Stakeholder Dynamics in northern Peru: Lobitos tourism development

1. **Project outline**

The overall aim of the project is to support the inhabitants of Lobitos, a small town in northern Peru, to develop the town’s infrastructure and, accordingly, their livelihoods. This is to be achieved sustainably, preserving the ecological integrity and resilience of the area alongside development of tourism, infrastructure provision and connectivity. I will be working with primarily non-academic colleagues through an NGO called EcoSwell, on the project’s social dynamics and consultation phase.

I propose to spend 2 weeks in Lobitos in March/April 2014 in order to follow up on the initial social assessment undertaken in August 2013 by my co-investigator Alejandro Pizarro, an independent researcher specializing in local governance and development. Prior to the trip I will analyse the social assessment data (focus groups and semi-structured interviews) that I helped to design and plan. The analysis will allow my EcoSwell collaborators to begin the planning and implementation phase.

My fieldwork will include clarifying specific queries highlighted during the analysis, but will primarily seek to involve the community in the planning through informed multi-stakeholder consultation.

2. **Context**

Lobitos is a small town, population around 1,200, on the north coast of Peru. It was formerly an affluent English port; visited by wealthy tourists. The Peruvian military took over and used the town as a base during wartime. Lobitos was abandoned by the military, and has since been inhabited mainly by Peruvian families without official land rights.

The Central Government is keen to attract developers to fulfil Lobitos’ potential as a tourist resort. Newcomers have already begun to acquire land in the town without knowledge or consent of local inhabitants.

The social assessment is the first of its kind to be carried out in Lobitos, and EcoSwell will use it to inform the development of monitoring indicators and for project design. Development in nearby coastal town Mancora has been environmentally and socially disastrous, something the team are working to avoid in Lobitos.

3. **Fit with the NIREs Research Challenges/Strategy**

The Lobitos project provides an excellent opportunity, due to its manageable size and development stage, to be involved in the full life cycle of a project from the conception right through to implementation and outcome. The challenges in this case (closely aligned to NIREs’ remit) are to design and implement the **infrastructure** requirements in an **integrated, sustainable** way whilst safeguarding the **environmental resources** from degradation and ensuring that the local population
is empowered to be influential in shaping the development to maximise social benefits. My work is primarily directed to the interaction with and understanding of the stakeholders’ social dynamics.

This project contributes directly to the first NIReS sustainability challenge because the methodology will feed into the design phase of an integrated system, improving the likelihood of a successful, sustainable outcome that serves the needs of the community and ensures that the environment is appropriately protected. In line with NIReS approaches, I will be using primarily collaborative, co-creation and participatory techniques with both stakeholders and collaborators to ensure that the study is fully interdisciplinary from the start.

Contributing to the Lobitos project will enable me to further develop my published methodology [1,2], improving the likelihood of publication in an academically excellent journal. In addition, the project will be a demonstration of applying NIReS research into real world solutions and, if successful, will provide a useful example of the first-hand international impact of the Institute.

4. Quality/Excellence

My previous publications, in which I developed and presented the original methodology, are in Elsevier journal Biomass and Bioenergy (Impact Factor 2.975). In this project I will be testing the methodology in a different context, so could submit the result to one of the following: Geoforum (2.707), Population and Environment (2.585), Journal of Development Economics (2.920).

An alternative, more highly ranked publication that I would ultimately aim to target would be Global Environmental Change (5.236). This would be made possible by considering the confounding impact of the El Niño phenomenon, which has significant implications for the development of the northern coastal region of Peru, as outlined in a recent PhD thesis by Dr Fernando Gonzáles-Velarde [3]. I have discussed the Lobitos project with Dr Gonzáles-Velarde, a junior lecturer in the School of Modern Languages, who has agreed to co-author at least one journal publication on the subject.

I feel that my original papers are currently of 2 star standard - recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour. With the development, implementation and collaboration with experts in other areas I intend that this work could be confidently classed as 3 star - internationally excellent. In time, I hope to further broaden and implement the methodology to ultimately achieve 4 star recognition, in terms of achieving research of world-leading quality for this field.

5. Potential for a unique contribution from NIReS

The funding for the original research came from a €2.28M European Aid Cooperation grant (Re-Impact) dedicated to Bioenergy Projects in Africa and Asia. This extension and further application is therefore well outside the scope of the Re-Impact project. Working through NIReS would give me the opportunity to broaden and develop the methodology in an entirely different geographic context (South America) and in a new field (sustainable urban development for tourism), which is a departure from my previous experience. I see this as an exciting opportunity to develop my research in a new area which would be difficult to find external funding or support for at this early stage.

6. Degree of collaboration with external partners

I will be undertaking the fieldwork in collaboration with local NGO EcoSwell. In addition, I am planning to contact Practical Action, an NGO which has worked with disadvantaged Peruvian communities for over 20 years. During the trip I intend to make links with more local partners.
I foresee academic collaborations outside of Newcastle University, for example with colleagues at Leeds or UEA. I have not explored these options as yet and would be more likely to do so following the initial publication, with a view to finding other applications and developing the methodology.

7. **Clear outcomes and Impact, proposed outputs and deliverables**

The impact of the research will be immediate, in that the EcoSwell team intend to use the results to inform the overall planning for development and infrastructure design, enabling the community to be more actively and effectively involved at all stages. The intention is that the structured stakeholder dynamics approach allows the community to be influential in the development of Lobitos rather than just informed. This should ensure that, if followed through, the result is a form of sustainable development that the community feel ownership of and can benefit from. Moreover, it should be economically, socially and environmentally beneficial for all parties, with an understanding of any trade-offs and agreed compromises from the start.

I intend to use the opportunity of undertaking research in Lobitos to provide material for the following two publications:

A) **Stakeholder analysis through understanding roles, risks and responsibilities of different groups.** This paper will detail the development of the ‘stakeholder dynamics’ methodology, and its use in informing sustainability planning and the implementation of infrastructure for tourism. This builds on the initial methodological development published in the Biomass and Bioenergy papers.

The fieldwork provides the opportunity to test this methodology in a different context. The approach was developed on bioenergy projects in Uganda and India, so may need to be modified for a new location and type of project. This will result in a more robust and adaptable methodology that can be used to support sustainable planning of various development projects. This paper will be written in collaboration with Alejandro Pizarro and Dr Fernando González-Velarde.

B) **Methodological approaches to research involving several disciplines.** The intention for this study is to initially source a number of case studies of how different individuals/groups undertake ‘x’-disciplinary work and identify how different approaches affect outcome and impact (if they do). This paper will be written in collaboration with Dr Lynsay Blake and, if appropriate, the other Research Coordinators. A comprehensive literature review on different disciplinary approaches (multi-, trans-, cross-, inter-) will be carried out, and case studies to cover the full range identified. The aim is to produce a typology considering relevant factors such as: type of disciplinary approach, number of collaborators, stage of project, range of disciplines, funding source, and method of working together.

The Lobitos project provides a trans-disciplinary example. Additional case studies include: Re-Impact (cross-disciplinary multi-partner project, completed in 2010) and RELU (a flagship RCUK programme involving numerous institutions and organisations, finalised in 2013 and cited as an example of successful multi-disciplinary collaboration).

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3 HEFCE definition of “Impact” from REF 2014:

For the purposes of the REF, impact is defined as an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, beyond academia. Impact includes, but is not limited to, an effect on, change or benefit to: the activity, attitude, awareness, behaviour, capacity, opportunity, performance, policy, practice, process or understanding of an audience, beneficiary, community, constituency, organisation or individuals in any geographic location whether locally, regionally, nationally or internationally. Impact includes the reduction or prevention of harm, risk, cost or other negative effects.
Ultimately, I would like to look longitudinally at the difficulties, barriers and essentially success and impact of different x-disciplinary approaches. I expect this study to reflect on and inform the process of x-disciplinary working, to reduce the difficulties and improve the likelihood of project success. This may, however, form the basis for a follow up paper due to the time delay in measuring impact.

8. Degree of interdisciplinarity

This project is inherently interdisciplinary. I will be working with a group of professionals in Peru who have formed the NGO EcoSwell. The team intend to promote a conservation strategy in Lobitos which includes the sustainable use of natural resources, follows a bottom-up approach and relies on the involvement of all stakeholders in the "eco-system" through shared value. They comprise an Environmental Engineer, an Industrial Engineer, a Marketing Professional, a Social Assessment Consultant and Project Manager, and a Graphic Designer. In addition, I am travelling with a volunteer who will be undertaking a solar energy feasibility study, and have recruited an academic collaborator from Newcastle – Dr Fernando Gonzáles-Velarde – who is an expert in Peruvian governance structures, tourism development in the north, and the effect of El Niño in the area.

9. Value for money

Flights have been purchased at a cost of £759, though internal travel to Lobitos from Lima has not yet been booked (around £250 anticipated). Accommodation in Lobitos will be inexpensive, around £120 for the two weeks, with a total subsistence cost of around £300. The main resource is two weeks of researcher time on site, plus the additional time required for preparation and writing up. In total, around 7 weeks’ work is being budgeted for, with a salary cost of just over £6,000.

In total, the project is anticipated to cost up to £7,500. The NIReS contribution requested is £6,000 researcher time in kind. For the intended output of one paper directly on the project and one other using it as a case study, as well as the development of a new, potentially high impact research outcome, this is presented as very good value for money for NIReS.

10. Timeliness

I present this project as being particularly timely in an academic sense because of the recent publication, in 2013, of the two methodological papers and the highly relevant thesis of Dr Gonzáles-Velarde. In addition, Lobitos is on the verge of a development programme, so this is the ideal opportunity to implement the stakeholder dynamics methodology if it is to be effective and make an impact.

References

