Tracing the Realities of Marine Wildlife based Tourism Destiantion Study Case: Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park – Western Australia

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Travelling always meant for me one of the most marvelous ways to know youself and others. That is the main reason to study and work in tourism but during my professional life the sustainable and conservation fields impacted the way that I think. Is in that order that I follow that path working close with wildlife and nature based tourism, creating a strong sense about the connection between human and nature. The willingness to travel and learne from a different perspective more about tourism took me to The Netherlands. The program of Leisure, Tourism and Environment in Wageningen University was perfect to develop my research abilities and combine them with my practical experience in the field. In the same way Australia was a perfect place to apply the concepts that I learned during the program and see how tourism is conceptualized and performed in one of the best countries in this field.

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Summary

The present research describes Coral Bay as a destination, making an analysis in human actors and non-human actors. Analyzes representations, nature and different interactions to understand how marine wildlife tourism is performed in Coral Bay. Determinates who and what is performing actions in the destination. Describe the main moments that changed the reality in Coral Bay and different representations and discourses about it and make emphasis about the relationship between human and wildlife. The use of 'ANT', to describe tourism, helped to provide a narrative in order to understand tourism as a dynamic phenomenon with heterogeneous elements.

The descriptions provided by the research portray the different perspectives, ideas and agencies playing an important role around Ningaloo Marine Park. As well analyzes strategies to influence people during the negotiations and identifying translator which influence them to provoke a movement to develop tourism. The Save Ningaloo Campaign result a perfect example to describe the different representations of tourism development in Coral Bay and the negotiations that take place there. Where different perspectives clash with each other in order to produce their own vision about marine wildlife-based tourism destination. The research explores the value contestation, judgments and descriptions that together with narratives build the identity of the destination. In Coral Bay are various realities together to represent these identities. Those realities and mental conceptions are held it by people who live there, tourist which visit the place, tourism businesses, conservation and research organizations, and state authorities. Coral Bay holds multiple personalities that are linked together by the landscape, location and wildlife, most of the services or tourist come here for those characteristics even they have different mental constructions about the place. The research identifies the importance of the whale-shark as one of the iconic species from Ningaloo Marine Park. Furthermore, describes the representations, meanings, discourses, and narratives made by tourists, workers, researchers, conservation organizations and enterprises are focused in whale-shark characteristics as a tourism icon, local resident of the reef, and object of research.

In conclusion, the different realities that co-exist in Coral Bay that are mental constructions and narratives which differ depending on who is behind them, transforming the identities of the Coral Bay into a little paradise, isolated spot, tourism destination, working place or a home sweet home. Those different mental constructions and narratives of the same place are possible to co-exist at the same time without antagonism. Similarly the discourses behind the whale-sharks where described to identify the different meanings assigned by different actors to build the identity of Coral Bay in Ningaloo Marine Park.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The Australian Department of Resources, Energy and Tourism (2010) says that tourism is a significant economic activity for the country. In those terms tourism contributes with billions of Australian dollars to the economy. Also provides half a million of jobs to Australians and International people. As well with the fast development of aircraft industry generated low cost flights that increased the opportunities to tourist from Europe, United States and now Asia to visit the country. Australia has the outdoor country label. Due the nature based tourism activities that can be practiced as wildlife based tourism, adventure tourism, and community based tourism within others. Among them; marine wildlife based tourism is increasing in popularity especially in Western Australia in the Reef Coast area.

Lately, tourism activities that involve wildlife in natural landscapes are becoming more well-liked by tourists. These activities, based in natural environments, include observation and interaction with wildlife (Birtles, Valentine & Curnock, 2001). Coastal and marine environments are highly valued by the opportunities that offer to enjoy the marine landscape and environment. The marine protected areas in Australia represent an opportunity for the visitors to enjoy the different activities as their have a unique biological resources and geomorphological landscape (Smallwood et al., 2010). In Western Australia the name of Ningaloo Marine Park is an iconic example of those characteristics. Ningaloo Reef has a complex structure of continental reef systems in the western coast of Australia. It extends north from Red Bluff to the reefs of the Murion Islands, and from Bundegi Reef around the peninsula into Exmouth Gulf. It is a 200 km long, enclosing a lagoon of 200 meters to 7 km wide, at 300 km of distance. From the Cape Range Peninsula, Point Murat, and Coral Bay the self has less than 10 km wide. Recently nominated World Heritage Site Ningaloo Marine Park and the Muirion Islands Marine Management Area include, maintain, and protect a series of habitats, from continental shelf and slope communities of open waters, to the barrier reef and coastal ecosystems on Ningaloo and Bundegi reefs and the fringing reefs of the Muiron Islands (Commonwealth Waters, 2010: 20-22). Even though it is isolated from the large population centers, the attributes of Ningaloo Marine Park attract 200,000 visitors every year, which can practice snorkeling, swimming, fishing and sunbathing on the beach (Smallwood et al. 2010).

Coral Bay, the research site situated approximately 1,100 kilometers from Perth and 120 kilometers south of Exmouth, it is an small coastal tourism settlement in the southern part of Bills Bay, within the Maud's Sanctuary. The town has a recreational reputation among

tourist for their direct access to the Ningaloo Marine Park via a sheltered lagoon and it is one of the unique locations along the park where the Coral begins a few meters from the shoreline. The marine park is famous for their marine nature based activities and is one of the few places in the world where the whale-shark (Rhincodon typus) can be easily seen (Department of Environment and Conservation, 2009). With the fast expansion of marine tourism in the area, the possible impacts on wildlife and their natural environment are growing in the same proportion. In that sense Coral Bay becomes an interesting example because the size of the town is just ten minutes walk length. But it has the same characteristics as a big destination where different actors clash with diverse interests and produce singular meanings about what the town should be and how Ningaloo Marine Park should be represented.

The Actor-Network approach was applied to fulfill the purposes of the research because focuses on knowledge production as a result of multiple processes of ordering of people, objects, and technologies (Latour, 2005). In practice it helped to describe the constant process of negotiation and constantly creating knowledge by human and non-human actors in Coral Bay (Ren, 2009). Identifying how these non-human actors entered the scene as mediators, like human actors do, but they make associations possible and ensure the connections transforming the resources in the area (Paget, Dimanche & Mounet, 2010). Actor Network Theory helped to describe the process of how tourism in Coral Bay can create spaces shaping the landscape in the town, negotiating and establishing linkages between entities through actors that not always are obviously related (Ren, Pritchard & Morgan, 2009). Tourism in general can be difficult to visualize and confusing to analyze. Most of the time tourism is seen as a leisure activity underestimating the real effects of it. However within social sciences there is an increasing interest in how tourism is performed.

1.2 Problem statement

Tourism should not be understood as a static activity which just involves the increase facilities to amuse the visitors. In order to make a more appealing description the Actor-Network approach help to describe the different meanings, representations, and realities behind Coral Bay. At the same time there are different types of tourist coming to Coral Bay and all of them have a different representation about the place depending if they are Families, Elder People, Backpackers, and Workpackers for each of them Coral Bay fits into their own representation and meanings. As well the relation that they have with Coral Bay regarding the landscape, wildlife or lifestyle differs among each other.

By using Actor-Network Theory to describe tourism in Coral Bay, I propose that both human actors and non-human actors are important to be analyzed. As well as describe their nature and the different interactions between these actors. To understand marine wildlife tourism

in Coral Bay, is necessary to determinate who and what is performing actions in the network. To create a better picture of tourism, for 'ANT', knowledge is considered a social product and not a result of a scientific method (Ren, Pritchard & Morgan, 2009). Using 'ANT' the research will describe the different types of tourism knowledge produced by the actors and how this knowledge is helping to perform marine wildlife tourism in the study area. Therefore the problem statement is:

> *During the life of Coral Bay can we distinguish how it transforms trough different events that influenced the way that the landscape it is and the representations that tourist have about it. Furthermore the relationship between wildlife and humans can be important to analyze and describe to reveal the meanings behind Coral Bay. The Actor-Network approach would provide the necessary conceptual lenses to reach the most appealing description about Coral Bay.*

1.3 Research objective

The intention of the present research is to analyze the different realities that are present in Coral Bay by using the Actor-Network approach. Therefore, the description would analyze first the main moments that changed the reality in Coral Bay. Second, describe the different representations and constructions about Coral Bay. Third, provide a description about the relationship between human and wildlife in Coral Bay.

1.4 Research questions

In order to perform the research, the following general question is proposed:

What objects, discourses, nature, wildlife, architecture, culture and people are engaged and producing effects and common meaning in Coral Bay?

This question can be further divided into sub-questions, giving better insight in the specific subjects of research:

- What changes have occurred in the discourses of Coral Bay over time?
- What are the roles and positions of the different actors in wildlife based-tourism in Coral Bay?
- What power relationships exist between human/human actors and human/non-human actors?

1.5 Relevance of the study

This thesis research identifies human and non-human actors, describes how tourism is being constructed in Coral Bay, and analyzes the relations between them that make it possible for tourism to take place in the area. The use of 'ANT', to describe tourism, helps to provide a narrative in order to understand tourism as a dynamic phenomenon with heterogeneous elements. With this research I intend to gain a clearer grasp about how marine wildlife-based tourism has occurred within Ningaloo Marine Park.

The description of the different realities of Coral Bay intends to highlight the key factors (actors and interactions) that have led to how wildlife-based tourism has developed in this area. In general this research will provide a description of how marine wildlife tourism is being produced in the area by multiple actors.

1.6 Thesis structure

The present thesis research is structured in the subsequent way: The first chapter provides the background, research topic, the problem statement, the research objectives, the research questions and the relevance of the study. The second chapter draws the theoretical framework defining what is understood as a destination, principal concepts of Actor-Network Theory as a descriptive methodology in tourism studies and the critiques to the methodology to generate the discussion about the use of the methodology to study wildlife base-tourism. The third chapter provides the methodology guidelines including the positionality of the researcher, characteristics of the research, data collection, data analysis and limitations of the research. The fourth chapter contains a brief description of the history of Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park, making remarks in the key moments of it. The fifth Chapter describes different relationships between actors and Coral Bay exploring the different realities since the human actors' perspective. The sixth Chapter provides a description about a whale-shark experience since tourist gaze. Which analyzes whale-shark enacting marine wildlife based tourism. Final chapter reflect and discuses about the major findings of the research as well as elaborates a conclusion and propose further research topics.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

The present chapter will draw the concepts that I'm mobilizing to address my research objectives and support the data analysis. The content goes through the concepts about Tourist Destination and Actor Network Theory. It provides the main definitions about Tourist Destinations in order to understand the area that the present research is taking place. Moreover it has the main concepts of Actor Network Theory and the application of this methodology on tourism studies. Furthermore it remarks the reflections about the 'ANT' methodology to understand the phenomenon in order to not just centralize the thesis in the 'ANT' approach to draw an assertive description of the data collected.

2.1 Tourism destination

Inside the tourism studies one of the most popular concepts is destination, but depending on who is using it; the tourism industry, researchers or tourist, the term use to differ. According to Framke (2002), there are confusions around the word destination and the meaning. Because a destination can be understood: as a narrative, as an attraction, as a geographical unit, as an empirical relationship, as a marketing object, as a place where tourism happens and so on. The interpretations rather than bring some clarity it turn to have different meanings because destination as a term can be understood as a place (Jacobsen and Vinken, 1999).

According to Framke (2002) there are aspects that should be raised to understand the destination concept. 1) Most of the literature consider destination as places, regions in a special and/or administrative hierarchy (e.g. countries). With this we have to reflect in how comprehensible the spatial limits of a destination can be understood. 2) Destination most of the time is described depending on the attractions, facilities and services, but once again those descriptions can vary depending on the importance of those factors (e.g. Ecotourism). 3) As well at destinations, different kinds of interactions take place: between tourist and the business, interactions within the tourism industry, and interactions among the individual companies, the tourist organizations and authorities. Looking into these interactions described as social practice, networks or contacts to find the importance of them to describe the destination. 4) Another important aspect is that without tourist there will be no destination, which is why it is important to look into the tourist's role on the destination.

A tourist destination *"is defined as a geographical area which exhibits landscape and cultural characteristics and which is in a position to offer a tourism product, which means a wide range of facilities in transport, accommodation and food, and at least one outstanding activity or experience"* (Jensen et al., 1993: 42). As well with destination marketing and tourist attractions, narratives are produced, but only some attractions and spaces are

highlighted and the tourist movement is planned (Edensor, 1998). The previous definition contains geographical characteristics, cultural aspects as a commodities, and business factors, but it leaves aside the social process that occurs in a destination. To understand a destination as social production every activity that is happening at the place there are the ones which draw the destination identity. These social practices in tourism networks put together objects, places, and people that are bounded into a relationship. An identification of these networks that are taking place in tourist destinations helps to understand better the idea of process rather than essence. The places or destinations have multiple identities, which varies according to the activities that are practiced among the people there. (Framke, 2002). These tourist spaces are produced by social practices of the tourist, which includes attractions and businesses, with differentiation from one to another. Inside these places there are social relations that are traduced in relationships between tourists, industry, organizations and attractions.

According to Meethan (2001), the important aspects to define a destination is not much the physical patterns or types of special facilities that can be identified in the place, because in that way the space is understood as an abstract and neutral category. Moreover the aspects that define a destination are the socio-cultural values and perceptions that are produced in those special characteristics. As example *"the resort areas developed as a consequence of modernity, and are linked to the process of urbanization and industrialization, and the creation of both mass markets and mass consumption"* (Ibid.:17). As Meethan mention the destination correspond a relations between different factors that define it. As well there is necessary to highlight the relation of people across space and time, where the tourist industry has important role creating representations of tourist space. There are representations used by marketing destination that are bound to the place identity because they correspond to a culmination of historical, social, economical, and political processes revealing social construction, cultural change, identity and discourses around the destination (Ren, 2009). In the same way a "*place identity is contested and linked to power*" (Hague and Jenkins, 2005: 6) because there are many interest and perceptions that work or clash between them to shape their idea of the place.

At the end a destination is a sum of interest, activities, facilities, infrastructure and attractions that has as a result the identity of the place/destination. Destinations have two kinds of dimensions: 'static dimension' that composed by the place itself and 'dynamic dimension' that consist in all the elements like actors/agents and products/services, having a direct relation with the tourist demand (Framke, 2002). As Leiper (2000: 366) argue *"there is no evidence that any destination ever attracted, in a literal sense, any tourist. […] The main causal factors of tourist flows are not located in destinations but traveler generating regions, in places where trips begin, where the forces that stimulate tourists' motivations are located and where marker systems directing tourist to nuclear elements of attractions begin"*. The author makes emphasis in that a tourism destination is not a simple result of the

place itself instead it is a result of a pushing forces and relationships that are happening in order to give life to a destination.

2.2 Actor network theory

Lately academics have being dealing with different new challenges trying to understand relationships as a result of the complex and dynamic process that make tourism possible. The essence of ANT puts emphasis on material relations that are occurring in our environment (Law, 1992). 'ANT' methodology stresses "general symmetry", does not make any distinction between actors, independent of their social/natural or local/global nature (Law, 1992; Murdoch, 1997). The networks for 'ANT' are absolutely essential because they can identify the different sets of relations and associations which build our understanding of our world (Murdoch, 1998). ANT is more a method to describe how actors distribute their efforts to be interconnected with each other than a social theory (Latour, 1999). With this it is necessary to think about ANT more as a descriptive tool for social researchers to gain knowledge about how actors construct their world based on relationships.

In order to understand what is 'ANT', first we have to recognize that the concepts of actor and network are concatenated, meaning that one cannot be defined without the other. "*The actor-network is reducible neither to an actor alone nor to a network*" (Van der Duim, 2005: 90). According to the scholars the actor and network are mutually dependent. It cannot be an actor if it has no effect on the network. This counts the same for the network. This cannot exist if there are no actors related to it. 'ANT' does not work based on a priori assumptions. It is more a description or a unique set of circumstances. The actions performed by the actors result in the network. It is constructed with small pieces of information that the researcher can find and interpret. "*Actor-network theorists believe they are breaking down the dualisms that afflict so much sociological theorizing (e.g., Nature/society, actor/structure, global/local) rather than being determinant of particular phenomena. "These divisions emerge from heterogeneously constructed networks*" (Van der Duim, 2005: 90).

'ANT' retains what is called a 'collectif'. This concept is different than collective or collectivity (when people agreed to be in a common association) because "*collectif is an emergent effect created by the interaction of the heterogeneous parts that make it up*" (Callon and Law, 1995: 485). In the two other concepts, this 'collectif' takes place when there is a set of heterogeneous organizations created with one objective that suddenly is engaged in connections and relations just as a result of their location. As a result of these relations, it is difficult to decide the scale or size of the actor-network, although it is necessary to follow the process of association to have an approximate idea about the size or scale of the network (Latham 2002). These approaches are interesting to apply to tourism

because tourism basically works through connections, although those connections can lead to many locations and many actors involved in the activity. Another characteristic of Actor Network Theory is that there is no central actor that defines the network. According to Cordella and Shaikh (2004), actor-networks are influenced by the uniqueness of the actors who belong and the actors' ability to be in more than one network simultaneously.

There are several ways, one of them 'ANT', that tourism can be described by social theory. Much of this depends on the narrative, 'how to tell the story' or to follow the pathway of the network. It is necessary to pay special attention to the three different components: actors, non-human entities, and interactions (Paget, Dimanche & Mounet, 2010). First, the related actors can be consumers as well as producers of tourism. Second, the non-human can be defined by their nature. They can be objects (e.g., cars, restaurants, lodgings, etc.), natural resources (e.g., wildlife, beach, reef coast, etc.), information or means of communication (e.g., brochures, websites, newspapers, etc.), technological services (e.g., visas, travel papers, sport activities, etc.). Third, the most important component, because it makes tourism real, is interactions. This component connects people with the non-human components of performing tourism (Paget, Dimanche & Mounet, 2010). *"Van der Duim re-conceptualizes tourism with his idea of Tourismscapes as Actor Networks connecting within and across different societies and regions, transport systems, accommodation and facilities, resources, technologies, environments and people, and organizations"* (Paget, Dimanche & Mounet, 2010: 831).

According to Van der Duim (2005) the interrelation between human and non-human actors is translated in the idea of 'Tourismscapes'. To understand the concept it is necessary to know how to differentiate between: human actors, non-human actors, and interrelations. First, tourismscapes include the people using tourism services and the people and organizations providing these services and goods (transport, accommodation, food, guidance, and/or entertainment)**.** Tourismscapes rely on the performances of an enormous quantity of people working in every kind of enterprise and organization through complex processes of ordering. "*Obviously, tourismscapes also encompass tourists as they enact tourismscapes by consuming services, buying local products or situating things (caravans and tents, T-shirts, waste, their bodies) in the actor-network"* (Van der Duim, 2005: 97).

2.2.1 Translation

When going to analyze networks, it is difficult to say which of the actors has a major effect in the network. Doing empirical work, we can describe actors' relations in the network. In the case of tourism it is hard to determine which actor has more importance, human (inhabitants, tourists, indigenous communities) or non-human (entrepreneurs, nature,

wildlife) over the destination. That is when translation becomes more useful (Brown, 2002; Johannesson, 2005).

'ANT' provides valuable scope for tourism research. First, its ability to portray the relational materiality of the social world, known as 'translation', draws the happenings of the tourism activity in multiple networks and different actors performing action in them. Second, 'ANT' is eager to take into account multiple relational orderings, which are the result of different tourism realities to analyze them (Johannesson, 2005). *"Translation refers to the process of creating a temporary social order, or the movement from one order to another order, through the changes in the alignment of interest in a network"* (Law, 1992; Sakker et al., 2006: 54). Translation should be seen as a continuous process, where the relations become networks according to the different associations that are performed by different agents becoming actors, bringing into line the same goals, achievements, and interest that are transforming continuously (Callon, 1986; Johannesson, 2005; in Ren, 2009).

Translation is a process which *'involves a translator, something that is translated and a medium in which that translations is inscribed'* (Callon, 1991: 143). According to Law (1005), translation literally implies transformation and the possibility of equivalence. That means that translator, medium and object of translation have equivalence in importance because one thing can stand for another, in this case an actor for a network. 'ANT' takes the world as a set of material relations where every element has the potential to be transformed or be translated (Johannesson, 2005). "*To Callon, translations must be studied because they create the ability for actors to speak, act, and represent others through processes rather than completed accomplishments"* (Callon, 1986; in Ren, 2009: 33). Analyzing the translation we can trace which actors have voice and to whom those actors are representing at the moment to take decisions or express their ideas.

Translation involves the *"process of negotiation, mobilization, representation, and displacement among actors, entities, and places"* (van der Duim, 2007: 966). Understanding, that translation describes different actors' behavior according to the setting or network that they are performing. Helps to trace the way that actors display their efforts to share their ideas, agency or representations in order to accomplish their goals as well that those efforts and the way to transmit them change according to the 'network' in which they are acting. This power is more an associative form of power. Because it is not provided by hierarchy of the entities on the contrary it is the relations between these entities that produce agency (Woods, 1997; Van der Duim, 2007). Power is a result of processes that can be exercised over space and time. There are mediums to exercise power like "money, ideas, contacts, ownership of lands and goods, influence, and knowledge or expertise" (Van der Duim, 2007: 967). But power as it is mentioned before is a result of certain conditions. It is not possible to store it, like a resource (Ibid, 2007).

As explained, before translation talks about negotiation processes between actors that change their behavior according to the network requirements (Murdoch; 1998). But as well translation can create and share space that does not exist in previous intervention. In this way we can distinguish four moments: *Problematization, Interessement, Enrollment, and Mobilization,* in all translation processes (Callon, 1896a; Verschoor, 1997a; Clegg, 2003; Hiller, 2002 in Van der Duim, 2005). These four moments can overlap with each other, as well all the moments not necessarily have to happen (Woods, 1997).The first moment of translation is known as *"Problematization",* when an idea from an entity (actor) becomes central for another actor. This entity or translator, based on the nature and problems of the other actors, suggests an idea/project to deal with them. A second moment is called *"Interessment"*, characterized by the way (methods) from the translator to impose the idea among other actors to define their problems (Verschoor, 1997a: 31). Within the methods that actors use to influence people there persuasion to put their idea into the priorities of others in order to stabilize and control the network (Hiller, 2002 in Van der Duim, 2005: 95). The third moment of translation achieved only if the second moment turns out to be successful. This moment is known as *"Enrollment"*; it is when the actors/entities are committed to the translator's idea or project, in this way their behavior is modified by the translator's idea (Hiller, 2002: 89). Finally, if all the moments are successful, we can talk about *"Mobilization"*, the fourth moment when the interest actors are involved in the new idea (Van der Duim, 2005: 95-96).

2.2.2 Modes of ordering

For the translation process to occur, must be explained by modes of ordering (Van der Duim, 2005). Through modes of ordering, it is possible to trace the connections that hold as well as those that fall apart. Studying the links, it is possible to understand how the associations work in different settings (Murdoch, 1998: 367). According to Law (1994), using modes of ordering to study how entities and objects hold their associations together, is a way to represent the network and how the relationships between heterogeneous elements work together. Also it is being used to analyze how organizations hold on together, even when they are not meant to work together (Law, 1994). These modes of ordering are represented *"through a variety of logics, strategies or individual characters, technologies, materials, and organizational arrangements as they run through and perform material relations with pattern and their own logic"* (Law, 2000: 23).

These established relations between entities (actors) are displayed, explained, and organized by processes of translation and modes of ordering which reflect the transformations or evolution of those relationships during the time (Ren, 2009). In the same way analyze the durability and strength of those relationships (Law, 1999). Analyzing the translation process and modes of ordering in one tourist destination as Coral Bay in

Ningaloo Marine Park, will portray how the different organizations work together around the activity, in order to make it possible.

Describing a tourist destination can be done by following the current process of translation and ordering. In order to proceed with the analysis it is necessary to understand that the human and non-human actors shouldn't be taken for granted as they are the starting point of the investigation (Ren, 2009). *"Neither empirical nor analytical importance or precedence of certain categories, phenomena, people or action be establishes or assumed prior to the examination"* (Ren, 2009: 34). Therefore as a researcher it is necessary to pre-establish the entry point of the investigation *"to trace and describe the network (relational practices) underlying these effects or categories"* (Johannesson, 2005: 139). The question is what "*is negotiated, what is included an authorized and what is rejected and made absent"* (Ren, 2009: 34) in order to hold on to the network. Another question that rises up is how many processes and modes of ordering a tourist destination or specific network has being through in other words; *"descriptions must seek to convey what the destination network does and how this is doing work"* (Ren, 2009: 34).

Tourism is materially heterogeneous as well as a social phenomenon. It is hard to reduce it to just social because it is relates and links to a variety of objects. Tourism organizes complex relationships between humans and non-humans which result in an ordering (Kendal and Wigman, 2001). According to Franklin (2004), tourism is always in movement, enrolling new objects and participating in other orderings. It is able to take another orderings like; *"sports, urban design, governance, and information technology"* (Franklin, 2004: 279) as well as produce new tourism orderings with those orderings as *"adrenaline tourism, maybe ordering cities after the likeness or ordering internet site after the manner of tourism site"* (Ibid.:279).

Tourism itself constructs the way that the space (landscape) should be used *"influenced by different and often colliding modes of ordering"* (Law, 1994 in Van der Duim, 2007: 970). According to Van der Ploeg (2003: 111), using modes of ordering to analyze agriculture in the same form can be applied to analyze tourism in three different related ways. Firstly, modes of ordering correspond to consistent conceptions about how tourism activities should be performed. Most of the time those conceptions are deeply related to a particular cultural setting (Van der Ploeg, 2003; Van der Duim, 2007). Coral Bay, as a subject of description, would show that the production of tourism is influenced by the notions or conceptions that entities/actors which act in the place. Every set of relationships between entities manages certain types of concepts that are relevant to develop a certain empirical are reality. In the case of Coral Bay in Ningaloo Marine Park, the concepts that would appear probably related with wildlife based-tourism and conservation. According to Van der Ploeg (2003) those related concepts are the core of one particular network that affects directly the decision making about how tourism should be performed (Van der Duim, 2007: 270).

Second, it is necessary to take into account the notions about how tourism should be performed. At this point the *"spatial practices in it are represented in mental constructions, consisting in values, facts, or the desires of entrepreneurs, tourist and locals"* (Van der Duim, 2007: 970). These conceptions about how tourism should look in Coral Bay or Ningaloo Marine Park correspond to tours operators, hotel enterprises, tourists, agencies, and authorities. In this way modes of ordering drive the practices in certain places according to the conceptions of the entities/actors involved in the decision making. Coral Bay as part of Ningaloo Marine Park is portrayed as a *"paradise, a unique little spot on earth"* and results in tourism operation, new projects, certification, etc.

At the end, we have the different ways that the tourism industry affects and influences spatial developments performing various modes of ordering that converge at some point. According to Van der Duim (2007), those spaces can be translated in *"tourismscapes"* where more than one mode of ordering interacts with each other, having as a result a power relationship. Modes of ordering not only describe the relations between human–human but are also useful for human-spatial interactions (Ibid.)

2.3 Narratives, allegories and actor network theory reflections

2.3.1 Narratives and allegories about a destination

Narratives are other modes of ordering, because through this is possible to distribute values, judgments, legitimacy and put them together with other narratives (Law, 2000). Narratives *"to represent is to generate distributions [...] to represent is to narrate or refuse to narrate. It is to perform, or to refuse to perform a world of spatial assumptions populated by subject and objects. To represent those thus renders others possibilities impossible, unimaginable"* (Law and Benschop, 1997: 158). These are ways to represent realities creating version of the destination. In many destinations these material and mental representations are handled by local people, enterprises which work there, tourist as well as the practices, and landscape characteristics. Most of those representations come in small pieces and are multiple; all of them interact with each other in order to create those narratives or descriptions about a destination (Law, 2004 in Ren, 2009). These descriptions are variable depending on whom or what is performing them, most of the descriptions do not hold the same discourse and they struggle to be the main description of a particular destination.

According to Law (2004), allegories are different from representations because they can hold *"two or more things together that do not necessary cohere"* (Ibid.: 90), turning into ambivalence and ambiguity. This concept of allegories is meant to hold together entities/actors which do not belong together or do not fit in the same space, discourses that

together have no coherency and representations that do not transmit the same reality (Ren, 2009). These representations can differ depending on who is making it. Different from the representations, allegories does not seek to speak for itself instead it is putting together realities which do not belong together. According to Ren (2009), allegories do not want to represent reality, since it is understood as relational with theories that are made for it. Allegories are *"a set of tools for making and knowing new realities"* (Law, 2004: 98). These allegories are analytical resources which handle concepts that are deeply related with the context. In this case of a tourist destination would permit to see the different realities that happen into the same context. Help to analyze the different representations of the same destination depending on the practices, influences, discourses, and purposes from the entities. Tourist destinations are shaped through marketing and branding, in many examples are represented as unique places over-exposing their blessings. These constructions about destinations are discourses that are present in brochures, flyers, webpages (from the destinations or enterprise). In those descriptions it is possible to identify the different discourses on whom going to read them. During the development of this thesis we are going to identify different "realities" depending on what /who is performing the discourse in the tourist destination.

2.3.2 Reflections about radical symmetry in ANT

'ANT' can help us to understand how relationships can be organized and stabilized to create a durable and robust network" (Callon, 1992). Even though the use of 'ANT' has increasingly grown in social sciences, at the same time some questions and critiques have been raised. One of the strongest criticisms of 'ANT' is the symmetrical approach that assigns the same power of agency to humans and non-humans. According to Collins and Yearley (1992), it is necessary to build humanistic analysis in order to prioritize human importance when agency is given to the objects. According to symmetrical concept human and non-humans are in the same category and they have the same agency. One of the big differences that the critiques to 'ANT' are made it is that humans always have intentions behind their actions not like non-humans; no matter their performance (Pickering, 1993; Nickelsen, 2003 in Ren, 2009). If does not matter their characteristics critics say that tools, machines or any object has no intention without a human behind them. According to Vandenberghe (2002), only human have intentions behind their actions but he includes a difference between non-human-animals and non-human artifacts or machines. The difference is that animals act without planned intentionality. This difference should be taken into account to describe wildlife based-tourism destinations.

 The word 'actor' can be used to refer to a person, plant, machine, water system, a germ, etc. This goes with this 'radical symmetry' involves acceptance of the agency of humans and non-humans as equal and disputable (Callon, 1986 in Whittle and Spicer, 2008). According

to Callon and Latour (1992), there is no agential priority institutional, conceptual, natural or material. The non-human has the same importance in agency that a human. About the human giving meaning, use, or value to the non-humans can be understood with one example. The properties of a rock are in function of the story and the way that this is narrated. For someone a rock can be a weapon, for a geologist a layer of sediment, a precious stone for a jewel miner, or an ornamental pebble for a landscape gardener, each of those have different definitions for a rock and everyone is valid. These definitions depend on the context and it is transformed depending on the glasses we use to look at non-human entity (Edwards, 1995 in Whittle and Spicer, 2008).

Non-human belongs to another ontological region called material nature. Boats, bricks and trees are non-human entities that acquire meaning depending on the discourse behind them. They can lose that meaning in the same way. According to Vandenberghe (2002) humans always encounter non-humans but they are deeply interconnected and through this relation, humans end up giving meaning, use or value to non-humans. These non-humans (wildlife or landscape) have certain meaning to humans because they encounter themselves and establish a relationship in the same life-world. After these encounters, they can acquire civic, mercantile or industrial value (Thevenot, 1994b; Vandenberghe, 2002). Trying to have evidence about the properties of non-humans without involving humans is a hard task for 'ANT'. As Grind and Wooldar (1997) argue, gathering that evidence is impossible without researchers, participants and respondents. They sustain that the non-human actor (landscape, wildlife, machine) is difficult to analyze without the perception of a human actor which build value, use, or meaning around them.

Another criticism of 'ANT' is about the way that the descriptions are taken into account because the standpoint or the starting point is viewed from the perspective of the victors, the manager, or the innovator (Ren, 2009). This critique makes us think about who is describing the network and the intentions behind the description. A tourist destination can be many realities and every single one of them can be described since this 'victor' point of view depends on the purpose. If it is scientific we go straight to wildlife and standards of conservation and so on. This brings up a dilemma about the stories that are not taken into account those beside winner's stories that can build a powerful network (Star 1991 in Ren, 2009). As it appears in Coral Bay in Ningaloo Marine Park, there are stories that are not being heard due to by the victors' standpoint. These effects occur because some stories are overlooked and others are just left under the surface.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Characteristics of the research

Using the 'ANT' methodology helped me to use personal experiences and everyday practices to try to describe the production of tourism in Coral Bay at Ningaloo Marine Park, by looking into the construction of discourses, practices, and material relationships (Ren, Pritchard and Morgan, 2010). The research involves quantitative methods to understand a social phenomenon (Miles and Huberman, 1984). In order to understand tourism, the research follows the network to describe it (Johanneson, 2005: 139). No prior assumptions would be made in advance (Richards, 2010). It does not establish beforehand what actors are important or have priority in the network (Johanneson, 2005: 139).

3.2 Data collection

The process to identify actors, it was necessary to reflect about *"why some things, groups, people or other entities have come to define, sell, illustrate, and talk on behalf of or represent the tourism product instead of others"* (Ren, 2010: 201). Between these actors I was able to identified workers of the companies that offer tourist services in Coral Bay, like tours operators staff, managers, guides, receptionists, tourists, and staff in general. This identification was possible by analysis of company web-pages, Australian official sites, scientific journals, West Australian tour magazines, newspapers, reports and historic documents like Ningaloo Reef: Human Heritage Nomination, where I found the actors and more were identified during the fieldwork performing informal talks. From there I identified how they defined and associate among them, so then it can be understood to which components they belong; also identify the different discourses and representations. Doing this had a first impression about which actors are aligned and working together. However, the research is not only focused on text and discourses performing observation and participation in the tourism activities, I was able to describe physical structures, and nature landscape, and people, as well as, how those elements become sources of information to trace the network (Ren, 2009).

Historical documents, newspapers, reports and journals about the Ningaloo Marine Park which mention Coral Bay, helped to identify the key moments and actors of the park's history. To perform informal interviews I had to become familiar with people related to the Ningaloo Marine Park in Coral Bay. This was to identify the translation processes that generate represented a change in the park's objectives, strategies, management and identity. Also through the interview I was able to perceive how they communicate and represent Ningaloo Marine Park. This first part of the field research took into account all

those actors (human and non-human) that are not physically close to the park itself (tour operators, tourism associations, tourism workshops, research institutes, government, etc.).

Part of this method included observing and talking to tourists about their experiences, perceptions and expectations concerning the park. Furthermore, I had informal talks with nearby inhabitants, to gain knowledge about their experiences related with the destination as workplace, and as home town. Finally, with the help of the literature review and empirical research I was able to provide a description of the network.

The research browsed the web-pages that are related to Coral Bay in Ningaloo Marine Park. Those links led to forum sites from tourism consumers, tourism producers, conservation organizations, academic institutions, governmental organisms, amongst others. With this method, apart from identifying people that are working in or are related to the Ningaloo Marine Park, it identified the types of discourses and how they are performed by the actors.

The subjects that were informally interviewed belong to at least one of the groups mentioned above (e.g., researchers, owners of tourism related services, government agents, nearby inhabitants, etc.). The purpose of the interview is to find the motivations, expectations, values, identities and experiences that the interviewees had related to the area. That also would help to identify the main connector between actors, whereas the main interest is to know in depth how they interpreted Ningaloo Marine Park.

3.3 Data analysis

In order to understand and make a solid story from the data collected would be necessary to cross the information between the informal interviews, observation process and second hand sources (websites, web forums, etc.). As most of the interviews were conducted without a recorder and all the data was written after every interview it would be summarized, linked with the theoretical framework to address with the research question. The identification of discourses involves extracting of the observation method that consisted in participating on tourism activities to have a personal standpoint and be able to interact with tourism consumers and producers as well as analyze the tourist reviews and perceptions that correspond to the main activities (diving with whale-sharks, manta rays, kayaking, or just laying on the beach) in Coral Bay.

3.4 Limitations of the research

It is necessary to understand that there were certain limitations for this research. First, as a researcher, I tried to put myself in the middle of the network or in other words be as most

impartial to select the information sources, attempting to avoid influences of certain discourses from particular groups. But it was a hard job because I had to see further than the researcher's circle that is centered in biological and oceanography scope, turning the information more into the biological aspects of Coral Bay. Another factor was that I become member of the community in Coral Bay to have access to the information from the human actors (workers and tourists), this affect the glasses that I was using to observe Coral Bay because I was an insider exposed to a discourses about the ideals of the community. The way that the entry point is identified affects the research. Second, the willingness to give information from the community of workers/inhabitants was hard to achieve because they were closed circle of people. Third, the particular moment in which I conducted the informal interviews and observation was in the middle of the whale-shark season. The difficulty of the trip to the area is also another factor as well as the cost of the activities. Fourth, it is important to be aware about of animal behavior at the moment that I entered the area because that influenced the observation, the opinion, and experience of the tourists. And fifth, according to what is described above, the way I perceive or trace the network through the different actors also affects the result of the research.

3.5 Challenges

The major challenge for the research definitely was the willingness to cooperate by local workers (inhabitants) of Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park. It was difficult to create the entry point to gather the perceptions of the local people that in the majority are just workers of the tourist services in Coral Bay. This obstacle appears maybe because I was gathering information more related with their daily activities and the life in Coral Bay, which was different from other researchers because they are more interest in the marine biological part than the social part of Coral Bay. According to them most of the research that took place there involved the marine biology of Ningaloo Marine Park. But the present research has a strong content based on descriptions provided by actors and it was difficult for them to understand my interest in what they think about certain topics. They strategy that I used to overcome this difficulty was gain the trust of the workers becoming one of them, in that way I was able to discuss with them daily problems and concerns as well as stories about the place. Coral Bay in Ningaloo Marine Park is a small community where everyone knows everyone and what are they doing it, making my activities even more visible.

In this particular case I can mention that my portrayal as a researcher did not fit well because I looked different being the only Latin American person in Coral Bay at that time. Furthermore, I was the only Bolivian who ever swam with whale-sharks, according to the dive master guides. These kinds of situations affected the credibility of my intentions according to them. As a consequence, I gain the nickname of *"the nosy tourist"*; among

locals at the beginning because my story was hard to believe: a Bolivian student who came from The Netherlands in order to gather data for research. Besides that, I was the only dark-complected in the town, with a little notebook talking with tourists and asking questions about the day to day in Coral Bay. I made some local people nervous generating questions like: *Who is he? What is he doing here? Why such an interest to know what is happening in our Coral Bay?* Some of them told me that they even associated me with the dark side of my country due a book published by Rusty Young called Marching Powder (published in Australia in 2003) which talks about the cocaine tours in a Bolivian jail.

The time was passing and it was harder to become part of the community. Due to budget reasons I had to take a job as Umpa Lumpa in a hostel, which basically consisted to help with cleaning the common spaces, opening and closing kitchen and keep on eye about the use of the installations in exchange for free accommodation. I became an insider researcher by accident, I became a *workpacker* to gain trust with local people. Because as soon I started to clean the floor with a broom, the carpets with a vacuum cleaner or kill red back spiders armed with spray and my flip flops, the locals started to talk with me: Receptionists, dive masters, guides, managers, chefs, and '*workpackers'*. After look at me for a while the first approach happen with the phrase; *"So, what did you say you were doing here?"* from there I started to receive more and more stories. I had to re-name myself [according to the Australian manners] as Gus [that sounds like Goose] that gave it to me another key to start a conversation because they replied to me; *"like in the Top Gun Movie"*. It worked really well as an ice breaker. Most of the information was very personal and they refused to be recorded or let me put names in the thesis report. As a researcher it was a good lesson about how the things that we see at the desk can change in the field. But with a change of strategy at the end I finished in a staff party in a yacht in the deep sea, listening to stories, talking about intriguing tourism perceptions and learning about other realities in Coral Bay.

3.6 Positionality of the researcher

I am a student from Bolivia, who has been involved in tourism and conservation since the bachelor degree. In my professional life, my work was deeply related with community based-tourism, wildlife based-tourism and conservation. Developing projects with international cooperation and the interest about tourism as a tool of conservation and poverty alleviation was growing inside me every time that I see a new project. Throughout this time I used to be concerned about the involvement of people into the decision making process. Developing ideas about how to use tourism as an economic reinforcement for depressed regions with a high index of biodiversity I reflected a lot about the voices that were not heard and create spaces of opinion in order to get a fair scenario to decision making. It was during the time spend in Wageningen University when I learned about 'ANT' and its advantages (and disadvantages) to describe the tourism phenomenon, that

motivated me to apply the methodology. About the study case, I wanted to learn how tourism it is being managed in one of the top countries in the field of wildlife and tourism. The present research involved self reflection process about previous jobs that I did, increasing intention to understand and describe how tourism occurs and how actors can be involved in negotiating. Australia in a personal perspective always being ahead in tourism and conservation studies as well the characteristics of Ningaloo Marine Park and Coral Bay attracted to me for their characteristics small community, wildlife and power relationships struggling.

Chapter 4: Main moments in Coral Bay's history

In this Chapter I provide a background about Ningaloo Reef, Ningaloo Marine Park, and Coral Bay; the purpose it is to introduce the area of study and draw a timeline of the most emblematic moments in the region. This will allow me to do an analysis of the translation process and modes of ordering that took place in the place.

4.1 Ningaloo Marine Park Background

Ningaloo Marine Park was created to protect the reef's scenic, conservation and recreational value. It is located to the west of the Cape Range Peninsula the regions that are in the park begin in Point Murat in Exmouth Gulf to Amherst Point, south of Coral Bay on North West Coast of Western Australia. It includes the majority of the Ningaloo Reef, the largest fringing barrier reef in Australia as well as the longest fringing coral reefs in the world. The extension of the reef is about 260 km along the west coast of Cape Range Peninsula. It is one of the most accessible coral reef; formed by a shallow lagoon, between 2-4 meters in depth and ranging in width from 200 meters to excess of 6 km separates the reef from the mainland (Ayling and Ayling, 1987). It is located approximately 1,200 km north to Perth (Envrironment Australia, 2000: 1-5). About legislation, one portion of water in the park is established as Commonwealth under the supervision of Environment Australia and State Waters controlled by Western Australia Marine Parks and Reserves Authority. The park is managed under an agreement between the Commonwealth and the state jointly by the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and Fisheries Western Australia. The present area of the Marine Park (State and Commonwealth Waters) is 5,070 km². An area of 2,435 km² belongs to the Commonwealth Waters (Environment Australia, 2000: 1-5).

The Commonwealth Waters of Ningaloo Marine Park have IUCN Category II National Park, which means that is managed mainly for ecosystem conservation and recreation. That implies that there are restrictions on the activities that can be developed in the area, except for those that have a management plan, or get approval from the Director of National Parks. In Commonwealth Waters it is an offence to kill, injure, take, trade, keep or move a member of a native species; to damage heritage; to carry out an excavation; to erect a building or other structure; to carry out works; or to take an action for commercial purposes. Mining operations and commercial fishing are prohibited. Recreational fishing consistent with the conservation of the listed values is permitted and is managed through education, and compliance and enforcement programs. A large percentage of this area is also inscribed on the Commonwealth Heritage List. In this list are included whales (a number of species), whale-sharks, turtles, sharks, dugongs, dolphins, birds including wader and migratory species, and billfish (Australian Heritage Database, 2011).
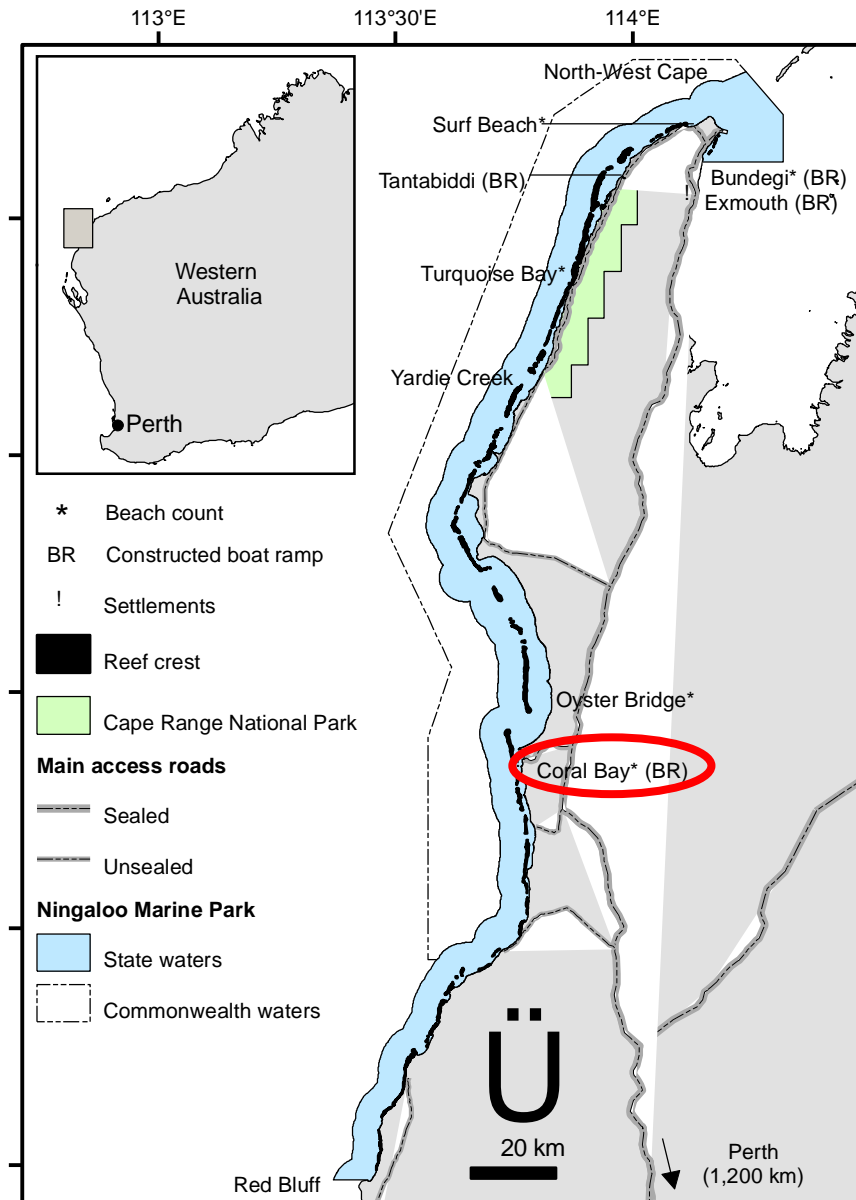
Figure 1: Map of Ningaloo Marine Park
Source: Murdoch University, 2011.

The area is protected under the Western Australian Government Legislation. It is the main instrument to draw the guidelines of management inside the Commonwealth Waters of Ningaloo Marine Park. The principal legislation is the *"Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 (CALM Act)"* because it establishes and manages conservation reserves in Western Australia. It dictates the purposes of these areas like conservation of native species, biodiversity, ecosystems and recreation and points on which authorities are responsible for the land and waters. The jurisdiction comprises Ningaloo Marine Park (State Waters) and the Muiron Islands Marine Management Area. CALM also manages the leases and licenses

to commercial activities in land or waters inside of the reserves. There are six pastoral leases with the purpose of conservation and recreation areas, the term of these are until 2015. They were issued by the Pastoral Lands Board (WAPC, 2004b). The Western Australia Environment Protection Act 1986 (EP Act) is the legislation guide for environmental impacts assessment in Western Australia.

The Environmental Protection Authority provides recommendations to the Western Australian Minister for Environment, who determinates whether proposals are accepted or declined. Furthermore, the Western Australian Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 (WC Act) is the main legislation about protection and conservation of native Wildlife in Western Australia. It provides guidelines for the protection of flora and fauna including the coastal sea. It includes many species in the Ningaloo Coast, season for whale-sharks sighting, and season for marine mammals sighting. It is supported by the Department of Environment and Conservation of Western Australia (DEC). The Western Australian Planning and Development Act 2005 (P&D Act) has the main requirement guidelines for planning and development of lands and establishes the responsibilities about urban, rural, and regional land use planning and land development. The strategic land use plan it has a time frame of 30 years that end on 2015. This Act provides the vision for sustainable development with strong community consultation. The main centers of development (services) are Carnarvon and Exmouth. As well as propose regional development of coastal tourism framework with guidelines for the activity in Carnarvon, Exmouth and Coral Bay know as *Ningaloo Coast Regional Strategy Carnarvon to Exmouth* (in Commonwealth Waters, 2010: 139-143).

The Ningaloo Reef coastal region has approximately 8000 residents, which live mainly in the towns of Carnarvon (71%), Exmouth (26%), and Coral Bay (2%). The region's economy is based on tourism, fishing, mining, horticulture and livestock, while nature-based and wilderness tourism in the main activity in Exmouth and Coral Bay, and it has national and international projection as Premier Destination (Western Australian Tourism Commission, 2003). The Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation labeled Ningaloo Marine Park as the state's *"premier marine conservation icon'* (Department of Conservation and Land Management, in Jones et al., 2010).

4.2 Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park "The Beginning"

The development of tourism in Coral Bay was a result of the construction of the first building in 1933 for the pastoral station workers but it was until 1968 that was established a Hotel, Caravan Park and a Service Station, which were located near the beach with easy access to the reef. With the hotel located near the coast and the reef close to coast, it was matter of time before people started to appreciate the landscape. Another factor which facilitated the access to the area was that all the roads from Perth to the north were well

maintained during 1970s and 1980s. The roads played an important role because accessibility is one of the most essential steps to develop tourism. Additionally, the environmental authorities recognized the character of the land and sea on the region and were assigned for conservation purposes. These situations led to recognition of the natural attractions, specially the annual migration to Ningaloo of the whale-sharks and the possibility to swim with them (Selwood et al. 1996; Davis et al. 1997 in Jones and Shaw, 2007). According to Butler's (1980) tourism life cycle, this moved from exploration, through involvement and into the development phases just in a few years and in three decades it reached the concern about the capacity of the place and the conservation of the wildlife for future generations (Jones and Shaw, 2007). In other words the development of Coral Bay as a tourist destination it went faster than the planning of it.

> *'Basically at the beginning there were the pastoral stations, after that they*
> *built a pub for the people who used to work on the stations. The resort began*
> *and the other tourist business came alone as a result'.*
> <div align="right">Worker (informal interview, 2011)</div>

Most of the inhabitants remember how tourism became a reality but none of the current workers or inhabitants actually saw the entire process. The people who are now are living in Coral Bay have not being there longer than 15 years. They explain how conditions like easy access to the reef, marvelous coast, accommodation, and road infrastructure developed by the Western Australian Government for the pastoral stations; helped to develop a tourist destination. For the Western Australian Conservation Authorities all these events at the beginning led to ask about the region's capacity to support tourism impact or provide the services following environmental considerations. Suddenly the proposal to build a major resort at Maud's Landing appeared. The development was placed near to Coral Bay along with the plans to build campgrounds along the Ningaloo Coast (Jones & Shaw, 2007).

The character of the town was developed *"in a relatively ad hoc manner"* (Western Australian Planning Commission, 2004: 107). In 1973, Coral Bay was separated from the Cardabria pastoral station, due to a lack of water supply, which led the local government to be against residential development in the region. Yet, Coral Bay by 2004 had built up 25 tourism businesses, increased the accommodation capacity to 1,848 beds, and employed more or less 150 people. The accommodation capacity levels were absolutely beyond the permit capacity set by the Carnarvon Planning Department. Moreover, tourism development brought with it serious concerns about the capacity to hold on the activity. For example, effluent disposal facilities of septic tanks, and leach drains and evaporation ponds are inadequate for the exponential grown of tourism wake affluent. The tanks from the gas station are not well located. The staff accommodation became a big concern because it is precarious, being just a trailer park. The runway for the planes is not correctly aligned to avoid strong currents. These led to private investors being critical about tourism

development meaning expansion and major infrastructure along the reef (Jones and Shaw, 2007). The Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park as a tourist destination led to a boom and developed a region that was planned and prepared for another activity (pastoral leases) but it was not set up to support a big flow of tourists and the demand of services that tourism activity demand from a place.

4.2.1 Save Ningaloo Campaign

These situations mentioned before led to a one of the key moments of Coral Bay, the development of Coral Coast Resort as a solution to the environmental problems and unmanaged campsite. The first attempts to realize the project were in 1987, at the same time that Ningaloo Marine Park was being institutionalized. At that time the stock market crashed making it impossible to undertake the investment, only to become possible in 1993. During 1995 the Liberal-National state government agreed with the developers to make public their planning. As a consequence in 2000, heavy negotiations taken place between the developers, the Department of Land Administration and the Western Australia Tourism Commission on a Land Development Agreement, meant to reduce the capacity of the resort. At the moment the negotiations were taking place, among the conservation groups there was a rising concern about the controversial proposal. As a consequence, a campaign called 'Save Ningaloo' was launched in Perth, which receive a lot of media and political support from highly representative groups against the Coral Coast Resort development (Jones and Shaw, 2007).

> *'It was a big revolution to keep the town as it is and stop the project'*
>
> Inhabitant – worker (informal interview, 2011)

The quote represents the memory of the most emblematic moment in the Ningaloo Marine Park-Coral Bay history and the involvement of the people. The campaign received a lot of media attention as well the attention of hundreds of people around West Australia. 'Save Ningaloo' was the main campaign to prevent the Coral Coast Development; *"developing a save Ningaloo action guide, fundraising to keep the campaign alive, promoting the campaign, lobbying personalized letters, emails, faxes to powerful politicians"* (http://www.save-ningaloo.org/, accessed on June 2011). This conservation group was spreading their concern not about just one development but more about the impacts. Trying to reach people through actively campaigning and provoking involvement and from by. The movement attracted attention of recognized people like author Tim Winton, actress Toni Collette and sports figure like Mick Malthouse and Luc Longley (Jones & Shaw, 2007).

> *'In his efforts to draft actress Toni Collette into his campaign to preserve WA's Ningaloo Reef, Tim Winton told her of whale-sharks and giant turtles,*

wondrous coral systems and a vast empty beach. But it was September; the end of the tourist season and the wind was up. "We just hoped we wouldn't look like frauds" Winton of Collette's first visit [...] that we'd go out on the boat and she'd jump off and said "This look pretty boring". But within seconds the star of Muriel's Wedding and Sixth Sense was leading four manta rays in a gentle dance" [...] Now, convinced, [...] she has join Winton – whose 18th book, Dirt Music, was shortlisted for this year's Booker Prize – in the campaign to save the reef from a $200 million inland marina and beachside resort planned for the area. The project includes caravan and camping grounds, a hotel and 200 luxury homes. "It's a rare fragile stretch of wilderness", says Sydney-raised Collette, 29, fresh from wrapping her 21st film, Japanese Story, in the nearby Pilbara. "What developers don't realize is that they'll be murdering that very essence that they crave". Alan Smith, executive director of Coral Coast Development Pty Ltd, is unmoved. "At the end of the day, who is Toni Collette? " Says Smith, who argues that current unmanaged tourism is far more of a toll (he says that Coral Bay is struggling to cope with the 3,000 visitors it gets a peak times). "Sure, she is a fine actress, [but] she is not a marine biologist". "I'm not a campaigner, I'm not a spin doctor, I hate doing interviews, and I don't like to be in the public gaze" says Winton, [...] "For me this is the Future".'

(http://www.save-ningaloo.org/, accessed on June 2011)

The piece extracted from the article in 'Save Ningaloo' webpage represents the hard negotiation that was taking place at that moment. But apart from the negotiations between government and developers there was a big movement taking place. Concerns were raised about different conceptions about managing a tourist destination. Private investors suggest a massive development which controls the overflow of tourists and the conservation groups propose to preserve the area without development and keep it small-scale. The campaign managed to reach people recognized by the media and caught the attention of the general audience. With a remarkable strategy which consisted in make them experience the reef with all the wildlife to start a relationship between them and the landscape. We can see different translators explaining their ideas trying to start an involvement process. Furthermore there were different actors involved here; groups, government, inhabitants of the town, inhabitants in Perth, and wildlife. The discussion goes even further than media taking place in the expertise of one group to advise about what or not to do in the reef.

In the 2001 State election, a surprising victory from the popularity of the Labor Party and in the parliament the Green Party gain strength. Due this political scenario, the conservation values meant the rejection of the Maud's Landing proposal in 2003 (Jones and Shaw, 2007). At the end the *"revolution for Ningaloo Reef"*, raised important statements in the political scenario that can be appointed as another important moment in Ningaloo Marine Park.

Looking at the evolution of movement which went from the reef until the level of decision makers and having effects in policies of the country.

Figure 2: Save Ningaloo movement 'Rally for the Reef'
Source: www.save-ningaloo.org

Without the Muad's Landing project development, the main concern was the impacts from the wilderness campers. Suddenly the argument from Biologist Karen Edyvane about having a single, integrated, environmental management system for a single development was much better than try to minimize the impact from many smaller developments in length of the region. As an answer to reach compromise between the campsites the government develop the *"Carnarvon-Ningaloo Coast: Planning for Sustainable Tourism and Land Use"* (WAPC, 2004). Under this plan, it was established a Regional Interim Development Order from Carnarvon to Exmouth. The institution leading the new scheme was the Western Australian Commission for sustainable tourism and land use. The new regimen allowed for an increase of twice the tourist capacity in Coral Bay, having considerations to waste disposal, water supply and staff accommodation and the reorganization of campers, conservation areas, and recreation areas. *"The management of the campsite will occur through a partnership with pastoral leaseholders, State agencies, local government, and visitors along the coast"* (WAPC, 2004: 131). The pastoral leaseholders started the negotiations to obtain the entitlement of the development node to return to those lands (Jones and Shaw, 2007).

4.2.2 'Save Ningaloo' facing another challenge

Now Ningaloo Reef is considered a marine biological importance for wildlife and wilderness sanctuary. As a consequence in January 2010 Commonwealth Australia finished the document to nominated Ningaloo Reef Coast as World Heritage Listing by UNESCO. This put the status of the Marine Park even higher for all the requisites and examinations that a World Heritage candidate has go through before to became World Heritage.

> *'This is an historic moment for Western Australia's Ningaloo Reef. Over a decade ago, a group of citizens joined together with environment groups and the people of the region, to launch a campaign to protect Ningaloo Reef from a future of over-development and neglect. World Heritage listing was always a faraway dream for the campaign that drew tens of thousands of people from across the political spectrum, and across the world. It seemed to take an age. It outlasted a slew of ministers and governments, but now it's here with bi-partisan support. Ningaloo's status among the world's great natural wonders has been asserted. But special places like Ningaloo will only survive if we are eternally vigilant. We know that we must take extra care with the ecosystems that nature Ningaloo Reef Exmouth Gulf, in particular must be protected with no less resolve. If oil rigs stray too close, when climate change threatens, the newly-minted World Heritage-listed Ningaloo will be able to draw on a whole new wellspring of interest and support. Ningaloo is a place loved by the people of the region, and now more than ever before, Ningaloo will inspire the citizens of the world.'*
>
> (http://wwf.org.au/news/ningaloo-world-heritage-at-last/, accessed on August 2011)

Ningaloo Reef increased their importance over time among people, governmental authorities, international organizations, and conservation organizations. The nomination for Ningaloo Reef as a World Heritage Listing of UNESCO constituted an achievement for them. During that time the region became recognized as a world class tourist destination offering pristine landscapes and wilderness also because it is a hot spot for migratory species (hunchback whale and whale-sharks), ensuring their environment. It constitutes a statement against overdevelopment serving as learnt lesson that small scale tourism development with good management can be an answer to protect the environment.

Despite all the inspiring work at Ningaloo Reef from the people who love the place, conservation groups and the government, in March 2011 another threat to Ningaloo Marine Park appeared and were announced by the media with concern with the following newspaper headline:

> *'Global petroleum giant Shell has applied to start drilling for oil and gas less than 50 km from the edge of Western Austrlia's prized Ningaloo Reef, which the federal government has nominated for World Heritage listing.'*

The drilling activity near to the reef created a concern among environmentalists, which confirmed that exploring near to Ningaloo Marine Park is too dangerous for the spills risk and the consequences of a disaster for the marine wildlife and environment, including all the migratory species. Here again, is development versus nature conservation. Ningaloo already went through a huge process to stop a development in the Coral Bay's coast. But now the menace has previous examples as Montara oil spill off West Australia coast and British Petroleum Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico. Like the last time, there are opinions coming and going around the subject.

> *'Shell says it expects the environmental impact of drilling – which it wants to conduct over 60 days starting as early as September – will be minimal. […] The well could be just 48 km from the western boundary of Ningaloo Marine Park. […] The World Wildlife Fund's WA director, Paul Gambling, said the Gillard government should reject the bid because the lessons from the 2009 Montana spill had yet to be fully understood and changes to regulation had not occurred. He described the area as a marine highway of whale-sharks, humpback whales, blue whales, endangered turtles and fish, including tuna. […] Shell said there was a low probability that a well blowout would affect the reef, but it did admit there could be a risk to whales, dolphins and whale-sharks. […] As we have seen time and time again in the oil and gas industry, it takes one accident to create an environmental catastrophe. At the distance Shell proposes to drill, any accident will inevitably impact on Ningaloo. […] This is one of those cases where our weak State environmental processes shouldn't even be necessary: the Barnett Government should kill this proposal right now. […] Greens senator Rachel Siewert said Australia regulations remain unchanged and licenses continue to be granted despite huge spills in the past. […] If a spill were to occur in the deep water off Ningaloo Reef, nobody could be confident that it could be handled. […] Important marine areas around Margaret River, the Kimberley and Bight Basin are already under threat from development and now Ningaloo is being added to that list.'*

Different discourses raised around the issue that say the people would be included during the process to ensure the reef as well as the techniques for drilling will have the lowest probability to provoke a spill accident. The conservationist part is extremely concerned about the fact that a recent World Heritage that is protected by their unique characteristics

and that their importance to maintain wildlife now it is exposed to a threat. The levels of negotiations are taking place between government and oil drilling company. Here enters the debate between government position about environmental protection and the resources extraction.

4.3 Modes of ordering and translation process in Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park

During the early stages of Coral Bay in Ningaloo Marine Park, had the conditions to be defined as a tourism destination for the geographical location, unique landscape attributes, and some services. When tourism entered in the scene, it was a small activity which gathered some conditions like tourist facilities, transport, accommodation and a potential tourist product to generate unique experiences. With the time those activities earned popularity among tourists. The marketing of the destination produced by tourism businesses created narratives around the attributes which are the landscape and the wildlife resulting in different denominations for Coral Bay like: little paradise, unique spot on earth or a wildlife sanctuary. In order to define a destination is necessary to understand the social practices that build the identity of it because there are relationships among objects, people and places. These relationships in Coral Bay can be seen in how the day by day the landscape, reef and wildlife play an important role in people life. The majority of the master divers come here to obtain their licenses for professional divers but more than that they spend the whole time interacting with the landscape, wildlife and people (workers and tourist). All the tourist that come to Coral Bay as well establish a bound with the reef being all day long practicing activities in reef looking underwater discovering a new world. During the dinners in the hostel, around a bonfire in the campsite or the pub, they share what they found and give this information about which are the best places or where they look the best coral or marine wildlife. In that way they become in experts creating their own experiences.

In the beginning of marine wildlife-based tourism in Coral Bay, there were major changes that were incorporated in order to reach the actual stage. With the grown of the tourist activity in the place concerns about the impacts and ideas about how tourism should be performed, started to rise among the actors (producers of tourism and local authorities). They started to ask themselves about what is the best way to develop tourism activity in the region, in order to control the impacts on the landscape. To describe which actors were having effect in changes and ideas around Coral Bay was necessary to traduce the different events into a translation process. During this translation process we can distinguish a *Problematization* moment with a translator that in this case were private investor groups with an idea to deal with the impacts of tourism activity. The strategy from this private group was a traditional big tourist development alone the coast with high-standard hotels, luxury houses, restaurants, big-scale tourism services. That strategy was negotiated between the Coral Coast Development group and the government.

The answer to deal with tourism activity impacts that Coral Coast Development Group went with the traditional coastal developments made around it in the Caribbean by huge hotel chains next to a natural paradise and develop massive installations. As previous examples in the Caribbean (Riviera Maya, Mexico), Balearic Islands and Lanzarote (Spain), these developments were successfully implemented. They attracted mass tourism, produced employment and developed the economy of the region as well as environmental impacts, landscape transformations and unfair labor conditions for local people. These were the main concerns that attract the attention of conservation groups concerning Coral Coast Development. In this scenario appeared two different kinds of translators: developers and conservationists, with opposite ideologies about tourism development in natural landscapes with unique wildlife.

The new translator appeared with another conceptualization about tourism development completely different from the Coral Coast Development. This conservation group had concerns about the magnitude of the development planned for Coral Bay. It looks that another conception about how tourism should be performed and how the elements should be organized appear in the scene. The conservation group ideas were environmental friendly and gaining adepts and strength that gave origin to 'Save Ningaloo Campaign' that could be understood as *Interesstement* moment. Coral Bay's workers support the idea to shut down the development project as well people from Perth started to make a statement about the protection of Coral Bay. The process had a main translator called Tim Winton that was attracted by Coral Bay and Ningaloo Marine Park more than 15 years. The idea to see a huge hotel chain and business in the shore of Maud's Landing in Coral Bay was against everything that a Protected Area should be. So he started the movement 'Save Ningaloo', making a statement about the problem that a development like Coral Coast Resort will represent for the conservation of the biological resources in the region. The vision of the 'Save Ningaloo Campaign' was to give voice to those who cannot be heard in the biggest decision spheres, representing their interest from local people from Coral Bay, people from West Australia and as well from the reef itself. That is a good example how one actor can stand for another actor. The way how the problem was presented gained sympathy from powerful politicians, recognized people and citizens. In order to make that more people perceive and understand the problem the campaign use public figures to address the current situation. The intervention of them it was successful because they can attract media attention and persuade people.

The *Enrollment* started with all the public with the eyes in Ningaloo Marine Park, the problem was already assumed by the public opinion it was question of time to take a decision to go forward or call off the project. Then the movement it was present more than ever with people in Coral Bay and Perth taking action with campaigns pro-Ningaloo, pacific protests against the project around West Australia, discourses, signatures petitions, public events more and more often until a crucial moment in the state elections played a key role

to shut down the Coral Coast Project. By using translation and ordering process to analyze the story where one actor represents another that could not be heard, as well the negotiations that were taking place about how should or should not tourism be developed. The different perspectives, ideas and agencies playing an important role around one biological resource like Ningaloo Marine Park. Addressing a problem and the way to influence people during the negotiations, gain popularity through the key translator and provoke a movement until have a decision congruent with their conceptualization to develop tourism. Now that was just one challenge to Ningaloo Marine Park because another potential threat has appeared near to the shore, which is oil and gas exploration in the border of the park. This situation of course went way faster than the private development by Coal Coast Resort Group, the negotiations were taking in advance and the scenario was a high spheres of power but international waters legislation and energetic resources which represent significant push for the economy played an important role in the decision.

Chapter 5: Exploring the realities about Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park

The present chapter intents to address the different discourses and realities constructed around Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park. The descriptions are based on the perceptions of tourists and inhabitants which portray for them what this tourist destination means. It goes through branding destination to explore the different characteristics that are used by different tourism businesses. All those descriptions finally reflect different realities which co-exist in Coral Bay.

5.1 Coral Bay – So much to do!!

Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park is a tourist destination which gives the chance to swim with the biggest fish in the world, the whale-shark. As well it is possible to enjoy the beauty of the reef from the sky on a panoramic tour by plane or visit the surroundings of Coral Bay riding four-wheelers. Tourists enjoy the calm landscape, reading books or trying to get a perfect tan. The size of the town influences the activities of the visitors because it is a ten minutes walk from one side to another. There is a strong emphasis on the landscape and the proximity of the beach as well easy access to the reef by local businesses to persuade visitors to have a nice stay. As soon as one arrives in town, it is easy to perceive the movement all around with people setting up camp in the campsite, people going alone the main road with the snorkel on their heads and on their hands, buses with tourists excited about their deep sea adventures and in the early morning people waiting for just baked bread in the shopping center.

5.1.1 Wildlife Tours

Coral Bay is basically a place for marine wildlife-based tourism, the majority of the activities goes along to the reef. *"Come and meet the locals!!"* it was backpackers' hostel sign that show an interesting way of think about the wildlife in the reef and invite you to the reef tours. With these kinds of phrases Coral Bay welcomes visitors who will spend some days doing activities on the reef. In the tourism offer the main running tours in Coral Bay are whale-shark swimming, manta-ray tour, whale watching, turtle spotting, snapper feeding, visit the shark nursery, coral viewing, sea kayaking, fishing, quad bike treks, four wheel driving, and four wheel safari tours. The main wildlife tours that are running are the following ones:

Whale-Shark Tours: The whale-shark season starts in April and goes until July followed from a massive spawning of coral but the tour is available from March to July every year. In order to have accuracy finding the whale-sharks there is a spotter plane which flies above the vessel to guide the crew to the place where whale-sharks are swimming. This coordination

with the plane it is to guarantee the experience and pass more time swimming than looking for them. The tour always includes the captain, skipper, two dive guides and a professional video photographer filming the experience. All of them are certified expert master diver's instructors. The entire crew provides a safe trip for the tourist and whale-sharks as well. In this kind of tour the time of contact is important with these animals. According to the Department of Environment and Conservation a group can be no more than 10 people in the water in contact with an animal and the time it is 2 minutes per group (per swim). Touching the animal is forbidden and it is considered a fault by law. The swimmers must be 4 meters far away from each side of the whale-shark, never should be in the front of it or close to the tail. The correspondent regulation it is in the tour operation licenses of tour operation. The tours consist in a full day with all the professional equipment (snorkel, neoprene suit and fins) and a buffet on board. The types of tourist that practice those activities have to be a skilled swimmer that's the only restriction. According to the list of assistant (February – April 2011) to the activities there are from 10 until 55 years old tourists that practiced this tour but the majority is from 20 until 45 years old.

Manta Ray Tours: The manta ray season is all year round because it is a permanent resident the reef. In the operation of this tour as well they use the spotter plane to guarantee the experience and have more time swimming with them. The tour crew includes a captain, a skipper, and two certified master diver guides with a professional video photographer. As well as every tourism activity with wildlife it has to make a safe trip for tourist as well as for the manta rays. The same considerations are taken the swimmers approach or touching the animal is forbidden. This tour is the second most popular in Coral Bay, sometimes it works as a substitute product from whale-sharks tours due price issues according to backpackers budget. To practice this activity the requirement is to be a skilled swimmer during the present season there were children, teenagers, young adults and adults.

Humpback Whale Tours: The season for the humpback whale correspond to their annual migration from June to November. These tours consist of going deep sea to encounter the mother whales and their calves. The advantage it is that during the journey it frequently is possible to encounter dugongs, dolphins and turtles. The crew has with them two certified dive master divers. The regulation to interact with the whales is harder than with the other species for safety measures. Swimming, feeding or touching whales is not permitted. When a person is on in the water they keep a distance of 30 meters from the whale. The vessels should keep 300 meters distance from the whale within the whale contact's zone. The tour takes a full day and the meals are included. During the time that I spend there I could not practice this activity but I heard the stories about it from the dive masters and the impressions of having a massive mammal in front of you it is an incredible experience.

Shark Nursery tours: This is an activity that can be organized with the glass bottom boat or independently hiring a kayak or walking north until Bill's Bay. The necessary equipment it is

a snorkel and fins. The best season is during October to March when the water of the reef turn into a shark cleaning station. This is where the sharks come into the shallow waters to receive a dental service from small fishes. This activity could be easily done going there by Kayak or walking depend of the preference. As they say '*Stop at the shark cleaning station. This is not as scary as it sounds'* as they tell you in the reception of the backpackers' hostel, instead is an amazing and safe experience. For this activity it is necessary to have a good physical condition to paddle until 20 minutes up north from Coral Bay shore to reach the shark station. The tourists who practice this activity are commonly the young backpackers.

Fishing tours: Sport fishing tours operate in Coral Bay. There are excellent conditions to practice this sport in charters packages, using top quality equipment and a very qualified crew. The tour goes in line to promote state wide bag limits that is the limits of fishing and supports the tag and release program. Coral Bay – Ningaloo Reef provides an abundance of fish like Blue Marlin, Black Marlin, Striped Marlin, sailfish, Wahoo and others. The amount of fishes caught is according to the State bag limits. *"In Coral Bay: Early to bed, early to rise – if you want to go fishing then this is good advice".* The tourists that assist to this activity are professional in this kind of sport.

Figure 3: People spending their leisure time in the beach of Coral Bay
Source: Gustavo E. Gutierrez Thompson

During the period in the study area I could observe tourism and leisure activities that are not programmed and can be done just renting a snorkel, fins, swimming suit and just by going to the shore people can enjoy the landscape. As well the main point to the beach which has an amazing landscape, it is usual to see all kind of tourist enhancing themselves in different activities like snorkeling looking wildlife, taking a kayak to go to locations which have better coral specimens. Between those tourists we can see many different types like backpackers that are mostly young people that stay no longer than three days. Then we can see entire families with children bounding with the landscape and wildlife. Another group of tourists in Coral bay are elder people there are many retired people in the shore just relaxing in the beach and taking a sun bath. The whole zone is catalogued as a sanctuary zone. Therefore fishing activity is not permitted that allow enjoy all the fishes, turtles, small rays come to the reef. All over the shore from Bill's Bay to Paradise Beach a snorkel or dive experience is happening. In this way Coral Bay became make busy all the visitors which come to know the reef. It is for real that no all the visitors make all the activities but for sure they come to enjoy the beach and the relax environment of the town.

5.2 Coral Bay, has an identity disorder?

'Attention!!! This ATM is temperamental. It may take a couple of tries. You will only get charged the once'

(ATM sign in Coral Bay)

In a way the signs, phrases or quotes that appear in the web pages, magazines, tourists' blogs, tourist descriptions or simply on paper with a blue maker are portraying the representations of the destination. The quote above caught my attention because in a simple way reflected some of the reality of Coral Bay town. In other words, this warning about the failure of the ATM machine also reflects Coral Bay's 'lie back and relax' way of being with a nice humorous touch. The choice to use this phrase instead of 'this ATM is not working' makes you aware about the fact that the cash machine is not working well but they represent the fact with a humor. In the same way I explored through different phrases or slogans which in a way portrays the identity of Coral Bay unrevealing different conceptions referring to the same place given by the workers, inhabitants and businesses.

5.2.1 Tourist destination descriptions

'Coral Bay, it is as idyllic as the name suggests'

Browsing through webpages about tourism in which Coral Bay appears, it is easy to come across some of this kind of phrases, in which Coral Bay – Ningaloo Reef experience is described with suggestive and even in a poetic way. Most of these advertisements are deeply related with Coral Bay identities that invite tourist to enjoy a *"small piece of paradise on earth",* as inhabitants used to refer to their home when they talk about the town. Other kinds of descriptions try to portray a characteristic of the tourist destination for example the following ones:

'The Ningaloo Reef starts just meters from the shore', 'ideals family swimming location', or 'Safe swimming beach at the end of the fish sanctuary and ideal for snorkeling'

(Holiday Guide 2011/2012)

Those phrases from a travel guide highlight Coral Bay´s strongest competitive characteristics, the closeness of the reef from the main beach. As well are made to help others take the decision when choosing a vacation destination. If the family is planning a vacation that involves children, reading these phrases makes Coral Bay fit perfectly with the requirements. Passing through magazines, flyers, web pages, and tour agencies advertisements, there is one attribute that comes up along with Coral Bay: safety, which is also mentioned in most promotions of the town and when referring to the marine wildlife experience:

'I know what you're thinking and no, they have no sting so they can't harm you'

(Backpackers hostel book guide)

It tries to represent a safe activity with huge animals that can produce a big impression. They use the phrase to encourage people to swim with whale-sharks as not every day you can hear that people swam with sharks and survived. Nevertheless, in Coral Bay it happens often. Those are the impressions that the destination achieve with these descriptions. Tourism businesses behind the descriptions are working to build up an image that they have around the tourist destination through the branding as a sanctuary and save tourism spot.

'We make a lot of effort to put Coral Bay in a Backpacker language that adds a lot of fun'

Staff (Informal interview, 2011)

Depending on who is speaking or who they want to reach with these descriptions, the personality of the tourist destination changes. Like the receptionist of the hostel made emphasis that they put Coral Bay in backpackers' language. That means that it has a changeable personality. Earlier, it was presented as safe family destination and now it turns into a backpackers' destination. The representation changes while it remains the same destination with the same characteristics only with different interpretations. Additionally, it has a strong relationship with the major activity in the tourist destination because in many cases they end up tied to it.

> *'Tourism in Coral Bay it is more than whale-sharks. The reef and the wildlife is the main attraction. Because we work the whole year; whale watching, as well the manta rays are always here. The only thing that you need is to dive and the coral is there. I mean the whale-shark is the big money, but Coral Bay is more than that'*
>
> Master diver (Informal interview, 2011)

As magazines describe Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park as a home of the mighty whale-shark the destination has the fame to be an exclusively for this activity. Nevertheless, workers who live there always made the statement that it is much more than just the whale-sharks trying to open the scope of the tourist destination in this way they struggle with the different representations because due the marketing some step on the others. There are also other businesses which depend more on the tourism length of permanence that rephrase the magazines with their slogan:

> *'Whale-sharks are just the beginning...'*
>
> (Ningaloo Reef Resort slogan)

This is a strong statement for a destination that is sold with the image of the whale-shark. It is an invitation to keep exploring the destination further and it tries to open the options to the visitor to look more at the destination than the activity. This kind of description about one destination can represent sometimes an obstacle when not being in line with the reality by raising tourists expectations.

> *'They told me about the colors but almost everything is white'*
>
> Swiss Tourist (Interpersonal communication, 2011)

In some cases it can lead to disappointment of tourists when they are not finding what they were looking for. The quote represents tourist frustration about the fact that the pictures and the descriptions of the reef made an image about Coral Bay in his head that led to high expectations and at the end just produced the contrary effect. Coral Bay's personality can change according to who is representing the destination. In most cases tourism businesses

play with the branding of the destination and pictures of the landscape making an illusion of the place.

5.2.2 Perceptions about Coral Bay

Searching to find the identities, discourses and practices involved with the destination, the tourist perceptions or interpretations about the place are interesting to analyze because they experienced the destination in a particular way and have their own conception about what it represents for them.

> *'Well I hopped off the tour bus here in Coral Bay and it's been such an amazing week! The weather has been perfect. The beach is a 5 minute walk from our hostel and you can just walk off the beach and into the water and you are swimming with coral and a lot of fish. So stunning! So, I've been snorkeling and lay down on a beach for most of my time here. This is the life!!! A little paradise'*
>
> Swedish Tourist (Personal Communication, 2011)

Most of the time as the quote shows, tourists were completely amazed by how easy it was to walk around the town, easy to go everywhere in this "*ten minutes to walk the length of town*". As soon as you are in the town the directions are followed by *"just walk a little bit and you will find the beach".* Additionally, it has to do a lot with the distribution of the town that it was almost planned. Finally, it comes to the appreciation as a paradise because everything is close by, there is the beach to relax, tours to hire, the shopping center for groceries, pub and restaurant to take a drink.

> *'Coral Bay can be described as a small tourist spot where you can find everything that you need'*
>
> Receptionist (Informal interview, 2011)

That is a particularity from Coral Bay compared with the other towns in Ningaloo Marine Park which are bigger urban centers with a difficult access to the main attractions. This characteristic plays a main role with an easy access to the landscape, beach, wildlife, and services. Tourist came back to Coral Bay from another place just for that reason.

> *'You are going to miss this place because it is simply perfect. Exmouth is way bigger and has no personality, you lost the sense of wilderness. Coral Bay has a nice weather, no flies, no bugs and the reef is just a few meters away'*
>
> Backpacker (Personal communication, 2011)

Figure 4: Main street in Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park
Source: Gustavo E. Gutierrez Thompson

It took two days for a group of tourists to come back to Coral Bay, even thinking about the distance between destinations in West Australia. They argued that the other destination was more developed so it lost the feeling of being in middle of nowhere. That is the effect Coral Bay produces, *"even more when there is just one supermarket to do groceries"*. That brings to the table the subject of development of the destination because small and remote in this case appeals in a with the tourists needs.

> *'Coral Bay is beautiful because it is a small spot and it is better to remain like this'*
>
> Tourism Business Staff (Personal Communication, 2011)

The personnel who work in tourist services recognized that the beauty of Coral Bay remain because is small. That also brings to their memories the 'Coral Coast Development' that was called off by the community and groups that support Coral Bay. It can be perceived in the town that the quality to remain small goes hand in hand with having control about what is happening around.

> *'I mean the idea to have this town small is great because you can protect the reef but as well prevent the Gold Coast effect. In that part I can see a*

prostitution of tourism. All those people everywhere, no place to sit and all the mess. That is the beauty of Coral Bay'

<div align="right">Tourism Business Staff (Personal Communication, 2011)</div>

This kind of comparison shows up at the moment to explain the identity of Coral Bay, the fact that there is peace and calmness in the town helps in two ways, one for the tourists that visit the destination and the other for the people who live there. They argue that it is not only their job but also their home and they don't want to become in a bigger place with more tourist and more business. That is the conservation feeling that they have; the practices of small development in order to keep their lifestyle.

5.3 Another day in Coral Bay

As the time was passing by I realized that my budget was seriously low. I needed to spend less to prolong the time in the town. I took job as cleaning staff in exchange for free accommodation. Suddenly another reality of Coral Bay appeared in front of me, the opportunity to live as a local or as a 'workpacker'. The doors to the community were open because finally I could enter the local circle. The power of the mop transformed me from a nosy tourist to another worker.

5.3.1 Coral Bay: sweet, sweet home!!!

'Sweet, Sweet home!!!'

<div align="right">Tourism Business Staff (Informal interview, 2011)</div>

Those are the words to describe Coral Bay used by the workers in the different business. The tourist destination, small paradise to relax and other attributes take another representation in front of this description. The local people who work here just fell in love with the place and decided to live there with their work is. The population is composed of permanent residents and itinerant residents that spend all high tourism season in Coral Bay. People ended up living in Coral Bay and made reef their home.

'I just came here as Backpacker with the idea to conquer and see all the Down Under Country but I felt in love with Coral Bay and I'm here already four years'

<div align="right">Tourism Business Staff (Informal interview, 2011)</div>

It became common to hear how people got trapped by the beauty of Coral Bay and from one day they decided to stay and live there. The residents of the town came for vacations and they ended their trip by staying here. Most of them tell that they were *"looking for new*

air or a change in their daily routine or life". After living in the cities with a regular job and the troubles that involves living there they mention:

> *'This is the place to be, because I feel free in the small town. I can ride my bike around, swim and grab my kayak and go to the reef'*
>
> Tourism Business Staff (Informal interview, 2011)

> *'Way of life? Just short term living, lie back, any activity to do on the beach, beautiful weather'*
>
> Workpacker cleaning staff (Interpersonal Communication, 2011)

Figure 5: The entire shore is classified as a Sanctuary Zone in Coral Bay
Source: Gustavo E. Gutierrez Thompson

Coral Bay becomes a relaxed way of life with hard work, without daily city problems and ending the day by watching the sunset from the shore. There are also residents that needed a second chance to start something new in a new place. There were people realizing the last adventure as I found an exceptional character from the town. He was in his personal adventure looking for his family in Australia, after trying to contact them and finishing resources, hope, and after going town by town finally he end up working in Coral Bay and found a new family among the workers. But it appears that not only running away from a big city is the reason to live in Coral Bay;

'No, I'm not built for snorkel or diving!!! I came here because my boyfriend is working as a master diver so I started to live and work here six months ago'

'The main reason that people come and stay here as a de facto relationship visa. There many couples that appear in Coral Bay, it happen to me'

People following their partners or de facto union is present in Coral Bay. The amount of couples is increasing in the town. This situation leads to think that at some point they will become a family. A change in the town's demography will require more services. If the family with children appears in the community it will be necessary to implement some services that are not included at the moment like a primary school. The discourse around the town it changes depending on the person talking: a permanent resident or just an itinerant resident. For example, tourists love Coral Bay's remoteness but permanent residents feel that:

'Coral Bay it is definitely isolated'

Then the beauty of a place in middle of nowhere becomes an isolated location. There are services that are not present; as the inhabitants say *"we don't have the resources or the services to support a bigger population, without school or a hospital".* The town has an emergency medical post for basic problems injuries and emergencies. They have to go to Carnarvon for a serious emergency or for major diagnosis. The town does not have a school because there are no children living in the town but there are couples in the town that mentioned this situation. The concerns about the amount of people living and arriving to the town became an issue. *"Population increased a lot during these years more and more people coming to work"* as a result the fact that the town is not prepared to support certain amount of people and the concerns started to come to the surface.

'We live in the back of the town in an area designated to workers. There are containers and caravans. You know it is a good way to save money. Because they charge us really cheap per week and they pay good money per hour, for me it is a good deal'

'In my perspective, we live in third world conditions. We are isolated and with not many services for sure there should be better conditions. The place that the workers live is called Little Kenya, so you make your own deductions'

Opinion about living conditions depends on who is speaking. It is a good deal for temporary worker who has the plan to change of environment and live the day by day without worries. But it turns around when it is a permanent resident who is speaking. It housing is not ideal, because the cabins are rough constructions meant to be temporary. But it fulfills workers' basic necessities of shelter and basic services. *"According to the pastoral leasing character of the land nobody it is allowed to live here and nobody can own land as well"*. The development and urbanism on the town depends on legislation about the use of the land. The implementation of the new use and agreement will help to develop better housing conditions for the workers. In Coral Bay *"there is a rule concerning the length of stay here. If you are not a worker you can't live more than 90 days in the town"*. The community is really strict about that rule because the tourist in a holiday work visa who finds a job in the town automatically has to leave from the tourist accommodation to the workers housing installations. For that reason, *"all the people who live here are workers; none of them actually own the business or land"*. Coral Bay's development is a sensitive subject because as a local person observes:

> *'Actually we are divided in own ideas about Coral Bay. There is one group that wants to develop and make a bigger destination and there are people that want to keep it small because the little paradise will disappear'*
>
> <div align="right">Tourism Business Staff (Informal interview, 2011)</div>

Figure 6: Sign that states that people can own a piece of land but stay up to 90 days
Source: Gustavo E. Gutierrez Thompson

The ownership of the land has become a matter of discussion as a worker in the town express; *"people should have some rights from the DEC to recognize us as inhabitants as well as to have a right to own some piece of land. There are people giving their life to this place. In my opinion people who live here more than ten years should be able to have some rights"*. But those are controversial opinions about the land ownership that appear sometimes discussions between locals. In any case, in the other side of the story people says; *"if the town grows I definitely will look for another place"*. They love the town as it is and they are completely happy with the conditions because they found what they were looking for.

5.3.2 Workpackers?

> *'Workpackers are a special kind of traveler that finance their trips with their work'*
>
> Tourism Business Staff (Informal Interview, 2011)

Most of those 'workpackers' represent a good amount of the workforce in the town. It is common to see them working in tourism businesses doing jobs that do not require much expertise but experience is a requisite. Workpackers *"as you can see there are young European people working here mainly from countries that have the working holiday visa to Australia. If they are good in their job they can earn the sponsorship for the second year"*. According to the conversations with workpackers, most of them have the intention to migrate to Australia as workforce. Furthermore, for these workpackers, Coral Bay is not only a tourist destination. It represents an opportunity to be able to earn a sponsorship to stay longer in Australia. According to the Australia Visa Bureau, passport holders from the following countries have access to the working holiday visa: Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Japan, Republic of Cyprus, Denmark, United Kingdom, Sweden, Canada, Finland, Malta, Republic of Ireland, Taiwan, France, Italy, Norway, Republic of Korea, and The Netherlands.

There is an entire information network between all the workpackers, about which enterprises offer better work conditions, higher salaries, schedules or even tips for how to receive sponsorship. Most of the workpackers come to the town with a pre-arrangement. They contact the enterprises months in advance before the high season. Then the networking starts in the town, walking around filling forms with local businesses to establish the first contact. *"There is always some job that needs to be done"* as a possible workparcker mention with optimism. In the last year according to the staff the amount of people coming to ask for a job has increased. There are more workpackers arriving to the town and the locals are concerned about this fact.

'In Coral Bay, more people come to work (earn money) instead of spending it.
I think that can be caused by the economic recession'

<div align="right">Tourism Business Staff (Informal interview, 2011)</div>

It is difficult to predict the intentions of the workpackers because their motives can change from saving some money doing a little bit of work to look another opportunity in a different place. This was yet another face of the same destination.

5.4 Different realities about a same place

The destinations have a contestation of values, judgments and descriptions that are together with help of narratives. In Coral Bay are various realities put together to represent the identity of the destination. Coral Bay is a small emplacement constituted by one street despite the size this town situated next to the famous Ningaloo Marine Park can produce many realities and project different identities. Those realities and mental conceptions are held it by people who live there, tourist which visit the place, tourism businesses, conservation and research organizations, and state authorities. There are different kinds of representations of the town that together build particular versions of the destination according to individual experiences or proposes. The descriptions of Coral Bay most of the time contest depending if are tourism businesses, workers or tourist which are realize them. The background or interest on them influence the identity in many cases struggling among them (e.g. the town spin around the whale-sharks or the whale-sharks are just the beginning), many descriptions about the town correspond to personal interests. Coral Bay holds multiple personalities that are linked together by the landscape, location and wildlife, most of the services or tourist come here for those characteristics even they have different mental constructions about the place.

Looking through branding or marketing information about Coral Bay can lead to a multiple discourses. These most of the time represent the town as an idealistic paradise with perfect weather, astonishing landscape, unique adventures, and perfect to rest. Those descriptions can be easily found in any brochure or webpage that make reference to Coral Bay, tourism businesses highlight the landscape attributes as a competitive advantage. As well these constructed discourses depend on who is going to read them. Coral Bay Luxury Destination can be found in the webpage of the Ningaloo Reef Resort in Coral Bay; they build representations from nice couple spending a day having the reef just a few steps from their balcony as well the place can turn into a romantic venue for newlyweds offering a honey moon with the spectacular landscape or representing Coral Bay as a safe experience on the reef for families with children.

Figure 7: Children having a safe experience along the shore in Coral Bay
Source: Gustavo E. Gutierrez Thompson

Backpackers destination reality is completely different about the previous given descriptions. It is represented by adventure, outdoor activities and wilderness. Those are the qualities that are engaged to this representation because people puts a lot of effort in transform everything into a backpackers' language. That is different from of representation or branding; the language becomes more informal, with humor, and playful. The advertisements are different, knowing this market sector for travel with a small budget and save any penny to use it in the next adventure, the phrase that appears every time is backpackers' discount. Everything is based in a playful representation like 'is not as dangerous as you think' are phrases which addressed just for backpackers. Inside this group of tourists there are the campers that for them Coral Bay is one stop more to rest for three or two days and then hit the road again, their unique interest it is have a nice campsite, with the bathroom and kitchen facilities to set up the camping. Their experience is different they just go alone in the campsite eating forming a community around the vehicles.

Coral Bay has a representation as a home place, given by the workers it is a particular representation difficult to understand because the inhabitants are workers (permanent or itinerant) because no one born there, according to some workers there is just one generation and no families in Coral Bay just couples. Coral Bay is represented as home sweet home, for many of the people who lives here is a relax paradise where they find the

most essential to live a good life without worries. They have their jobs, a small community to interact even their differences about how Coral Bay should grow or remain small. These characteristics are deeply related as well with the kind of worker the permanents that already lived more than four years feel an emotional attachment towards the town. They would like to have more services but it means more people and businesses instead they prefer to keep their small paradise as it is. Among the workpackers which look opportunity to have a residency permit and be considered eligible to live and work in Australia with a enterprise sponsorship. The reality for them it is traduced in a new life opportunity because they travel and work to increase their budget but there are migrants looking an opportunity. All those representations for part of the identity of Coral Bay and depend in which reality you have contact a new face appear in front.

Figure 8: Campers site in Coral Bay
Source: Gustavo E. Gutierrez Thompson

Chapter 6: Whale-shark enacting wildlife based tourism in Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park

Many tourists are interested visit Ningaloo Marine Park are aware of the attractiveness of the landscape and the wildlife. As soon as they enter to look for information about the activities appears a particular animal called the whale-shark. The whale-shark is the biggest fish in the world and it is harmless for humans, they can be seen around the coast of Ningaloo Marine Park from March until June. Tours with whale-sharks started around 1989, but there was an increase of the activity in the early 90's. After all the movement with marine wildlife in the region, the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) created licenses for commercial activities that involved marine wildlife, inside those activities is tourism. Currently, there are three licenses for marine wildlife operations in Coral Bay. As an important attraction for the park, the whale-shark has many representations related with the place as a destination, in activities, slogans, pictures, stories, articles, and videos. The whale-shark has a deep relation with Ningaloo Marine Park that we will explore in this chapter.

6.1 Discourses around the whale-shark

> *'Ningaloo Marine Park is considered one of the most reliable and easily accessible places on earth to swim with these gentle giants'*
>
> (Holiday Guide 2011/2012)

According to the travel guides, websites, travel blogs and research in Ningaloo they describe the park has the conditions to offer the encounter with the animal. Coral Bay has a good reputation for the whale-shark experience for the easy accessibility to the reef. There are many discourses about whale-sharks and the relationship with tourism activity in Coral Bay. The image of a whale-shark is always related with Ningaloo Marine Park on the arrival to Coral Bay immediately is present in illustrations, pictures, brochures, slogans, signs, souvenirs, and even in the personnel uniforms by local businesses but there is a tendency to focus more on the whole reef but the whale-shark gets more attention. Looking information at this situation was aware how different descriptions work with the destination representation, discourses and practices concerning the relation whale-shark/Coral Bay.

> *'You'll be amazed at what you will see'*
>
> Tour Operator (Informal Communication, 2011)

> *'You would be CRAZY to leave without seeing one'*
>
> Backpackers' hostel sign under a whale-shark picture (2011)

Those are the expressions that are used to describe the whale-shark experience, inside the office a huge flat screen television with images of people going on boat, swimming in the reef and of course the whale-sharks, manta rays and humpback whales. Those images were creating a reality of the place with the best scenes: all the people happy, an amazing landscape, and a beautiful sunset on the sea representing an ideal destination. During the collection of information I found much research on the marine biological aspect of Ningaloo Marine Park and whale-sharks which are focused on quality of the environment for marine wildlife, studies about types of coral, socio-economical studies about whale-shark impact in tourism and so on. That represents the whale-shark as a scientific object of research that has a different connotation than a non-human animal actor in the reef. The branding of the marine park is strongly tied to this marine animal, using the colors of them which are dark blue, light blue and white on the designs in most of the publicity there was a picture of it. As well there are illustrations made by tourist like in a blackboard in the bar of the hostel a chalk-drawing, which depicted Coral Bay's essence that showing the marine wildlife, the reef and the people enjoying the sea. It was a clear representation about what is the personality of the town as well as what the people can find.

Figure 9: Chalk-drawing by Cloe and Rowey (Backpackers)
Source: Gustavo E. Gutierrez Thompson

'I swam with them just once but it was fantastic, the calm that they transmit! You can't imagine one experience like that definitely you have live it to understand it'

Tourism business staff (Informal Communication, 2001)

This kind of expression was usual to heard in Coral Bay, maybe was because people that work as a dive masters came here to work attracted by the whale-shark and the diving activity. The stories about the experiences with whale sharks turned to have a deep impact in tourists, about the size, color, amount of time and number of sharks that they found during their tour. Walking the only street in the town, in order to get familiar with it I observed the influence of the reef and the whale-shark because in the tourism businesses doors that have the license to operate with whale-sharks were telling the people how many sharks they swim with, turning them in a measure of the experience. I could observe as well in the different offices around the town the whale-shark on souvenirs, little models, and pictures on the advertisements, as well the signs of the business and the workers' uniforms which permit me to confirm in a way the impact of it in Coral Bay.

Figure 10: Tour Operator Office certified to operate Whale-Shark experiences
Source: Gustavo E. Gutierrez Thompson

'I wouldn't be here if wasn't for the whale-shark, no beach and no atmosphere'

<div align="right">Workpacker (Interpersonal communication, 2011)</div>

That explanation was used by backpackers when explained their motives to by interest in Coral Bay. Most tourists in the town come to have the experience to swim with the whale-sharks as well they recognize that adds the personality to the destination because they recognize the attributes of the town like the landscape and how everything was near to the beach with the reef just a few meters. The influence of the wildlife in Coral Bay becomes the essence of the place due to most of the activities in the destination are related with it.

'Well the town just dies after the whale-shark season. Most of the guides and master divers just go away and there are not much people around'

<div align="right">Tourism business staff (Personal Communication, 2011)</div>

"This town runs around the whale-sharks. The coral it is nice but after being snorkeling a lot it is always the same"

<div align="right">Dutch Tourist (Personal communication, 2011)</div>

Those arguments show the effect of the whale-shark in Coral Bay as a part of the attractiveness of the reef but as well the impact that has in the economic movement in the town. During the low season the number of tourist and workers decrease. Despite the tourist made emphasis in the whale-shark experience the permanent personnel of the tourism businesses which are the inhabitants say that the beauty of the town is not centered in one animal instead it is in the whole landscape and the wildlife. The tourist who come just for swimming with the whale-shark have the impression that after three of four days as much it is the perfect time to spend in Coral Bay before departing next for adventure.

In order to understand better the whaleshark experience I engaged in the activity to observe how the activity it is realized. During the preparation for the tour the personnel leading the tour explain the whale-sharks main characteristics, migrations habits, physiological details, details about current research which is try to track them to learn more about them, and other important aspects. Like the rules from the Department of Environment and Conservation and safety rules (e.g. to not swim in front of it or close to the tail, we should be careful with the cameras). The length of every swim was approximately two minutes per group. The activity needs a lot of energy to jump into the water and go out of the water several times, follow swimming the dive master guide. Then learn to be focus about where the whale-shark was and where to look to be sure of your position. During the tour I was able to find a space to talk with the group of tourist once the ship crossed to deep sea waters waves. Then during conversations between tourists the central subject of course was Ningaloo Marine Park and the whale-shark.

> *'I live in Indonesia but I'm from The Netherlands; I decided to come to Australia and this activity was in my bucket list: swim with the whale-sharks'*
>
> *Dutch tourist (Informal conversation, 2011)*

That was a 51 years old lady that was on vacation driving around Australia in her van, she mention that *"swim with the whale shark was a unique opportunity that should be done once in a lifetime"*. Travelling around Australia there are many things to see but there are experiences that definitely you must do. The effort to come until Ningaloo Marine Park means that swimming with the whale-shark must be done. I was surprised by her age and the decision to swim with the whale-sharks. Other tourists joined to our conversation to make remarks and comparisons like:

> *'The whale-sharks tour is a once in a lifetime experience that can be comparable with Serengeti Gorilla tourism in Uganda'*
>
> *English Tourist (Informal Communication, 2011)*

> *"The whale-shark, the humpback whale and the turtles, are our big three of Australia"*
>
> *Australian Tourist (Informal communication, 2011)*

For this tourist the experience to swim with a whale-shark was equivalent to have an encounter with an iconic big game animal in Africa. The whale-shark is considered by tourist as an iconic species in Australia. The importance of the animal itself has biological value but the association with some of the most important representative species for tourism in Africa just can be done by a tourist who experienced both. Those expectations were present among the whole group before our experience with them that showed our excitement besides the sea sickness.

We receive a signal about the location of the whale-sharks there was a lot of movement inside the ship, the guides giving us the last instructions about emergency signals and the way that we should smoothly jump into the water to not scare the animal. Separating us in the two groups and coordinating the times for the jump into the water and checking the gear. The group jumped into the water the first time to swim following the signals of the master diver, in middle of all the blue deep sea the figure of a whale-shark of eight meters was in from of us. The whale-shark in front of us more than treating gives you certain peace. The only thought in one's mind was the majestic image of the biggest fish in the ocean swimming next to you, calmly and slowly. Then with one signal we just gather around the master dive guide and return to the ship while the other group was ready to jump after us. After the first swim in ship again everyone was excited about the experience talking about the characteristics, showing pictures about that were made in that instant, talking about the

nerves that you felt before jump and once in the water the adrenaline of the moment just goes through all you body.

> *'I was feeling terrible but I was already in the boat, and I crossed Australia to see the whale-shark there was no time to get sick'*
>
> German Tourist (Informal communication, 2011)

> *"We did it because we came for them [whale-sharks] so this is a once in a lifetime experience"*
>
> Estonian Tourist (Informal communication, 2011)

The phrases *"we crossed Australia"* or *"we came for them"*, denote the importance of the whale-shark experience as a motivator to cross from the other side of the world to meet them. The reputation of Ningaloo Marine Park is one of the best places to see the whale-sharks it is well earned for the professionalism which the tours are handled. After this experience everyone had a feeling that we accomplished something unique in the water with the *"gentle giant"*, with huge smiles every face repeating again and again the stories about their experience.

> *"The amazing thing is that even though they are massive creatures, when you enter to the water with them, it is a very calming experience. Try it and see!"* Backpackers'
>
> Sign in the Backpackers' hostel (2011)

Then I understood the sign posted in one of the walls of the hostel, because even though it was my first time diving into the deep sea and with a massive marine animal, it was a calming experience and exhausting that was payback for the seasickness in the group and the huge waves that were on top of us.

6.2 Whale-shark as a central piece of the wildlife tourism in Coral Bay – Ningaloo Marine Park

The whale-shark has biological importance as one of the iconic species from Ningaloo Marine Park. The representations, meanings, discourses, and narratives made by tourists, workers, researchers, conservation organizations and enterprises are focused in whale-shark characteristics as a tourism icon, local resident of the reef, object of research, and so on. It is true that the whale-shark has an important value for tourism in Coral Bay and Ningaloo Marine Park, becoming the center of the tourism activities, tourist experiences, tourism branding, and tourism research as well on the region. The whale-shark earned representations as *"the almighty whale-shark"* or *"gentle giant"*, which are meanings given with a determinate purpose. Whale-sharks are considered a non-human but with a

particular characteristic that their actions are not planned or have a meaning behind because it is instinct. It is unable to produce meaning by itself without be linked to a network with another actors around. The descriptions have a commercial purpose based on experiences. Tourist are encountering the whale-sharks and creating meanings to generate tourism in the area. Furthermore the economic value that whale-shark for the region it is important to for tourism activity in Ningaloo Marine Park and Coral Bay. As mentioned the whale-shark experience create different representations around the whale-shark without those experience of swim with them it is difficult to assign a value or a description.

Figure 11: Whale-Shark experience on the open sea
Source: Gustavo E. Gutierrez Thompson

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This research was focused on the realities present in Coral Bay by using the Actor-Networks approach. In order to produce a description was necessary to analyze which objects, discourses, nature, wildlife, and people were producing knowledge in the destination. For the purposes of the present research destination was defined as sum of interest, activities, facilities, infrastructure, attractions and knowledge production through interactions. To analyze the sequence of events in Coral Bay history was possible since the translations processes which provided the tools to distinguish the moments that were inside the debate between Coral Coast Development and Save Ningaloo Campaign in Coral Bay. During the period of time was useful to look how through different actors the ideas about the tourism development were conceptualized. As well the involvement of the different actors into the negotiations making their own ideas about how to deal with the impacts of tourism in the destination and at the end the final decision with actors with political influence. Actor-Network approach helped to look into the relationships between the human actors, non-human actors, objects, artifacts, and landscape resulting in the different realities into the destination. Those realities differ through the different backgrounds, objectives, meanings, purposes and relations from the actors with the landscape and wildlife that are traduced in mental conceptions and representations of the same place. Moreover the Actor-Network approach offer the opportunity to analyze the relation between human actors and non-human actors, to be more specific between human actors (producers and consumers of tourism) and the whale-shark, iconic species in Ningaloo Marine Park.

The present research used different information sources in order to provide the descriptions of the relationships in the destination. Among the sources there was literacy review, newspaper articles, historical documents, interviews with different actors: tourist, workers, inhabitants, and researchers. In order to gather more information I performed observation and participation in the different tourist activities as well as I become a worker in Coral Bay to gather information of the other side. With all this information I could represent the different realities in Coral Bay and describe the relations among the destination.

7.2 Conclusion

The present research used the translation to describe how an actor can represent the non-human actors (landscape, reef and marine wildlife) in Coral Bay during the campaign Save Ningaloo. The process of negotiation about how to develop a destination and deal with the impacts of tourism activities had two main translators which expressed their ideas to the public opinion gathering adepts for both sides. The process of negotiation took many years

before just including government and the group of investors. Once that the government decide to do public the proposal of Coral Coast Development another actors appear in the scenario. The conservation groups were a growing group along West Australia to participate in the debate for the consequences that carries on with the Coral Coast Development. As well looking the different strategies used to involve more people for the cause, once they were involve make the action and mobilized to stop a project which did not correspond to the purpose of the Marine Park. Moreover identifying the actors involved in the negotiation and the inclusion of new translators to the ongoing process to use their agencies to include more people to the movement. Once the negotiation entered in the political spheres with elections coming and electoral parties the decision reached people with political influence and the project was dropped. Then after this translation process appear a new ordering in Coral Bay about how to deal with the impacts making changes in the legislation of the pastoral stations for the administration of the campsites and the licenses to operate marine wildlife-based tourism in the reef. Now the changes still going on because the legislation for the pastoral stations end in 2015 that represent another translations which will affect the way to produce tourism in Coral Bay giving as a result a new ordering.

According to the objectives of the research applying Actor-Network approach as a methodology to describe the production tourism in Coral Bay permitted to analyze their different realities. Providing a description of the different realities that co-exist in Coral Bay that are mental constructions and narratives which differ depending on who is behind them, transforming the identities of the Coral Bay into a little paradise, isolated spot, tourism destination, working place or a home sweet home. Analyzing the narratives carried by families, backpackers, campers, workpackers, permanent workers, tourist businesses, public authorities, conservation and research organizations was possible to see how each of them is making from Coral Bay their own interpretation according their own perspectives, background, expectations, or intentions. As a result of those elements we had different mental constructions and narratives of the same place that are possible to co-exist at the same time without antagonism. Similarly the discourses behind the whale-sharks where described to identify the different meanings assigned by different actors (tourists, tourism businesses, local workers, and inhabitants) in order to explain the encounter between human and non-human actors.

'ANT' approach as well it helped to describe the discourses around the whale-sharks, looking for relations between human and non-human actors, making those interactions possible with technology, organization and specialization to perform the whale-shark experience. Most of these discourses are generated by tourist businesses in first place using branding to give special attributions to the whale-shark making narratives on him as 'come and meet those gentle giants'. Furthermore, using the image of the whale-shark to represent the reef and making of it a representative piece of the tourism for Ningaloo Marine Park. Then the workers in Coral Bay represent the whale-shark as one resident more

of the reef and tourist that based in their past and present experiences can compare the whale-shark with the gorillas experience in the Serengeti-Africa. But all this realities and representations come from human actors that can relate these different representations and narratives. Is here where flat general symmetry which states that human and non-human have the same agency gets challenged. In order to produce meaning on the non-human the encounter with the human actor it is necessary. Which create an experience to help to construct a discourses based in those moments in the same way to involve public figures in 'Save Ningaloo' the strategy was take them to the reef and make them experience the encounter with the reef and the wildlife to produce the effect in the people. The methodology it helps to understand the different processes between actors and realities that they are creating around tourist destinations.

7.3 Discussion

Tourism destinations are the result of the social practices in the place. The Actor-Network approach was useful to describe different relations going on in Coral Bay. Those relationships between human and non-human actors produce identities, discourses and narratives in Coral Bay. Using this approach to study the development of tourism destinations is useful to know the different perceptions of actors concerning one place to understand what the actors want for and from a destination. The translation approach was useful to search into the history of Coral Bay and identify the moments which produce changes in the destination giving origin to a new ordering in which the destination work differently. In the case of the debate about the impacts of tourism in Coral Bay and the strategies to deal with them the translation moments were valuable to describe the events that actors producing meaning. As well the Actor-Network methodology was helpful to describe these realities since the actors' perception. As well was handful to see the relation between human and non-human actors. Analyzing the different descriptions, narratives, discourses and representations about the reef, landscape and wildlife; was difficult to stick to the general symmetry because all those meanings were result of mental processes from human actors who encounter the non-human actors. The biological value of a species or landscape is important to the environment and has functions to keep going with one cycle.

The different mental constructions of the destination can exist in the time and space giving multiple identities to Coral Bay. Depending on the of the actor or entity that is producing this mental constructions Coral Bay was translated in working place, small paradise or perfect place to live. Most of the times are tourism consumers and tourism producers which add those meanings to a destination. Is necessary to understand that a destination is not able to attract tourist just by itself, is the sum of characteristics, processes, experiences and narratives made by others which build the identity of the Coral Bay.

7.4 Recommendations and further research

This research was able to get an insight about the different situations going on in a destination. The use of Actor-Network methodology was useful to describe the events and relations happening in Coral Bay. As a further research the present thesis recommends that would be necessary to increase the knowledge about the wildlife as a non-human actor. Marine wildlife is considered non-human actors but they cannot be treated or analyze as objects because they have actions that are not planned because are animal instinct. The analysis of tourist destinations with marine wildlife has to put emphasis in the interactions between human and non-human actors to get better insight about how the meanings are being produced along actors that cannot speak by themselves. As well reflect more in the general symmetry respecting wildlife and analyze further who is producing meaning on it. Furthermore, if without this human representations wildlife has the same meaning for tourism. The condition of non-human actor applied to wildlife should be studied according to their nature. Wildlife has an importance in biological and economical ways for natural areas and for tourism. But to understand better their nature as a non-actor should be analyzed who is producing this meaning and who is giving voice to wildlife.

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