for tourist. Heritage Program of Spanish Development Agency (*Cooperación Española para el Desarrollo*) aiming at the conservation of colonial heritage of the canyon held in the period of 1997–2005⁴ that lead to complete or partial restoration of several of local churches (in Achoma, Cabanaconde, Canocota, Coporaque, Chivay, Ichupampa, Lari and Maca) is partially responsible for that. However the concept of heritage operating in the canyon nowadays is much wider. Inventory of cultural resources has

⁴ 868.715 €.Instituto Nacional de Cultura – Región Arequipa.

been conducted by Sierra Sur Program and its results are present within the local development strategy elaborated by Autocolca (2006). A study on 'products and services with identity' (*Proyecto ...* 2007) was made public recently. Several new cultural events appeared as part of local agendas. Traditional dances contests and gastronomic fairs are being organized yearly in Cabanaconde, as well as a festival devoted to local, unique varieties of corn protected since recently by a trade mark. They integrate local community and turn into its showcase for the regional authorities and NGOs. First attempts of attracting tourist to such local events were rather frustrating in opinion of the informants. During the local food fair tourists were reluctant to eat as they believe eating outside their 'safe' hotel restaurants can be risky for health. The language is a significant barrier in contacts as well.

Chivay – with its longer tourist experience – also aims at the creation of new cultural attractions. A local handicrafts market *Qorimaki* was inaugurated in august 2007 with the idea of selling there quality local handicrafts only – as in the local souvenir shops and on the market they disappear within a mass of cheap tourist souvenirs from all over the country. Local producers association is responsible for the future of the enterprise established with help of local authorities. DESCO opened a shop with local agricultural products holding Colca trade mark. Attempts of promoting local *fiesta* have been initiated by Autocolca and traditional *fiesta* organizers.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2007 research reveals a significant change of Colca Valley inhabitants' attitudes towards tourism, demonstrating much more inclusive patterns of tourism both in social and territorial sense. It seems that the tourism activity has become an important stimulating factor for local initiatives and as a consequence, also for local development. The number of local residents included in this activity is increasing and apparently they are more aware of pros and cons of the tourism business. **Empowerment** of local authorities, informal community leaders and local inhabitants trying to take control of what is happening around them is an important factor of the new situation. **Growing importance of new actors: NGOs, local associations and migrants** is another key to understanding the present regional agenda. Although

the majority of people don't participate in the tourist sector, the number of groups of small entrepreneurs, who are trying to achieve some economic and social benefits out of tourism is growing. Tourist activity brings problems to local residents, such as for example increased pollution (garbage, dust), but it is also contributing to the improvement of infrastructure – more inhabitants have access to electricity, telephone, internet and living standards in localities are improving with better roads, paved streets, electricity supply all day round.

Plans of developing cultural – ethnic tourism are closely linked to the **revalorization of natural and cultural heritage of the valley** – consciousness of its assets, opportunities that cultural products and services may bring to a wider range of beneficiaries.

Associations that have been set up by the inhabitants of the Colca Canyon and attempts of bottom-up initiatives developed not only in Chivay, but in smaller communities as well, are a response to the increasing number of tourist arrivals fully organized by exterior travel agencies and to the loss of control of this situation by the authorities and local people. **New discourse on local development** and on the role of tourism which goes in pace with the idea of getting together in order to achieve a common goal, seems to be spreading in the canyons localities.

The number of tourism arrivals to the Colca Canyon has risen dramatically in the last few years and it seems that this tendency is going to continue. The carrying capacity of the Canyon might not put up with this increasing number of uncontrolled tourism arrivals. There is a growing consciousness the area should be by opening some sort of reserve or national park. Increasing mobilization of local social actors may be a key issue within such initiatives.

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