

Bridging conservation and development through heritage in Galapagos islands

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The Galapagos islands are considered one of the most iconic heritage imaginaries. While world natural heritage and national park provide unique conservation conditions, the images of “last Eden” and “living laboratory” Cairns (2011) creates an unpopulated natural space which excludes the human being from narratives and international images.

In documentaries, tourist guides and magazines of Galapagos, human existence aren't located in the same place, consequently tourist don't know the islands are actually populated. Due regarding these dimensions almost all funds and economic resources goes to nature conservation. Nevertheless, Galapagos host more than 25.000 habitants and 275.000 tourist bringing subsequent islandness (Moles, 1982) and social metabolism (Newell y Cousins, 2014; Murray, 2015).

There are centuries of history about Galapagos islands which haven't been yet mentioned. Nowadays, the production and reproduction of empty place, local population perceives disadvantages through conservation privileges. On the other hand, past narratives considered Galapagos as a “cursed” or “enchanted” islands, in fact originated by inhospitable

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conditions which were narrated by navigators who crossed them since XVI century or habitants in all their colonization efforts since XIX century.

Actually, there's a gap between current and past narratives and between insiders and outsiders' imaginaries. In 2008 Watkins already mentioned a Galapagos as a socioecological system as a critical new perspective where human-nature systems need to be related. However, there's a few efforts to extent human history beyond conservation. Regarding that, there are just 4% of studies are related to social sciences in Galapagos, while social needs are increasing.

In order to achieve a sustainable local development, the hypothesis of the research pretend to include human being in worldwide imaginaries and island metabolism (Rodríguez-Jácome & Blanco-Romero, 2018). We consider cultural heritage as a key driver and human narratives as a strategy bridging conservation and development. The valorization of tangible and intangible heritage through tourism, empowerment of local governance and population are the aim of this research.

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