

# CONSTRUCTING FAIR TOURISM IN ECUADOR

## The Case of Asoguabo

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<p>The objective of this pro gradu thesis is to examine how the Fair Tourism Project of the Association of Small-Scale Banana Producers of El Guabo (Asoguabo) has been constructed. This study examines the construction of the project from two different angles: First, how and why Asoguabo has diversified from banana production to tourism; and second, what kind of image has been constructed of the project through marketing, and how have the imageries used in fair trade marketing been adopted in the construction of fair tourism. The theoretical framework for the research consists of the ideas of <i>nueva ruralidad</i>, new rurality, which deal with changes in rural areas.</p> <p>Tourism has changed over the last few decades, and tourists are increasingly looking for real and authentic travel experiences. Simultaneously, tourism has been commodified by emphasising certain features of sustainable development, and especially in the developing world, tourism is often marketed under the brand of alternative, community-based, or ecotourism. As a new concept, fair tourism has joined this wide variety of different brands, and this thesis discusses the project of Asoguabo from the point of view of fair tourism.</p> <p>This thesis is a case study on the Fair Tourism Project of Asoguabo, and it is based on fieldwork of one month in Ecuador in January 2010, as well as on the author's previous experiences from Asoguabo. The data consists of 21 semi-structured qualitative interviews with sixteen informants, most of who were closely related to the Fair Tourism Project. Apart from the interviews, data were collected through participant observation and content analysis of the promotion materials of the project.</p> <p>This thesis shows how the Fair Tourism Project faces a number of challenges before it can achieve its objective of creating additional income for Asoguabo. The research shows how the project mainly benefitted those few members of the association, who work in the project as guides. These guides profit directly from the project by obtaining small additional income, by growing their social capital, and by getting an opportunity to learn through participating in different courses, for example. The results of the research also show how communication problems between the different actors in the project exacerbate the information flow and consequently activities of the Fair Tourism Project. These problems also increase the levels of uncertainty about the project among the farmers of Asoguabo. In addition, the thesis shows that, to some extent, similar imageries are being used in the marketing of the Fair Tourism Project as in the marketing of agricultural fair trade commodities. However there are surprisingly few producers portrayed in the promotion material and pictures of European tourists are often at the centre stage.</p>			
Avainsanat – Nyckelord – Keywords fair tourism fair trade new rurality income diversification authenticity Ecuador			



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<p>Tämän pro gradu-tutkielman tarkoitus on tutkia, miten reilun kaupan banaania tuottavan El Guabon pienten banaaninviljelijöiden järjestön Asoguabon reilun turismin projekti on rakennettu. Projektin muotoutumista tutkitaan tässä työssä kahdesta eri näkökulmasta: siitä, miksi ja miten Asoguabo on monipuolistanut viljelystä turismiin, sekä siitä, millainen kuva projektista on rakennettu markkinoinnin kautta ja miten reilun kaupan mainonnasta tuttuja ilmiöitä on hyödynnetty reilun turismin rakentamisessa. Tutkielman teoreettisena taustana on maaseudun muutoksia tarkasteleva uuden ruraliteetin käsite.</p> <p>Turismi on viime vuosikymmenten aikana muuttunut, ja matkailijat etsivät yhä enemmän aitoja ja autenttisia matkailukokemuksia. Samanaikaisesti turismia on tuoteistettu korostamalla sen tiettyjä, kestävä kehityksen mukaisia piirteitä, ja erityisesti kehittyvissä maissa turismia markkinoidaan usein vaihtoehtoisena, yhteisöpohjaisena tai ekoturismina. Reilu turismi on uutena käsitteenä tullut mukaan tähän laajaan kirjoon, ja tämä tutkielma käsittelee Asoguabon projektia nimenomaan reilun turismin näkökulmasta.</p> <p>Tämä tutkielma on tapaustutkimus Asoguabon turismin projektista, ja pohjautuu kuukauden pituiseen kenttätyöhön Ecuadorissa tammikussa 2010 sekä kirjoittajan aiempiin kokemuksiin Asoguabosta. Aineisto koostuu 21 puoli-strukturoidusta laadullisesta haastattelusta kuudentoista informantin kanssa, joista suurin osa oli hyvin läheisesti tekemisissä projektin kanssa. Tämän lisäksi aineistonkeruussa on käytetty havainnointia sekä projektin markkinointimateriaalien sisällönanalyysejä.</p> <p>Tutkielma osoittaa reilun turismin projektin sisältävän monia haasteita ennen kuin se voi saavuttaa tavoitteensa tuottaa lisätuloja Asoguabon toimintaan. Tutkimushetkellä projekti hyödytti suoraan pääasiassa muutamia järjestön viljelijöitä, lähinnä niitä, jotka toimivat projektissa oppaina. Nämä oppaat hyötyvät projektista saamalla pieniä lisätuloja, kasvattamalla sosiaalista pääomaansa, sekä saamalla mahdollisuuden oppia muun muassa osallistumalla kursseille. Tutkimuksen keskeiset tulokset osoittavat myös, kuinka vuorovaikutus-ongelmat projektin eri toimijoiden välillä vaikeuttavat tiedonkulkua ja täten reilun turismin toimintaa. Nämä ongelmat myös lisäävät epätietoisuutta Asoguabon muiden viljelijöiden parissa. Lisäksi tutkimus osoittaa, kuinka reilun turismin projektin mainonnassa käytetään osittain samoja keinoja kuin reilun kaupan tuotteiden mainonnassa, joskin tuottajia on kuvattu mainosmateriaaleissa yllättävän vähän ja pääosassa ovat usein eurooppalaiset turistit.</p>			
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## Acronyms and abbreviations

AFAD	AgroFair Assistance and Development
Asoguabo	Asociación de Pequeños Productores Bananeros “El Guabo”
CECOCAFEN	La Central de Cooperativas Cafetaleras del Norte
FLO	Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International
FTP	Fair Tourism Project
FTTSA	Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
PROMESA	Programa de Mejoramiento Social y Ambiental
PSOM	Programma Samenwerking Opkomende Markten
SNV	Netherlands Development Organization
UCE	Unidad de Comercio Exterior
UROCAL	La Unión Regional de Organizaciones Campesinas del Litoral



Map 1: Map of Ecuador

## 1. Introduction

In 2006 the Fair Tourism Project was set up in the Asociación de Pequeños Productores Bananeros El Guabo<sup>1</sup>, a fair trade certified small-scale banana producer organization in Southern Ecuador (see map 1). Since 1997 Asoguabo has exported fair trade certified banana to the growing fair trade markets of Europe and the United States, and in October 2010 the organization had around 400 small- and medium-scale banana producers as its associative members. As a successful example of an associative fair trade organization, Asoguabo has since its establishment in 1997 received substantial amount of visitors from around the world. Fair trade advocates, journalists, activists and others related to fair trade in one way or another have been visiting the organization in order to see how fair trade is working in practice and to learn about banana farming. Both Asoguabo producers and employees are accustomed to receiving visitors who have been openly welcomed to get to know about the organization and who have been guided around the banana fields. As more interest was shown towards the association and as the visitor numbers were increasing, the idea of establishing a tourism project that could create some additional income for Asoguabo and its producers was introduced in order to be able to better benefit the association and attend the visitors' needs. Currently the Fair Tourism Project does not only cater for visitors with fair trade background, but for anyone interested about the life at the "banana land".

This thesis is a study about the Fair Tourism Project of Asoguabo. The Fair Tourism Project consists of one main product, the Banana Tour, and several additional tours. In the following analysis I will explore why, how, and by whom the project is being operated, and how the fair trade imageries are used in the promotion of the project. This thesis is based on a case study of the Asoguabo organization and the project, drawing on the fieldwork conducted in Ecuador in early 2010, as well as on the author's previous experiences in working with the producers and employees of Asoguabo.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the thesis I will refer to the association by using the commonly used acronym Asoguabo.

### **1.1. Diverse forms of tourism**

Since the 1980s, new forms of tourism have become increasingly popular as a response to traditional mass tourism. Currently tourism is one of the main industries in the world, and its growth in developing countries exceeds that of the developed countries (Cleverdon & Kalisch 2000, 171). In 2006 Ecuador received close to a million international tourists, and their expenditure represents around 4,4 per cent of the country's gross domestic product, making tourism the third most important source of income after oil and bananas (IADB 2007, 21, 30). However, tourism research has often concentrated only on the negative effects of the industry, especially when the mass tourism is considered. Tourism industry is often seen as unequal to the local people, and while offering them some jobs, tourism rarely allows people to find pathways out of marginalisation and poverty (Reid 2003, 2).

Based on this situation, in recent years there have been increasing interest in developing new forms of tourism, especially small-scale tourism, particularly in many developing countries. Different forms of sustainable tourism have increased in importance, and they have become to be treated under the names of "alternative" or "new tourism" in seeking to distinguish themselves from the mainstream or mass tourism (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 4-5). These include pro-poor tourism, community-based tourism and ecotourism, for instance (ibid., 99). However, these concepts are so broadly used that they can refer to almost any type of tourism. For this reason, several researchers have called the concept of alternative tourism as one of the most widely used and abused phrases in the tourism literature (see for example Brohman 1996, Stronza 2001, Telfer & Sharpely 2008, Mowforth & Munt 2009).

One relatively recent acquisition to the bracket of new tourism is fair tourism, which derives its main ideas from the concept of fair trade. The idea of fair trade in tourism industry was first introduced after the initial success of the fair trade movement in the 1990s, and since then the concept has been used in different contexts, often meaning several different issues for different authors. A clear, widely accepted definition for fair tourism, therefore, is yet to be developed. One way of addressing the concept has been through integrating fair trade principles into tourism, trying to adapt the fair trade standards

used in agricultural commodities into tourism (Cleverdon & Kalisch 2000, Mowforth & Munt 2009). Another way of addressing the question of fair tourism is from a point of view of certifications, both fair trade and other standards (Roe et.al. 2003, Mahony 2007). However, in this research I will consider the notion of fair tourism from a somewhat different angle. First, the focus of this study is on a project that has been named as the Fair Tourism Project largely because of its close relation to fair trade. It does not have any certifications, it has a very vague set of rules, and at a glance the “fair” in the project seems to be somewhat ambiguous term used because of the certification Asoguabo has for its bananas. Second, Asoguabo is a fair trade certified organization that has often been cited as an excellent example of a fair trade producer association (Melo & Wolf 2007, Salinas & Matamoros 2007, Ruben et.al. 2008). By introducing the Fair Tourism Project it has included tourism as one of its activities and is thus trying to offer new forms of income to its producers by diversifying to tourism.

Relatively little has been written about tourism in fair trade certified producer associations, and even then it has only been mentioned as a possibility to diversify from agriculture (Utting-Chamorro 2005, Smith 2009). Another way of linking fair trade with tourism is through the idea of unveiling of commodity fetishism. Fair trade products are marketed and promoted in a way in which the daily life of a Southern small-scale producer is represented in a romantic tropical setting, showing the customer where the products they buy are being produced (Goodman 2004, Wright 2004). This type of promotion has been used both in fair trade commodity products (Bryant & Goodman 2004, Varul 2008) and in fair tourism initiatives (Cravatte & Chabloz 2008). Tourists are invited to visit a site offering an experience where they can meet “real people in real places producing real things” (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 71).

Tourism can play a certain role in diversifying rural incomes, although its contribution in the entire portfolio of incomes of the rural households often remains low (Ellis 2000, Sharpley 2002). In the analysis of the Fair Tourism Project as an option for diversifying the producers' incomes I will use the ideas of *nueva ruralidad*. It is a concept deriving from the idea that because of notable changes in the rural areas, these areas have shifted from merely agrarian societies to more diversified rural societies which include a variety of other

commercial activities along with agriculture (Cartón de Grammont 2008, 23-24). The new vision of the rurality does not examine the issue as a simple change from backward to modern, from rural to urban, from agriculture to industry, but there are characteristics that show the multi-directionality of the process (Pérez 2001, 22). This new vision springs from reassessment of the rural, trying to give more emphasis on rural sector in designing the development programmes (ibid., 19). As Miller (2009: 5) notes, much of the research carried out by European or North American scholars on Latin America participates in debates that only address to a wider English-speaking audience, paying no attention to local, Latin American scholarship. Miller believes that this kind of approach easily “ignores the work of vibrant social science communities in Latin America that have gained in strength since the 1960s” (Miller 2009, 5). Therefore, as the debate and research on *nueva ruralidad* has been active and vivid especially in Latin America, I consider it as an interesting and highly relevant addition to be taken into account when studying rural tourism in Latin America.

## **1.2. Purpose of study and research problem**

Even though academic research on fair trade has been rich during the last decade, research on tourism in fair trade certified organizations is still a relatively new object of study. In this thesis I aim to explore the concept of fair tourism in this context. I will use the Fair Tourism Project of Asoguabo as a case study, trying to conceptualize the issues lying behind on how it is established, and to understand the ways in which it is constructed and how it works.

This study thus has the following three objectives: (i) to assess the emergence of fair tourism in Asoguabo and to examine how the project has been organized and constructed; (ii) to analyse the opportunities the Fair Tourism Project might offer in order to diversify rural incomes; and (iii) to explore the ways in which authenticity and imagery is being constructed in the promotion of the Fair Tourism Project.

The main question of this research thus is: *How has fair tourism been constructed in the context of the Fair Tourism Project of Asoguabo?* In this context construction refers first to the actual establishment of the project: Why has Asoguabo chosen to diversify its activities to include tourism, and how has this process been organized. Reasons for diversification to tourism and its possibilities will be examined, as well as the benefits and constraints it has brought to Asoguabo, its member producers, and the producer-guides of the Fair Tourism Project. I will concentrate my analysis especially on the producer-guides, who are the group that is the most involved in the project. How did they become guides, what were their motives to participate, and how do they benefit from participating in tourism are among the questions which will be answered.

Second, I will analyse *the construction of the Fair Tourism Project through the creation of imagery and the impressions of authenticity*. The Fair Tourism Project strives to offer tourists a unique experience showing how Ecuadorian small-scale producers live their everyday lives. In this thesis, I will analyse what kind of images FTP<sup>2</sup> tries to construct, and how these images are marketed towards potential customers. This process has strong connotations to symbolic connections that are supposedly created between Southern producers and Northern customers in fair trade networks. These links with tourism will be carefully examined throughout the analysis.

### **1.3. Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is structured in the following way: Chapter two introduces the analytical framework used in this study, further clarifying the different relevant concepts that I will be using in the thesis. The principles of fair trade and the discussions surrounding the commodification of fair trade, especially in its marketing will be discussed, before moving on to alternative tourism and the definition of fair tourism and the imagery used to romanticise fair tourism. Chapter two ends with a review of *nueva ruralidad* and its usefulness in the analysis of rural tourism. In chapter three I will explain how the research

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<sup>2</sup> FTP is an abbreviation of the Fair Tourism Project, and will be used alongside the complete name throughout the thesis.

was conducted, the methods that were used and why I chose to opt for the methods that I carried out. Some ethical issues will also be raised, and I will critically address the question of conducting research in an organization where I had been working before, and the question of values particularly when studying a fair trade organization. In chapter four I will provide a contextual background for this thesis. I will introduce the social context, and explore the main economic activity of the region, namely the banana production in more detail. Asoguabo's history, organization and producers will also be addressed, as well as the importance of fair trade to Asoguabo.

In chapters five, six and seven I will move on to discuss about the Fair Tourism Project itself. The empirical data collected from Ecuador will be analysed in these chapters. In chapter five I will briefly introduce tourism in the province of El Oro, before moving on to discussion on the Fair Tourism Project. I will provide an ethnographical snapshot on what is included in the Fair Tourism Project, and then discuss the historical roots of the project and the different actors involved in it. In chapter six I will take a closer look at the Fair Tourism Project as a diversifying strategy and my analysis will be focused on participation and benefits derived from the project. Then, in chapter seven I will shift the analysis the imagery of tourism. The Fair Tourism Project's promotion material will be analysed, followed by a careful examination of authenticity in the project. Finally, chapter eight will conclude the thesis and offer some recommendations for future research.

## **2. Fair trade, fair tourism and changing ruralities in Latin America**

### **2.1. Principles and impacts of fair trade**

Fair trade movement has its origins in the 1960s Third World solidarity movement, and in the last two decades it has grown substantially to become a response to negative impacts of

globalization (Fridell 2003, 1). Fair trade markets are now controlled by Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO), which has certified over 700 producer organizations in 58 countries, and which claims to represent over one million farmers and workers in the developing world.<sup>3</sup> Fair trade is based on a partnership between producers and consumers, and it aims to empower Southern small producers by paying a fair price and strengthening the producer organizations.<sup>4</sup> In this partnership the idea is to build more direct links between producers and consumers in a way which would benefit the producers and to break down the alienation of consumers from the products they purchase (Murray et.al. 2006, 180). The direct beneficiaries of fair trade are supposed to be the participating small producers and their families, and in order to advance their interests they have to be organized in cooperatives (FLO 2009, 6). The aimed benefits of fair trade for producers include access to markets, stable prices with long-term contracts, empowerment of farmers as well as farm workers, and a payment of a fair trade premium to the organizations for investing in social or environmental development projects.<sup>5</sup> Apart from these visible benefits that fair trade aims to offer, it also aims at providing the producers with less visible benefits, such as improvement in product quality and creation of different networks. In addition it intends to extend these benefits further from the producer: to extended families, communities and producer organizations (Murray et.al. 2006, 6, 7).

Goodman (2004) is on the same lines arguing that for the producers, the benefits of participation in fair trade extend beyond those of improved landscapes and communities, in that “these benefits manifest through the economic structures of fair trade, but also through professional development provided to growers by other network participants: an increased knowledge of international markets, technical production, and quality control assistance, and organizational help to expand bargaining power” (Goodman 2004, 897-898). Thus, fair trade is claimed to be contributing to the capacity to improve and diversify livelihoods in a wider sense and not only on a producer level (Smith 2009, 468). One way of achieving this is through diversification of incomes, and Smith (2009) illustrates various examples of diversification of the FLO-certified producer organizations. Producers have diversified their sources of income for instance by buying processing machines, diversifying to and

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.fairtrade.net/facts\\_and\\_figures.html](http://www.fairtrade.net/facts_and_figures.html), visited 27/5/2010

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.fairtrade.net/what\\_is\\_fairtrade.html](http://www.fairtrade.net/what_is_fairtrade.html), visited 27/5/2010

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.fairtrade.net/benefits\\_of\\_fairtrade.html](http://www.fairtrade.net/benefits_of_fairtrade.html), visited 19/10/2010

marketing other (agricultural) produce, moving to organic production, investing in ecotourism projects, and by expanding their livelihoods to non-farm sector, for instance to crafts production (Smith 2009, 469-470).

Fair trade is said to be “a hybrid of a social movement and alternative market structure” (Jaffee 2007, 1), and working “within and against the market” (Fridell 2003, 3). Both of these statements illustrate the special position fair trade has in the world markets – it is special because it connects the Northern customer with the Southern producer in a solidarity relationship, while trying to compete in a capitalist market challenging many of the market’s principles. Partly because of this contradiction there exist numerous critics against fair trade. Much of this critique concentrates on the economic benefits, and on the question on fair trade’s capability to actually alleviate poverty (Jaffee 2007, Smith 2009). While fair trade is capable of improving the situation of some producers, it does not always take participants out of poverty, nor can everyone who wants participate in fair trade (Jaffee 2007, 8). Murray et.al. (2003) list additional possible negative sides of fair trade, including market’s slow growth, producers’ lack of knowledge on the fair trade system, and lack of productive diversification and expansion opportunities (Murray et.al. 2003, 15, 16, 18, 25). Furthermore, Bacon (2010, 142) calls for increased democracy in the FLO’s decision-making system, and sees that small-scale farmers’ organizations and other stakeholders such as labour unions are currently underrepresented in the FLO board. Therefore, fair trade standards do not adequately support the producers, as they “provide no guarantee that adequate benefits reach local communities” (Lyon 2006, 460). Further participation is required in order for fair trade to be able to guarantee farmers a sufficient pay for their produce, so that fair trade can continue to represent itself as an “important force for positive change in the world today” (Fridell 2003, 7).

## **2.2. Commodity fetishism in fair trade**

One of fair trade’s special aspects is that, as noted above, it aims to create solidarity links and relationships between the consumers in the North and the producers in the South. One form of creating these links is by forming a border-crossing “new moral economy”, that

“confronts the logic of the market by promoting a ‘critical consumer culture’ which challenges the individualistic, competitive and ethically impoverished culture of capitalism” (Fridell 2003, 4). This is achieved through informing consumers about the social effects of fair trade, including working conditions, and thus forging greater links between the consumer and the producer (ibid., 5). Thus, every fair trade certified product is said to connect the two places, the place of production and the place of consumption, in a novel economy of semiology (Goodman 2004, 893).

Commodity fetishism is a concept created by Marx, and refers to “a phenomenon in which participants in commodity production and exchange experience and come to understand their social relations as relations between the products of their labour – relations between things, rather than relations between people” (Hudson & Hudson 2003, 413). Alternative trade, like fair trade, attempts to lift this fetishism, thus revealing and making visible the social relations that underline production and exchange, and “to make relations of production – in terms of labour and its impact on nature – a visible part of the commodity” (ibid., 413-414). In the case of fair trade, advertising is one way of trying to undermine commodity fetishism by bringing the producer closer to the consumer – instead of only creating a relationship between the consumer and the product, fair trade advertising aims to create a relationship between the consumer and the producer as well (Wright 2004, 671). Thus, this could be seen as a contrast to the traditional view on commodity fetishism in which “the complex exploitative social and economic relationships that lie behind the commodities” are being veiled (Goodman 2004, 902). Fair trade networks intend to make the connections between the producer and the consumer to look as if they were “made *visible*, and thus made *real* for consumers” (ibid., 903, emphasis as in original).

In the case of fair trade, therefore, the traditional capitalist commodity culture is being challenged, and is replaced by a solidarity seeking commodity culture “in order to emphasise the distinctive focus on social justice through fair labour and exchange practices” (Bryant & Goodman 2004, 344). According to Goodman (2004: 898), fair trade is commodified through two inseparable and interrelated production moments: the moment of the actual socio-ecological production where the product is actually produced in the Southern peasant communities, and the moment of discursive or semiotic production,

where the socio-economic conditions are created through information on the production process. All the images and texts that accompany fair trade commodities are carefully designed to construct a certain type of image about the producers and the landscapes they live in. Since the early days of fair trade markets, they have “been surrounded by a set of narratives, notably articulated by NGOs that emphasize issues of social justice linked to fair labour conditions” (Bryant & Goodman 2004, 357). Wright (2004, 671) argues that while these narratives offer “the consumer the romance of a full and transparent relationship with the producer”, they are “in fact necessarily partial, a caricature even”.

In advertising fair trade products this romanticised imagery is being commonly used, as fair trade products seem to have a natural tendency to invite romantic daydreams (Varul 2008, 661). Because the consumer and the producer “rarely, if ever, enjoy actual proximate interaction” (Lyon 2006, 458), the imagined relationship between the two is established by the advert and is “visual, virtual, and entirely one-way” (Wright 2004, 671). Thus, the fair trade marketing and advertising is creating an imagined and romanticised picture of “‘fecund’, tropical natures and hard-working Southern producers” (Bryant & Goodman 2004, 348). As Varul (2008, 659) puts it, “people consume images as much as material products”. This leads to a situation where consumer sees the advertisement as an authentic representation of a simple, benevolent peasant in a distant, tropical land, which, of course, it is not (ibid., 661). This is what Goodman (2004, 902) calls re-working of commodity fetish: “operationalization of this re-working is at once the removal of the commodity veil, but also a replacing of the fetish in the images of indigenous producers, tropes of productive tropical nature, and meanings of alternative development”. Hence, as one fetish is removed to reveal the production process, a new commodity fetish is created in the form of images and narratives of the producers as a “‘spectacle’ for Northern consumers” (Bryant & Goodman 2004, 359).

### **2.3. From mass tourism to new forms of tourism**

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the ideas of alternative development and consecutively alternative tourism began to emerge as a response to the somewhat

negative ideas about the impacts of mass tourism to the developing world (de Kadt 1990). Mass tourism was seen as an industry that created enclaves to the developing countries, where foreign-owned, large-scale compounds reduced tourism's potential for generating broadly based growth, as well as the net financial advantages to the developing economies (Brohman 1996, 54-55). By the early 1990s mass tourism had already become a big industry in the developing countries, but as it did not always bring the best returns and had significant negative social impacts on local communities, there was a growing need for tourism that mitigates these problems (Scheyvens 2002, 11). This need was further emphasised as mass tourism was seen as providing only few opportunities for local people to make money from tourists, who remained within the enclaves behind the walls of the resorts (Telfer & Sharpley 2008, 77).

The main points in alternative tourism are its quest for environmental and cultural sustainability, support for small-scale tourism developments that are organised by the locals in a way which allows both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction, and attempts to generate benefits for local communities (de Kadt 1990, 4-5, Stronza 2001, 274). Thus, when comparing conventional mass tourism with alternative and new forms of tourism, we can see that the main differences lay in the use of "sustainability" in the definitions – new forms of tourism place emphasis on development, claiming to take into account environmental, economic and socio-cultural impacts of tourism, and aiming at empowering the local people (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 98). While the traditional conventional mass tourism is often simplified as being all about "sun, sea, sand and sex", uncontrolled, short-term tourism for large, loud groups on a packaged holiday, new tourism is considered as an alternative to this, by presenting itself as being more flexible for smaller groups who want to experience the real local lifestyle with more time in their hands (Telfer & Sharpley 2008, 39-40, Mowforth & Munt 2009, 26).

Different types of the so-called new tourism include, for instance, ecotourism, sustainable tourism, community-based tourism, pro-poor tourism, and fair tourism (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 99). Although many of these types of tourism often overlap and share many values and principles between one another, they are often more specific in their means and goals. While ecotourism, for example, is mainly concentrated on environmental sustainability, it

might also aim at bringing benefits to local host communities. Similarly, while community-based tourism seeks to increase people's involvement and ownership of tourism at the destination end, it aims to do so by culturally and environmentally sustainable means (ibid.). Smith (2001) defines sustainability in tourism through three main goals. First, sustainable tourism should seek to "protect the physical environment and biodiversity to ensure human survival"; second, "maintain cultural heritage and ethnic diversity in support of multiculturalism in a plural society"; and finally, "sustain the continued prosperity of the world's largest industry on which many national and local economies now depend" (Smith 2001, 190).

Ecotourism is probably the most widely known form of new tourism. Ecotourism is nature-based tourism, which should include environmental education and should be sustainably managed (Scheyvens 2002, 70). Ecotourism has not, however, always been very successful in fulfilling its aims. One of the biggest problems in ecotourism is that its benefits are often concentrated on certain areas or groups of people, and it does not spread the benefits equally (Walsh 2005, 657). Furthermore, although ecotourism seems to have relatively low impact on ecosystems, it may spoil natural areas if it is unregulated and unmonitored (Stronza 2001, 275). Walsh (2005, 657) argues that there is actually only little evidence that ecotourism has stopped the destruction of biodiversity in protected areas. There has also been discussion on whether ecotourism is really an alternative or just "a guise for business as usual" (Stronza 2001, 275), a form of greenwashing.

Whereas ecotourism places environmental sustainability at its core, other new forms of tourism, such as pro-poor or community-based tourism shift the focus on the local people and the "community". The ambiguous term "community" has been used in many different tourism initiatives, and the role of the community participation in tourism has often been at the core of the debate (see for example Scheyvens 2002, Reid 2003, Simpson 2008). However, communities are often presented as something of uniform, homogeneous groups of people who are in similar positions toward tourism development. Community-based tourism projects often aim at increasing income and employment levels of the local people and through developing new skills empower the locals (Reid 2003, 9-10). Community participation is often at the centre of the debate, and it is often seen as a way to enhance

local people's capacity to have an effect on their livelihoods through sustainable means (Choi & Sirakaya 2006, Simpson 2008).

Another form of new tourism, pro-poor tourism identifies its subjects, the poor, who should be the beneficiaries of this type of tourism. Pro-poor tourism is not a specific product or sector of tourism, but rather aims at generating economic, social, environmental or cultural net benefits for the poor (Ashley et.al. 2001, 2). Although overlapping with them, pro-poor tourism differs from other types of new tourism, like community-based or ecotourism. For pro-poor tourism, the poor are always at the centre of analysis, and environmental protection, for example, is only a part of the picture. Also, rather than aiming to expand the size of the sector, pro-poor tourism strategies aim to unlock opportunities for the poor (ibid.). Whether pro-poor tourism has been successful in eliminating poverty is arguable, but while there are likely to be small, local effects, tourism advocates sometimes present wildly exaggerated claims that tourism is an answer to addressing development and tackling poverty in the global South (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 348). All these new types of tourism claim to offer the tourists something different from the traditional mass tourism, which, according to Lash & Urry (1994, 274), is part of a broader change towards "post-Fordist" consumption patterns. They back up their argument by the changing patterns of tourists' behaviour and attitudes, and by criticism of certain environmental effects of mass tourism (ibid., 274- 275). Whereas before, in the "old Fordist" tourism, packaged mass tourism to the beach for sun, sea, sand and sex was seen as a main form of tourism, now, in the post-Fordist system "real", flexible and individual travel is important (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 26). However, the question remains whether this new tourism is in fact any more sustainable than the "old" one.

#### **2.4. Towards a definition of fair tourism**

Fair tourism aims at filling this space by introducing one more tourism label among the new tourism's sphere. Fair tourism shares many characteristics with other forms of new tourism, and its uniqueness lie in basing many of its ideas with the standards of fair trade. An organization of French travel associations, ATES, defines the concept of fair tourism as

various forms of alternative tourism in which man, the encounter and sustainable development constitute the core and the main goal of the journey. Involvement of the locals, respect of the individuals, of their culture and of the nature as well as the fair repartition of the incomes is the basis of this type of tourism (an extract from ATEs' official statute, cited in Cravatte & Chabloz 2008, 232).

This definition of fair tourism reveals some of the main thoughts and metaphors concerning fair tourism. The local people and the encounter between the tourist and the locals have been put in to the core of this type of tourism. There are also resemblances to fair trade's principles, like those of involvement of the locals and the fair repartition of the incomes. Although there exists a number of tourism initiatives that include a label or a certification, there is not an international quality certification for fair tourism, and for instance the Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International is currently "not involved into tourism"<sup>6</sup>. Initially the fair trade standards and criteria were developed for agricultural commodities, and although many of the criteria are relevant to tourism, Cleverdon & Kalisch (2000) also point out several differences between commodity and tourism markets. These include, for instance, invisibility of tourism compared to commodities, and its dependence on low prices in the market (Cleverdon & Kalisch 2000, 175, 176). Most important difference between the two is, however, the fact that while commodities are transported out of the community, tourism brings the consumer to the village. Unlike in commodities, this way the consumer can see the benefits of their contribution themselves, and see whether the fair trade standards are actually being implemented accordingly (ibid., 178). However, it is up to the tourism providers to decide what is being shown to tourists, and therefore the consumer can only see strictly defined spheres of the local people's lives. Thus it is unlikely that a short-time visitor can actually make any well-developed judgements on whether or not fair trade is beneficial to the locals. Apart from tourism itself, there are further elements of tourism-related activities that provide an opportunity for use of fair trade, such as handicrafts production and sale (Mowforth et.al. 2008, 45).

As in fair trade in commodities, fair trade in tourism can be, in its simplest sense, understood as a way to provide the Southern people an opportunity for fair income through solidarity networks with Northern consumers. Even though there has been a number of initiatives that have some resonance of fairly traded tourism, Mowforth et. al. (2008, 44)

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<sup>6</sup> Schmid 2009.

argue that fair trade has been most effective in poverty reduction with simple and tangible commodities such as coffee or chocolate. However, here the authors seem to have underestimated the complexity of some fair trade products, as for example coffee's production process includes a wide array of steps by diverse actors, such as the producers, the grower cooperatives, intermediaries, roasters, exporters, importers, distributors and retail stores or cafés (Jaffee 2007, 49). Even calling an unprocessed fruit such as banana a "simple commodity" would be questionable: although the fruit itself is not highly processed, the whole supply chain from, for instance, an Ecuadorian small farm to Northern European supermarkets includes numerous phases with a variety of actors in several countries.

Ten years ago, Cleverdon & Kalisch (2000) published one of the first articles that dealt with fair trade in tourism, trying to clarify the concept and consider what it was and what it could be, as there was a lack of research on fair trade in services and even more in fair trade in hospitality sector. It is still one of the few pieces published trying to understand the concept of fair tourism in a wider sense. Cleverdon & Kalisch (2000, 172) see the contemporary mainstream tourism as "a part of the existing trade system built on classic liberal economy theory of 'comparative advantage', the 'trickle down effect' and modernization". To them, in fair trade tourism it is the South and the Southern producers who need to play a determinant role, and Cleverdon & Kalisch identify various pre-requisites that a project aiming at fairness needs to fulfil. These include access to capital, ownership of the project, equal distribution of the benefits, transparency of trading operations, and representation of destinations in North (ibid., 178). Importantly, "one of the determinant factors in the quality of the tourism product should be the economic well-being of the host communities", which in this case refers to the local people within the area of influence of a tourism project (ibid., 181).

Evans & Cleverdon (2000, cited in Scheyvens 2002, 201) have approached fair tourism through a dual approach, which clarifies the roles between the Northern consumers and tour operators, and the Southern host-producers and local operators. According to them, in the North the fair tourism products are targeted mainly to the more aware, or "alternative" customers, and thus, like fair trade commodities, create a niche market for the product. Fair

tourism also requires fair trade branding by guaranteeing something (for example local participation or fair income distribution), as well as promotion in the media. Evans & Cleverdon (ibid.) further argue that the fair tourism products also need to be adopted by an association in the North. In the South, on the other hand, tourism product is supposed to bring about local economic development, and in order to achieve this, fair trade relationships with tour operators are required. Also, those responsible of the product should have good relationships with different stakeholders, and good promotion and marketing strategies as well as training opportunities (ibid.). Furthermore, Cleverdon & Kalisch (2000) argue that fair trade in tourism should include measurable targets as indicators for product's success and fairness. These include the creation of social, cultural, and economic benefits for host communities, respecting the national laws that address sustainability, developing better consultation cultures both between the North and the destination as well as within the community, transparency in trading operations, ecological sustainability, and respect for human rights (Cleverdon & Kalisch 2000, 183).

## **2.5. Fair tourism in practice**

As fair tourism is a somewhat ambiguous concept, earlier studies on the topic study it from different points of view. Tourism in fair trade certified farms has been scantily studied, but there are several investigations that address the notions of fairness in tourism from varying angles (Goodwin & Roe 2001, Mvula 2001, Utting-Chamorro 2005, Mahony 2007, Varul 2008, Cravatte & Chabloz 2008).

In their article, Goodwin & Roe (2001) link tourism with nature conservation in Zimbabwe's wildlife national parks. They understand fairness in tourism as a way for local people to diversify their livelihoods by participating in tourism and the creation of linkages between tourists and the local people. In this case, most locals who participate in tourism do so by selling handicrafts to tourists. Main problem in this has been the existence of an enclave system, which denies local artisans' access inside national parks, and most of the selling takes place in roadside stalls by the roads leading to the parks (Goodwin & Roe 2001, 386). As tourists spend most of their time inside the parks, creating links has also

been challenging, even though tourists are encouraged to buy from local markets and craftworkers – Goodwin & Roe suggest that hotel owners and national park managers could further promote the work of the locals in promoting the crafts, ensuring that their stores are stocked with local produce, and by letting crafts artists to enter the enclave and sell there (*ibid.*). Apart from working with crafts, local people have been employed in construction, and there has been pressure to employ and train more local people so that they could fill more skilled posts in the future (*ibid.*, 389).

Mvula's (2001) article also deals with tourism in national parks in Africa, this time in Zambia. Somewhat different from Goodwin & Roe's example, in Zambia's case there is no enclave system, but a community-based tourism project where an important sum of entrance fees and tourists' consumption go towards park protection and community development (Mvula 2001, 397). Furthermore, communities may also decide what the money is used for, and even though the standards of living have not remarkably improved, local people have benefited from tourism through jobs, publicity to the area and increased environmental awareness within the community (*ibid.*, 398-399). However, the project also has its problems. Although some local people work in tourism, most of the managerial positions are for white people, and the locals are not much involved in developing or managing tourism. Also, those who do participate, are mostly men and relatively educated (*ibid.*, 399, 403, 404). Many more would participate if given an opportunity, and locals are especially interested in providing tours around villages, meals, telling stories and sharing cultures and traditions, for instance (*ibid.*, 403). In addition Mvula finds out that the encounters between the local people and tourists are often short and superficial, not "genuine" cultural exchanges as intended (*ibid.*, 399).

Although FLO does not have a fair trade label for tourism, there are other initiatives that have created standards for fair and other types of tourism, and also give certifications to for example operators, hotels and airlines who show their commitment with the criteria (see Spenceley 2005, Roe et.al. 2003). Many of the tourism certifications traditionally concentrate on environmental or quality issues, but lately there has been a growing number of certifications that address social and developmental issues, one of them being the Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa initiative, FTTSA (Mahony 2007, 393). Mahony notes that

there are a number of problems and challenges for tourism certifications, the most important ones including people's low awareness of the existence of certifications, slow uptake of certifications by providers, proliferation of different labels and their confusing definitions, and debate about whether these certificates actually make tourism any more sustainable (ibid., 395-396). FTTSA is run by an independent conservation organization, and it offers certifications to providers who fulfil FTTSA's six central principles: fair share of the income, democracy in participation, respect for human rights, culture and environment, reliability ensuring quality and safety, transparency in all actions, and sustainability (Spenceley 2005, 3-4). FTTSA focuses on social and developmental aspects of tourism development by educating the people involved in the tourism industry and raising awareness of fair trade in tourism, and by certifying tourism establishments that fulfil the six principles and contribute positively to South Africa's socioeconomic transformation (Mahony 2007, 400). However, there have been some concerns on the certification's real effect on poverty reduction, but at least it fulfils its paper as having an advocacy role in making country's tourism industry increasingly aware of fair trade in tourism, and industry's possibilities for poverty alleviation (ibid., 402).

Finally, there are some examples on tourism that does actually involve fair trade certified producer organizations (Utting-Chamorro 2005, Varul 2008). Traidcraft, a UK-based Christian charity and fair trade organization, run their own Meet the People Tours travel business to Kenya that offers "small groups of people a unique and authentic insight into a country's people and culture" (Traidcraft 2007 cited in Varul 2008, 668). On these tours tourists can both see whether the fair trade standards actually work among the communities they visit, and at the same time they "offer an opportunity to create further revenues to enhance producers' livelihoods" (Varul 2008, 669). However, Varul criticises these tours in that they simultaneously offer a quasi-colonial experience in which an inspection of the workshops and plantations is combined with traditional leisurely tourist activities (ibid.). As Varul (2008, 669) concludes, the producers "have nothing to sell but their authenticity". Whereas in this case it is an external organization arranging the visits, a Nicaraguan fair trade coffee organization CECOCAFEN have used fair trade premium money to plan an ecotourism project in two communities in its area of influence, aiming to "create an environmental conservation culture, provide services for tourists, and to build hostels"

(Utting-Chamorro 2005, 594). The organization encourages its members to generate more income through diversification, by helping farmers develop new skills, and increasing access to international markets by promoting its activities (ibid., 596). In addition, this ecotourism project is being seen as a way to prevent problematic out-migration from the villages, and this is why young people especially have been trained to work as tourist guides which includes learning English (ibid., 597).

## **2.6. Authenticity in and commodification of tourism**

Especially in fair tourism, where the encounter between the local people and tourists is at the core, the notions of authenticity are important. Dean MacCannell (1976, 96) writes about authenticity of tourism experiences, and argues that touristic settings are divided into “front” and “back” regions, in which the front is a meeting place for hosts and their guests, and back is the “real life” setting, where the locals spend time before and after the touristic “performance”. According to MacCannell, tourists desire to share the real life with the locals, or “at least to see that life as it is really lived” (1976, 96). Tourists wish to go off the beaten path, and guided tours often offer easy access to areas that are normally closed to the outsiders. However, what is often being shown to the tourist is “a staged back region, a kind of a living museum” (1976, 99). Furthermore, it might be the case that “tourists ... define for themselves what is authentic, relying on popular stereotypes as points of reference rather than on historical or ethnographical facts” (Stronza 2001, 271). Partly due to this it is generally difficult to draw a line between real and staged authenticity, and as MacCannell argues, “settings are often not merely copies ... of real-life situations but copies that are presented as disclosing more about the real thing than the real thing itself discloses” (MacCannell 1976, 102).

In a more recent contribution, Hughes (1995) sees authenticity as something that has been “produced by a variety of entrepreneurs, marketing agents, interpretative guides, animators, institutional mediators, and the like”, thus considering it as something that has not been naturally given but rather constructed (Hughes 1995, 781). Although different tourists have different motivations for seeking the “authentic” cultures, “the laments of the fake” show

that people share accelerated need to experience real, or at least what they consider real, cultures through travelling (Telfer & Sharpley 2008, 108, Mowforth & Munt 2009, 76). Thus, authenticity must be understood in a broader frame, and not only consider it as if searching for authentic cultures. As Mowforth & Munt (2009, 76) conclude, “authenticity ... is not just about ‘real’ tribes in Thailand, Kenya or Bolivia; it is about the ability to witness and consume ‘real’ lives too, and this includes poverty, civil struggle, and so on”. This point of view of authenticity is of special interest for this work.

When local people invite tourists to see their daily lives, they become commodified in a sense that some aspects of the culture are “evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value, in a context of trade, thereby becoming goods” (Cohen 1988 cited in Stronza 2001, 270). This way the locals put up a performance, which is no longer “authentic” as such, but works as a selling point to tourists, thus “[trying] consciously ... to match visitors’ expectations of what is authentic, even if the results seem contrived fake” (Stronza 2001, 271).

Like in the case of fair trade, also in tourism “the industry uses images and descriptions of destinations that tend to mystify and romanticise by playing on the consumers’ dreams and fantasies” (Cleverdon & Kalisch 2000, 180). This has had an effect of “turning Third World places, landscapes and people into commodities”, meaning that the consumption of these elements of a holiday is similar to the consumption of other objects or commodities (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 63). In many ways, travelling acts like any other commodity in expressing what we are, what we consider our status to be, what we believe in, and so on (ibid., 70). King & Stewart (1996, 295) argue that travel opportunities have become “packaged experiences that are sold as commodities to a consuming culture”. Therefore, we increasingly seek to travel to places that might be classified as “*real* or *authentic* ... promising *real* as opposed to *tourist* experiences” (MacCannell 2001, 382, emphasis as in original).

If it is authenticity that tourists are seeking for, Cravatte & Chabloz (2008, 233) argue that fair tourism would then be a good option, as it involves an encounter between the tourist and the producer. In fair tourism the possibility to see the “real daily life of the people being

visited” is one of the main attractions, but in order to show this “reality” to a tourist, this life is often represented as an isolated, rural life, systematically leaving out elements too obviously connected to modernity (ibid., 233, 235). Here we can see similarities to the idea of re-working the fetishism discussed above: in order to show the real life of the producer to the tourist, this “reality” must be made visible and modelled – unlike fair trade commodities, face-to-face meetings with the producer may actually undermine the image fabricated by the tourist on fair trade, and this way debilitate their position (ibid., 233). Like MacCannell (2001, 382) puts it, “even in the most exotic destinations, the itinerary has been worked out in advance, and the local arrangements, however crude they may be, have been made by the tour operators”.

Although fair tourism may market itself as a provider of the encounter between the agricultural producer and tourist, other forms of tourism also involve encounters with the local people. Especially in mass tourism, most of the time the “others” that tourists meet in tourist settings are other tourists and locals who work in the tourism industry with the objective of serving the tourists (MacCannell 2001, 383). Thus, mass tourists mainly meet local people who are working for the tourist, and this is, according to Mowforth & Munt (2009, 71), the reason for new tourism’s appeal: “to meet real people in real places producing real things”. This way the “authentic frontier” is pushed further away, as tourists are continuously searching for new “authentic” places to replace those already “spoiled” by other tourists. However, as it is mainly the image that is consumed in travelling (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 71), and as every tourist travels to the destination wanting to see it as a picture-perfect image of itself (MacCannell 2001, 383), it is more how the destination is presented rather than the “real authenticity” that matters. Thus the images of tourist destinations presented in the brochures, for instance, tell more about how the destination is wanted to be shown to the potential visitors than about the destination itself.

Tourism industry often uses colonial imagery in marketing the destinations in the developing countries in order to sell a particular brand of fantasy (Echtner & Prasad 2003, 661). This fantasy shows the destination country in a certain light, making reference to the historical context and highlighting the asymmetric nature of the industry relationships between the North and the South (ibid., 662). Destinations aim to market themselves as

“having distinction, an *identity*” (MacCannell 2001, 384, emphasis as in original). This distinction often derives from locality, from what is symbolic to the culture, and therefore creates certain expectations, even stereotypes. Tourism industry’s use of imagery and romanticised descriptions might lead to a “distorted and unrealistic impression of the country. In many cases, stereotypes, racism, sexism and colonial behaviour structures are reinforced” (Cleverdon & Kalisch 2000, 180). Echtner & Prasad (2003, 663, 665, 675) found out that for example Ecuador is shown in tourism brochures as a frontier country with great natural attractions that mainly attracts foreign visitors who see themselves as adventurous explorers in natural, untouched and pristine atmosphere. Interestingly, the brochures did not show any pictures of peasants or relic places that are so common for some other tropical destinations, including other Andean countries (Echtner & Prasad 2003, 675). Tourism marketing intends to show potential visitors the country in a way they would probably like to see it, and like in fair trade marketing, also here the idea is to show that they offer tourist a real “spectacle” (Bryant & Goodman 2004, 359).

## **2.7. Rural development and *nueva ruralidad***

The discussion of fair tourism in Southern ruralities is closely linked to the recent approaches of *nueva ruralidad*. Its ideas on rural income diversification and revaluing of rural spaces constitute among the most important themes for this study, as tourism can be seen as one form of diversification for rural households. Although *nueva ruralidad* is a Latin American concept, it does not differ greatly from the European discussion on the changing nature of rural livelihoods and the multifunctional character of rural households.

A need to study rural livelihoods from wider perspective than just agricultural is an issue that has been increasingly relevant to rural studies since the 1990s. In Europe, the undervaluing of rural areas started with the rapid modernization and urbanization after the Second World War, and from the 1950s onwards “the territory of the rural could be portrayed as an isolated backwater, left behind by its urban counterpart” (Cloke 1997, 368). Study of rural areas was left in a somewhat marginal position within the European social sciences as it needed catch up with the faster-moving urban elements (ibid.). Interestingly,

Kay (2008, 915) notes that the rural and agrarian development debate was indeed vivid and active in Latin America and elsewhere in the developing world in the 1960s and 1970s; thus this undervaluing of the rural could be considered more a European phenomena. In Latin America the debate started rather to dry up in the last two decades of the twentieth century with the Washington Consensus, as rural reality was no longer what it used to be (ibid.). As in Europe in the 1990s, also in Latin America in the early 2000s there emerged a new form of thinking on rural realities as a consequence of restructuring of rural economies. This is what Cloke (1997) calls a “cultural turn”, where “signs and significations of rurality have been freed from their referential moorings in geographical spaces ... and the myths and symbols of rurality are recognized to pervade wider social spaces” (Cloke 1997, 368).

In traditional Latin American rural studies there has been one theme above others throughout the twentieth century: the agrarian question and the peasants’ role. However, to merely talk about agrarian question leaves out large portions of rural societies, and “one now has to talk of the rural question, and given the depth of urban-rural articulation, the territorial question” (Bebbington et.al. 2008, 2875). This means that whereas before rural and urban issues have been dealt with distinctively, there is no more ground for this as the division between rural and urban areas is blurring. Kay (2008, 926) writes about urbanization of rural areas and ruralisation of urban areas, highlighting how rural inhabitants increasingly find work, often temporal and seasonal, in the cities and vice versa. Bebbington et.al. (2008, 2875) suggest that rather than focusing exclusively on the agricultural economy as a vehicle for addressing rural poverty and exclusion, a wider rural development approach should be considered as a way forward in rural development.

Along with the change in rural areas, some new key rural issues emerge. According to Ashley & Maxwell (2001, 396) these include “the extent to which we can rely on agriculture as the engine of rural development; the future viability of small farms; the potential of the non-farm rural employment; the challenges of new thinking on poverty; participation and governance; and implementation of problems”. As Kay (2008, 922) argues, “in its most common interpretation, *nueva ruralidad* is used as a framework to analyze the transformations of neoliberal globalization by highlighting certain issues which other approaches have under-emphasized or ignored”. Traditional views of the rural

presented the countryside as a place where agriculture was dominant, if not exclusive means of livelihood, where the population was somewhat homogeneous, where there were low conditions for well-being, and that was culturally backward (Gómez 2001, 7). The vision of the rural in *nueva ruralidad* does not see the relationship between rural and urban spaces simply as going from backward to modern or from agriculture to industry, but rather that these characteristics show multi-directionality of the processes (Pérez 2001, 22). Thus, *nueva ruralidad* is questioning the assumptions of many policy makers and analysts “by arguing that rural communities are highly integrated into markets and do not operate solely within an agro-based subsistence logic” (Kay 2008, 922).

In its simplest definition, *nueva ruralidad* refers to “the transformation from the agrarian society to a more diversified rural society” (Cartón de Grammont 2008, 23). This means that rural households are gaining their income from a variety of sources and not solely from agricultural activities. Ellis (2000, 15) defines the rural livelihood diversification as “the process by which rural households construct an increasingly diverse portfolio of activities and assets in order to survive and to improve their standard of living”. Diversification can mean increasing diversity on-farm for example by introducing new crop varieties, off-farm by engaging in agricultural wage labour, or non-farm by gaining income from sources other than agriculture, such as from tourism (Ellis 2000, 11-12). In the developing world the number of multifunctional rural households increased rapidly over the course of the twentieth century, and whereas in the mid-century only about twenty per cent of rural households’ incomes in Latin America came from non-farm activities, in 2005 this had raised to about 50 per cent (Reardon, Stamoulis & Pingali 2007, 173). According to Reardon, Stamoulis & Pingali (2007, 174-175) there were two main reasons behind this trend: the first one was the opening of the rural economies due to structural adjustment programmes and improved infrastructure; the second reason was the rur-urbanization of rural areas, where rural small and intermediate towns grew in size and in importance, and this way further blurred the distinction between rural and urban areas.

Up until the 1990s in Latin America rural areas were seen mainly as providers of the foodstuffs to the cities, and in many parts countryside was seen as backward region, where semi-feudal and Fordist modes of production were prevalent. With neoliberal policies local

agrarian production became unproductive, as agribusiness, high technology and use of temporal migrant labour force became increasingly important (Cartón de Grammont 2008, 35-36). These changes affected especially peasant households, who were often left with two options: migrate to the cities, or diversify household income sources. This need to diversify created actors of new rurality in the countryside, whose analysis differs from the traditional analysis of the peasant households. *Nueva ruralidad* aims to take into account actors others than peasants, both more traditional ones such as fishermen, traders and transporters, as well as more recent, modern actors such as tourism operators and other service providers and actors in the industrial sector or natural resource management, for instance (Gómez 2008, 67). Before *nueva ruralidad* the diversification and consequent emergence of new rural actors were largely ignored in agrarian approaches, as these transformations were taking place in non-farm and off-farm activities (Kay 2008, 921). Thus, *nueva ruralidad* aims at taking into account the wide variety of transformations taking place in rural areas, not only those that take place within the agricultural sphere.

The relevance of *nueva ruralidad* in studying rural tourism lies especially in its notions on household income diversification and revaluation of rural areas. Although tourism may not be a great source of income for many rural families, if managed properly it might provide an opportunity to generate some extra income specifically for women and young people (Riveros & Blanco 2003, 6). However, Sharpley (2002, 235) argues that tourism contributes relatively little extra to farm income, especially as it tends to require fairly high investments and is highly dependent on seasonal fluctuations. In tourism-related activities we can also see *nueva ruralidad*'s relevance in the revaluation of the rural space. Although countryside does not need to be identified with agriculture, agriculture does play an important role in constructing positive images on rural areas. Rural areas are no longer considered solely as spaces of production for material, often agrarian products, but as "rich fountains of symbolic goods that move to feed new economic and social dynamics" (Carneiro 2008, 87). As an example we can see the figure of the farmer, *agricultor*, as "an emblematic figure in representing the *campo* in the rural sector" (ibid., 83). This figure of Latin American *campesino* on his fields is often used in marketing by both the tourism industry as well as food industry. As Mormont (1989, cited in Carneiro 2008, 88) notes, it is somewhat

paradoxical that while *nueva ruralidad* is decomposing the specificity of the rural, we are simultaneously observing the return of interest in the rural.

Although *nueva ruralidad* might be a useful concept in analysis of certain aspects of Latin American rural development, there is also criticism towards it. Kay (2008, 934) argues that although credit should be given to new ruralists for highlighting the importance of rural non-farm activities, they often misinterpret and exaggerate the possibilities these activities offer for the well-being of the peasants and rural workers. In the Latin American context we can see that around 45 per cent of the average rural household income comes from non-farm sources, much of it being agro-related (Ashley & Maxwell 2001, 408). It is true that over the last two decades non-farm activities' share of rural income has grown remarkably faster than that of agriculture, while the relative number of the poor has stayed about the same (Dirven 2004, 52). This means that non-farm activities only bring certain economic relief, and as Ashley & Maxwell (2001, 409) note, "rural non-farm employment is usually accessible to those with capital or skills, and low-return activities are open to the poor". As Kay (2008, 934) states, these activities often are not an option but a necessary move after they have been forced out of agriculture in order to make ends meet. For poorer peasants, Kay continues, "multiactivity has been little more than a means for survival leading to a process of depeasantization, and thus [they have] lost their capacity to produce cheap food" (ibid., 935).

### **3. Data and research methods**

Jill Belsky (2004, 274) argues that tourism researchers rarely speak directly about the values that influence their choice of topics and the research methods they employ. In certain way this becomes even more important in tourism research on fair trade association, as fair trade is hardly a value-neutral issue. As I have spent some time working for Asoguabo before conducting a research for this thesis, it is important to address my personal linkages to both fair trade in general and to Asoguabo in particular.

### 3.1. Background for the research

I first went to El Guabo in the autumn of 2004, accompanying a friend who was supplying office accessories for Asoguabo. At that occasion I was only passing by Southern Ecuador on my way to Peru, and had stopped there for a few days to visit some old friends. The reason why I had wanted to join my friend for his job assignment was that I had read about a fair trade organization in El Guabo that produces most of fair trade bananas sold in Finland. Back then, I was already interested in Latin American rural issues and I was really keen to find out more about fair trade bananas produced in El Guabo: how bananas are produced, who the producers are, and most importantly, whether fair trade really had had a positive impact on the lives of Ecuadorian small-scale farmers. On that cloudy yet sweaty afternoon more than six years ago my questions remained largely unanswered. I did have an opportunity to visit Asoguabo's office and managed to have a brief discussion with one of their employees, but unfortunately for me my friend was really quick in completing his business, and soon we were sitting in his car on the way back to Machala. I left Asoguabo's premises with a promise to myself that someday not so long from then I would be back there to obtain the answers to my questions.

Finally, three years later, I managed to return to El Guabo. Between January and March 2008 I spent three months there doing an internship for AgroFair, a Dutch fair trade company responsible for importing Asoguabo's bananas to Europe. During those months I took part in one Banana Tour, which was still in its very early stages. I worked mainly with the agricultural technicians and with the producers obtaining data on the greenhouse gas emissions of banana production. Later, in September 2008 I was back in El Guabo again, this time for six months as a volunteer, and now my main tasks were very closely related to the Fair Tourism Project. I helped the project manager in practical issues, did plenty of background research, assisted in teaching English basics to the producer-guides<sup>7</sup>, and translated the guidances of Banana Tour from Spanish into English. I thus managed to gain

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<sup>7</sup> Throughout the thesis the guides of the Fair Tourism Project will be referred to as producer-guides. Even though not all of them are producers, they are closely related to both banana production and to Asoguabo.

some invaluable insights into how the Fair Tourism Project works. I have carefully reflected on these experiences before my actual fieldwork period and assured I would not misuse any information gained for my research during these periods; after all, at the time I did not even know I was going to write my thesis about the Fair Tourism Project.

Because of my experiences in El Guabo prior to the actual fieldwork, I had obtained relatively good knowledge on the region, Asoguabo and the local culture. Furthermore, as I had volunteered directly for the Fair Tourism Project during the latter period there, by the time of my research fieldwork I was not only familiar with Asoguabo, but also with FTP and most of the people involved in it. These earlier experiences in Asoguabo clearly facilitated my research in terms of contacting people and forming trustworthy and reciprocal relationships with my informants, many of whom I had interviewed before for FTP's internal use. It was also useful for me to have been worked with FTP during different seasons of the year, as the visitor numbers vary greatly by the month.

However, there were also challenges related to these relationships. First, while I was working in Asoguabo in 2008 and 2009, I became really good friends with many people involved in the Fair Tourism Project, including some of the producer-guides and the project manager. While on the personal level this obviously is a positive issue which greatly helped me with my fieldwork arrangements, it also created some difficulties in obtaining data that was slightly more sensitive, especially about the relationships between the producer-guides and the project manager. It was, to some extent, difficult to create "an ethical safety zone", where there was a sufficient distance between the researcher and the "researched", especially in the case of the project manager (Sumner & Tribe 2008, 41). However, for most parts this was resolved by discussing the matter beforehand, explaining thoroughly the purpose of the study as well as the preservation of the anonymity of the informants. This last point was especially important in interviewing the producer-guides, as they are a small group, consisting of only six persons, and thus might be easily identifiable by their residence or experience as guides, for example. I have tried my best to hide their identities,

and pseudonyms are being used in the thesis, but there are still some aspects from which someone close to FTP could identify a particular guide.<sup>8</sup>

Now, more than six years since my initial visit to Asoguabo I have found out, in theory at least, how bananas are being produced, and I have visited dozens of fair trade banana farms and even made friends with quite a few producers. The final question I had before my first visit to Asoguabo, the one on the impact of fair trade on the producers, has puzzled me the most. However, I am keen to believe that fair trade has at least provided many of these producers with some new cultivation skills, possibilities to improve their farms, and new ways of identifying opportunities for additional income. The Fair Tourism Project, for its part, is trying to diversify the ways in which Asoguabo producers may improve their livelihoods, and thus makes an extremely interesting, highly relevant object of study in the fields of fair trade research, rural development and tourism research.

### **3.2. Data collection and analysis**

This thesis is a case study of Asoguabo's Fair Tourism Project, and it is based on qualitative research including semi-structured interviews, participant observation and content analysis of the Fair Tourism Project's promotion material. The Fair Tourism Project is a case which has not been studied before, and through this thesis I am trying to understand its complexities and particularities, and offer a new point of view to tourism research by analysing the links between fair trade and tourism. In case studies, the end report is always the researcher's dressing of the case's own story (Stake 2000, 441), and my aim has been to present the story of Fair Tourism Project truthfully and profoundly to my best understanding of the case. Stronza (2001, 269) argues that even though tourism research includes descriptions on introducing tourism in local communities, research has been largely devoid of local voices, and thus there is not much information on how the locals themselves perceive the pros and cons associated with tourism. Through the interviews and participant observation I have tried to take this into account in the research for this thesis, and intended to tell the story of FTP through the local people.

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<sup>8</sup> For a list of interviews see References.

The actual fieldwork for collecting data was conducted in January 2010, when I spent four weeks in Ecuador, most of it in El Guabo. A month is a really short time to carry out a qualitative research, but as I had already worked in Asoguabo twice before, I consider this time sufficient enough to obtain the necessary data. For this thesis I conducted a total of 21 interviews or e-mail communications with sixteen informants. Most of the interviews were conducted in El Guabo and its surroundings; one interview, however, took place in Ibarra, Northern Ecuador, and four via e-mail. The interviews in Ecuador included interviews with all the six producer-guides of the Fair Tourism Project who participated actively in the project in 2009, FTP's project manager, PROMESA's director, Asoguabo's president, tourism directors of both El Guabo and the province of El Oro, and FTP's cook and a proprietor of one of FTP's additional tours. These interviews spanned between ten minutes (FTP's cook) and more than two hours (FTP's project manager). I made two longer interviews via e-mail, with PASEO's manager and FTP's project manager, and a shorter communications with FLO's office coordinator and a Finnish volunteer to Asoguabo.

Apart from two e-mail interviews, all the interviews were conducted in Spanish, and only direct quotes in the text have been translated into English. All the interviews were then transcribed; however with some interviews I used my consideration to leave out some parts that were clearly not relevant to my thesis. After the transcription I analysed the interviews using methods of qualitative content analysis. The interviews were coded by using simple, short codes, after which they were categorised in order to reduce the data into smaller and simpler categories (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 202-203). For producer-guides, the categories included, for instance, the project's positive and negative features, the roles of different actors in the project, power relations, and future prospect of FTP. The purpose of coding is to develop categories which capture the fullness and complexity of the experiences studied (*ibid.*), and as there was a total of almost 100 pages of transcribed interview data, this process was really helpful in achieving to understand a more complete picture.

I chose to use semi-structured interviews as the main form of data collection since I had identified most of the informants before the fieldwork based on my previous experiences in

Asoguabo, and I felt it was important to let the informants to discuss about the topics they were most interested about. Other forms of interviews would not have been quite as useful, as apart from the producer-guides, all the informants were in different positions towards the Fair Tourism Project. Compared to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews have the advantage of giving the researcher more freedom to probe beyond the answers given to specified questions (May 2001, 123). For producer-guides, I had compiled an interview outline including the relevant themes and some questions. However I gave them an initiative to talk about the topics in order they wished, which gave them an opportunity to talk about issues that interested them most within the Fair Tourism Project. For other informants I had prepared specific interview outlines depending on their position.

Before fieldwork I had planned on conducting focus group interviews with the guides, but unfortunately this turned out to be impossible due to time constraints. Despite my earlier knowledge of the area and the people I wanted to interview, it was rather time-consuming to arrange even individual interviews with all the informants. Even though I acknowledge that a focus group interview with the producer-guides would have been a great way to share ideas and gain valuable data, I had to abort this idea and make sure I would have an opportunity to meet each of them individually. Similarly, I had originally planned to interview Asoguabo members who were not participating actively in the Fair Tourism Project. On the first week of the fieldwork I arranged two such interviews with producers who were otherwise active in Asoguabo. However, as both of the interviewees were practically unaware about FTP, these turned out to be somewhat unfruitful, and thus I decided to concentrate on assuring I would get the most important interviews first. Unfortunately, I had no time for any further interviews after these.

The research for this thesis included also participant observation during different periods of participation in the Fair Tourism Project. Furthermore, I had a chance for informal observation of the daily life in the office of Asoguabo and all the related activities during the six months I volunteered for FTP. Participant observation “is about engaging in a social scene, experiencing it and seeking to understand and explain it” (May 2001, 173). I participated in more than a dozen Banana Tours between 2008 and 2010, and also in several additional tours. In most of these, I participated as a representative of Asoguabo, either as a

translator or as an assistant for the project manager. I composed in-depth field notes from four tours, two in 2009 and two during the actual fieldwork in 2010. Participant observation is an actor-oriented research method, and aims at observing the situation from the subjects' point of view (Brockington & Sullivan 2003, 65). During the observation I contemplated the situation through the points of view of both the tourists and the producer-guide, and through this method I tried to subjectively attain the most accurate description of different phases of the Fair Tourism Project. It was also helpful to have been working in Asoguabo's office, as this had given me a sound understanding on FTP's role within Asoguabo, the power relations, and everyday issues taking place in the office.

Besides interviews and participant observation, I also carried out content analysis of promotion materials of the Fair Tourism Project. This material included five different postcards, a brochure in English, and a caption in the general brochure of Asoguabo, both in English and in Spanish. I have approached these data through analysis on how the material present different people, environment, poverty, and the production process of bananas. I also analysed the textual captions on the data. According to May (2001, 193) content analysis of documents requires a consideration on what the author of the document intended, and what meanings the potential audience gives to it. FTP's promotion material intends to achieve more visitors by offering certain images of the Fair Tourism Project, and the audience will have to decide whether to visit FTP or not. As the task of the researcher is to analyse the images in terms of their symbols in order to understand their context (May 2001, 193), I have used different studies on authenticity in tourism and on commodity fetishism in fair trade research as tools for my analysis.

Finally, I had an access to several primary documents and statistical data regarding the project. Through the project manager of the Fair Tourism Project I had an access to tourism-related statistics, including data on tourists, guides and finances. I also had an access to many of FTP's internal documents, such as their Business Plan and the manual for the FTP guides. Furthermore, AgroFair Assistance and Development AFAD kindly granted me a permission to use relevant sections of their 2007 quantitative research data on the Asoguabo farmers. All this data was carefully examined, and they were of great use in writing this thesis.

## 4. Fair bananas in El Guabo

### 4.1. Setting the scene: El Guabo<sup>9</sup>

The town of El Guabo is located in the province of El Oro, in Southern Ecuador. It has approximately 41 000 inhabitants, and it is one of the fourteen municipalities in the province. El Guabo is located some twenty kilometres from the provincial capital, Machala, and is conveniently situated by the main highway between Machala and the country's biggest city, Guayaquil, some 180 kilometres from El Guabo (see map 1). Although western Andean mountains are visible from the town and the terrain starts ascending just a few kilometres from the centre, El Guabo is a lowland town with a tropical coastal atmosphere. Climate is tropical, with the yearly average temperature of around 25 degrees Celsius, with plenty of rain in the winter months between January and April. El Guabo was founded in 1824 and for a long time it was a parish of the municipality of Machala. In 1978 it became a district, and now it is constructed of four rural parishes and one urban parish, the town of El Guabo. Poverty level in El Guabo is high; up to 72 per cent of town's inhabitants live in poverty, of whom about the half live in extreme poverty.

El Guabo's main economic activity is agriculture, and banana production is by far the most important source of income for its inhabitants. Almost 60 per cent of El Guabo's economically active population are engaged in agriculture, and more than half of the agricultural production units in El Guabo are dedicated to banana production. Officially El Guabo has over 2200 agricultural production units, of which about half are very small, less than five hectares (Paredes 2009, 167). Another important agricultural product is cacao; especially smaller farms often produce simultaneously both banana and cacao. While banana is the main crop and is harvested every week throughout the year, cacao gives yield

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<sup>9</sup> If not stated otherwise, the statistical data in this chapter are from the latest population census of 2001, and is adapted from AME (2006a) and AME (2006b).

twice a year, and thus can be easily worked alongside banana. The distribution of land in the region is very unequal – while small farms account for less than four per cent of the cultivated land, less than 200 large farms account for more than 60 per cent of the land (Paredes 2009, 167). Especially in recent years a locally-owned banana company Palmar Corporation has increased its holdings in the area – between 2001 and 2006 Palmar more than doubled its land holdings to over 500 hectares in El Guabo, mainly through buying the land from small-scale producers (Rodríguez 2008, 70, 74).

#### **4.2. Banana production in Ecuador and in El Oro**

Large scale banana production started in Ecuador in the 1920s, after the so-called “cacao boom” had come to an end. For over half a century Ecuador had depended on cacao production, and it was not until 1948 when Ecuador got over the crisis initiated by the decreasing demand for cacao – that was due to another boom, this time of banana (Larrea 1987, 37). Up until the 1950s Central American countries had been the most important banana exporting countries, but because of the mixture increasing prevalence of a destructive plant disease, the Panama disease, rising labour costs, political instability and legal troubles in the USA, Central American banana exports declined and large banana corporations began to look for new countries to set their feet in (Soluri 2003, 71). Compared to Central America, Ecuador had several advantages that attracted the United Fruit Company to install a large enclave there, and consequently made the country the world’s largest banana exporter in the 1950s. First, the Panama disease, which had destroyed much of Central America’s banana plantations, was uncommon in Ecuador. Second, the climate in Ecuador was very suitable for banana production, and the country lacked serious climatic hazards common in Central America, such as hurricanes. Third, the Ecuadorian government was somewhat stable and welcoming, and promised to help in building the necessary infrastructure for the companies, including construction of port facilities, roads and railways as well as creation of credit opportunities and establishment of regulating legislation. Fourth, the soil, especially in the southern Ecuador, was extremely fertile and suitable for banana production, and fifth, there was an abundance of cheap

labour force available in Ecuador (Larrea 1987, 46, Sylva 1987, 120-121, Fernández 2006, 17).

While the production in other banana producing countries like Colombia and Central American nations maintained in the hands of the large North American companies such as the United Fruit Company, Ecuador took a different route. Even though in the 1950s foreign companies participated actively not only in the export but also in the production, by 1965 there were virtually no foreign-owned plantations and most of the production was in the hands of Ecuadorian capitalist farmers and peasants (Moberg & Striffler 2003, 7). The biggest enclave in Ecuador under the control of the United Fruit Company was the Hacienda Tenguel in the south coast, an area where Asoguabo has one of its most active producer groups today. The United Fruit Company arrived in Ecuador in the 1930s and at its height in the 1950s in Tenguel it controlled over 22 000 hectares of land and employed over 2500 people producing around 80 000 clusters of bananas each week (Striffler 2002, 42). However, in 1962 the hacienda was taken over by its workers and by peasants from the surrounding areas, forcing the United Fruit out of direct production and ushering national agrarian reform laws (Striffler 2003, 173). These events in Tenguel played an important part on shaping Ecuadorian banana production to the way it is today. Currently in Ecuador there are high numbers of small-scale producers, with relatively few plantations that are owned by large multinational companies. As the big companies were still controlling much of infrastructure despite being forced out of production, the former hacienda workers and banana-producing peasants were pushed to contract farming. Thus many small-scale producers had no choice than to produce to big companies, now as independent farmers under contract (Striffler 2003, 188-189).

Today Ecuador is the biggest banana exporter in the world, producing around one third of the world's total banana exports.<sup>10</sup> The province of El Oro is the most important banana-producing province in the country, and around 30 per cent of Ecuador's banana exports leave from Machala's port, Puerto Bolívar.<sup>11</sup> Bananas constitute Ecuador's second most

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<sup>10</sup> UNCTAD, <http://www.unctad.org/infocomm/anglais/banana/market.htm#exports>, visited 13/07/2010.

<sup>11</sup> Asociación de Exportadores de Banano del Ecuador AEBE, [http://www.aebe.ec/data/files/DocumentosPDF/Estad%C3%ADsticas/2009/2doSemestre/Puertos\\_Dic09.pdf](http://www.aebe.ec/data/files/DocumentosPDF/Estad%C3%ADsticas/2009/2doSemestre/Puertos_Dic09.pdf) visited 13/07/2010.

important trade product after oil, and it has been estimated that over a million people, or almost ten per cent of the country's population, depend directly or indirectly on banana production (Melo & Wolf 2007, 261). Every hectare of banana requires between 0,5 (large, commercial plantations) and 1,1 (small organic farms especially) permanent workers, which accounts about 150 000 direct places of employment in banana production in the country (SIPAE 2009, 4). However, working conditions in the banana industry are sometimes hazardous. Use of child labour has been reported on the plantations, workers' demonstrations have often been violently broken up, and certain chemicals used in the production process have been blamed to deteriorate workers' health (Raynolds 2003, 33-34, HRW 2002). Similarly, as banana production is a chemical intensive business, it is an environmentally sensitive form of agriculture in its use of high levels of agrochemicals in order to fight the various diseases which threaten the plants (Fernández 2006, 181)

For a long time banana trade was dominated by few large companies. Currently the banana exportation is, however, more diversified, and in 2009 only two companies, Dole and Noboa, achieved market shares of more than ten per cent of the total.<sup>12</sup> Unlike in Central America, in Ecuador much of the production has maintained in the hands of independent producers and many national companies have been involved in the exporting business (Larrea 1987, 47). In recent years, however, big export companies have obtained notable shares of the production process by acquiring more land or keeping prices low, which has driven many small producers out of business. More than two thirds of Ecuadorian banana farmers are small-scale producers. However they only count for about sixteen per cent of the production whereas large landowners constitute only a small percentage of the producers, but cultivate almost half of all the bananas produced in the country (SIPAE 2009, 3).

The province of El Oro played a relatively important role in the country's agricultural exports already during the "cacao boom", and by the end of the nineteenth century, around twenty per cent of Ecuadorian cacao was produced in the province (Poma 2008, 21). The capital of El Oro, Machala, had maintained as a relatively small and isolated provincial

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<sup>12</sup> Asociación de Exportadores de Banano del Ecuador AEBE, <http://www.aebe.ec/data/files/DocumentosPDF/Estad%C3%ADsticas/2009/2doSemestre/CiasExpAcumDic09.pdf>, visited 13/07/2010.

town, and most of the cacao was sold in Guayaquil to local or Peruvian merchants (Guerrero 1994, 36). There were about 40 000 inhabitants in El Oro in 1900. During the first decades of the twentieth century, however, migration from the surrounding mountains to the province intensified as workforce was needed first on cacao plantations and later in banana production, and at the same time the highlands' economy was in decline. In the mid twentieth century, the city of Machala and smaller cities of the region, such as Pasaje and El Guabo, started to grow fast because of the expanding banana trade.

Despite being an important area for cacao production, it was only in the 1950s that the road connecting Machala and the province to Guayaquil was constructed (Fernández 2006, 18). In 50 years the population of the province had more than doubled to over 90 000 inhabitants in the 1950s, with Machala being the biggest town with little less than 10 000 inhabitants. As banana production was expanding, it had a remarkable effect on the economic growth and development of the province of El Oro. The mass migration to the region resulted in the emergence of two new social groups: the first, and much bigger in size, was the group of agricultural labourers, who were hired to carry out the physical work in the banana fields. Compared to cacao, banana production is much more labour-intensive activity. The second group was that of dock workers, who were needed to carry the banana bunches into the ships especially before the introduction of carton boxes to transport bananas in the 1960s. (Poma 2008, 21-22). Until 1965 bananas were brought to the port by small ships in rivers or by train, but as the road system improved trucks began to be used in the transportation (Fernández 2006, 15). During the banana boom the new and modern port of Puerto Bolívar was constructed outside Machala, and today it is the third busiest port in Ecuador, almost exclusively dedicated to handle bananas.

Today Machala is the second biggest town on the Ecuadorian coast with approximately 250 000 people. Although El Oro is now a highly urbanized province with about 75 % of its inhabitants living in the cities, banana has maintained its importance in smaller towns and especially in the countryside. Each year approximately 70 million boxes of banana, of which around 2,5 million is fair trade certified, leave from Puerto Bolívar to the world

market.<sup>13</sup> Banana employs directly almost 20 000 people and indirectly close to 30 000 people in the province, which means that around one third of El Oro inhabitants depend on banana one way or another (AME 2006a, 26). In El Guabo the number is even higher, as around one third of all the banana producers of the province are located there (ibid.). El Oro has both numerically and proportionally more small- and medium-scale banana holdings than any other municipality in Ecuador. The province counts for almost half of all the producers in the country, of whom almost 90 per cent have farms smaller than 30 hectares. As a comparison, another very important banana growing province of Los Ríos, in central Ecuador, only counts for thirteen per cent of the country's producers, but 32 per cent of all the land under banana cultivation in Ecuador (SIPAE 2009, 3).

Because of the large concentration of small producers in the province and the difficult situation they encountered in the banana business in the late 1990s, there was a growing need to develop alternative markets and alternative paths to sell the banana.

#### **4.3. Asoguabo: an example for fair trade cooperatives?**

Asociación de Pequeños Productores Bananeros "El Guabo" was established in 1997 after a group of fourteen small-scale banana farmers joined forces to ship the first fair trade bananas to Europe. However, it was already in 1993 that small producers of the area were introduced to fair trade by a regional peasant organization UROCAL, first through an initiative to export cocoa (Salinas & Matamoros 2007, 8). Although this initiative proved not to be a successful one, it did increase the producers' awareness of the unfavourable situation they were experiencing, and realised there were alternatives for the current situation. Small banana farmers were especially vulnerable to volatile market prices, seasonality in demand of the product, and an uneven situation in the negotiations with the fruit purchasers and middlemen (Sarango 2005, 6). Thus, with the help of a Dutch NGO Solidaridad, some producers in El Guabo were able to start to export some banana to European solidarity and fair trade markets in 1995. However, due to various difficulties

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<sup>13</sup> Asociación de Exportadores de Banano del Ecuador AEBE, [http://www.aebe.com.ec/data/files/DocumentosPDF/Estad%C3%ADsticas/2009/2doSemestre/Puertos\\_Dic09.pdf](http://www.aebe.com.ec/data/files/DocumentosPDF/Estad%C3%ADsticas/2009/2doSemestre/Puertos_Dic09.pdf), visited 13/7/2010.

with transportation and insufficient quality of the fruit, these early initiatives turned out not to be very prosperous. Out of a total of five producer associations initially involved in the initiative, only one, Asoguabo, went on to formally organize itself and legalize its operations (Sarango 2005, 7). In November 1997 Asoguabo was officially registered as a small-scale banana producer association, and apart from the fourteen funding members, there were another approximately dozen producers working for the association to meet the demand.

#### *4.3.1. Organizational structure of Asoguabo*

Since the beginning, Asoguabo has worked closely with AgroFair, a Dutch import company importing mainly fair trade certified fruit to Europe. AgroFair is closely related to Solidaridad, and they were already involved in the first shipments of Asoguabo to Europe in the late 1990s. AgroFair is a company partly owned by the Southern producers, and Asoguabo owns five per cent of AgroFair's shares.<sup>14</sup> Asoguabo is also AgroFair's main supplier of bananas, supplying nearly a half of all fair trade bananas sold by AgroFair in European fair trade markets (Ruben et.al. 2008, 156). Apart from AgroFair, Asoguabo has created links with other international actors as well. Fair trade certification has brought about plenty of interest from different parts of the world, and NGOs like the Dutch SNV or German GTZ have both cooperated with Asoguabo (Melo & Wolf 2007, 270). In 2008 Asoguabo received a very significant financing from the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and their PSOM-programme to invest in new business opportunities and to set up an experimental model farm in order to further develop farming techniques and consequently increase productivity levels.<sup>15</sup>

The highest decision-making body of Asoguabo is the general assembly. The assembly meets approximately once a month, and every member has the right to speak and vote. Every two years members of the association elect a directorate, an executive body, which is in charge of most of the operational issues of the association. There are 9 members in the

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<sup>14</sup> AgroFair, [http://www.agrofair.nl/pages/view.php?page\\_id=320](http://www.agrofair.nl/pages/view.php?page_id=320), visited 15/9/2010.

<sup>15</sup> NL EVD Internationaal, <http://www.evd.nl/zoeken/showbouwsteen.asp?bstnum=235856&location>, visited 06/07/2010.

directorates elected in January 2010, each representing a different producer-group, *gremio*. While all the producers are members (*socios*) of Asoguabo, each of them also belongs to a *gremio*. Membership for most of the *gremios* is based on the geographical location of the farm. The role of the *gremios* is to guarantee the information flow between the Asoguabo office and the producers, and to ensure the correct use of the fair trade premium for social development in the localities (Sarango 2005, 13). *Gremios* meet approximately twice a month, and participation in the meetings is obligatory for the members, under penalty of a fine.

Currently Asoguabo has around 400 small- and medium-scale banana producers as its members, and they are divided into fifteen smaller *gremios*.<sup>16</sup> Despite the current dip in the number of members, Asoguabo has grown rapidly throughout the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and there would be more producers willing to affiliate to Asoguabo than their capacity allows.<sup>17</sup> The two main reasons for producers wishing to affiliate are the relatively high prices that Asoguabo pays them, and the stable income that is guaranteed year round.<sup>18</sup> The central office of Asoguabo is based in the town of El Guabo, but producers are located on a wide geographical area in the provinces of El Oro, Guayas, Azuay and Bolívar in southern Ecuador (see map 1). Asoguabo's office employs approximately 35 employees, including administrative staff, agricultural technicians, and staff responsible on the use of fair trade premium money. Organizationally Asoguabo has been divided into two main units: the foreign trade unit UCE is responsible for everything related to bananas, from quality control in the farms to exportation process. The social and environmental programme PROMESA is in charge of the use of fair trade premium money.

#### 4.3.2. PROMESA

PROMESA is a body within Asoguabo that is responsible for managing the fair trade premium money. For each box of bananas sold in the fair trade market, a premium of US\$ 1

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<sup>16</sup> The number of member producers fluctuates constantly; while new members join in, old members are suspended for not respecting the fair trade rules or drop out voluntarily. Since 2009, however, the number of Asoguabo *socios* has dropped down from about 500 to the current level.

<sup>17</sup> Salinas 2009.

<sup>18</sup> AFAD 2007.

is paid on top of the price received by the producer, aimed for community development. Of this premium money, twenty per cent is used for a credit programme which aims for further technification of the farms, and the remaining 80 per cent is for different social and environmental programmes that PROMESA administers (Ruben et.al. 2008, 157). The objective of PROMESA is to

execute in the best possible manner the FLO price premium so that these resources are invested in an equitable way for everyone involved in the banana chain, both in environmental and social areas, socioeconomic development and training, and to implement efficient mechanisms to monitor that the norms and criteria implemented by FLO are being complied with (Corporación PROMESA 2010).

Since its foundation in 2002, PROMESA has supported a number of different social and environmental programmes among Asoguabo's producers and their families, farm workers, office employees, harbour workers, and rural communities in general. Since its early days PROMESA has managed the fair trade premium, and it has also been responsible for internal controlling of the fulfilment of FLO's social and environmental standards (Salinas & Matamoros 2007, 13). PROMESA has been in charge of creating various benefits for the people in the area, some of which are required by fair trade standards. These include credit opportunities for producers, social security and distribution of groceries for workers, school grants for children, health programmes, and support for local schools, for instance (Salinas & Matamoros 2007, 20-26). Furthermore, PROMESA is also responsible for training the producers in environmental and productive matters.

In 2008 there were changes both in PROMESA's organizational structure as well as in its targets. PROMESA was transformed into an independent corporation, thus differentiating itself further from the UCE. Related to this, a new director took the charge of PROMESA in January 2008. Due to the difficult economical situation that also affected Asoguabo, there were not much funds available, and after a very difficult winter in 2008 many assets had to be reorganized in order to help the producers who had lost their plants because of floods and rains in January 2008<sup>19</sup> <sup>20</sup>. In the beginning of 2010 the general assembly approved a document presenting the frame for PROMESA's activities until the end of 2012.

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<sup>19</sup> Apolo 2008-2010.

<sup>20</sup> Interview quotes are cited in footnotes, denoting the surname of the interviewee and the year of the

According to this document, Marco Lógico del Plan Premio 2010-2012, the main challenge for PROMESA is to improve the economic situation of its members by increasing the productivity of the banana fields, while simultaneously decreasing the production costs. This should be achieved through reinforcing the organizational capacity of the association and of the fifteen *gremios*. Other goals mentioned in the document include improving the availability of health services, continuing support for rural schools and workers association, and providing members and workers benefits, such as a monthly basket of groceries. One of the most important goals in the document is that of diversification. The PSOM-programme will continue, and there are plans to commercialize bamboo in order to generate some extra income. In June 2010 PROMESA signed a cooperation contract with the University of Loja, aiming to fabricate paper made of banana leaves and thus create use for the otherwise unuseful raw material.<sup>21</sup> Finally, the document states that by the end of 2010 Banana Tour should be self-governed, and by the end of 2011 it should generate additional income for Asoguabo. Apart from this Asoguabo has other on-farm and off-farm strategies to diversify the farmers' incomes and to improve their production, including a communitarian model farm, micro loans and search for new markets for cacao.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, with the emergence of the Fair Tourism Project, there has been further international interest towards the association.

#### 4.3.3. *Producers of Asoguabo*

Currently member producers of Asoguabo cultivate a total area of approximately 2000 hectares, with farm sizes varying between two and twenty hectares (Ruben et.al. 2008, 156). Production conditions of the farms also vary greatly, from small, non-technical organic subsistence family farms up in the mountains to larger, technical, mono-cultivations on the lowlands. Also the productivity levels of Asoguabo members vary, from about twenty boxes per hectare for producers with limited technologies up to 55 boxes per hectare

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interview. Check References for further details.

<sup>21</sup> Information from Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja website, <http://www.utpl.edu.ec/noticias/2010/06/10/cerart-firmara-convenio-con-asociacion-de-pequenos-productores-bananeros-de-guabo/>, visited 11/06/2010.

<sup>22</sup> Apolo 2008-2010.

for fully technical modern farms (Ruben et.al. 2008, 157). In recent years the Globalgap certification standards have become obligatory for the members of the association, but still many of the smaller farms especially lack basic infrastructure, such as modern packing stations, adequate storing facilities for agrochemicals, or lunch and sanitary facilities for workers. In 2009 Asoguabo exported a total of over 1,8 million boxes<sup>23</sup>, having a share of 0,75 per cent of Ecuador's total banana exports.<sup>24</sup>

As fair trade certified producers, Asoguabo members are entitled the guaranteed minimum price agreed by the FLO, as well as certain social and other benefits stated in the fair trade standards. Currently the price for conventional (ie. non-organic) fair trade bananas in Ecuador is set at US\$ 5,90 per box, plus fair trade premium for social development of US\$ 1 per box (FLO 2010). In November 2010 the official price for a box of banana in Ecuador, set by Ecuadorian Ministry of Agriculture, was at US\$ 5,40<sup>25</sup>, although it is widely acknowledged that exporters in Ecuador rarely pay the producer the official price.<sup>26</sup> However, the difference between the official price and the fair trade price does not satisfy all Asoguabo's farmers, especially as the price difference in favour of fair trade bananas used to be more remarkable before. In the research by AFAD on Asoguabo producers in 2007 almost 80 per cent of the producers were at least somewhat satisfied with the prices paid to them.<sup>27</sup> Since then, however, the prices have stagnated, and as one producer commented,

in some other years the difference was the same, and outside [of fair trade] we were paid five dollars and 40 cents, but then the association paid even a bit more than the set price. But now, since the last year, they have only paid the set price. The association paid the same, no matter if one could sell outside for ten dollars. In other years association always paid more, at least one dollar extra per box. I don't know why they have halted there; it hasn't progressed in the same way as before, paying a little more...<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Volume of banana production is generally stated in boxes, one box weighing at least 18,14 kg.

<sup>24</sup> Asociación de Exportadores de Banano del Ecuador AEBE, [http://www.aebe.com.ec/data/files/DocumentosPDF/Estad%C3%ADsticas/2009/2doSemestre/CiasExpAcum\\_Dic09.pdf](http://www.aebe.com.ec/data/files/DocumentosPDF/Estad%C3%ADsticas/2009/2doSemestre/CiasExpAcum_Dic09.pdf), visited 09/07/2010.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.aebe.com.ec/>, visited 28/11/2010.

<sup>26</sup> It is a common occurrence that Ecuadorian press publishes articles on producers complaining for not being paid the official price. During my fieldwork in January 2010 it was widely rumoured that in the El Guabo area many exporters paid as little as less than 2 US dollars per box of bananas.

<sup>27</sup> AFAD 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Palacios 2010.

Despite the demands for higher price, participation in fair trade has brought about some benefits when compared to the situation of non-certified producers. Most of the non-certified farmers, who sell their bananas to one of the big banana companies, are often forced to sell at the price dictated by companies and middlemen, and the contracts to sell are often short and change rapidly (Raynolds 2003, 33, Melo & Wolf 2007, 261). In fair trade, contracts are made by the year, and the price and the amount of boxes are negotiated with the producers. This way the producers know how much and at what price they can sell to Asoguabo each week, which helps them to plan the investments and improvements in advance. As one Asoguabo producer remarked, “the main thing about fair trade is not how much you’re getting paid, but rather the stability of the prices and the fact that you always know how much you can sell”.<sup>29</sup>

Another improvement with fair trade has been the possibility to gain cheap credit for improvements at the farm. One producer guide explained how this has brought about new opportunities for her farm:

And this last productive project we’ve done is completely without an interest; they (Asoguabo) lent me, and haven’t charged any interest whatsoever. Think about it, they lent a small-scale producer, with only one hectare, 8000 dollars for constructing a well. Can you imagine, one hectare where I produce fifty boxes per week, 8000 dollars for a well and for expanding the farm! No other company would do that, at least not without an interest. But if a producer here really needs the loan, they’ll give it to you, in order for you to progress.<sup>30</sup>

Since 2006 Asoguabo’s *gremios* have used part of the fair trade premium money for providing loans for their members (Salinas & Matamoros 2007, 25). Furthermore, one feature differentiating Asoguabo’s fair trade producers from conventional banana producers is the training they receive in agrochemical handling and storage for example (Melo & Wolf 2007, 268). The members of Asoguabo are also entitled to subsidised organic fertilizers, and as one producer commented, “the main importance of Asoguabo is that it allows all the producers to join, also those who only produce few boxes, and there is a really good support from the technicians, not so much on a personal but on a gremial level”.<sup>31</sup> Finally, Melo & Wolf (2005, 299-301) note that in environmental issues such as buffer zones, water quality, and agrochemical and waste management the Asoguabo farmers

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<sup>29</sup> Ordóñez 2009-2010.

<sup>30</sup> Ordóñez 2009-2010.

<sup>31</sup> Paucar 2010.

come off remarkably better than their conventional counterparts. Importantly, over 80 per cent of the Asoguabo members feel proud for being a member of Asoguabo.<sup>32</sup>

## 5. Fair Tourism Project within Asoguabo

### 5.1. Tourism in El Oro and in El Guabo

Despite its relatively small size, Ecuador is a popular country for tourism; in 2008 over a million international tourists visited the country.<sup>33</sup> Ecuador has seen a remarkable increase in the number of international visitors, a rise of over 30 per cent in about ten years. About half of the visitors are from other Latin American countries, mainly from Colombia and Peru, and many of the visitors from these neighbouring countries come to Ecuador for reasons other than tourism. For tourism industry the most important markets are the United States, Chile and Germany, which are the countries where most of the tourists come from.<sup>34</sup> Among tourists, Ecuador is especially renowned for the Galapagos Islands. Sites like the capital city of Quito and the famous indigenous town of Otavalo also receive many tourists. Furthermore, there are some popular tourist spots both in the eastern rainforests and on the coastal strip. Currently Ecuador poses a decent infrastructure for tourism, and in the most popular tourist sites there is a wide variety of hotels, restaurants, tour operators, transportation possibilities and sights to choose from. While this is true in the most visited places, it is still difficult to find adequate tourism facilities in many more remote places. The southern coast of Ecuador, where El Guabo is located, is often considered to be one of the country's less interesting regions to visit for an average tourist. Footprint travel guide to Ecuador claims that this region offers some of the best and worst of Ecuador; while the guidebook rates the Southern highlands as a really interesting place to visit, it sees the city

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<sup>32</sup> AFAD 2007.

<sup>33</sup> UN Data, <http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=Ecuador>, visited 25/8/2010.

<sup>34</sup> Ministerio de Turismo del Ecuador [http://www.turismo.gob.ec/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=459&catid=62:servicios&Itemid=95](http://www.turismo.gob.ec/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=459&catid=62:servicios&Itemid=95), visited 28/10/2010.

of Machala and its surroundings unsafe and unpleasant (Kunstaetter & Kunstaetter 2007, 317).

The province of El Oro has only limited tourist attractions, and it is thus not considered to be a part of Ecuador's common “gringo trail” . Because of the region’s immediate proximity to the Peruvian border, however, many travellers pass through the area. Due to good transport connections and relative proximity to the cities of Guayaquil on the coast and Cuenca on the mountains, many tourists seem to use El Oro and Machala as a place to change buses on the way to or from the border. Machala, with over 220 000 inhabitants, is one of the biggest cities in Ecuador, but from the tourists’ point of view it is not particularly interesting.<sup>35</sup> Despite the current mayor’s Carlos Falquéz’ efforts to renovate the city to become more appealing for tourists, its attractions are few and far between. There are few renovated parks to stroll on, several statues and monuments to gaze at, and some decent restaurants to eat in. Nearby is Puerto Bolívar, famous for its seaside restaurants with fresh seafood fare, and the island of Jambelí, the most popular beach resort in the province.

Probably the most interesting tourist sites in the province are found on the highlands, in Zaruma and Portovelo. Especially Zaruma is famous for its picturesque colonial architecture, and Portovelo has an interesting history of being home for one of the early modern gold mines in South America. This area is also renowned for its wide variety of bird species, thus making it a good place for bird-watchers. As Footprint travel guide to Ecuador notes, the highlands of El Oro is a great area in which to get off the beaten path (Kunstaetter & Kunstaetter 2007, 318). In visitor numbers the most popular and fastest growing destination in the province is the petrified forest of Puyango, in the South of the province.<sup>36</sup> In 2009 Ecuador’s Ministry of Tourism started to promote the southern border provinces of El Oro, Loja and Zamora Chinchipe as “*destinos sin fronteras*”, “destinations without borders”. There are new brochures promoting tourist destinations near the border, but so far these only exist in Spanish and are thus destined mainly to Peruvian tourists.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, [http://www.inec.gov.ec/web/guest/publicaciones/anuarios/cen\\_nac/pob\\_viv](http://www.inec.gov.ec/web/guest/publicaciones/anuarios/cen_nac/pob_viv), visited 15/9/2010

<sup>36</sup> Vega 2010.

<sup>37</sup> Vega 2010.

While agriculture is by far the main economic activity in El Guabo, tourism provides the main means of living to a small number of people in town (AME 2006a, 13). Most of them work in the service sector, and there are one decent hotel and a few restaurants in town. El Guabo is not considered as a touristic destination, even though there are some interesting sites to visit, and as the project manager of the Fair Tourism Project commented, Asoguabo are trying to get rid of the idea that there is nothing to see in El Guabo.<sup>38</sup> The most visited site is the beach of Bajoalto, some 30 kilometres North-West from the town. Approximately 500 tourists, mainly from El Oro and the nearby provinces, visit the beach weekly, and this number multiplies during the yearly *carnaval* celebrations (AME 2006b, 34). However, the El Niño phenomenon has deteriorated the beach, and it is now somewhat narrow and filled with junk from the ocean. Near Bajoalto there is also the beach of La Puntilla, where some community-based tourism initiatives are carried out by the municipality of El Guabo. So far these have not proved to be highly successful as the beach is difficult to reach, the local communities have not been well trained and there is no adequate infrastructure to accommodate tourists.<sup>39</sup> Near the town of El Guabo there are the Cascadas de Manuel, an increasingly popular ecotouristic site with several waterfalls, some of which are suitable for bathing. The Asoguabo Fair Tourism Project offers a visit to the waterfalls as an additional excursion. Despite the lack of proper touristic infrastructure in El Guabo, the municipality considers it as one area to be developed, aiming especially at concentrating on rural community-based tourism and ecotourism initiatives on the beaches, marine estuaries and in the mountains (AME 2006a, 97).

## 5.2. Snapshot: being a tourist in El Guabo<sup>40</sup>

Early in the morning the manager of the Fair Tourism Project arrives in El Guabo and starts arrangements for a long day ahead. By eleven o'clock a group of some 30 Dutch tourists are supposed to arrive to El Guabo, and they have arranged a full-day tour, including not only the Banana Tour, a visit to a banana farm of one of Asoguabo's members, but also all

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<sup>38</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

<sup>39</sup> Pineda 2010.

<sup>40</sup> This chapter is based on the author's fieldnotes from various participations to Banana Tour and additional tours, and does not describe events of only one particular tour.

the additional tours in offer. The group is touring Ecuador for two weeks, and today is the only day they will spend on the Ecuadorian coast before their flight to Galapagos the next day. Prior to their arrival to El Guabo the group has visited places of interest in the Ecuadorian mountains, *sierra*: after their arrival in Quito a week ago they have visited the famous Otavalo indigenous market, beautiful lake of Quilotoa in the central mountains, and the colonial city of Cuenca in the southern *sierra* for example. From Cuenca, the group has started their bus ride early in the morning along a good road towards Machala, descending from 2500 metres above the sea to the sea level.

Before everything is ready to receive the tourists in El Guabo, several arrangements need to be done. From the Asoguabo office, the project manager needs to collect the promotional material to be handed out to tourists, as well as some other material needed during the tour. Water and some bananas are bought, and chairs and tables are picked up from a nearby reunion room. The project manager also ensures that the guides will be ready at the plantation by noon, and that the person responsible for cooking, this time a producer's wife, is aware of the amount of plates that need to be prepared by one o'clock. This time only one guide will join the tourists, which means that the project manager will need to take charge of the other half of the group. Shortly after eleven o'clock the group arrives to El Guabo, where the project manager is ready to start the tour.

Before entering the plantation, a visit to a local school for children with special needs, Escuela de Padua, is arranged. This is part of an additional tour of visiting the social programmes of Asoguabo, as the organization uses part of the fair trade premium money to teachers' salaries in rural schools. In Padua, Asoguabo has paid a physiotherapist's salary for several years, and due to school's convenient location close to the El Guabo centre, it makes an easy visit to see what has been done with the fair trade premium money. Inside school tourists are shown around and explained about school's function. School's vivid and outgoing director is in charge of the visit, as tourists enter each classroom and have an opportunity to talk to teachers and children. Tourists are shown how the school works in practice, and they ask questions regarding the financing of the school and children's disabilities. Then, tourists congregate to a dining room where the director further explains about the school, its achievements and challenges. According to the Fair Tourism Project's

project manager, “the only problem with the visit seems to be that the director talks too much and does not stick in schedule”.<sup>41</sup> Tourists’ attitudes towards the children seem paternalistic, pitying even. Some of the females approach children and try to ask them questions on their broken Spanish. The children have become one more sight for the tourists, a piece of the visitors’ tales on the “real Ecuador”. Whether wanting it or not, they have become a part of the “performance” for tourists (MacCannell 1976, 96). This is the type of authenticity tourists crave for, seeing the “real” life of the people, including poverty and struggle (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 76). After about an hour, the tourists wave goodbye to the children, thank the teachers, take the final pictures and pack themselves back into the bus. Next up is the highlight of the visit to El Guabo, the Banana Tour.

Twenty minutes past the noon the tour bus curves outside the Andrés’ farm and tourists get out of the bus. Producer-guide for today’s tour, Andrés, welcomes the group and reminds of the importance of mosquito repellent at the plantation and gives the usual precautions about the patchy terrain. Tourists are offered water and fruit, including bananas, and after the group has been divided into two, the Banana Tour is ready to begin. First the tourists are explained about the fair trade system and the benefits it has brought about to the producers as well as to the farm workers and their families. Social benefits, stable prices and cheap credits are all mentioned, and these rouse questions among the tourists on the differences between fair trade and conventional farmers. Andrés assures the visitors that the producers are better off in fair trade, basing his argument on the growth of Asoguabo; why would people want to join if it was not good for them? Understandably Andrés appears much more positive towards fair trade than the day before when I interviewed him – then he wondered why the prices paid by the association had not progressed at all for a year, like they had done in the previous years.<sup>42</sup> Andrés’ presentation is faithful to the lines of PASEO’s manual for the Banana Tour guides, a document outlining the run of Banana Tour: fair trade is presented as something of a salvation for small-scale producers, and according to the manual, “most of the people working in the Asoguabo office are producers themselves, which often means that they work at their farms in the mornings and only go to the office

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<sup>41</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

<sup>42</sup> Palacios 2010.

after that”.<sup>43</sup> In reality, this only applies to possibly a few members of the directorate, not any of the actual employees of Asoguabo.

Next Andrés moves on to tell about the history of banana production, and how the fruit actually originates from Asia but over the centuries its production has shifted mainly to Central and South America. The importance of banana to the Ecuadorian economy is also grasped upon, and the visitors are explained about the fruit’s production process. The visitors listen carefully, and few seem to be especially interested about the use of chemicals and banana’s effects on the nature, probably fuelled by a small airplane fumigating the neighbouring farm that has appeared every now and then since the beginning of the tour. Andrés recognizes that growing banana is not the most nature-friendly form of agriculture, but soon he moves the discussion to how helpful Asoguabo has been in providing organic fertilizers for the producers. The man who asked the questions on the environment seems to believe that fair trade standards are somewhat looser in environmental issues than some other certifications, but Andrés does not provide him any additional evidence on that. By now, part of the group appears to be more interested in taking pictures about the plantation than in the guide’s explanation.

While the group moves around the fields little by little, Andrés keeps telling about banana’s different production phases and tasks involved in the process. The heat under the shade of the banana plants intensifies and there are no signs of any breeze. Some tourists seem to swelter. The group moves to the cable which is used in transporting the banana from the fields to the packing station, and two farm workers show how the banana is harvested. This part of the tour is among the most exciting, and almost everyone is now taking pictures. Next, tourists help to push the banana clusters to the packing station, where there are several people preparing banana to exportation. Andrés explains the process thoroughly, and some tourists ask questions on the farm workers’ salaries and working conditions. One female visitor finds it hard to believe that liquid sprayed on the bananas to prevent them from being attacked by fungus during the shipping is harmless as the worker in charge of this wears plastic gloves and a respirator. Andrés assures her on the safety of this product by telling her that the liquid, Citrex, is completely organic and is being used in organic

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<sup>43</sup> Contour Projects 2008.

production as well. This is a normal harvest day and it looks like the arrival of tourists came as a surprise to the workers.

After about an hour Banana Tour ends in watching how banana boxes are packed to trucks and ready to be transported in the harbour. Then, tourists are offered a local three-course lunch by the packing station. Before their arrival, the project manager has prepared the plastic chairs and tables to be ready for the lunch. The food has been prepared by a local *señora*, a producer's wife. There is asparagus soup for a starter, and followed by chicken and rice with salad on the side for the main course, washed down with a freshly pressed pineapple juice. Bananas are offered as a dessert. Most of the tourists seem to enjoy the food, but there are some who barely taste their meal. The atmosphere is lively, and pictures and stories are being compared. Then, it is time to move on, and Andrés is thanked with a big applause before the group is ready to move to their next stop, the waterfalls. Andrés has done his part, and is now free to return to his tasks on the farm. From this point on, the project manager of the Fair Tourism Project, Nelson, will be acting as a guide for the rest of the day.

It is about an hour's drive from the farm to the waterfalls, first on the main highway towards Guayaquil, and then later on a dirt road ascending to Andean slopes. The waterfalls are located at about 500 metres above sea level, and the slightly cooler air is a welcoming shift after the oppressive heat at the farm. At times, the road becomes almost impassable, but after a bumpy ride the tour group arrives at the waterfalls, where the owner of the concession, Don José, is welcoming them and ready to show around. There are a total of six waterfalls, differing in size and volume, some of which are easy to reach, while others need a bit of an effort to get to. At the furthest waterfall there is an opportunity to swim, and the tourists seize the moment and spend over an hour swimming and refreshing in cold water. The waterfalls are located in a naturally beautiful environment surrounded by a tropical forest, and Don José likes to refer them as an ecotourism attraction. It was only recently when he made the waterfalls accessible by constructing paths leading to them and by improving the road leading to the site. At around six in the afternoon a tired group is drove back to their hotel to rest before an evening visit to the Puerto Bolívar.

The visit to the harbour, Puerto Bolívar, needs to be arranged at night, as it is only then when it is possible to see all the different work phases of loading the bananas. First, the tourists visit Asoguabo's *bodega*, or warehouse, just outside the dock area. There the tourists have an opportunity to see the process of quality control, as after the banana boxes have arrived on the pick-up trucks from various Asoguabo members farms, a box from every farm is opened up and it is ensured that everything is in control. The visit to the *bodega* is very brief, lasting only a few minutes, and even though Nelson offers tourists an opportunity to ask questions on the quality controllers, tourists seem content with staying at the background taking pictures.

After this, it is time to enter the actual harbour installations. Before being allowed to get in everyone needs to provide their passport numbers to the security guards at the gate. Each tourist is then provided with a helmet and a security vest, after which the bus is permitted to start a tour of the harbour. As Puerto Bolívar is mainly a banana port, also tonight the vessel is being loaded with boxes of banana. The bus is only permitted to pass the vessel from a distance, and there is a chance for the tourists to disembark and take a few pictures. Not everyone gets out of the bus. Tourists start to become tired, and some complain about not having time to eat before having to leave for the port. Only few show any enthusiasm or interest towards the loading process, and the guide's broken microphone does little to cheer up the moods. After about 40 minutes of cruising around the dark harbour, the bus curves out of the harbour and takes a quick ride through Machala's *malecón*, a beachfront boulevard. At eleven o'clock at night the full-day fair tourism experience has come to its end and the tourists head back to their hotel for a good night's sleep before continuing towards the northern coast the next day.

### **5.3. The emergence of tourism within Asoguabo**

The Asoguabo Fair Tourism Project started in 2006, after AgroFair had contracted a Dutch tourism consultation company Contour Projects to provide technical assistance for developing the tourism project of Asoguabo (Asoguabo 2008, 4). Contour Projects is a company aiming at developing tourism concepts which are *fresh*: "fun – responsible –

ethical – social and honest”.<sup>44</sup> Apart from the project in El Guabo, Contour Projects runs two similar fair tourism projects, a coffee tour in Tanzania and a pineapple tour in the Dominican Republic.<sup>45</sup> These three cooperation projects are grouped under a brand name PASEO, which is used in the marketing. Initially there were more projects included in the PASEO family, but the unsuccessful ones have later been left out of the programme. These PASEO projects all share a bundle of characteristics, and in order to be part of PASEO the projects need to fulfil several criteria. They need to be run by a fair trade certified producer organizations and be conveniently located so that tour operators might become interested in them. Furthermore, the organizations need to be financially committed to the project, and there need to be opportunities for unique tourism products.<sup>46</sup> These requirements to participate in the PASEO seem, to some extent, contradictory with Contour Project’s concept of *freshness* – if the company raises ethics and social issues as being amongst their main principles, they should also consider offering opportunities to non-certified farmer groups, who are often seen as more vulnerable than fair trade producers, and to organizations that are located in more peripheral areas.

Asoguabo, however, seemed to fulfil PASEO’s criteria, and when they showed interest towards an idea to develop a tourism project among the farms of their producers, the cooperation was agreed upon. Although the project officially started in 2006, a number of tourists had been visiting Asoguabo since 1998 “to see how fair trade works in practice, what impact it has had on the community, [and] how it has changed people’s lives”<sup>47</sup>. Before the Fair Tourism Project started, the visitors were mainly European journalists or fair trade advocates, but also young consumers interested in seeing where the fair trade bananas come from and what kind of effects fair trade has on people’s lives. Asoguabo welcomed these visitors, and they were taken to see the production process, often at a near-by farm. Even though the visitor numbers were relatively low, a few dozen visitors per year, always when there were visitors, someone working for Asoguabo took the responsibility on them and showed them around. This meant that every time someone visited Asoguabo, one person had to spend a day with them, thus not being able to fully

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.contour-projects.com/en/whatwedo.html>, visited on 16/8/2010.

<sup>45</sup> <http://paseo.nu/>, visited on 16/8/2010.

<sup>46</sup> Jansen 2010.

<sup>47</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

concentrate on his/her primary tasks. At the time tourism in the farms was not organized, and the visits were arranged depending on visitors' wishes and producers' willingness to let people visit their farms. Normally the visitors did not pay for this service; occasionally however they tipped the producer whose farm they visited.

As many of the visitors to Asoguabo were Europeans, they often did not know Spanish and thus needed a guide who could translate the conversations with the producers. Only few of the Asoguabo office workers knew English, so it was often the current project manager of the Fair Tourism Project who was assigned to take care of the visitors. He speaks fluent English, and has also had some minor experience in tourism business before being appointed as an agricultural engineer in Asoguabo. Before the Fair Tourism Project started, tourists were often taken to Tenguel, a traditional banana-growing area in the midways between El Guabo and Guayaquil since it had a good infrastructure and various Asoguabo's members were from that area. As a producer-guide from Tenguel, Natalia, remembers:

Tenguel was the first *gremio* where all the tourists came. Where did they arrive? To Tenguel! Why? Because we had our own office, which was the most important, we had also the warehouse, and, well, we had what to teach them, what to show them, what we had done with the [fair trade] premium money because that's what they wanted to see, how the premium had been invested, what had been done with it.<sup>48</sup>

As we can see from Natalia's caption, in the beginning the main reason to visit Asoguabo was to see how the fair trade premium had been invested. Since many visitors were actually working for fair trade, or journalists writing about it, Tenguel was a good place to take them as it is one of the oldest *gremios* and thus has been developing the infrastructure since the late 1990s. In Tenguel, it was relatively easy to show the visitors what they wanted to see: concrete benefits that fair trade had brought about to the local people.

After AgroFair found out that Asoguabo was receiving visitors in 2006, they contacted Contour Projects to formalize these visits in order to benefit the association. After the initial contacts, the Contour Projects' representative visited El Guabo to see what they had to offer and what changes needed to be done before the association could begin to receive organized tourist groups. The project was approved by the Asoguabo directorate with a

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<sup>48</sup> Ordóñez 2009-2010.

requisite of not generating any extra costs for the company, and the current project manager was selected for the post. This decision was not a surprise, as he already had experience in receiving visitors, but some still thought this decision was based purely on the fact that he was fluent in English. As one producer-guide commented, “nobody else there speaks any English, and without knowing English it was impossible. I don’t know anyone else there who speaks English”<sup>49</sup>. The project manager was to be in charge of searching the suitable producers who could act as guides, as well as of the actual implementation of the project.

By the summer of 2008 twelve people were selected to work as guides in the Fair Tourism Project. Eight of them were producers of Asoguabo, one a producer’s wife, one a nephew of a producer, and two were caretakers at a farm of an Asoguabo member. Democratic participation and involvement of the local people is one of the main principles of fair tourism (Spenceley 2002, Cravatte & Chabloz 2008), and as the central objective of FTP is to generate extra income for the producers, these producer-guides play an important role in fulfilling this objective. Guides were chosen by the project manager, and he tried to find producers who are “available, with no fear of talking, who are expressive, patient, and who would have some experience with people from other parts of the world”.<sup>50</sup> However, most of the producer-guides were already familiar with the project manager, and the producers were not informed about the selection process; thus the process was not open for all. This situation resembles with Goodwin & Roe’s (2001, 379) notion that in tourism development “those with most power, education, language skills, or who happen to live in the right place, are most likely to get new jobs”. What happened in the case of Asoguabo was that the producers’ earlier contacts with the project manager, or their farms’ suitability for tourism were among the reasons why they were chosen to be guides. Even though the guides are not particularly well-educated nor possess knowledge of English, they were, to some extent, close with the project manager and thus in the right place at the right time.

The producer-guides who were selected to participate formed a heterogeneous group from several *gremios*. Some of them had already received tourists before the project, but for many this was the first contact with tourism industry. While others were small-scale organic

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<sup>49</sup> Delgado 2010.

<sup>50</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

producers from the mountains, others had several hectares of banana near the town of El Guabo. However, the reasons to participate were quite similar, and for most of the guides meeting people from around the world and teaching them about fair trade and bananas were the main motives. As one explained,

well, I like it, I like to talk to people, explain about what we know, because in reality... Most people who visit us are from Holland, Finland, Italy also, and as they don't know, then we, at least I, I have a lot of time and I know that... I know I can teach them! I like to teach people, to transmit what I know.<sup>51</sup>

In tourism the producer-guides also saw an opportunity to meet consumers and this way to possibly affect their decisions to buy fair trade bananas and also promote marketing of fair trade banana in their countries:

...the idea of developing the Banana Tour was supposed to benefit our association, not only selling the banana, but also to receive plenty of people from the outside, possibly many groups, many of whom are consumers of our fruit.<sup>52</sup>

No producer-guide admitted money being a reason to get involved but since the beginning FTP had, however, promised to pay a small remuneration of ten US dollars for each tour, something that had not been done before. The guides were pleased with this development:

[The producers were] interested and excited. And others agreed as well, because over the years they had always received visitors and as the visitors hardly ever left any contribution, the guides made it completely out of good will. And now they were told that they could receive money, as well as the women who cooked the lunch, they could also get some extra income.<sup>53</sup>

However, as one of fair tourism's main principles is the fair repartition of the benefits (ATES, cited in Cravatte & Chabloz 2008, 232), the amount paid to a guide for a several hours of work seems low. In fair trade, the producers are used to being paid a fair price for their bananas, but thus far fair tourism does not seem to fulfil these promises.

After the guides had been selected, in June 2008 they were invited to a one-week course to learn the basics of being a tour guide. This course was arranged and organized by Contour Projects, and it was implemented by two Dutch tourism professionals. It included lessons

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<sup>51</sup> Ordóñez 2009-2010.

<sup>52</sup> Paucar 2010.

<sup>53</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

on communication, on differences between tourists from different countries, on the content of Banana Tour, for instance, and a variety of practical exercises (Contour Projects 2008a). Most of the guides were not familiar with one another before the course, so apart from learning to guide, it also provided an opportunity to meet other producers. One guide, who had been involved in tourism before, found the course helpful in improving his guiding skills:

We were happy with the course, and even though it was very brief, a variety of different themes were treated, and it made us feel capable to guide, secure to guide... Before I didn't know very well what to say while guiding, I just made it up on the spot.<sup>54</sup>

Soon after the training course, in July 2008, Asoguabo was ready to receive the first tourists under the Fair Tourism Project. The project manager remembers his feelings after the first official visit:

I felt somewhat nervous on my first tour, as it was already an official experience, but afterwards I felt satisfied for having fulfilled the expectations, everything went fine, the tourists and the tour leader congratulated us and that gave us confidence.<sup>55</sup>

Cleverdon & Kalisch (2000, 176) call the shift from unorganized, non-profit visiting to an organized tourism project “commercialization of hospitality”. This means that whereas before hospitality was something of a free gift, after the commercialization it became a commodity that is being sold for tourists. Thus, the relationship between host and guest becomes commercialized (ibid.). Before the beginning of the Fair Tourism Project, the visitors to Asoguabo were toured at farms without putting a price tag to the experience, thus making any payment a voluntary act. After introducing the Fair Tourism Project this encounter between the tourist and the farmer has become commercialized hospitality, as there now is a price that a visitor needs to pay to the organization in order to be taken to a farm. Whereas before someone from the Asoguabo office just showed the visitors around for a day, now everything is organized beforehand, and the producers whose farms are being visited are selected in a way that they fulfil certain preliminary conditions for the visit, as defined by PASEO and the project manager. This added to the fact that because of their experience and knowledge, the producer-guides are probably the best possible

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<sup>54</sup> Delgado 2010.

<sup>55</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

individuals to explain about the banana production in the area, has made this commercialization of hospitality worthwhile. Now, the producer-guides can use their expertise in one area, namely banana production, in a new form of commercial activity, tourism.

#### **5.4. Different actors in Fair Tourism Project**

##### *5.4.1. PASEO*

Asoguabo's Fair Tourism Project is part of the larger group of PASEO's projects. New York Declaration is a document outlining PASEO's principles, and its first article states that "the PASEO Foundation ... wants to make sure that local people, whose environment is used and whose resources are exploited for tourism development, are also the main beneficiaries of the tourism products in that particular area".<sup>56</sup> This means that tourism projects under the PASEO programme strive to be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable for the people living in the project's area of influence. Contour Projects, through PASEO, provides these projects economic and technical assistance in the process of converting the projects self-sustainable.

In the case of Asoguabo, PASEO's assistance has been diverse: financial assistance in helping to cover the costs of promotion materials and participation to tourist fairs both in Ecuador and abroad; assistance to cover the project manager's travelling costs to PASEO meetings abroad; technical assistance in training the guides, designing the promotion materials and in creating professional approach to the project administration; and in creating market access and maintaining contacts with tour operators in Europe and elsewhere.<sup>57</sup> With assistance comes also responsibility. As Chernela (2005, 622) notes, it is possible that with external assistance, like that from PASEO, there is a chance that the external actors mediate their own agendas in the process, thus not taking the local point of view into account. In the case of the Fair Tourism Project, PASEO has been active in

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<sup>56</sup> PASEO: New York Declaration.

<sup>57</sup> Pérez 2009-2010, Jansen 2010.

promoting its fair tourism agenda, and although this initiative is viewed as positive by different actors within Asoguabo, very few are actually aware of what it includes. When I asked the producer-guides about how they perceived the notion of “fair tourism”, all seemed somewhat puzzled with my question. What is more, none of them even knew that the project was actually called the Fair Tourism Project. One producer-guide summed up felicitously his knowledge on fair tourism:

I don't know... I don't know whatsoever! I guess it's the same that with the fair price of the bananas, what we're supposed to be paid. But I don't know, no one has ever told me that. I believe they would like to pay us fair, a fair price also in tourism, I really don't know. What is it?<sup>58</sup>

PASEO's financial assistance for the project finished at the end of 2008, and since then PASEO's relationship with the Fair Tourism Project has been based more on practical and technical issues, including administration of the project. While the Fair Tourism Project continues to be a part of “the PASEO family”, PASEO is even considering of cutting out the cooperation with Asoguabo because of the lack of commitment by the Asoguabo directorate and the project manager seeming incapable of handling the project. As PASEO's director said, “it's sad to say that with Nelson at the steering wheel [the project] will never fulfil its potential”.<sup>59</sup>

#### 5.4.2. *The directorate of Asoguabo*

Every two years the members of Asoguabo select a directorate to represent their interests and to be in charge of association's executive matters. However, the members of the current directorate do not seem to be interested in or even aware of the Fair Tourism Project.<sup>60</sup> For some time PASEO has tried to get a person responsible for FTP into directorate, but so far this has been unsuccessful. There are two main problems in the relationships between the

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<sup>58</sup> Dueñas 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Jansen 2010.

<sup>60</sup> As an example of this, during my fieldwork in El Guabo two members of the directorate denied an interview about FTP as they “did not have enough information about it” (a member of the directorate, 13.1.2010).

directorate and FTP. The first one is the alleged lack of interest among the directorate in anything else than banana: “It is problematic that the directorate doesn’t know much about the project, for example, they don’t know how much money we have got, but still they don’t let us use it as we want. Neither are they very interested in the project; they’re so much into bananas”.<sup>61</sup> Even though the members of the directorate are not active participants in the project, they claim to approve it and agree with its implementation:

In reality, we don’t participate a lot in the tourism project. But we have always approved it, that’s what’s important because if the directorate didn’t approve it, it simply wouldn’t exist. As a directorate we represent all the producers, and since the beginning we have always given our support for the project to be implemented.<sup>62</sup>

When the six active producer-guides were asked whether or not they agree with the statement “directorate is aware of the Fair Tourism Project”, only one did, while the other five thought that the directorate did not have enough information about the project. Producer-guides seem to be somewhat disappointed with directorate’s lack of interest towards the project. As one guide stated,

what’s missing there is a change of attitude, a meeting with the whole directorate so that everyone would find out about the project, that everyone would know. Rubén (Asoguabo’s president) has never even participated in the Banana Tour, all the directorate should do it so that they’d see... And Nelson isn’t interested, I know he likes it but sometimes I feel he just doesn’t get it, I don’t know...<sup>63</sup>

This attitude towards directorate’s lack of interest is recurring among the producer-guides, and they feel somewhat disappointed by the fact that not even one member of the directorate has ever taken the tour. One guide also complained about the directorate leaving the project manager without any support:

For instance they never even participate in the Banana Tour. I don’t know if Nelson Pérez instructs them or if they collaborate with him. Because I see that Nelson does almost everything. He is the Banana Tour! He buys the input, he brings the water bottles, he goes to meet the tourists at the arrival, he shows them around, takes them to places and all that... He’s the conductor of the tour but that’s because he doesn’t have anyone to help him. When Theo (the manager of PASEO) was here he needed to ask the directorate to approve and they approved, but they never came [to do the Banana Tour].<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

<sup>62</sup> Salinas 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Delgado 2010.

<sup>64</sup> Dueñas 2010.

The second problem is the lack of communication between the directorate and FTP, which is acknowledged even by the president of Asoguabo:

Well, I have to admit that the communication is not the best attribute that we have in El Guabo. However, it's not like we never communicate but we don't receive any regular updates for instance. It's more like when we need something we ask. But it is a good question, right, as the communication should be more periodical, and not so that we would have to go around asking for it, it should be part of the programme, constant evolution.<sup>65</sup>

One possible solution to this could be regular meetings between the project manager and the directorate, or possibly including FTP into responsibilities of a member of directorate.

PASEO has communicated to the directorate that they are considering discontinuing the project with Asoguabo as long as the current project manager is in charge. The manager of PASEO commented on the problems with Asoguabo saying that it is the lack of interest from the directorate and the project manager's "communication problem" that prevents the project from developing as an enterprise.<sup>66</sup> Some guides seem to agree with this, and as one of them stated,

Well it has nothing to go forward with (*salir adelante*), if they keep it this way it won't progress. There's a lack of interest... There's a need for a sub-director who would be in charge of administering the guides, Nelson Pérez needs to be a manager and nothing more, if he only could do that... He'd have to promote the tour in different locations and all that. Theo (the manager of PASEO) told the directorate that there needs to be another person in charge, he told them. Well, it's not so much that Nelson doesn't put the necessary interest in the project, he likes whatever he likes. I mean, he's only an agronomist, but he knows English which is fine... But about tourism he does know not. The association has the money and all, so it's a pity...<sup>67</sup>

The fact that the project manager is "only" an agronomist and not a tourism professional has thus also created some dissent both among PASEO and the producer-guides, and especially PASEO has hoped that he would be replaced by someone who has studied tourism. However, as long as the directorate shows no more interest towards the project it is difficult to see that they would change the person in charge to someone else, especially as

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<sup>65</sup> Salinas 2009.

<sup>66</sup> Jansen 2010.

<sup>67</sup> Delgado 2010.

the directorate currently seems to be content with the situation: approving, but nothing more.

#### 5.4.3. PROMESA

As with the directorate, the position of Fair Tourism Project within PROMESA is not much clearer. The director of PROMESA is responsible for using the fair trade premium money, and FTP is also placed under the administration of PROMESA. Currently FTP's project manager uses half of his working time for tourism, and another half for different tasks as defined by the director of PROMESA. Even though FTP has its own, separate bank account, its financial issues are also administered by the same financial employee that administers PROMESA's financial matters. According to Nelson Pérez, there are 12 000 US dollars on FTP's account.<sup>68</sup> PROMESA's director thought there would be less than half of this, which again shows the lack of communication between FTP and PROMESA.<sup>69</sup> As in other tourism-related matters, the project manager is in practice the only person aware of the financial situation of FTP. When the project started in 2006, part of the deal between PASEO and Asoguabo was that Asoguabo participated in the project's costs in the first phase. In that year Asoguabo gave 5000 US dollars to the project through PROMESA, but after that the funds have come from PASEO and as income from the tours. The project manager Nelson Pérez claims that the reason for not receiving any more financial assistance is because "PROMESA thinks Banana Tour has a large budget, and that's the idea we need to change"<sup>70</sup>. PROMESA pays the project manager's salary, though the plan is that by the end of this year half of his salary would derive from FTP's income.<sup>71</sup>

The financial issues are not the only problem in the relations between the Fair Tourism Project and PROMESA. As with the directorate, the communication does not seem to circulate very openly. PROMESA's three-year plan states that by the end of 2010, FTP should be financially autonomous from PROMESA. This is a rather ambiguous statement,

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<sup>68</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

<sup>69</sup> Apolo 2008-2010.

<sup>70</sup> Pérez 2009-2010. FTP is commonly referred to as Banana Tour among Asoguabo's employees and producers.

<sup>71</sup> Apolo 2008-2010.

as FTP has not received any funding from PROMESA in years, and the project manager, whose salary PROMESA pays, works also in PROMESA's other activities. Additionally, different actors see this autonomy in different ways. PROMESA's director states that

no way there's any vision of doing anything more independent, no, it would be more like financial autonomy. But everything else, administration, coordination, promotion and all that would remain in the association. This is a project of the association.<sup>72</sup>

This point of view differs somewhat from the project manager's idea of where the project should be located within PROMESA:

Now we talk about self-sufficiency, so that [Fair Tourism Project] would no longer be part of the association. In the same way we would continue to work only with fair trade producers, and everything else would be the same as now, but with more independence, especially on the financial side.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, PASEO's manager goes even further, suggesting more radical move that would give all the executive power to individual producer groups, or *gremios*:

I have been thinking of not working any longer with Asoguabo, rather than [*sic*] with the individual groups. In the main office one finds too many administrators, while you need people with entrepreneurial skills... the producers themselves!<sup>74</sup>

This point of view contradicts with the fair trade principles, which emphasise the cooperative organization of small producers (FLO 2009, 6). However, these differences in something as important as the near future of the project tell more about the lack of communication than about real disparities between the actors. As with the directorate, FTP is still something in the margins of PROMESA; in their three-year plan there are only two brief references to FTP on the fourteen pages. PROMESA's director says that there has been no need for them to participate more continuously in FTP, but because of this lack of interest they are not aware of what is going on in FTP, nor seem to recognize the fact that the person running the tourism project has had no formal tourism-related training whatsoever. In January, 2010 the office of the FTP's project manager was moved from the other side of the building to the same open office as PROMESA's other employees, which has offered new possibilities in improving communication between the project and PROMESA.

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<sup>72</sup> Apolo 2008-2010.

<sup>73</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

<sup>74</sup> Jansen 2010.

#### 5.4.4. *Non-participating producers*

The main objective of the Fair Tourism Project is to provide the producers of Asoguabo an additional source of income. However, thus far FTP has only provided direct source of income for very few people. Out of the twelve producer-guides who participated in the course, only six actually worked as guides in 2009. As there are approximately 400 member producers in Asoguabo, this is an extremely low number. Producers who do not participate actively in Fair Tourism Project are not regularly informed about it, nor do they know much about it. Some are familiar with Banana Tour because they have seen Asoguabo's small bus with colourful pictures and the text Banana Tour printed on the side of the bus. Others may have seen a group of tourists visiting the neighbouring farm, or bumped into them at the association's office. When I informally asked over a dozen randomly selected producers at Asoguabo's office what they knew about Banana Tour, no one admitted knowing anything more but that there sometimes are some foreign tourists visiting Asoguabo. The reason for this lack of knowledge is the same as for the lack of knowledge of the directorate: insufficient communication. PROMESA's director argued that while producers should know more about the project, it is not a good idea to systematically visit different *gremios* informing them about FTP, as this could "generate expectations that [PROMESA] can't fulfil while Banana Tour is at the period of consolidation"<sup>75</sup>. The producer-guides do not agree with this attitude, however; when they were asked whether Asoguabo's producers had enough information about FTP, only one out of six gave a positive answer. As Mvula's (2001, 399) study on Zambia showed, many more living in the area of influence of tourism activity would participate in the project if given an opportunity, and this might well be the case with FTP as well.

The producer-guides say that they have talked about their experience within FTP with other producers, who have found the project interesting. As one guide told,

when I meet other producers of Asoguabo I always tell them I work as a guide, and everyone asks me what that is like, they don't know. So I explain them until they do understand, they

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<sup>75</sup> Apolo 2008-2010.

say “fine, I had no idea what it was like”. While we do things for the good of the association, there’s no reason to oppose anything.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, this particular guide had explained other producers about the project; he saw the project as a possibility for the association as well, and thought the producers should be informed about it. Similarly, another guide lamented that others do not know about the project even though they are interested in it and, as members of the association, they are also owners of FTP:

Well, it seems that it’s like... like nothing! Because some of the producers who are also the owners, they don’t even know Banana Tour exists. One can tell they don’t know but... At times I have talked to a producer, and also he has told that other producers are interested but they don’t know about [Banana Tour]<sup>77</sup>

Another issue brought up by producer-guides in their interviews was the fact that FTP was not properly discussed even in the general assembly. The director of PROMESA told that in 2009 he had once mentioned tourism project when presenting PROMESA’s budget, so “at least the assembly knows that we are working with Banana Tour”.<sup>78</sup> However, according to one producer-guide this is not enough, as the project is still not well explained to the producers: “In the assembly they say tourism this much income, this much expenditure and all that, but the producers don’t even know what tourism...”<sup>79</sup>. Communication between those who participate actively in the project and those who do not but are still members of the association is an important factor if the project is to succeed (Simpson 2008, 6). It is clear that in Asoguabo the communication does not flow as it should, and while at least some non-participating producers are interested in the project, they do not receive information from the project manager or PROMESA, but from the producer-guides. This, rather than open and systematic distribution of information, will probably provide more expectations and chances for misunderstandings.

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<sup>76</sup> Ordóñez 2009-2010.

<sup>77</sup> Palacios 2010.

<sup>78</sup> Apolo 2008-2010.

<sup>79</sup> Palacios 2010.

#### 5.4.5. *Producer-guides*

Lack of communication does not limit to non-participating producers and the Fair Tourism Project, but it also exists between the producer-guides and FTP. When the six active producer-guides were asked if they knew what is being done with the money tourists pay for taking part in Banana Tour, no one admitted knowing. One guide said this was “a secret”, and that with the prices tourists pay there should be some benefits for the guides as well.<sup>80</sup> After the training course and the positive start for FTP, the guides were told there would be a meeting with the project manager at the end of 2008 about different issues related to the project:

So he said that at the end of the year we'd have a meeting, at closing of the year we'd have a meeting, we'd find out how many tourists have arrived, how many we have received, and how it's going to be with our payments... I tell you, I don't know, thus far the engineer [Nelson Pérez] hasn't told us anything, he hasn't explained what they are supposed to do with the money, how it will be invested...<sup>81</sup>

However, this meeting never took place, and the producer-guides also feel the project manager does not listen to them in issues related to FTP:

Well, I've never had any conversations with Nelson Pérez, there's no interaction. Nelson has only dedicated to maintain contacts with those who bring the tourists (the tour operators) and the groups in Ecuador who haven't come, and then he calls us the day before the tour and that's it!<sup>82</sup>

Another problem in the communication derives from the short notice of arriving tourists to the guides. Sometimes this is due to the tour group's late notice, but sometimes merely to the project manager's lack of informing the guides about the upcoming tourists. For example, during my fieldwork there was one instance when a large group of Ecuadorian university students were coming to take the tour, and the project manager had this information at least a week prior to the visit. However, for one reason or another he failed to contact any of the guides in advance to ask whether they were available for guiding the group, and it was only in the morning of the tour, some three hours before the group's

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<sup>80</sup> Dueñas 2010.

<sup>81</sup> Paucar 2010.

<sup>82</sup> Dueñas 2010.

expected arrival, that he started to call the guides asking about their availability. He could not reach most of them, and those whom he could, were unable to do the guiding, apart from one who already knew about this as the tour was to take place at his farm. Thus, when the group was divided into two at the farm, the project manager took the charge of guiding the other half of the group. This incident demonstrates how poorly communication flows between the project manager and the guides, who might be notified about tourists only hours before their arrival. Partly due to this, the project manager does not enjoy the confidence of the majority of the producer-guides.

When the active producer-guides were asked whether the Fair Tourism Project is well-administered, none agreed. Part of this derives from the lack of communication, but there are other reasons behind producer-guides' somewhat pessimistic view on how things are run. One issue that often came up in the interviews with the producer-guides was the project manager's apparent incapability to run a tourism project. One guide explained how "the project manager is good for the association, but for tourism... No, no".<sup>83</sup> Similarly, another talked about the lack of development within the project and how not even the project manager seems to believe in the project:

It hasn't evolved at all, there haven't been more farms or more guides... Nothing has been done! I think that Nelson is very easygoing (*tranquilo*), I think that even he himself doesn't have much faith in Banana Tour. He doesn't show the enthusiasm...<sup>84</sup>

The fact that the current project manager was chosen for the post mainly because of his knowledge of English tells something about Asoguabo's commitment towards the project. Some guides even go as far as to say that without changing the project manager to someone who actually knows tourism and has the desire to improve the project, the project will not succeed. One of the producer-guides sums up his feelings of how the project is working by stating that "I think Banana Tour works, although it's not well implemented. It works, but we don't know how".<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Delgado 2010.

<sup>84</sup> Dueñas 2010.

<sup>85</sup> Dueñas 2010.

## **6. Diversification of livelihoods through tourism**

Introduction of tourism in Asoguabo has brought about some opportunities to gain extra income, chances to meet people from different parts of the world, and possibilities to learn new skills. However, these changes have only affected some of the members of Asoguabo, and others have been left out and not always even given opportunities to participate. This chapter will widen some of the issues already briefly discussed in the previous chapter, and analyse the issue of at which degree tourism actually supports diversification of livelihoods in the households of Asoguabo's producers'. The division by Ashley et.al. (2000, 4) of the four different ways of earning income will be used in the analysis. These different ways include wages from formal income, earnings from selling goods, services or casual labour, profits for local enterprises, and collective income. Especially the first ones, formal income and selling goods and services, are relevant to Asoguabo's case.

### **6.1. Wages from formal income and from casual wage work**

The main objective of the Fair Tourism Project is "to provide the fair trade banana producers with an additional source of income by means of tourism" (Asoguabo 2008, 5). In PROMESA's new action plan for the period of 2010-2012, this objective has been extended so that by 2012 the project should be financially independent and create income for Asoguabo, and especially for PROMESA.<sup>86</sup> Then, it would be possible to use this money generated by tourism to support association's members in the same way as the fair trade premium money is used. According to Ashley et.al. (2000, 4), the guiding work can, in theory, be of high status and relatively well paid. Currently, however, the Fair Tourism Project does not generate money for collective use, nor does it provide direct income for more than a few producers. As often with non-farm diversification, then, FTP has not dramatically improved the producers' well-being or increased their income (Kay 2008, 934). In FTP, only one person, the project manager, is paid regularly a formal wage for

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<sup>86</sup> PROMESA 2010: Marco Lógico del Plan Premio 2010-2012.

taking care of the project, and even his salary is not paid by FTP but by PROMESA. The producer-guides in FTP work casually, ranging from a couple of guidances per year to a few in a month, and the income they receive from guiding is marginal.

According to a research by AFAD in 2007, the main economic activity of about two thirds of the Asoguabo producers is banana production.<sup>87</sup> Thus, over 150 producers who are members of Asoguabo do not consider banana production as being their main source of income. Many of them work at their farm where the main crop is for instance cacao, but there are also many farm workers, wage labourers and professionals, who only get some of their income from their farm. Therefore, like in Latin American rural areas in general, also among the Asoguabo producers off-farm and non-farm activities play an important role in the rural households' income generation, and the links between rural and urban areas are evident (Reardon, Stamoulis & Pingali 2007, 175). The active producer-guides of the Fair Tourism Project are as varying a group as Asoguabo's members in general, and only two of the six consider banana production as their main economic activity. Of those who do not, one is a physician, who has hired a caretaker to be in charge of the farm's routines; one works as a secretary for her *gremio*; one is a university student, and one a caretaker at a farm. Apart from this, many of the producer-guides participate or have participated actively in other terrains, such as in their *gremios* or in different social and communal organizations.

### 6.1.1. Seasonality of tourism

The number of tour groups to the Fair Tourism Project varies greatly between the seasons, which means that the workload is also considerably different at different periods. As Sharpley (2002, 235) argues, the high dependency on seasonal fluctuations makes tourism's contribution to farm income relatively insignificant. In 2009, a total of 410 tourists visited Asoguabo in 33 different groups. This gives an average of less than three groups per month, which is much less than FTP's capacity would allow. As a large majority of tourists only participate in Banana Tour and do not take any of the additional tours, most of these 33 visits were only half-day. FTP has set an objective to reach 1200 visitors by the end of

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<sup>87</sup> AFAD 2007.

2010, which has proved out to be a highly overestimated number (Asoguabo 2008, 3). By the end of October 2010 there had been 303 visitors, while at the same time year before there had already been close to 400 visitors.<sup>88</sup>

There is a clear spike in visitor numbers during the European holiday season in July and August. In 2009, half of the groups visited Asoguabo during those months. Most visitors to Asoguabo are Dutch holiday makers on a tour around Ecuador, and the Fair Tourism Project has managed to get in to the itineraries of three Dutch tour operator. As large majority of these tours take place during the holiday season, visits accumulate to these months. Whereas Dutch tourists' visits are concentrated on the summer months, in 2009 most Ecuadorian groups visited Asoguabo in January and March. As we can see in Table 1, there were seven months in 2009 when Asoguabo received less than twenty visitors, including two months with only one or two visitors, and two months when there were no visitors whatsoever.

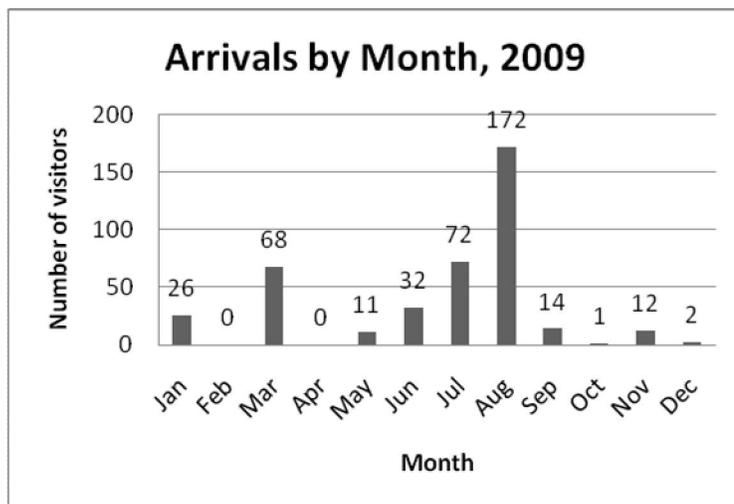


Table 1. Number of tourists visiting Asoguabo in 2009. Field data, 2009.

These differences in visitor numbers between months constitute a challenge for the Fair Tourism Project. As long as there are so few tourists during certain periods of the year, it might be difficult to convince PROMESA and the directorate of the importance of the

<sup>88</sup> Pérez 2009-2010, Korpela 2010.

project. This situation is even more difficult for producer-guides, as they cannot know when their services will be needed for the next time. One guide explained his situation after a long period without visitors:

From now, the last time there was a tour group on my farm was in October... November, December, January, it's been four months without anything! Just imagine if we lived off Banana Tour... That's not the objective either, but there is an incentive to that people would improve their lives a bit.<sup>89</sup>

While there had been no visitors in a long time, this producer-guide believes that this situation is something that can be changed. PROMESA's director commented this problem by saying that it is acknowledged, and that during 2010 this topic will be discussed.<sup>90</sup> However, as there is not much demand from the existing contacts, new markets are needed in order for FTP to be able to receive visitors also during other months. As most of the Ecuadorian tourists already visit Asoguabo in months other than July or August, trying to attract more national visitors might give at least a partial solution to the problem.

### *6.1.2. Participation of the producer-guides*

Closely related to the seasonality of tourism is the participation of the producer-guides in the Fair Tourism Project. A total of twelve producers were trained as guides in 2008, but since then there have been major differences in number of guidances between the guides. Half of the producers who took part in the course have not done a single guidance since 2008, for different reasons. One female guide became pregnant and has been unable to participate, though she was one of the most active ones in 2008 and might be available again after her maternity leave. One migrated to Europe, but the remaining four have dropped out because of the lack of time, difficulties to travel to El Guabo at short notice or project manager's inability or unwillingness to get in touch with them.<sup>91</sup> One active producer-guide also accused the project manager for not choosing the producers with right qualities to take part in the course:

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<sup>89</sup> Dueñas 2010.

<sup>90</sup> Apolo 2008-2010.

<sup>91</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

I think there are some guides who haven't [participated], who haven't kept themselves prepared... Our people, a little humble... Sometimes they don't have the charisma, to communicate with people, they might be a bit afraid of talking to foreign people, or in front of a big group. For example in the course for guides there were many who didn't participate, so it looks like the *jefe* (Nelson Pérez) did some screening on whom of us will be appointed as guides. That's what happened, and for that there are some [guides] who haven't done many [tours].<sup>92</sup>

This comment shows how the guides are expected to simultaneously present themselves first as typical Southern small-scale producers, and second, as tour guides fulfilling the Western standards and expectations of tourism professionals. The classification Carlos made on some guides being “humble” shows also the heterogeneity of the guides, as those who were possibly not prepared to face the foreign tourists in the way Nelson Pérez wanted have since dropped out, and only those who have been able to fit themselves into Western standards of a tour guide have remained active.

Of the six producer-guides who participated actively in 2009, only one was in charge of about half of the 33 groups (see Table 2). On nine tours there were two guides, so in 2009 there was a total of 42 guidings for 33 tourist groups. Reasons for this inequality in number of participations vary. Andrés, the producer-guide with most guidings, is a caretaker in a relatively large farm, just outside the town of El Guabo. The farm is easy to reach, with parking space for big buses, and it has got a decent infrastructure to receive tourists, with clean bathrooms and shady space just by the packing station to spread out the tables for lunch. Furthermore, Andrés is a good guide who is willing to share interesting stories about the local life, and he is often available as his condition as a caretaker allows him to delegate farm tasks to his workers. This added to the fact that there have been visitors coming to the farm for a long time and that the workers are thus familiar to receive foreign visitors and answer their questions, it comes as no surprise that this farm is one the most visited by tour groups.

Another farm that is being continuously visited is Carlos' farm, which is also conveniently located between El Guabo and Machala, just by the main road. Unlike Andrés' farm, this farm is often visited also when the owner is not available to do the guidance. Also this farm fulfils PASEO's requirements, and apart from the decent infrastructure it also possesses a

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<sup>92</sup> Dueñas 2010.

garden with over 80 plant species, including different flowers, sugar cane and cacao, and a traditional house made of cane, which is open for visitors. In the future it might be possible for tourists to sleep in the house as well. Additionally, the caretaker of the farm, who is not a guide in the Fair Tourism Project, is a very demonstrative and likeable person who enjoys showing around and talking to the visitors, so even when Carlos is not there, the visitors are guaranteed a vivid encounter with a farm worker. Carlos commented that one reason for him to participate as a guide was to be able to meet different people and also to have a good reason to improve the infrastructure of the farm.<sup>93</sup> Apart from these two farms, only two other farms were visited in 2009.

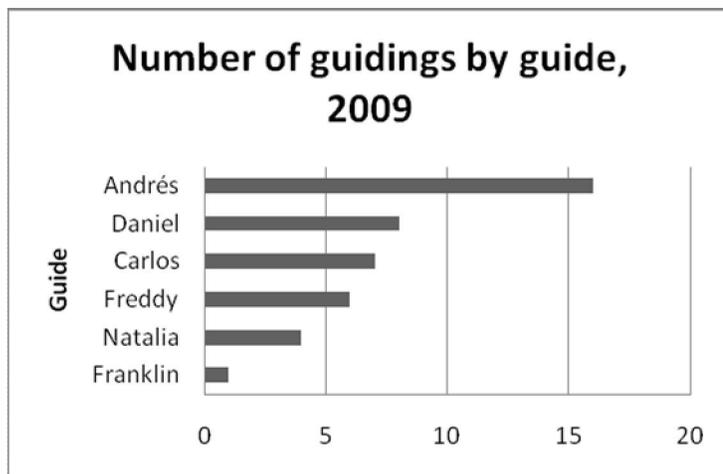


Table 2. Number of guidings by guide in 2009. Field data, 2009.

A guide, who only did one guidance in 2009, explained his reasons for not participating more and possibly dropping out altogether:

With other [guides] we've been commenting that in reality one can't always dedicate much time for this, one has to work at the farm, and if I go to guide, I need to leave someone to work at the farm, and I have to pay him. Also sometimes I've had to go to another farm, then I have to pay the travel, the fuel, so from my point of view I can't participate any longer.<sup>94</sup>

This particular producer-guide, Franklin, lives at about an hour's drive from the town of El Guabo, and apart from him and his father, they have not hired farm workers, except on harvest days. Although his organic farm is very attractive, located on the hillside, it is relatively hard to get to, partly by a dirtroad, and it does not have all the facilities needed to

<sup>93</sup> Dueñas 2010.

<sup>94</sup> Fernández 2010.

bring tourists to the farm, such as adequate sanitary facilities. As Franklin mentioned, he is not willing to do any guidings away from his farm as it is not lucrative for him, financially or labourwise. Franklin also believes that other producer-guides are more active than him because “maybe they do a very good job, or are located close where the tour takes place, and maybe they also get paid for the job they are doing”.<sup>95</sup>

One of the guides who took the course but never made any guidances even stopped picking up project manager’s calls after a foreign volunteer in Asoguabo started to offer optional English classes for the guides.<sup>96</sup> He felt that he was put under too much pressure, even though these classes were completely optional, and there was no expectation for guides to be able to guide in English. The groups are usually accompanied by a translator, and if not, the project manager or one of the foreign volunteers translate. Also, the project manager sometimes does the guidings, especially when he has not been able to reach anyone else for the job.

### *6.1.3. Financial benefits to producer-guides*

Guiding as casual labour can provide producer-guides with some extra income, but until January 2010 there had been very little compensation paid out to them. None of the guides admitted money being among the main reasons to start participating in the Fair Tourism Project, but as generating extra income for the producers is the main objective of FTP, one of the easiest ways to do this is to pay the producer-guides for their services. Currently the guides are supposed to be paid ten US dollars for guiding on the Banana Tour, whereas in 2008 they were paid twenty US dollars. Normally the guides are present only during the Banana Tour, which lasts approximately three hours, not in the additional tours. However, as the groups do not always arrive at the indicated time, guides are often tied to Banana Tour for five to six hours. Added to this is the time used in travelling when the guiding takes place away from their own farm, which can be up to two hours, depending on the

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<sup>95</sup> Fernández 2010.

<sup>96</sup> Paucar 2010.

guide and the visited farm. In addition, when the producer-guides are not available in their farms, someone else is often needed at the farm to carry out the daily tasks on the fields.

Even though the producer-guides did not admit money being the reason to participate, one guide reflected that “not everyone participates, mainly because of what they get paid... More for that than for not having time to participate”.<sup>97</sup> There are also different opinions on whether ten dollars is enough for a half-day job. Andrés, whose farm is near El Guabo and is often visited by tours, thinks it is:

For me ten dollars is fine for what it takes, but I don't know about the others because some of them have multiple occupations. Take Natalia for instance, she has to travel from far away, she pays three dollars for the bus, and the trip takes two hours, together with the guidance it makes five hours.<sup>98</sup>

This particular guide thus feels that ten dollars would be a decent compensation for the guiding only, but for those who have to travel longer it is not enough, both for time and for extra costs. Also, one producer-guide questions the amount they are being paid, as it might be only a small fraction of the amount paid by tourists:

I'm going to tell you, I'm going to be sincere... I'm not that interested in money, not at all, but it's not like I'm stupid either! For instance when a group of tourists comes, they each pay about twenty, 25 dollars for the tour. If the guides are paid ten dollars for guiding a group of over twenty persons, the guide gets no more than 50 cents per visitor! It's not as if I was asking to be paid more, but one has to be a bit fair, right? To receive at least one dollar per tourist...<sup>99</sup>

This low level of payment for the guides contrasts starkly with the fair trade standards, and even though the Fair Tourism Project is not a fair trade certified product, it claims to be fair, which is generally understood as paying a fair price for the services provided. Although ten US dollars for a half-day's work is above the Ecuadorian minimum wage, it barely shows any evidence of the partnership between producers and consumers, who each pay at least double of what is paid to the producer-guides for their work.

All producer-guides do not even seem to know how much, if anything, are they supposed to receive for guiding. Only two of the six active guides had been paid for the guidings they

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<sup>97</sup> Delgado 2010.

<sup>98</sup> Palacios 2010.

<sup>99</sup> Dueñas 2010.

had done. The other four either thought that they were volunteering, or did not know how or when they were supposed to get paid. Here again one can notice the lack of communication between the project manager and producer-guides. One guide, who had not been paid for a single guiding said that not being paid feels strange, as he “didn’t ask for anything, and they *offered* to pay”.<sup>100</sup> Another does not even know she is supposed to get paid for being a guide:

Look, the association tells us... Until now we haven’t received anything, we’ve been doing this voluntarily. But his year we were told that they would pay, so one can’t really tell... But tourists leave us tips, for instance, but so far we haven’t received anything like a salary, no no.<sup>101</sup>

This guide has been involved in receiving foreign tourists since the first tourists came to El Guabo over ten years ago, but she is unaware that she should have been paid for guiding since 2008. Similarly, another producer-guide explains how he has been disappointed with the project manager for not having fulfilled the promises made during the training course:

No, I don’t want to talk bad about Nelson, but... When we took that guiding course, we were told that we would receive a remuneration for each guidance and for each visit to the farm... But we haven’t received anything. I don’t know if the colleagues have received something, but...<sup>102</sup>

This Franklin’s comment on how he does not wish to talk bad about Nelson shows that the relations between the project manager and the producer-guides are somewhat unequal. As it was at the project manager’s power to choose the producers to participate in the guiding course, those chosen felt privileged about it, and are thus unwilling to openly criticise the project manager. In addition, as Nelson is a representative of Asoguabo, the producer-guides might think that criticism towards him might cause them trouble in the future.

Although the Fair Tourism Project is not an especially important source of income for any of the producer-guides, banana production does not pay relatively well at the moment, and even small amounts might be helpful in the everyday running of the household. During difficult times people will try to take advantage even of the minor opportunities open for them in order to increase their incomes (Nygren & Myatt-Hirvonen 2009, 829). The

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<sup>100</sup> Dueñas 2010.

<sup>101</sup> Ordóñez 2009-2010.

<sup>102</sup> Fernández 2010.

producer-guides also seem to be disappointed for not being paid what they had been promised. One of them reminds that “it is also very important to understand that we are also producers, we want our farm to improve, and we need to work to sustain our families.”<sup>103</sup> Especially foreign visitors often tip the guides and sometimes also the farm workers. The amount of the tip varies, and when given, it can be anything from two to twenty dollars per guide. According to the producer-guides they receive tips approximately from half of the visiting groups. Thus even with tips the level of their income does not rise to a remarkable degree.

Apart from this remuneration that is supposedly paid for guiding, a small amount of five US dollars is paid to producers whose farms are being visited. However, with these payments there have been similar problems as with paying the producer-guides, and about half of the visits in 2009 were yet to be paid in January 2010.<sup>104</sup> When it is not a harvest day and a demonstration of the harvest needs to be arranged, the producer is also paid six US dollars for each banana cluster cut for this purpose. Normally two to four clusters are cut during a Banana Tour.

Finally, it is important to bring out some other, non-monetary benefits that producer-guides have received from participating in the Fair Tourism Project. First, the producer-guides participated in the training course for guides, and thus had an opportunity to learn about different aspects of tourism and about how to act with foreigners. PASEO is even worried about producers starting their own tourism businesses now, when they know the basics on how to receive visitors (Asoguabo 2008, 8). Many producer-guides also mention encounters with people from other parts of the world as one of the most rewarding sides of participating in FTP. Some producer-guides say that they keep contact with some visitors for instance via e-mail or by sending and receiving postcards. Additionally, in 2008 producer-guides were offered a basic English course by a European volunteer<sup>105</sup>, however this covered only the very basics and thus did not help in decreasing the importance of translations in tours. As there has not been scheduled meetings for the producer-guides, these English lessons were also good opportunities for the guides to meet each other and

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<sup>103</sup> Fernández 2010.

<sup>104</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

<sup>105</sup> I volunteered as an assistant for this course.

reflect FTP among themselves. For the future there are plans to offer additional training for guides, and possibly train more producers to work as guides.<sup>106</sup> If Asoguabo keeps receiving more foreign volunteers as has been planned, they would also be willing to continue with English classes for guides.

## **6.2. Earnings from selling goods or services**

Another way in which tourism can create income is through selling goods and services to tourists (Ashley 2000, 4). In the case of the Fair Tourism Project, the most important contacts outside Asoguabo are those with additional tours. Goodwin & Roe (2001, 379) argue that the problem of leakage is common among small tourism enterprises, especially in the South. This means that as the linkages with the local economy are weak, very little tourist expenditure actually stays in the locality visited. So far this has not been a big problem with FTP as practically all the income stays within the association. However, apart from a few exceptions, Asoguabo has not been active in promoting or creating links with other local enterprises.

Apart from Banana Tour, the Fair Tourism Project includes three separate additional tours available for tourists: a visit to social projects funded with the fair trade premium money, a visit to waterfalls, and a night-time visit to the Machala harbour, Puerto Bolívar, to see how the bananas are prepared for shipping. However, visitor numbers for these tours are low, and in 2009 less than 30 tourists visited the social projects and the waterfalls, and about 50 tourists visited the harbour. It is worth noting that the Dutch tour groups, who make up a remarkable number of all tourists, normally only do the Banana Tour, and those visiting additional tours as well are more often independent tourists or Ecuadorian groups. The full-day package that includes all the three additional tours costs 35 US dollars, while Banana Tour only costs fifteen dollars per person. For each group visiting the social programmes a payment of twenty dollars per every six visitors is given to the Padua school. For the waterfalls, there is a fee of one dollar per person directly to the proprietor, and the visit to Puerto Bolívar does not involve any extra costs. Of these additional tours only the

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<sup>106</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

waterfalls receive regularly other visitors, and the thirty visitors brought by FTP in 2009 are relatively unimportant as there normally are around 200 visitors every week.<sup>107</sup>

Another group who has participated in the Fair Tourism Project are those who prepare lunch for the tourists. These two women, both wives of Asoguabo producers, prepare lunch for tourists at the end of Banana Tour. This lunch is generally basic local fare, for instance a soup to start, followed by meat or chicken sauce with rice and salad, washed down with a glass of fresh fruit juice. These women are paid three dollars per plate, which is enough to cover the costs of preparation, and gives a little extra as well.<sup>108</sup> However, due to irregular visits of tour groups these opportunities are sporadic and depend on the number of visitors. In 2008 there were attempts to involve more women in FTP through selling locally manufactured crafts, but the implementation of these attempts has never realized.

After a tour tourists are normally given a Banana Tour postcard, and sometimes offered to buy t-shirts with Asoguabo embroidery. However, apart from this, there is no merchandise on sale for tourists. During my fieldwork in El Guabo, t-shirts were very rarely advertised to tourists, and in 2009 a total of 63 t-shirts were sold to tourists for ten dollars each. If these were offered to visitors more frequently, there could be many more of them sold: a group of ten Dutch tourists who were offered t-shirts bought ten shirts, and another Dutch group of eighteen bought fourteen shirts. These examples show that there would be more demand if they were regularly offered. Apart from t-shirts, some of the producer-guides believe that other items such as crafts, key chains or booklets about Asoguabo could be sold to tourists and could this way generate extra income.<sup>109</sup> There have also been plans to open a souvenir shop to sell handicrafts, though this was supposed to be located in Asoguabo's new office building. However, construction work for the building has been cancelled since 2008 due to the difficult financial situation.

Finally, the Fair Tourism Project has had some cooperation with a few local companies. In El Guabo, a local hotel-restaurant has been recommended for tourists spending the night, and when the cookers have been unavailable to prepare the lunch, food has been bought

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<sup>107</sup> Tacuri 2010.

<sup>108</sup> Encalada 2010.

<sup>109</sup> Delgado 2010, Paucar 2010.

from this restaurant. Similarly, there are at least two different hotels in Machala that have been recommended for tourists wishing to spend the night in the big city rather than in El Guabo. Furthermore, bananas and some other fruit for tourists are bought from El Guabo's marketplace before each tour, and sometimes, when there is a big group visiting, plastic chairs and tables need to be rented from local people. Cooperation with all these enterprises is informal, but at least until FTP starts offering its own accommodation services, visiting tourists need to rely on these recommendations, however.

There are further plans to diversify the Fair Tourism Project and include more people in it, both Asoguabo producers and others. At the moment, the biggest challenge for FTP is to get the tourists stay in the region for longer time, and thus increase the probability of using local services as well. One option to reach this goal would be to include more farms by arranging visits to areas which have not yet been visited by tourists. Since most tourists arrive from the city of Cuenca and continue their trip straight after taking the tour, most farms that are being visited are located close to El Guabo town. However, introduction of new areas to visit would increase interaction between tourists and producers, and would create possibilities for further economic benefits for the local people. Visits to other local sites of interest could also be arranged, and include for instance demonstrations on other local agricultural products, such as cacao.<sup>110</sup>

Another issue that has been discussed within the Fair Tourism Project is the introduction of accommodation opportunities for tourists. Currently, if the tourists wish to stay for longer than one day, they need to arrange their own accommodation. The most likely option for lodging would be communitarian accommodation, where tourists would spend the night in a producer's house and get to know the local cultural practices.<sup>111</sup> There already exists one possibility of accommodation for tourists in La Libertad, a village about an hour's drive from El Guabo. Many of the region's banana producers are Asoguabo members, and they have constructed a rustic communal house with a few rooms where up to twelve people

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<sup>110</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

<sup>111</sup> Apolo 2008-2010.

could be accommodated. However, so far FTP has not used this option, as they do not see this lodging opportunity as fulfilling the requirements of the Western visitors.<sup>112</sup>

Finally, the inclusion of women and their participation in making handicrafts is still an ongoing theme in PROMESA and FTP. In 2008 PROMESA arranged a course for fifteen local women to prepare handicrafts of banana stem to be sold on Banana Tour, but after completing the course the women did not continue with making them as “they did not believe their produce could be sold”.<sup>113</sup> PROMESA’s director is still keen to try this, and there have been plans to try again if this would work out, this time in cooperation with a local university.<sup>114</sup>

## **7. Imagining fair tourism**

### **7.1. Commodifying the Fair Tourism Project: use of fair trade imagery in tourism marketing**

Before tourists arrive in any country, they have certain expectations of the country and its inhabitants. According to Urry (2002, 3) places that are visited are chosen because there is anticipation to find something that is different from the habitual life. This anticipation is constructed through a variety of non-tourist practices such as movies or literature, and thus begins already before leaving home. Once having seen pictures or read stories about the destination, one would like to go and see it for himself (MacCannell 2001, 383). When the decision of travelling is made, the anticipation is increased through finding information about the destination for instance from the internet or from tourism brochures.

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<sup>112</sup> Apolo 2008-2010.

<sup>113</sup> Pérez 2009-2010.

<sup>114</sup> Apolo 2008-2010.

### 7.1.1. Ecuador's image in tourism marketing

Ecuador's official tourism website markets the country with not-so-imaginative slogans such as "Ecuador, the leader in sustainable tourism", or "the country of the four worlds". Ecuador is claimed to be the "most mega diverse country in the world" and one of its main advantages lie on possibility to see many different regions, such as mountains, rain forest and coast, in a short time.<sup>115</sup> On the website's front page, environment emerges as the main selling point, but there are also images of the "exotic other" in the form of Amazonian indigenous people and the *cholos* of the coast. This myth of savage and pristine nature is often used in promoting tourism in countries such as Ecuador, where tourists come in search of untamed nature and natives in unchanged periphery (Echtner & Prasad 2003, 675). In the photo gallery of the coast we can find a picture of a farmer or an agricultural worker biking along the road by a banana plantation. This is the only picture of the El Oro province in a group of over 40 pictures from different coastal attractions. While the inclusion of this picture underlines the importance of banana production for the province and for the country, it also shows the relatively low significance of the province in Ecuador's tourism industry in being the only picture of the province.

The province of El Oro, however, does have some printed material for promoting tourism in the region. A new brochure was published in late 2009 in cooperation between provincial government and the ministry of tourism, and this bilingual brochure of over 100 pages is a complete and informational booklet with a reasonable map and plenty of colourful pictures. Eight pages of this brochure are devoted to El Guabo, with pictures mainly on the beaches and waterfalls, and with some basic information on the town. The pictures that have been chosen to represent El Guabo do not differ greatly from the pictures representing other small provincial rural towns: the main emphasis is on natural attractions that tourists may find appealing. Finding tourism information in the internet is a more demanding task, however. The provincial government has a site to promote tourism, but apart from some pictures it contains very little information. From El Guabo there are a few small pictures on the Bajoalto beach, a picture of the town's church, and two pictures on the waterfalls of

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<sup>115</sup> <http://www.ecuador.travel/en/>, visited on 6/9/2010

Manuel.<sup>116</sup> The recently renewed website of El Guabo's municipal government does not include any information whatsoever on tourism.<sup>117</sup> If, then, El Guabo is included in the tourism brochures or websites, the pictures that appear seem to follow the same formula, and there is not much variety on the touristic sites pictured in the brochures: the beach, the waterfalls, and possibly the church all appear frequently, but apart from those the brochures show El Guabo as a town with very few attractions.

### *7.1.2. Imagining fair trade in the Fair Tourism Project's promotion material*

The tourists visiting the Fair Tourism Project will also have assumptions of banana producers in general and possibly about fair trade producers in particular prior travelling. As most foreign tourists visiting Asoguabo are on a more extensive tour around Ecuador, often including Galapagos Islands, it is very unlikely that FTP is the main reason to visit Ecuador for any foreign tourist on a tour. While it is probable that most of the visitors have at least heard about the concept of fair trade, the Dutch companies which have included FTP as part of their programme do not advertise it as fair trade-related tourism, but rather as a "sustainable project".<sup>118</sup> Sustainability is still often used successfully in tourism marketing, even though (or maybe because of) it can be so widely interpreted that it can be used in supporting of almost any case (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 108). Additionally, tourists are most likely aware of the term sustainable tourism and probably imagine it as something positive, whereas fair tourism is still a relatively new term and the tourists are thus not so familiar with its use. Therefore, it is uncertain how well the visitors on a bigger tour are aware of Asoguabo's status as a fair trade certified producer association before the visit. It is likely that independent visitors are more aware of this, as very rarely visitors arrive in El Guabo for any other reason.

As in the promotion of fair trade products, also the Fair Tourism Project uses visual imagery in promotion of tourism services. Whereas in fair trade commodities the

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<sup>116</sup> [http://www.eloro.gov.ec/arreglos\\_de\\_turismo/turismo\\_por\\_canton/turismo\\_guabo.html](http://www.eloro.gov.ec/arreglos_de_turismo/turismo_por_canton/turismo_guabo.html), visited on 6/9/2010

<sup>117</sup> <http://www.elguabo.gov.ec/>, visited on 6/9/2010

<sup>118</sup> <http://www.snp.nl/reis/ecuador/compleet>, visited on 16/8/2010

relationship between the consumer and the producer created by the advert is “virtual, visual and entirely one-way” (Wright 2004, 671) despite the efforts to create imagined connections between the two, in FTP the fair trade producer and the visitor (who often also is a consumer) get a chance to meet each other face to face. However, FTP’s promotion and marketing materials share many similarities with the marketing of fair trade commodities.<sup>119</sup> Fair trade commodity marketing creates romanticised picture of hard-working small-scale producers in a distant tropical land (Varul 2008, 661), but as we shall see FTP uses this romanticised picture in their brochures and marketing only partially.



Figure 1: Asoguabo’s emblem

Asoguabo’s emblem is a human-like smiling banana, with hands and feet, wearing a peasant-style hat and standing under the big, orange sun, making a gesture as if to invite people to meet him (see figure 1). This banana, often referred to as *bananito*, a diminutive of banana, is used in virtually all of Asoguabo’s merchandise and advertising, including the t-shirts and the website. There is even a man-size figure made of foam plastic and used in events in which Asoguabo participates, at different fairs, for instance. *Bananito* is a figure whose presence captures similar imageries as a figure of a peasant: *bananito* is certainly

<sup>119</sup> FTP’s marketing material include: website (<http://www.asoguabo.com.ec/bananatoursite/index.html>), five postcards, two stickers, a Banana Tour brochure in English, and a caption in Asoguabo brochure in Spanish and English.

tropical, wears a hat that is very easily imagined to belong to a Southern small-scale producer, and is happy and smiling, possibly because he can be a part of the fair trade system. This figure replaces the small-scale producer as the representative symbol of the imagined rural life in Asoguabo's advertising material (Carneiro 2008, 83). For the Fair Tourism Project, the *bananito* has been modified to a tourist banana, and on FTP's website and brochure he appears wearing a safari hat, backpack and a camera (see figure 2).

Asoguabo's website is available both in Spanish and in English, and it includes the same information in both languages.<sup>120</sup> On the website there is information on the association, though much of it is outdated, and many subpages do not exist. Concluding from the information available in the site, the pages were last updated in around 2004. On the website there are some pictures on the production process, producers and social programmes. It is worth noting that the English language section is written in poor English and it is difficult to find even one completely correct sentence on the site. During my fieldwork in early 2010, there were some plans to renew the website completely and some preparation work for that had already been done, but due to association's dire economic situation, however it is unlikely this will happen anytime soon.

The Fair Tourism Project's website was launched in 2008 and it is also available in two languages.<sup>121</sup> The site is compact, and includes four subpages, titled Introduction, Fair Trade Banana Tour, Activities, and Images. On this site English is much more fluent than in Asoguabo's site, and the information is the same in both languages. The amount of information, however, is scarce, and the site only briefly explains the main activities of FTP. The waving tourism *bananito* is ever-present, and a few pictures of tourists and happy producers alternate in the banner on the top of the page. In the "Images"-section there are seventeen photographs, mainly of European-looking tourists participating in the different activities of FTP, but also some pictures of producers, and the project manager posing at a tourism fair in the Netherlands. Seeing pictures of other tourists taking part in Banana Tour activities make it easier for the future tourists to imagine them as taking part in these activities, to see themselves at the banana fields. Most of the pictures on the website are the

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<sup>120</sup> <http://www.asoguabo.com.ec/>, visited on 30/8/2010

<sup>121</sup> <http://www.asoguabo.com.ec/bananatoursite/index.html>, visited on 30/8/2010.

same ones that are printed on FTP's postcards. There is also a contact form to facilitate sending messages and for instance to book a tour on the web.

There are five postcards that are being used in marketing and that are often handed out to tourists at the end of the tour (see figure 2). The postcards are colourful, and contain various pictures on banana, producers, social projects financed with fair trade premium, and tourists. They all have Asoguabo's logo and website address printed on both front and back sides, as well as a pun "I went bananas!". On the back side there is also a text "Thank you for supporting our organic farmers". This caption is rather interesting, as only about fifteen per cent of Asoguabo's exports are organic, and, in principle, participating in the Fair Tourism Project does not benefit the organic farmers any more than the conventional ones. The use of this caption in the cards creates an image of a producer close to the nature, using organic production techniques in a normally relatively chemical-intensive banana production. Even though this is true of part of Asoguabo's farmers, the tourist who gets the card has possibly not even seen an organic producer during their visit to El Guabo. Also, many pictures shown on postcards and brochures are from organic farms on the mountains, farms that are very rarely being visited by tourists.

On the five postcards there is a total of twenty pictures, some appear on more than one card. Foreign tourists are present in eight of these images, a banana producer or a farm worker in four, nature other than banana farm in five, and the social programmes in three. Apart from these, there are images of bananas floating in the water at the packing station, of a ship in the harbour, and of the cheerfully painted minibus of the Fair Tourism Project. It is interesting that foreign tourists, not the producers, are at the centre stage in so many of the pictures, especially as the fair trade imagination is dominated by agricultural and artisanal producers who bring about the perception of authenticity in themselves (Varul 2008, 661, 662). Of the four pictures that do represent banana producers, only one offers a clearly romanticised picture of them: a humble middle-aged female producer transporting a couple of banana boxes on a horseback: this is something that only few Asoguabo producers do, as most of them transport their bananas to the communal depot or to the harbour by a pick-up truck. On other pictures farm workers are pictured on the farm doing their work, either carrying a bunch of bananas on the field or placing them into boxes.

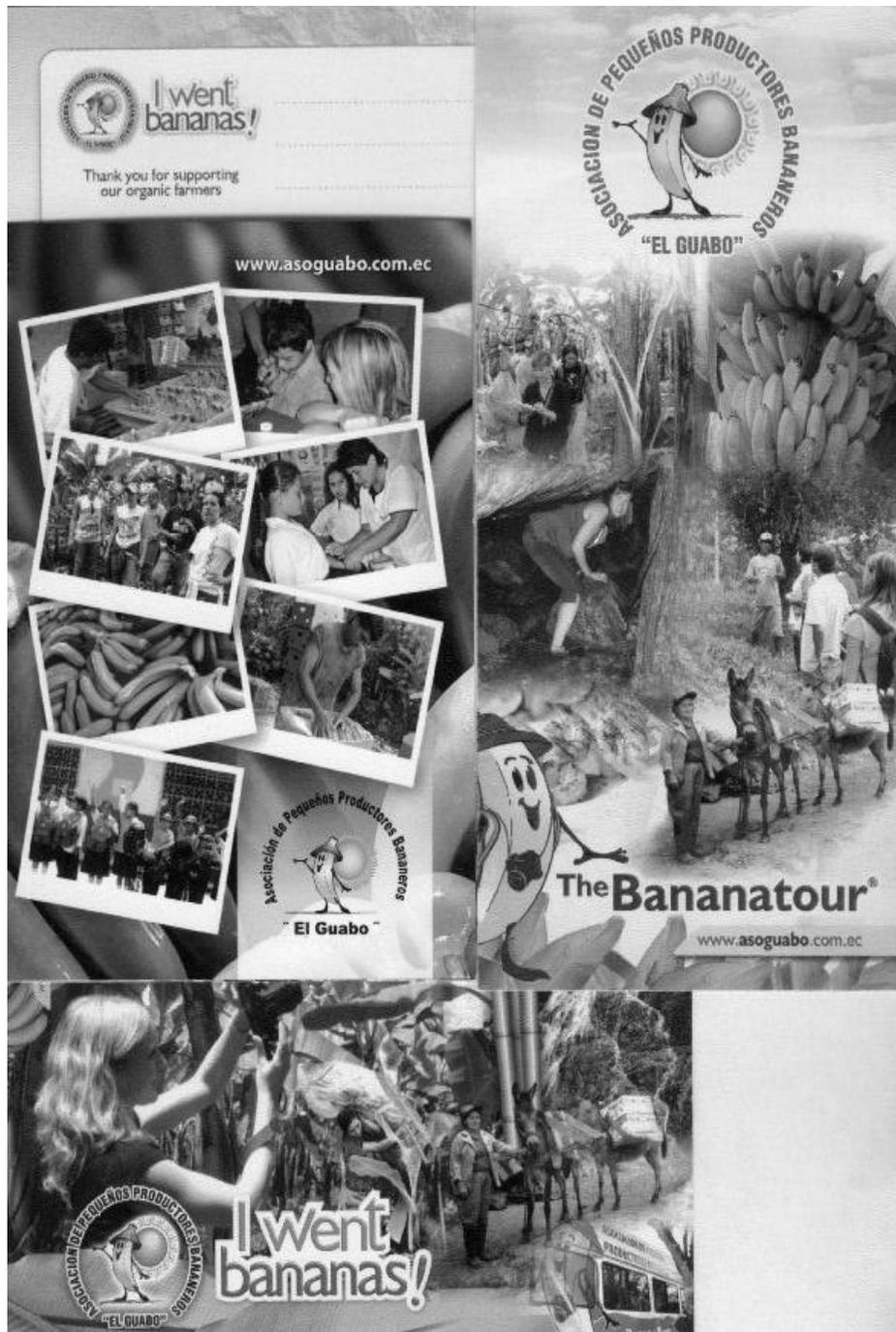


Figure 2: Collage of the postcards and a brochure of the Fair Tourism Project.

The English brochure of the Fair Tourism Project shares much of the similar imagery. The *bananito* appears in its both versions, and there are pictures of European female tourists walking on the banana fields and enjoying the nature. There is also a picture of a producer-guide at his work, and the already familiar picture of the female producer with horses.

Brochure's somewhat stumbling English-language text informs the reader on the main objectives of FTP and briefly explains the activities one can participate in while visiting El Guabo. According to the brochure, visitors will “have the opportunity to meet local people” and even “enjoy lunch with the farmer’s family”, as well as to “experience real life at the plantation”. Using terms like “local people” and “real life” in the brochures tries to separate FTP from other, “unreal” or “inauthentic” tourism experiences that only allow tourists to visit places *made* for them, thus not showing the *real* life as it is, without artificial ingredients. This is what Varul (2008, 660) calls romantic use of the imagination, where would-be tourists are being invited to daydream for instance about a lunch with a local small-scale farmer and his family in the afternoon heat under the shade of a banana plant. This daydreaming make people want to go and see for themselves what the place really has to offer (MacCannell 2001, 383). Unlike many fair trade advertisements, FTP does not use producer stories, personal profiles or close-up pictures of producers in their adverts to add a sense of authenticity (Varul 2008, 662). When the producers are being pictured in the promotion material, they are maybe surprisingly being portrayed as somewhat impersonal figures doing their work rather than the protagonists; it is the tourists who have been put at the centre stage.

If we compare the advertising material of the Fair Tourism Project with the often commodifying adverts of fair trade, we see that they do coincide to some extent. However, it must be kept in mind that whereas these adverts try to sell the fairly-traded agricultural products, FTP tries to sell the place, tries to achieve more people to visit El Guabo. This might explain why the images of the producers do not play such an integral role in FTP's adverts: by showing foreign tourists in their postcards and brochures, FTP wants to show the potential visitors that there have been other tourists from their country before and they have been enjoying the experience. This is only true for certain types of tourists, however, and does not appeal to travellers who look to rediscover their “authentic self”, distinguishing themselves from “ordinary tourists” in search for new, unvisited places to conquer (Nygren 2006, 513). The *bananito* figure in FTP’s adverts somehow replaces the producer in the promotion material by being exotic and peasant-like, “the other” in the sense that it is exotic, and has the feeling of simplicity and sustainability (Mowforth & Munt 2009, 76).

On the other hand, however, the use of foreign tourists also potentially decreases the authenticity of the Fair Tourism Project in the eyes of the would-be visitors to El Guabo. The aesthetic nature is present, but the farmer or other signs of poverty only appear rarely in them. The exception is a card that includes three different pictures of the social programmes. One picture shows a foreign female tourist smiling at a disabled little boy probably in a school, painting. In another one a nurse is vaccinating a young girl in a school uniform, and in one we can see a group of children outside school with their brand new schoolbags with Asoguabo's logo on them. While these pictures do not portray the children as remarkably poor, they are still pictured as the "others": the idea of these pictures is to show a consumer how their decision to buy fair trade bananas can make a difference, as part of the money spent in them ends up in social projects. Thus, the potential consumer, be it a potential tourist or a potential buyer of fair trade bananas, may feel like having "superior" social, economic and geographical status as they have an opportunity to help the local people with their consumption decision (Wright 2004, 672).

## **7.2. Authenticity in the Fair Tourism Project: getting to know the daily life of producers?**

The Fair Tourism Project is a niche tourism product aiming to show the tourists the real life of small-scale fair trade banana producers in Ecuador. It aims to be "a unique local life experience" for the tourist, to offer something special that one cannot encounter elsewhere (Asoguabo 2008, 12). In the analysis of FTP's authenticity I will use Mowforth & Munt's (2008, 71) claim that new forms of tourism, including fair tourism, strive to offer an experience where tourists can "meet real people in real places producing real things". By "real" I mean local people and places that tourists *imagine* to be real and authentic in their desire to get off the beaten path and in with natives (MacCannell 1976, 97). The veil of fetishism is supposedly removed, and tourists have an opportunity to meet people who live their everyday lives as usual. In fair trade there are largely symbolic "modes of connectivity" between the Southern producers and Northern consumers, which sometimes achieve the level of actual encounter in the producer's visit to a consumer country to share

their stories about their realities and everyday lives (Lyon 2006, 458). In tourism which includes an encounter with the producer this mode of connectivity is taken further, and now the Northern consumers have a chance to visit the fair trade producer in their surroundings. Even if the ambition of this type of tourism is to make the social links between producer and consumer visible (Cravatte & Chabloz 2008, 233), what is shown to a tourist is still selected and arranged in advance (MacCannell 2001, 382).

### 7.2.1. “Real” people

As already noted above, the brochures and the website of the Fair Tourism Project promises that tourists will have an opportunity to meet local people during their visit. When tourists arrive in El Guabo they will first probably meet the project manager, and some even spend the whole tour with him, as sometimes he acts as a guide. One producer-guide sees this role somewhat problematic as the project manager is an employee, who thus represents the Asoguabo’s office, not the producers.<sup>122</sup> Another producer-guide thinks the project manager should only act as manager and not get involved in guiding and hosting the visitors.<sup>123</sup> At the moment, however, this would not even be possible due to the challenging economic situation of FTP and Asoguabo, and the consequent fact that the association’s directorate is not willing to invest on FTP. However, the project manager is as Ecuadorian as any other, and the problem seems to be in him not having the image of a tropical farmer; that is exactly what the tourists expect to see when taking part in Banana Tour.

On most Banana Tours, however, there is also the encounter between the tourists and a producer-guide. The encounter with the producers is part of Banana Tour’s itinerary, and the meeting between the guest and the producer-guide is not casual, but, as in tourism in general, arranged in advance. As MacCannell (2001, 384) argues, the “others” that a tourist meets in tourist settings are most of the time other tourists and local workers whose job is to serve tourists. This is true in the Fair Tourism Project as well even though the producer-guides are small-scale producers or at least really close to one. Despite this, the producer-

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<sup>122</sup> Dueñas 2010.

<sup>123</sup> Delgado 2010.

guides' encounters with tourists are often reciprocal. The main objective of the visit is to explain the tourist about the fair trade system and banana production, but these encounters sometimes even lead to some kind of a friendship and further contacts between the producer-guide and the tourist. One producer-guide explains his experiences with visitors:

Well, afterwards they ask questions, in a more informal manner, with more confidence, they ask us how we live, about our families, the plants... Others ask if there are other people working on the farm, about the workers, some ask how come someone like me works there... And from there on we keep creating friendship. With some we've been more in contact, some have sent photos...<sup>124</sup>

Topics that are being discussed can thus vary greatly, depending on the group. Some groups are bigger, around fifteen tourists per guide, when the chances to make any closer contact are much smaller.

The encounters between the producer-guides and the tourists are often quite informal, and after the guiding course in 2008, the producer-guides have not received any further training on how to act with the tourists. In the course the producer-guides were advised to be themselves, "only acting to be you"<sup>125</sup>. Once during my fieldwork one of the producer-guides, who was about to make his first ever guidance, arrived on a farm ready to guide wearing his best outfit, with a silk shirt and shiny shoes. The project manager was blatantly annoyed by this outfit, but as the tour was about to start he did not say anything about this to the guide. After the tour the project manager told me how the producer-guides should wear the same clothes they normally wear on the banana fields, and not put on anything they would not wear while working. For the next guidance about a week later this guide was wearing his "authentic" work outfit, including a grimy cap, a snagged t-shirt and a pair of old rubber boots. This fits to an idea that tourists shape the outcome of touristic encounters by giving preference to locals who look and behave in ways that tourists imagine as being authentically indigenous (Stronza 2001, 271).

Apart from the producer-guides there are three groups of people that tourists may meet during their visit to El Guabo who are not there to serve tourists. Of these groups the farm workers are the ones met by most tourists as the encounter takes place during the Banana

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<sup>124</sup> Dueñas 2010.

<sup>125</sup> Contour Projects 2008a, 5

Tour. When possible, tours take place on the harvest day, but due to circumstances groups sometimes visit on the day when there is no harvest. Banana is a good fruit for this as it is harvested weekly throughout the year, and Asoguabo normally has three to four harvest days a week divided by region. This means that whenever tour groups schedule their visits between Wednesday and Friday it is very likely they will see an authentic harvest. When there is no harvest on any farm suitable for visiting, the farm workers put up a demonstration of cutting the fruit. The other phases of the harvest, namely those that take place at the packing station, are usually omitted in these tours. Meeting the farm workers is one of the highlights of the tour. One producer-guide explains how seeing the work done by the workers is an authentic and demonstrative part of Banana Tour:

Well, when there are workers on the fields, when the tourists see the people working on the fields, cutting leaves for instance, as some of the leaves have become yellow, infected with sigatoka (a banana plant disease), or when leaves are falling from the plants they clean up the stem so that... Like that, but only when people are working. If not, one has to mount a demonstration. During the harvest the tourists can see the reality, whether or not it is a real harvest day, because also then one has to fold the plant, cut it, then carry it to the packing station, every task like on the real harvest day.<sup>126</sup>

Besides from seeing the farm workers doing their work, tourists often also have, language skills permitting, a chance to talk to them and ask questions about their work and any other issues that might spring up. During my fieldwork, I noted different responses by workers towards tourists: some seemed familiar and unperturbed with the groups coming to observe their duties, some seemed to be more reserved.

The other two groups to get in contact with tourists during the additional tours are the staff and the children that are being visited in the school, and the port workers in Asoguabo's warehouse. These are not staged encounters, and for instance the children's school day is not affected by a visiting group. Here tourists have a chance to talk to the teachers and see how a state-owned school for disabled children works. Sometimes tourists also visit the Asoguabo warehouse in Puerto Bolívar, where there are about twenty to thirty mostly young men unpacking the banana boxes from the trucks and preparing them for exportation. There are very few visitor groups to the warehouse, and those who do visit,

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<sup>126</sup> Palacios 2010.

often observe the work for a few minutes, then hear about the work done in the warehouse by a supervisor, and observe the quality controlling process.

### 7.2.2. “Real” places

Meeting the “real” people is often perceived more authentic experience if these people are met in the “real” places, meaning an environment “natural” to them. The tourists visiting El Guabo see the producers’ working environment, the banana fields, but do not normally have the opportunity to see their private living environments. MacCannell (1976) divides the tourism establishments to front and back realities, where the front is the meeting place of hosts and guests, and the back is the place where the hosts retire between performances to relax and to prepare. According to him, the back realities are “intimate and real”, as opposed to the “show” of the front reality, and these realities can be arranged in a six-stage continuum starting from the front and ending at the back (MacCannell 1976, 92, 94, 101). The difference between the front and back regions is that tourists are normally only shown the front reality, but many visitors would like to get a glimpse of the back realities as well. In the Fair Tourism Project the back and front realities do exist, but the borders between them are rather ambiguous, and most visitors seem content with what they are being shown; for them, they see the daily work of a Southern small-scale fair trade producer in a real-life setting of a banana field.

However, we must take into account the fact that tourists are not welcome to visit *any* farm they wish, but they are taken to a particular, carefully selected farm. In MacCannell’s front-back continuum the visited farms are in stage five: a back region that may be cleaned up or altered when tourists are allowed to glimpse in (MacCannell 1976, 102). The tourist experiences on the farms that are being visited are real in a sense that these farms are places of work, not open to everyone, and the same events would take place whether there were tourists or not. However, these farms are selected to become touristic sites among great number of farms, and are open for tourists because they are the farms that the Fair Tourism Project *wants* to exhibit to tourists. Most of these farms that receive tourists are located relatively close to the town of El Guabo. Since El Guabo is a lowland town, most farms are

under conventional banana production and relatively monotonous with not many obvious tourist interests. This, however, is the typical and thus authentic type of farm found in the area and rather than sharing the romanticised view of subsistence farming on the small farms in the tropics, these productive farms are highly technical, with remarkably high yields, and they are places of production. This coincides with the views of *nueva ruralidad* on aiming to transform the idea of rural places as culturally and industrially backward areas that are still operating within the subsistence logic (Kay 2008, Gómez 2001). Rather, on many levels Asoguabo is among the most dynamic small-scale producer organizations in Ecuador, whose producers show good levels of land productivity (Ruben et.al. 2008, 161).

However, as Asoguabo has about 400 member producers, this obviously means that they are a heterogeneous group with a wide variety of different farms. Some producer-guides believe that more tourists should be taken to see the more varied, often organic farms on the foothills of the Andes. It is true that these farms often have more variety, and would fit better into the romanticised idea of fair trade farms in fecund, tropical environment (Bryant & Goodman 2004, 348). However, by showing the tourists that this romanticised idea is incorrect and that a “typical” small-scale farmer may not be similar to the images shown in fair trade adverts helps in defetishising these views. The best solution would probably be to show the visitors different farms with different producers in order to emphasise the heterogeneous nature of Asoguabo producers. One producer-guide explains how the wide variety of fruit and the close contact with the nature had affected one tourist group who had visited his organic farm on the mountainside:

And that’s what they like, that’s what catches their eye, they want to learn. Also one time when we did a tour here in La Flórida, it’s really impressive to get here when there are fruits, oranges, mandarins, plantains and all that, then we went around the whole farm, picking up oranges, they got them straight off the trees, they sucked the mandarins, they liked it all a lot and said that it’s better here than in the lowlands, because here one can see all the different fruits, different trees, the hills, the fields, how we use leaves as fertilizer, all that, and they liked it a lot!<sup>127</sup>

However, for tourist groups on a tight schedule it is often impossible to include visits to these farms as they are harder to reach, and it would require much more time to include more than one farm for a group’s visit.

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<sup>127</sup> Paucar 2010.

FTP's additional tours also offer a possibility to get a peek to the back region, by visiting a school, the warehouse and the port. Even though all of these visits are arranged ahead of the visit, they do not alternate the visited environment in any way for the visitors. These places can be seen as being as authentic as it gets: places that offer a glimpse of a real life as it is really lived in places that are normally closed to outsiders (MacCannell 1989, 99). When tourists enter these places they become *work displays* for tourists (MacCannell 2001, 384). Thus, as MacCannell argues, this whole scene of work becomes part of touristic consumption of the picturesque view of the workers in a tropical banana plantation or a warehouse packing the bananas. Although the scene is not manipulated as such, it does turn into a commodified scene for tourists to consume as soon as they enter the place. For tourists, the warehouse might not be a workplace of local young men, but rather an "authentic" insight of the local life.

During my fieldwork period, there were three instances when I had a chance to visit the warehouse with a group of tourists, and for visitors this visit turned out to be the least interesting of the additional tours every time. One reason for this was the lack of guidance, as the visitors were often just told to "look around". However, the warehouse is a big, dark shed with a couple of dozen busy workers going on about with their business. In addition to this, the air in the warehouse is poor as big diesel trucks regularly get in and out, and this also causes loud noises so that even if the guide was explaining what is taking place, it would be hard for the visitors to hear. Thus, even though the warehouse plays an integral part of the value chain of Asoguabo's bananas, it is probably not a right place to bring visitors. The idea to include this part of the banana's commodity chain in the Fair Tourism Project is interesting, however, and those visitors who only take part in Banana Tour only see the production process of the chain. A visit to the warehouse and the port offers another important glimpse of global banana trade to see how the bananas are prepared for transportation, and was this visit better arranged, it would have a chance to further enhance the visitors' understanding on some important issues regarding global commodity trade.

### 7.2.3. “Real” things

Finally, as tourists visiting the Fair Tourism Project see the production process of the same bananas that are being sold in many European countries, these bananas are “real things” produced by “real people in real places”. FTP offers tourists a possibility to meet the producer and see the production process, and in some cases what happens to the banana after leaving the farm, but is it possible for tourists to unveil the fetish surrounding the commodity, in this case banana, during this short visit to the farm? Goodman (2004, 902) argues that in fair trade networks relations between consumer and the producer are made to look as if they become visible and real, but simultaneously they replace this fetish with another one, the one romanticising the producer and the production place. In tourism to fair trade certified farms defetishising effort has been taken one step further still. While the connections between the producer and the consumer are made visible in that in FTP they have a chance to meet each other, this encounter is organised and only partly “real”, one where the fetish has been re-worked into an alternative spectacle for Northern consumers (Bryant & Goodman 2004, 359). As a conclusion, we can argue that in the Fair Tourism Project the fetish has been *slightly unveiled*, meaning that it is a step further from fair trade’s defetishising efforts, but does still not completely remove the veil from fair trade banana’s consumption. Even if a consumer does meet a producer and sees a farm where bananas are produced, it is still only one particular farm, and as the group of producers are a highly heterogeneous group there are many farms the consumer has not been able to see. Thus, while one veil might have been unveiled, it is possible that it has been replaced with another one.

Cleverdon & Kalisch (2000, 177) argue that when a consumer visits the producer and sees, and to some extent, even participates in the production process, they can see the benefits of their contribution and can even assess whether fair trade standards are implemented accordingly. However, this view of visiting the fair trade farms is somewhat simplistic, as it fails to take into account the discussion on authenticity and the fact that this is, to a certain extent, a performance. In addition, Cravatte and Chabloz (2008, 233) argue that the image fabricated by the tourist about the fair trade farmer and the production process can be undermined when the encounter and a visit to the farm take place. Thus, there is always a

risk that when tourists have an opportunity to see for themselves the conditions in the farm, they might also think that fair trade does not support the producers enough, or that the workers do their work in unacceptable conditions, or that there are too much chemicals used in banana production. The Fair Tourism Project tries to show the production process as genuine as possible, and one producer-guide claims that there would even be no point in trying not to tell the truth as the tourists are supposedly already aware of these things:

(PASEO's manager) Theo told us that the Dutch do understand, they know all about that, they use the internet and they are familiar with this, so he told us that we don't have to lie to them on anything because they know the reality. They will notice if we're lying, he said, and because of that we need to tell the truth, show them real things... They come, they see all kinds of tools used in the harvest process...<sup>128</sup> Sometimes they even ask the workers about how much they're getting paid, how much they get from working there and all that...<sup>129</sup>

Another interesting issue in "seeing the real things" being produced is the fact that tourists very rarely get to eat the bananas produced on the farm they are visiting. Even though customarily visitors are offered bananas to eat before entering the plantation, these bananas are generally bought from the market and are probably conventionally produced bananas for local use, and not the same ones the visitors will get in the supermarkets in their home countries when buying fair trade. Tourists are not told that these bananas are not necessarily fair trade certified or organic, but during my fieldwork there were cases when a tourist asked a guide about the origins of the banana they were eating, and in these cases the guide did reveal that they had been bought from the marketplace. The reason for not offering bananas from the farm that is being visited is that the bananas for export are only ripened in their destination country and thus leave the farm green and raw, whereas the fruit for local consumption generally comes from other producers.

Currently more and more tropical agricultural products have a system of traceability which allows a consumer to trace the product bought in the supermarket to its origins, often even at a farm level (see Reynolds 2008 for fair trade coffee). While bananas of Asoguabo do not have this opportunity, all the boxes are stamped with an eight-figure stamp that identifies the farm and the harvest date. Thus, in principle it is possible to trace each box of bananas

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<sup>128</sup> *Arrumador, cortador, desmanador, picador.*

<sup>129</sup> Ordóñez 2009-2010.

all the way to its producer, and as bananas are often sold straight out of their boxes, a customer would have an opportunity to trace the product back to its origins. As there is no organised traceability system, however, in practice this would require much work from a consumer to track down the producer. This possibility is, in any case, an interesting point that is explained to tourists during the tour. Possibility to trace the banana back to the producer further creates a certain connection between the consumer and the producer, and plays its part in defetishising effort.

## **8. Conclusion: *nueva ruralidad* in the Fair Tourism Project**

In this thesis, I have focused on studying the Fair Tourism Project of Asoguabo, and I have shown how the project has been constructed; both in diversifying from banana production to tourism, as well as in constructing the images attractive to potential tourists.

The Fair Tourism Project was established in 2006, after a Dutch organization PASEO got in touch with Asoguabo through its contacts with AgroFair. Because Asoguabo had already received tourists before, the shift to “commercialize the hospitality” (Cleverdon & Kalisch 2000, 176) was not such a big leap. Those producers who could participate in the project as guides were selected mainly through the project manager's personal networks, and their main motives for participation was to meet people from different parts of the world. Even though none of the producer-guides admitted money being their main reason to participate, FTP has in a sense failed to deliver what they have promised to the producer-guides for not paying a certain premium for them for guiding, as was promised at the beginning of the project.

In this thesis I have argued that the role of the Fair Tourism Project within Asoguabo is somewhat problematic, as the Asoguabo directorate is not paying attention to FTP, and its support mechanisms are thus limited. FTP forms a part of PROMESA, but its only employee, the project manager, is in practice in charge of all the aspects of the project, thus

making the decision-making highly concentrated. In this research, I also indicated that the main problems in the Fair Tourism Project are related to the lack of communication between the project manager and the producer-guides, FTP and Asoguabo directorate, and FTP and Asoguabo members. With the lack of communication the information does not flow, which again causes problems in financial issues, internal conflicts within Asoguabo, and misunderstandings about the the project. For this reason, the knowledge of the Asoguabo producers about the project is low.

The ideas of *nueva ruralidad* have been present throughout this thesis, and it is important to highlight the usefulness of these ideas in studying rural tourism in general and the Fair Tourism Project in particular. *Nueva ruralidad* emphasises issues such as rural income diversification and revaluation of rural spaces, and both of these issues have played an important role in this research. In diversification of rural livelihoods the Fair Tourism Project has provided certain benefits to some producers of Asoguabo, namely to the producer-guides. They have some opportunities to gain additional income from guiding. As the payment is low and the opportunities to guide are seasonal, this income does not, however, represent an important source of income for any of the producer-guides. In 2009, the producer-guides carried out between one and sixteen guidings per guide, and they were supposed to be paid ten US dollars per guiding. As I have shown in this thesis, most of this money was yet to be paid to the producer-guides at the time of my fieldwork, and the guides did not seem to know how much and when, if at all, they were supposed to be paid. Apart from the minor financial benefits, the producer-guides have benefited from participating in tourism through opportunities to participate in different courses and by being able to establish contacts and even friendships with some of the visitors.

Besides the producer-guides, the diversification opportunities the Fair Tourism Project has offered are somewhat limited, although existent to some of the local inhabitants. The additional tours offered as a part of the Fair Tourism Project provide some possibilities for income, and two wives of Asoguabo producers have an opportunity to cook for the tourists and this way generate some additional income. Through the additional tour to a local school FTP also participates in community development, as all the money paid for this visit goes directly to the school.

In its promotion materials, the Fair Tourism Project often replaces the emblematic figure of *campesino* with a smiling human-like banana figure, *bananito*. This figure represents the tropical imagery that in fair trade marketing has often been given to a small-scale producer; FTP does not use personal histories or close-up pictures of the producers, but rather shows pictures of foreign tourists and nature in their promotion material. By doing this, I argue, FTP aims to transmit to tourists the idea of possibility to visit the banana fields, making it easier for the potential visitor to imagine themselves being out there. The “others” that are being pictured in the promotion materials are presented in the form of *bananito*, as well as in some cases of children, and in few pictures also small-scale producers. Surprisingly, in the marketing material there is only one picture that clearly romanticises the producer, unlike in the fair trade commodity marketing where this is a common way to show the Southern producer, as the “other”.

Furthermore, *nueva ruralidad* rejects the common view of rural areas as producing commodities to the cities, and would rather see an integrated territorial approach to rural development where the urban sphere is closely linked to the rural sphere (Bebbington et.al. 2008). In the Fair Tourism Project, the links between rural and urban are obvious, and even though the core of FTP, the Banana Tour, is presenting primary production, some of the farms that are being visited are very close to the urban centre of the El Guabo town. Those visitors staying overnight have thus far no other option than stay in one of the hotels in Machala, or in El Guabo. Similarly, FTP has strong international links, as is common for tourism projects intending to attract international visitors. According to my analysis, the Fair Tourism Project shows Asoguabo producers as modern farmers with high yields in highly technical farms, who are closely linked to the “modern” life and the global banana production chain, thus rejecting the traditional view of the countryside as culturally backward region.

In analysing the authenticity of the Fair Tourism Project I have used Mowforth & Munt's (2009, 71) idea that fair tourism aims to offer tourists an experience where they can meet real people in real places producing real things. This relates closely to the ideas of authenticity in tourism, according to which tourists wish to see the real life, as it is really

lived (MacCannell 1976, 96). This is also related to the “modes of connectivity” (Lyon 2006, 458) of fair trade, where the veil of fetishism is being removed in order for tourists to see how the bananas are being produced. However, as I have argued in this thesis, in the case of FTP this veil is only partially removed, as even though tourists do have an opportunity to visit the place of production, the fetish that has been imagined before the visit may have been replaced with another fetish.

Almost a year after my fieldwork I heard that there have also been further initiatives to strengthen the cooperation between the projects of PASEO, as a form of building stronger South-South relationships. In November 2010 the project manager of FTP travelled to the Dominican Republic to learn about the Chocolate Tour and to exchange their experiences and solutions.<sup>130</sup> He was even accompanied by one producer-guide and one person from the Asoguabo directorate, so apart from just potentially strengthening the interaction between the two projects, there is also a chance that this visit helps improving the role of FTP within Asoguabo.

Finally, I consider it important to highlight some issues for future research. As fair tourism in general, and tourism in fair trade certified producer organizations in particular, is thus far a relatively little studied topic, more research on this area is needed. Especially the links between fair trade and tourism should be further studied, and the concept of fair tourism could be developed towards the direction of considering tourism in fair trade associations. Also, a further topic of interest would be the South-South linkages between the PASEO projects. In the past, this cooperation has been limited to one or two yearly meetings of the project managers of different PASEO projects, but now after the recent trip to the Dominican Republic there could be more learning and exchange opportunities between the different projects operating in the global South.

Even though the Fair Tourism Project is, in many ways, a great initiative, there is still much work to be carried out if it is to achieve its goal of self-sustainability and to deliver its promise of fairness. As PASEO's manager noted, the project is not even halfway yet,

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<sup>130</sup> Korpela 2010.

despite providing some additional income for some producers.<sup>131</sup> After all, as Cleverdon & Kalisch (2000, 176) remind us, the quality of the product is of utmost importance for its commercial viability, be it in commodities or in tourism, and the consumers will not pay for a product just for ethical reasons. The Fair Tourism Project does have the quality, and with better professionalism and more intensive cooperation between the different stakeholders, the project might become an important player in the region's tourism industry and consequently fulfil its ultimate objective to provide additional income for Asoguabo and its small-scale producers.

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<sup>131</sup> Jansen 2010.

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Ministerio de Turismo del Ecuador: <http://www.turismo.gob.ec/>

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