

Contradictions of tourism and amenity migration mobilities in local development. Four cases of study in Argentina, Latin America

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Rodrigo C. González; Otero, Adriana María; Domínguez de Nakayama, Lía; Marioni, Susana; Lonac, Alicia



CEPLADES 

CEPLADES Turismo
Facultad de Turismo
Universidad Nacional del Comahue
Neuquén, Argentina

Tourism mobilities and amenity migration in mountain destinations in Argentina

Mobilities of both people and objects, all go into “doing” tourism.

Such complex set of mobilities entails many risks: Tourism has always been accompanied by risks to host communities culture, landscape and environment, But it also implies the risk of been just a “screen” for another kind of business related to real state speculation.

Amenity migration may represent a threat to local development, hiding the lack of tourism industry competitiveness and being regressive in terms of local economic development.



Objective

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the contradictions of tourism and amenity migration mobilities in local development in four mountain tourism destinations in Argentina, in order to promote guidelines for the setting of an effective agenda facing local development in these communities.

Methodology

Four mountain villages of Argentina were selected: **San Martín de los Andes (SMA)**, **Villa La Angostura (VLA)**, **Villa General Belgrano (VGB)** and **El Bolsón-Lago Puelo (EB-LP)**.

The methodological approach was descriptive, of a qualitative and quantitative and synchronic and diachronic type, based in both **secondary data analysis**, including demographic, sectorial and local information, and primary information: **focused interviews to key social actors of the different migratory phases**, as well as in depth interviews to natives and old residents in the four analyzed cases.

Community workshops were also carried out, in which participative action-research techniques were applied.

The cases studied

San Martín de los Andes (SMA) Neuquen Prov.

Villa La Angostura (VLA) Neuquen Prov.

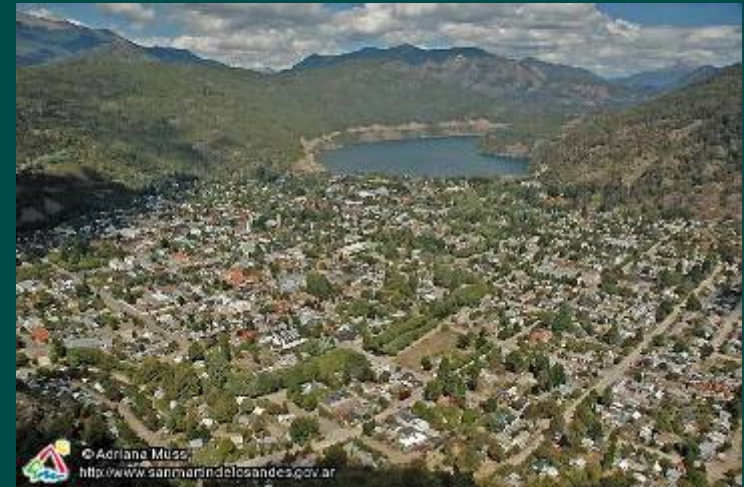
Villa General Belgrano (VGB) Cordoba Prov.

El Bolson-Lago Puelo (EB-LP) Rio Negro/Chubut Prov.



San Martín de los Andes (SMA)

- A mountain town with a population of about 25.000.
- Located in the southwest of Neuquén, 420 kms. south-west from the provincial capital.
- SMA is the gateway to Lanín National Park, being one of the favourite places in Argentina for both amenity migrants and tourists.



Villa La Angostura (VLA)

- Considered among the main attractions of the Argentine Andean Patagonia
- VLA is within Nahuel Huapi National Park, being the gateway to Los Arrayanes National Park. It has a population of approximately 12.000, with an annual growth rate of 121,83% (1991-2001), and a population density of 98,15 inhabitants per square meters.



Villa General Belgrano (VGB)

- Located in Cordoba province, 85 km south from the provincial capital city
- 6,000 stable inhabitants
- An identifiable central European building-style features.
- VGB lives almost exclusively on the contributions of tourist activity.



El Bolson and Lago Puelo (EB-LP)

- Mountain villages located in the Patagonia Andes sector recognized as *Parallel 42 Andean Shire*. The Shire is about 4,369 km², and is located in the south-western section of Río Negro Province, and the northwest part of Chubut Province, in Argentina.



Contradiction #1: Official speech VS the negative consequences of AM in mountain villages

- *The first contradiction is related to the official speech at both municipal and provincial levels in all the cases studied, which encourages foreign investments and therefore the arrival of new amenity migrants to tourist mountain destinations as a positive side of development, hiding some crucial negative effects on local social and economical development.*

Contradiction #1:

A number of negative effects on local social and economical development can be identified.

Problems detected in VGB

- Inadequate state of conservation of internal trails and water streams, due to the presence of polluting elements.
- Social inequity in the access to educative and health services.
- Services infrastructure insufficiency.
- Increase of residential housing price.
- Increase of life cost.
- Weakening of the links between the public and private sectors.
- Insufficient fulfillment of both municipal and provincial regulations on environmental impacts.
- Lack of continuity of tourist policies in the medium and long term.
- Increase of visual pollution.
- Lack of appropriate recreation services for local population.

Contradiction #1:

A number of negative effects on local social and economical development can be identified.

In SMA, local residents interviewed expressed their main problems: exaggerated growth of housing construction sector, remarkable reduction of public access to common resources, increasing sensation of problems linked to marginalization and poverty: alcoholism, drug addiction, familiar viol

In VLA, the continuous and sustained increase in real estate value and the institutional weakness shown by official regulative administrations, lead to an increasing of the loss of the native forest ground and water pollution. The access to common resources is, again, a core problem of this mountain village.

Contradiction #2: Mirror effect and the diffuse city

- Migrants move to the mountains influenced by an idyllic image of the new place, but taking with them their urban way of life, building up what can be described as a **mirror effect: the reproduction of the former urban way of life, but now within a mountain environment**. Urban images, values and societal forms are intended to be reproduced in the new environment.
- The proliferation of this **diffuse city** model is one of the **most significant change** that can be seen in our new mountain urban environment nowadays. They consist of **closed districts or neighborhoods offering a set of security and isolation conditions** required for these new cosmopolitan migrants. These districts, named locally as “countries”, are an urban phenomena born in the big cities, due to the increasing insecurity sensation, and the need of new open spaces

Contradiction #2: Mirror effect and the diffuse city

- The most representative case of this diffuse cities proliferation is Villa La Angostura, living a real estate boom since 2001 crisis, when many people decide to invest in the construction sector.
- Land costs went higher and higher. The cost of construction also experiment a continuous rise, thus attracting high investments development.
- During 2004 and 2005, price of the lands with higher commercial values, those located near the lake's shore and on the riverbanks, grew up to 50%.

Many of this developments are shown and promoted as “mountain neighborhoods”. they are usually located in places with high environmental risk, such as mountain and hills slopes and lake shores.

Contradiction # 3: Amenity migrants as tourist entrepreneurs

- Many amenity migrants are attracted because mountain destinations landscape and quality of life. *Once those migrants become entrepreneurs within their new environment, and start performing as tourist service providers, they cannot reach the minimum quality standards in their services, then not matching appropriately with the mountain environment.*


Contradiction #4: Displacements and the shadow of tourism

- *While tourist and amenity migrants enjoy moving within and through mountain destinations, local residents suffer demobilizations:*
- The access to the majority of public recreation attractions is restrained, space become inaccessible
- Socially speaking, they are confined to works such as housecleaning, cooking, entertainment providers, and offering their local knowledge as guides and drivers in tours, and even selling their bodies for sports (i.e. golf) or sex

Contradiction #4: Displacements and the shadow of tourism

Tourism can be considered as a scene of the real estate speculation forces.

Maybe it is not tourism itself, but what can be called the **shadow of tourism**, hiding those foreign interest, that promote a long list of new territorial symbolic re-appropriations



Steps towards and agenda for growth management in mountain tourism destinations

- Step 1: Setting the *agenda*
- Step 2: Policy formulation
- Step 3: Implementation

Step 1: Setting the *agenda*.



- It is necessary that government gets familiarise with the requirements of local communities concerning new migrants and the shadow of tourism: real estate speculation
- It is needed an understanding of the structure of the national and local economy and how it relates to key regional and global markets
- Governments should build the capacity and accountability mechanisms that will enable them to improve their performance in the delivery of public goods, public service provision and the access to common resources.
- Many actors involved may have to accept that institutional change is necessary. Governments must ensure that growth can be positive to the whole community and not just to a powerful minority. NGO´s should be aware of the importance of such change, and start being actively involved in such a process.

Step 2: Policy formulation

Policies should be mainly directed to:

- The development of growth management strategies at a local scale, involving all local actors, and paying special attention to the necessities of the population, natural and cultural resources sustainability, as well as sustainable tourist development plans and actions.
- The creation of a favourable context for sustainable tourism development by means of the application of specific quality improvement strategies and procedures, and State policies concerning local tourist micro-enterprises competitiveness.
- A critical review of local norms and regulations concerning land use management, taking good care of common resources.
- The cooperative work between commerce chambers, associations, NGO´s and local government, towards strategies dealing amenity migration.

Step 3: Implementation

The implementation of such a policy concerning AM in mountain areas in Argentina might face a context with:

- **State control and legitimacy:** State authorities and systems must be strong and viewed as legitimate, maintaining political stability
- **Public service:** A powerful, competent, autonomous and stable bureaucracy must exist, to create, direct and manage economic and social development. Other effective institutions and networks should appear necessary to promote and implement economic policy
- **The joint participation of State and non-state actors**

Step 3: Implementation

The implementation of such a policy concerning AM in mountain areas in Argentina might face a context with:

- **Policy priority:** Equitative economic development should be consistently prioritised by government policy, which promotes productive entrepreneurship
- **Local behaviour and attitudes:** Social and technical innovations are usually generated locally. They should be adapted and used to solve problems and create functional institutions and systems. Tolerance, meritocracy, social mobility and high levels of education should be valued and promoted
- **Community leadership:** Leaders promote development and corruption is limited or at least not predatory.