Chapter 4

Perceptions and Appropriations of Discourses in the National Park Island of Ons (Galicia, Spain)

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Abstract

In this chapter we analyze the discourses and conflicts of the actors linked to the island of Ons (Galicia, Spain). On this island, which is a National Park, we address the following questions: Who are the social actors of the island? What kinds of conflicts are occurring on it? Who is involved? How to explain the existence of conflicts on the island now? To answer these questions, we follow a multidisciplinary approach based on Rural Archeology and Anthropology. As main results we identify five key social actors whose discourses are very differently linked to one another. At the same time, we could see a shift in landscape management strategies that confronts different models of urbanity and rurality, which are part of the dichotomies of modernity.

Keywords: Island of Ons; National Park; discourses; conflicts; social actors; landscape

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Introduction

This chapter examines a number of historical and contemporary processes that compare different urbanity and rurality models over time in the life of the people in the island of Ons, belonging to the Ons Archipelago (Galicia, Spain). This Archipelago is located opposite to the Rías Baixas, at the entrance of the Pontevedra estuary, in Bueu County (Galicia, Spain). It is made up by the Ons and Onza Islands (in the South) and the O Centolo and Freitosa Islands (in the North and in South-East respectively). The archipelago is 6 kilometers long, 1.5 kilometers wide and comprises a total land area of 414 hectares. It is lying from North to South, perpendicular to the Pontevedra estuary. It has been part of the Sea-Land National Park of the Atlantic Islands of Galicia since 2001.

Although several traditional agricultural practices have remained stable in the island, they do not comprise the main source of income. Tourism is currently the main activity and the service sector has gained significant ground. The landscape of the island is mostly rural, although there is a small urban- area associated with the port. Within the urban area of the island, there are several types of tourist services (hotel services and information facilities or booths); in the rural area, there are no services whatsoever except in the camping area, which has a capacity for 200 people.

This relationship of landscape use projects, that brings together rurality with urbanity, is the place where multiple actors with a series of representations and interests converge and many times they are in conflict. We argue that this scenario is part of a complex process for the proposal of different occupational models, management and use of the landscape that happened to take part in the island. We analyze two key modernization shifts that propose different models that are at the basis of the present situation, and that go through the representations and interests of the different actors that are linked, spatially and symbolically, to the island. One is the period of the Franco dictatorship (1936-1975), and the other is the official denomination as National Park.

The research questions raised in the work presented in this chapter were the following[1]: Who are the social actors on the island today? What are the conflicts on the

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[1] The work presented here was initiated in the frame of the *Archaeological and ethnographical studies of the cultural landscape of the island of Ons (Bueu, Pontevedra)* project released by the Heritage Sciences Institute (Incipit-CSIC, Spain) and financed by the Sea-land National Park of the Atlantic Galician Islands which belongs to the network of Spanish National Parks (Spanish

island? Who is involved? And, how to explain the existence of conflicts on the island now? To answer these questions, we followed a multidisciplinary approach based on the Rural Archaeology that is based on Landscape Archaeology which proposes understanding the landscape as a product and as a part of human activity in relationship with the physical surroundings. It's an approach with structural foundations and the subject is understood as an agent of his world (his/her landscape) (Criado-Boado 1999).

Rural Archaeology points to reconstruct processes of structure and meaning of the territory and understands it as a domesticated landscape with a structuring effect upon the very societies linked to it. It is an approach that focuses on the study of material structures on the landscape at a ground as well as underground level, through photo-interpretation, archaeological excavations, historical document reading and oral memory recovery (Ballesteros-Arias 2010). The oral memory is very important to comprehend perceptions of the landscape as well as memories related to the use and management of the landscape itself.

With the objective of comprehending the landscape use, on the archaeology side aerial photo-interpretation of the island was done, using US flights (1956-1957) as well as current flights. Further along, fieldwork was carried out on the island. To this end, a team of archaeologists and anthropologists worked on the island for two weeks. During this period, an archaeological prospection of the island was conducted, which sought to understand the use and management of the landscape on the island.

At the same time, twelve informal interviews with the resident population of the island were carried out (all recorded with camcorder), as well as informal discussions with tourists and administrative managers, together with direct observation of economic activities of local settlers and their participation in local celebrations or festivities. The objective of this anthropological dimension was to understand the map of current actors of the island, related to their representations and conflicts.

Focus and Approach: Modernity, New Rurality, Protected Areas and Tourism

A fundamental characteristic of modernity is the stressing or highlighting of reason, upon which the modern project is supported. It is about a project based on the development of an objective science, a universal morality, self-guided law and art regulated by its own logic. Moreover, this project intended to free the cognitive potential of each one of these fields from any esoteric form to discover nature laws, imposing and controlling them (Habermas 1992).

At a basic level, modernity can be defined as an opposition to that based on tradition; in fact, it stands as opposed to tradition, understood as a non-objective knowledge embedded in theological ties. But certainly, modernity needs tradition in two ways: to deny it and to constitute itself as the opposite, to be transformed into it, in the tradition of what it is new, change itself (Domenach 1995). Something similar takes part in nature, because reason sets it apart from what is human, it denies it, but it needs it. Nature is the place where reason arises and it is also the place where it is applied. Within the project of modernity, the first world, industry and the city appear as the physical and structural place in which the project will be consolidated. The rural space (as well as the third world) is considered a space that is lagging behind, economically relegated to supplying raw materials.

What was rural was associated to agriculture and livestock and what was urban was associated to industrial activity. Urban would attract rural, economically as well as spiritually. Reason was to be found in the civilization that lived in the city, while savagery and barbarism, where reason was not dominant, was to be found outside the cities, logically, in what was rural. In this context, dominated by the Fordist model, leisure and free time was a privilege of the aristocratic classes and green spaces were reserved for raw materials. In Europe, in the beginning of the twentieth century, free time started to have a role in the workplace. Since 1930, paid holidays were extended by labor legislation to all workers. Leisure and free time activities started to emerge as economic development spaces. These new type of activities were oriented to enjoying the sun and the beach on one side, and on the other to visiting monuments, museums, and outstanding historical sites. By the end of the 1980's and beginning of the 1990's, different factors are brought to bear changes in the tourist trade: demand begins to outstrip supply of traditional touristic destinies the need to offer new and different tourist products emerges, and the concern for the environment and other cultures grows stronger (Riveros and Blanco 2003).

The shift from the perception of the rural space as the place for the production of raw materials to the space of the reservation of raw materials, to the space of biodiversity, has been long and complex. But longer and more difficult yet has been the management of protected green spaces, initially conceived as forbidden spaces for human beings, precisely the opposite to nowadays, where we have a large variety of management models where the presence of human beings is considered beneficial.2

In a general climate of modernity in crisis, post modernity is established. It is an attempt to set aside some dichotomies that we have previously mentioned, as in the case of modern/traditional, culture/nature, urban/rural, work/leisure time. Many of them are articulated, thus it is impossible to locate them ontologically at the same level (Touraine 1994). In the case of the dichotomy urban/rural, since four decades ago a new rurality concept is being discussed. While it is a comprehensive insight, it tries to de-marginalize 'rural' from urban. But more than a theoretical movement it is about a reality in which urban intrudes into the rural, imposing some productive approaches that are economically post-Fordist and culturally post-modern. In this framework, tourism as a post-modern type of production is close to this new rurality and even promotes it. The protection of nature as culture is promoted and consumed by the tourists promoting thus the breaking up of another dichotomy.

But this intention of post modernity of not reproducing these dichotomies (that at the same time are part of the foundation of new productive forms, of new types of tourism, of new knowledge and even of new development models) has to confront the established tradition: modernity. This tradition is represented by interests and modern values that, far from disappearing, utilize fragments of these dichotomies as arguments to reproduce them.

Results

Economic Models: From Rural to Urban Landscape

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[2] There are studies that indicate the existence of a positive relationship between the increase of biodiversity and human management (Erickson 2008) and, in a lot of cases, of economic benefits linked to ecosystemic services and tourism (Fagetti 2001).

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Although it hasn't been examined in depth, due to the scarce evidence available, during the first stages of prehistory, the first settlers of the island belonged to the chronic cultural period of the Bronze-Age, between 2500 and 900 BC. In general terms, these communities lived in houses made out of perishable materials, they practiced farming and they took care of small cattle. Sea and land food gathering was essential in their diet, even though they also went hunting and fishing along the continental coast. At a later point in history we find a fortified settlement known locally as *Castelo dos Mouros*, which is related to the Iron Age (800 BC.-100 AC.). This type of settlements was inhabited by sedentary farmers that farmed the land and bred cattle. They gathered shellfish and caught fish in the near coast, and kept in contact with other peoples of the coastal areas through trade. They were also craftsmen that made pottery as well as metal and stone objects. Roman presence is made evident through the ruins of what was likely a facility for fish salting located along a bay type of opening along the coast and closely related to the fishing and commercial activity of the island, which was very prosperous, with the rest of the islands and with the continent (Ballesteros-Arias 2009). The island was also occupied by monastic orders during the Middle Ages (centuries V-XV). At the beginning of the second millennium it became property of the Church and it was leased to the nobility, moreover it was attacked and used as an operation base for the Normand Incursions. In the same manner, during- ancient times it was possible to identify a very irregular population dynamics.

The present economic management of the agricultural environment that we could observe follows the general model of occupation and exploitation of the Galician rural landscape. This landscape is constituted by two different types of productive spaces: scrubland and cropland (see Figure 1). This landscape model made up by these two spaces operates by complimenting each other (Bouhier 2001) to the point that one change in the exploitation and management of one of the spaces affects the other one.
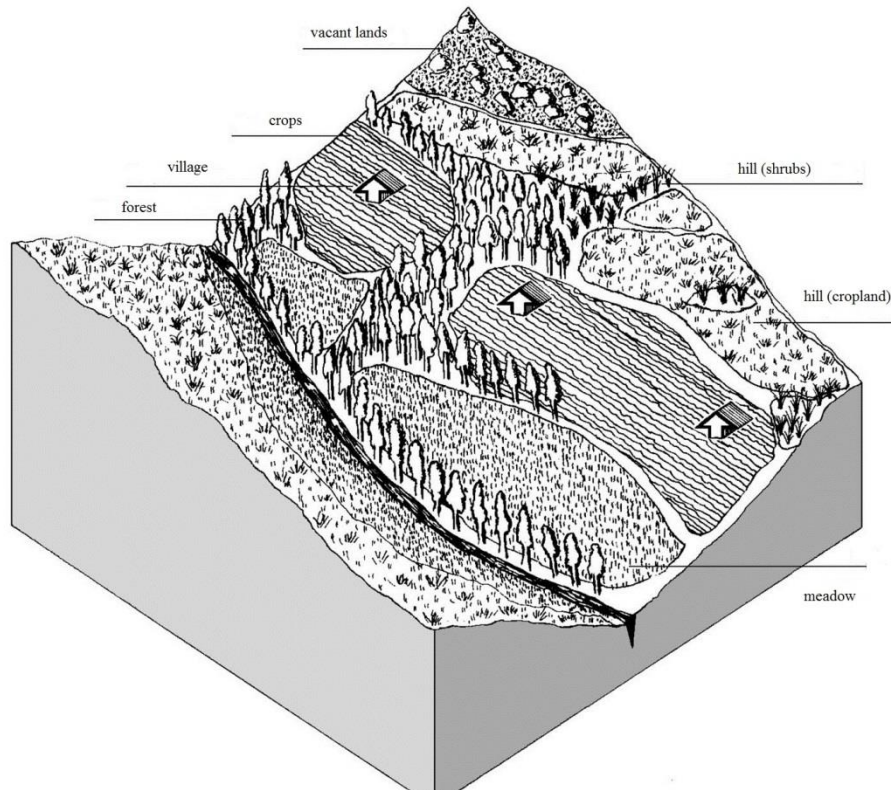
Figure 1. Theoretical model of the traditional farmer landscape of Galicia.

The productive systems adopted by the inhabitants of the island are based on the complimenting approach because they perform several activities in a rotating and interconnected fashion. One particular case is that of the rotation of crop-fields. Each person is the landlord and user of an amount of crop-fields whose boundaries are not clearly established for outsiders, but for the locals of the island they mean discrete units of landscape that are clearly identifiable. Each one of these plots presents a particular nomenclature that was orally passed from generation to generation.

This traditional model that was kept in essence up to these days suffered an important change during the Franco dictatorship (1936-1975), when several modernizing projects were proposed in the island aimed to centralize public spaces, create new infrastructures and a shift in the exploitation of the farm land through reforestation with exotic plant species. Within these projects, we find changes in spatial order and in traditional architecture, proposing a new approach to urban design, centralizing specific spaces. This plan was supported in a series of new constructions such as: the creation of a civic center in which the school for boys and girls would be

built, a new church, and individual homes for the priest, the teacher and the doctor, as well as a community owned grain-barn (see Figure 2).
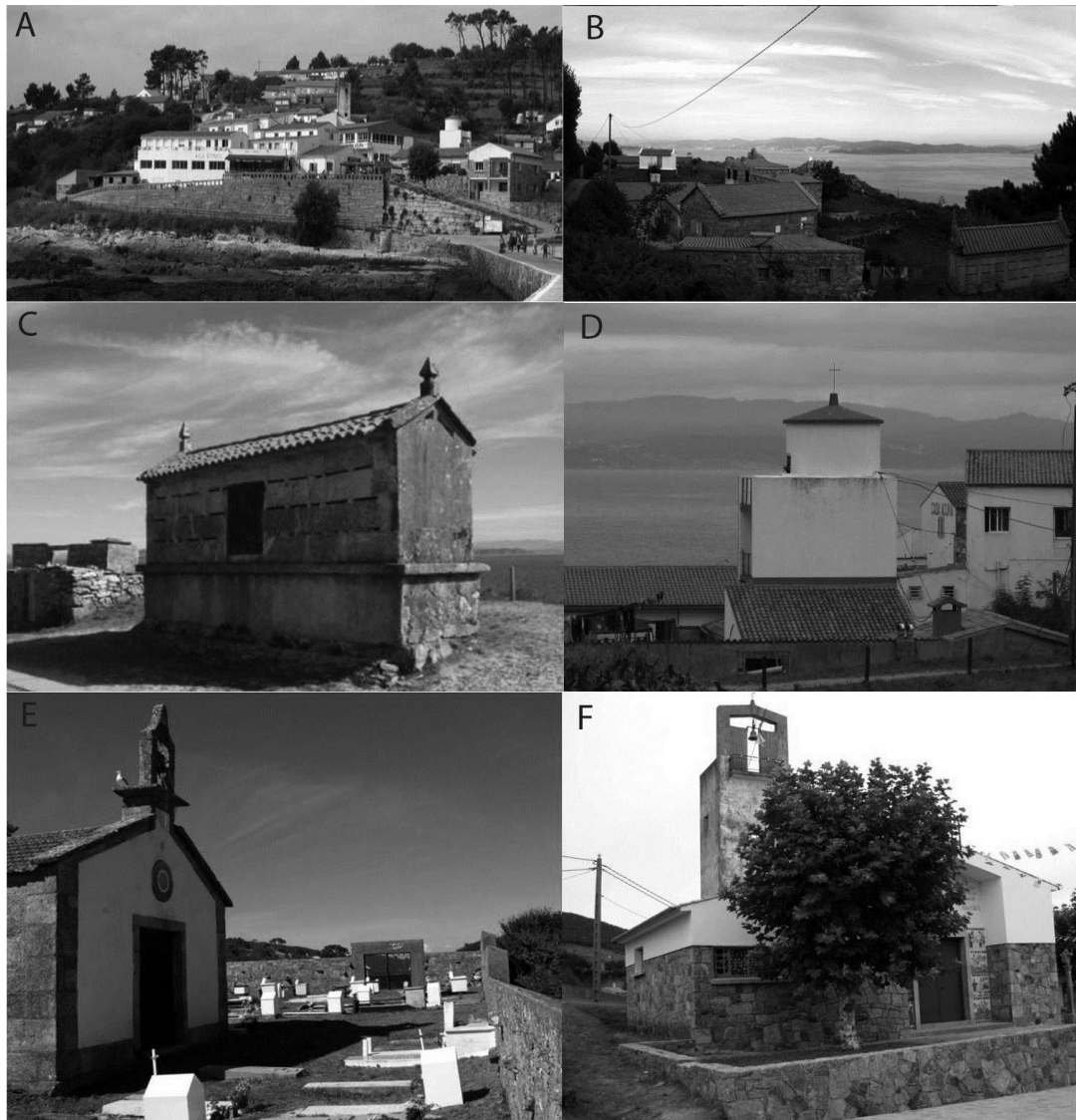

Figure 2. Comparison of infrastructures before and after the establishment of new forms of landscape management. A: a new zone concentrated on the southern limit of the island, across the port; B: island traditional settlement spread on the southern limit; C: traditional building for grain-storing (Hórreo); D: community owned building for grain-storage; E: old church located close to the old downtown; F: new church located in the civic center.

Another material and symbolic management model of the island that had a strong impact on the population dynamics was the one generated by the denomination

as a National Park in 2001, which among other things brought about the tourist industry. This new model suggests a use of space which we could measure to some degree by comparing the aerial photographs of a U.S. flight in 1956 with more recent pictures taken in 2003.

In general terms, this comparison allows us to observe that the Island of Ons presents a series of structural changes that match- the exploitation and use of the traditional space in Galicia which also occurs in the 1960's (even though it has been evolving since the 1950's) as a consequence of policies applied in this decade that eliminated old practices in favor of the 'modernization' and industrialization of the country. The mechanization of the countryside, plot concentration, the abandoning of scrubland and planting exotic species were some of the consequences. Scrubland and cropland stopped being complementary spaces and they become dissociated spaces: croplands were fertilized with chemical products instead of plants from the scrubland; and the scrubland turned into forests planted with fast growing species.

If we carry out this comparative analysis at a lower scale and we focus on a given area of the island, we see that these changes in the scrubland are truly drastic (see Figure 3). In this image from 1956, we can see the generation of micro-plots in the scrublands in much enlarged straps, set longitudinally as well as transversally, on the field and with different types of use (slash and burn farming, fallowing, scrubland). In the same area, in 2003, a standardization of the territory can be seen; the previous mosaic becomes a total uniform space, devoted to low scrubland, but this time associated with the vacating of the countryside.
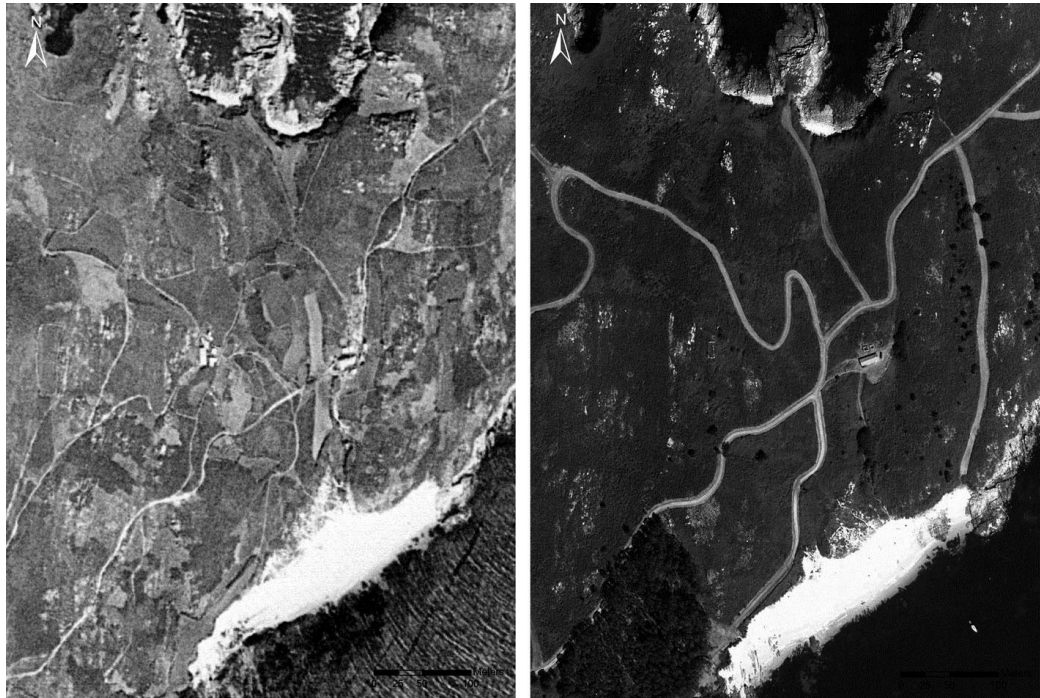
Figure 3. The comparison in detail of two aerial photographs in which changes between 1956 (left) and 2003 (right) can be seen.

Another element that draws attention in the observation of these two photographs is that the road network has changed drastically. In the photograph from 1956 we see a multiple network associated with the communication between areas of cropland and of the sea products industry; in 2003, that landscape no longer exists and in its place there are roads designed with a double purpose: being able to arrive in a 4x4 vehicle for a quick view of the territory, for scrubland maintenance work done by rangers or other officials and to direct tourism towards more likely interesting places such as beaches, or locations with broad and beautiful sights of the island, and its surroundings.

Actors, Representations, Conflicts

While anthropological work was done in conjunction with archaeological fieldwork which was performed during a two week period it is worthwhile mentioning that, some team members had several years of involvement with the island. This allowed us to

have a set of social contacts that provided access to the various places, identifying stakeholders and determining social perceptions regarding the conflicts in the island. Moreover considering the small number of local people it was not difficult to approach the most qualified spokesmen well versed regarding our problems. These spokesmen were selected according to the method of saturation, and were perceived as relating to each stakeholder group. Basically, we worked with local people over 60 years old, with various types of tourists and managers of the reserve.

Based on fieldwork in the area, we identified five groups of social actors. A type of key actors is the group of residents, who are mostly elderly people that continue with the traditional productive systems connected to fishing and agriculture. This group of actors consider the island as the place to live and they feel proud of 'being from the island'.[3] Within this group, there are two different subgroups: the ones that want tourism to increase in quantity and quality (regarding money spending), and the ones that do not want an increase in tourism. The first group of people is economically bonded to the tourist industry, while within the second group, some of them live off of tourism, specially renting their homes or rooms, but some of them have not followed this practice. This last group of people has almost no relationship with the 'urban' area of the island but they are not bothered by having people around during the summer-time.

On the other hand, there are public managers that perceive the island as a natural and cultural space that should be protected and kept in its 'original' state. The management model used in the island focuses on the conservation of nature and the proposed attractions are basically natural, even though the need for showing the cultural history of the islands has been gaining ground.

Another group of actors are tourists, within which we find two big subgroups: eco-tourists and mass tourists[4]. Eco-tourists are mostly from Galicia, and from the rest of Spain, even though there is an increasing flow of visitors coming from countries - of the European Union (Mediavilla García et al. 2011).This group of people - conceive the island as a distant place to be in close touch with nature and the 'Galician culture'. The vast majority stay overnight on the island and they are repeat visitors. The mass tourists, coming from diverse backgrounds, visit the island but the great majority does not stay

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[3] '*Ser da illa*' it's an expression that aims to vindicate the belonging to the island, often used in the iconography and the local discourses.

[4] According to the latest survey of visitors conducted by National Parks, from January 2012 to September 2012 was of 72,636 people in total (Parques Nacionales 2012).

overnight. They perceive it as a place for recreation and enjoyment of the summer sun and beach.

Recently, the tourist model wanted for the island has been disputed. Until the year 2009, when this work was done, the entrance to the Natural Park was subject to certain regulations, while visits to the island were not regulated at all regarding the number of tourists, neither regarding the staying in accommodations of a permanent nature, admission to the public camping ground was regulated.[5] For example, during our fieldwork we could see different disputes regarding the free touristic model that is currently used and another that had more regulations proposed by a sector of the population. In this alternative model, the privatization of the camping area is proposed, and under this framework there are diverse discourses and appropriations of the island. These disputes have been part of the conflicts that have approached and confronted the various groups of actors.

To analyze the relationship between actors in a more detailed fashion, we have cross-checked the various interests of each one of the actors. We have defined a set of interests and analyzed how they relate with the interests of other actors.

- National parks
o Heritage protection: the need for protecting heritage against real or potential dangers
o Public order control: security measures and community order.
o Infrastructure construction control: refers to one of the regulations for protected areas regarding the construction of infrastructures.
o Tourist infrastructure maintenance: various types of tourist infrastructure are under the administration and management of National Parks (viewing platforms, public restrooms, camping areas, etc.)
o Tourist flow regulation: several protected areas have limited capacity, thus tourist flow systems will be implemented. This parameter shows that intention.

- Eco-tourists
o No massive tourism: it refers to one of the main intentions of eco-tourists that is the no-development of a massive touristic strategy.
o Allowing freedom (not much police control, no privatization):

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[5] In this sense, it is worth noting that this is the only free public camping in Galicia.

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o　　　Conservation of culture and nature: these are two of the fundamental values that these actors advocate.

- Mass tourists

o　　　Improving touristic food and accommodation services: this is one of the main interests to be able to enjoy the prevalent model of sun and beach.

o　　　Improving accessibility: a strong interest oriented towards increasing mass tourism

- Traditional permanent population

o　　　Living peacefully: it consists in being able to live as they have been doing it up to now. Without interference from the other actors in their private space or in economic practices.

o　　　Being able to have social relationships: the island is the ideal environment for the social relationships of these settlers, and they do this in given places, such as homes, bars, and church. Being able to keep developing their social activities is fundamental for their well-being in the island.

- Permanent pro-tourism population

o　　　Producing consumer goods and trade in goods: relates to being able to derive economic benefit out of tourism.

o　　　Increase tourism infrastructure: it is really bonded to the previous interest and it aims to increase the supply of tourist services.

To analyze in detail the relationships between the interests of all the actors, we have carried out an interconnection between them. Each interest may have three types of relationships with the other actors: positive, neutral, and negative. Then, based on the frequencies on the type of relationships, we elaborated relative frequency charts that allow us to visualize comparatively clearer and in detail the relationship between all the actors. Then, we explain the results of the interconnection of interests per actor.

- *National parks* (chart 1). They present a good relationship with 'eco-tourists' and with 'traditional residents' and a greater conflict with 'mass tourists' and with 'pro-tourism permanent population'. This is because the island control proposed by National Parks goes against the proposal of free construction and the increase of the touristic flow held

by touristic sponsors. The affinity between actors is due to the existence of closer positions regarding the protection of heritage values, whether they are traditional or natural.

- *Eco-tourists* (chart 2). They show a greater affinity with 'National Parks' and with 'permanent traditional population'. The reasons for their good relationship with 'parks' are the same as the ones mentioned in the previous paragraph, and as it is the case with 'traditional population' there is a similar motive linked to the intention of 'eco-tourists' of protecting traditional - lifestyles , of which 'traditional population' are representative. Their greatest conflict is linked to mass tourists and to the 'pro-tourism population', because 'eco-tourists' propose quantity-regulated-tourism, safekeeping the 'natural' and 'cultural' values of the island.

- *Mass tourists* (chart 3). They present a better connection with the 'pro-tourism population' because they share the island modernizing project that aims to promote tourism and generate higher incomes. The island protection is based not on values as such, or on its heritage dimension, but rather on the protection of the economic potential of those values. The worst relationship to be found is the one between 'eco-tourists' and 'National Parks' because they are seen as the 'brakes' for the economic development of the island.

- *Traditional permanent population* (chart 4). It is a group of actors whose relationship with the rest of the actors is very neutral. It almost does not show a conflict with the other actors and they manage neutral values that speak about a set of interests that aim to keep the situation as it is. Their project is to be permanent. The result should be analyzed carefully because, and as it seemed to us, an ethnographical study in depth was not carried out, by now, as to address a more profound conflict, present in a type of private discourse. The discourses at an oral, material, and spatial level proposed by the other actors are very visible discourses in the public space.

- *Pro-tourism permanent population* (chart 5). These actors have a truly major conflict with 'National Parks' and with 'eco-tourists', something that is reciprocal, because the island management models are conflicting in several points that have been listed previously. They present a greater affinity with 'massive tourists' and a neutral relationship with 'traditional settlers' because these actors have no major conflicting views on these issues.

Conclusions

In this chapter we examine a number of historical and contemporary developments that compare different urbanity and rurality models through the passage of time and in the life of the people in the Island of Ons. The depth and the population dynamics of the island have been part and product of the interaction of diverse projects for setting up rationalities that, nowadays, keep appearing, at a more reduced scale, and can be described as social conflicts among the social actors involved in the island. The pre-modern rationalities from the past proposed a way to connect with the environment, of managing spatiality and materiality, and thus define a determined cultural landscape. Over time, the blueprints of each landscape were material and symbolic inputs of the structuring of other landscapes.

Modern rationality proposed another model for landscape management that generated very important changes that have resulted in a new wave of conflicts. This has happened because of the different management options existing in the island. Two recent events had a major impact regarding the island management, one has been the project carried out by Franco and the other one the denomination as a National Park. Both processes resulted in a strong change in the structure of the territory that nowadays constitutes the cultural landscape of the island. The current conflicts that exist between some actors of the island show the marks of these projects and put them into action as elements of arguments that swing between the urbanity and rurality models.

Thus, the eco-tourists actors aim to support processes towards a more traditional, rural, and natural island, while the pro-tourism population and the mass tourists aim towards modernization and urbanization. The modern dichotomies that are behind these representations espoused by the distinct current actors (tradition/modernity, urban/rural, natural/artificial) creates tense situation where the different projects and interests of each group many times are in conflict. It is likely to observe that a new rurality is being established in the island that insists on taking urbanity into rurality, work into leisure time, and culture into nature.

The local settlers are situated in the middle of these dichotomies, and frequently are affected by these tensions in their daily life, since management decisions on the cultural landscape are marked by the relationships between all stakeholders. Currently,

it is impossible to think about the existence of traditional or pre-modern lifestyles isolated or outside the tensions present among the multiple actors of social life.

From studying the relationships between actors linked to a more traditional rationality, we could see one that is the less conflictive. Besides the feeling of nostalgia for the past, intertwined with that of misery and poverty, portrayed in the expression 'we worked as (female) slaves'[6], which are in the memory and feeling quoted by the elderly people of the island. Therefore, tradition is framed in a nostalgic perspective that sometimes may be totally functional for those modernizing projects, supporting Touraine's (1994) hypothesis in which what is traditional, in modernity, more than challenging the project, works as an input for its replication.

At an economic level, traditional agriculture and traditional fishing are the activities less seen around the Island of Ons. Nonetheless, the youngest people are the ones that support the service sector promoted by the growing tourism in the area and that may become an important income source for the local economy.

Acknowledgements

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[6] In original Galician, *traballábamos como esclavas*.

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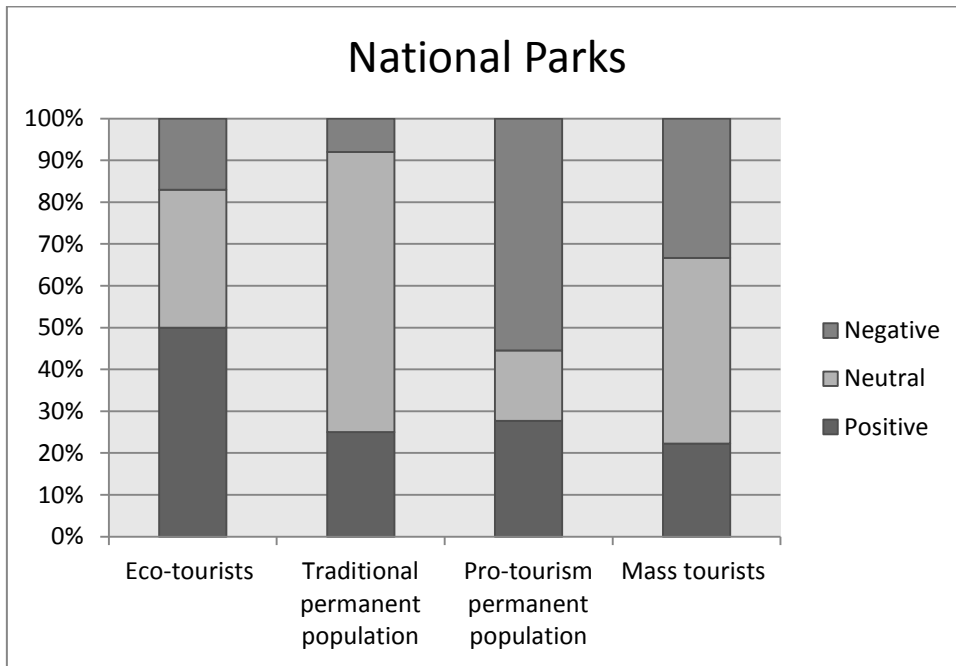Paula Balesteros-Arias

Charts

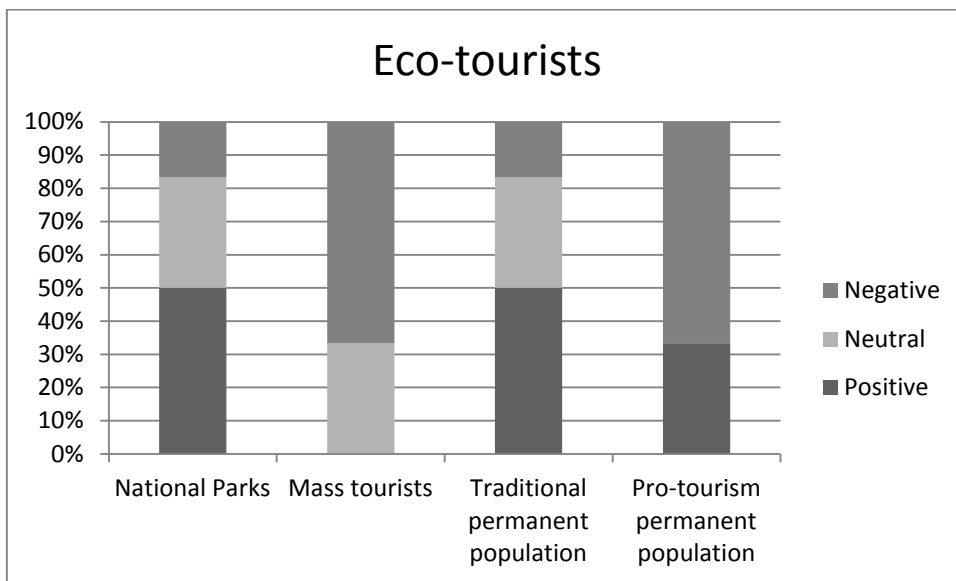Chart 1. Relationship between National Parks with the other actors.

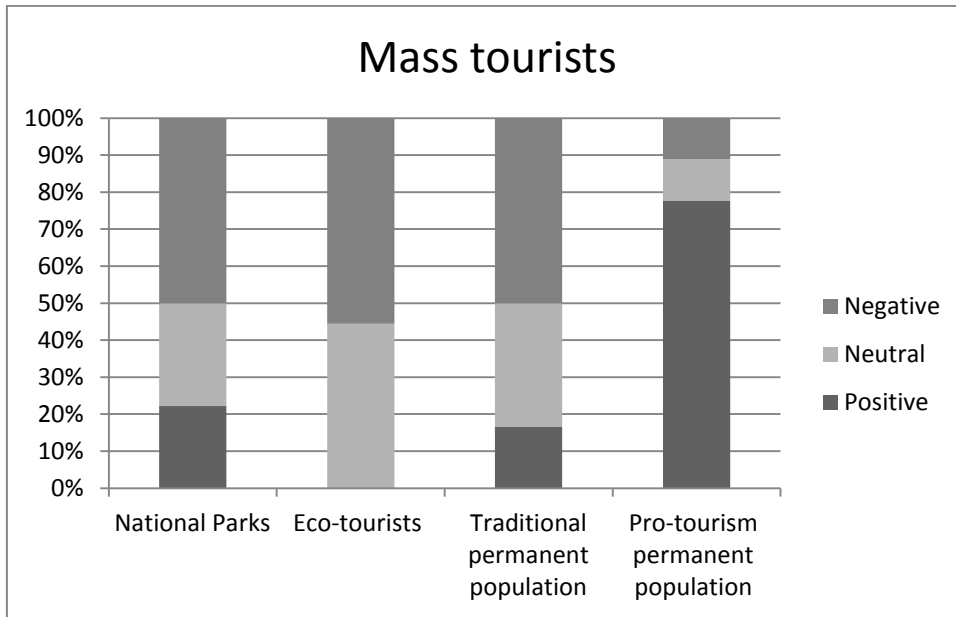Chart 2. Relationship between eco-tourists with the other actors.

Chart 2. Relationship between mass tourists with the other actors.
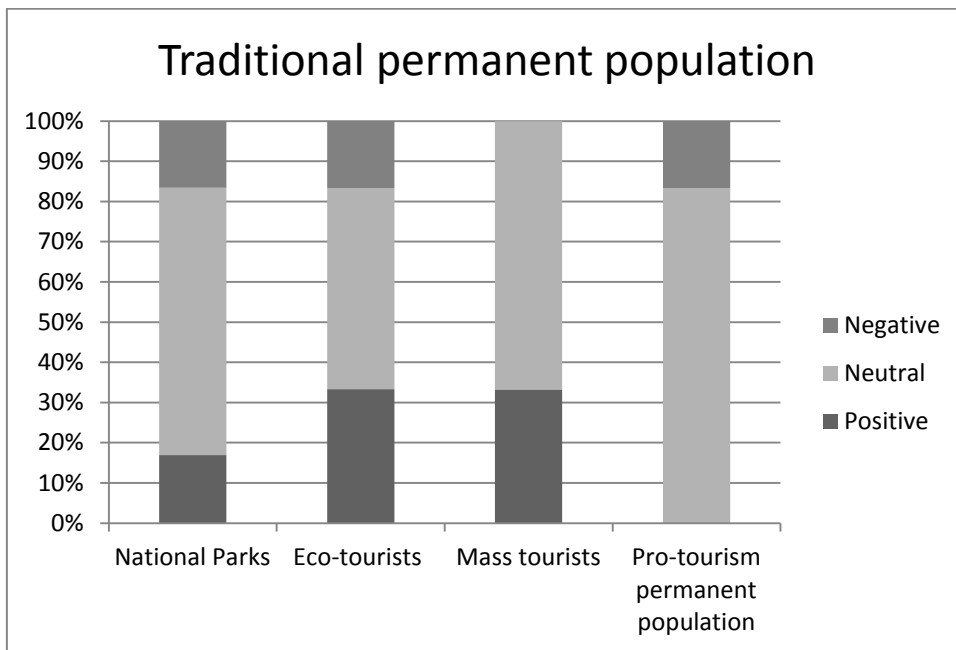

Chart 3. Relationship between traditional permanent population with the other actors.

Perceptions and Appropriations of Discourses in the Natural Park Island of Ons
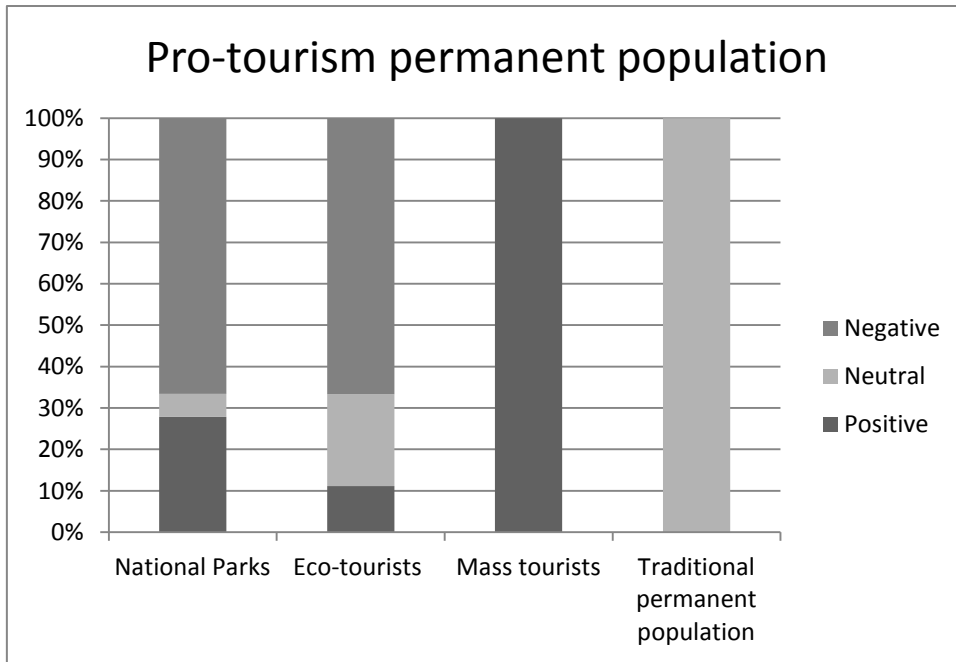

Chart 4. Relationship between permanent pro-tourism population with the other actors.