

Technical Report:

Characterization of tourist activity *Workshop*

February 2021

Project:

Pescadores do Passeio Ecológico
(*en: Fishers on the Ecological Tour*)

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Production:



Support:



Presentation

This technical report is part of the project “Pescadores do Passeio Ecológico”, carried out in Rio Formoso - PE. Here we will present the results of the Workshop held with artisanal fishers on the characterization of tourist activity on the site and perspectives regarding the implementation of community-based ecological tourism. The project is supported by The Rufford Foundation and is part of a broader proposal, covering a master's research project, entitled “Participatory conservation of a Brazilian estuarine socioecological system: empowering artisanal fishers through community-based tourism” (30051-1). The team is composed by Professor Dr. Maria Elisabeth de Araújo (UFPE), Professor José da Silva Mourão (UEPB) and is coordinated by MSc. Paulo Wanderley de Melo (UFRPE). As these are unpublished results, copyright is reserved for researchers who sign this report sent to The Rufford Foundation as documentary evidence to complement the project's Final Report process.

Introduction

The contribution of the project

Our project also intends to insert environmental education and, mainly, the involvement of the studied population as the main tool for the conservation of the estuarine mangrove ecosystem. Therefore, our main objective is discussing with the fishing community and make tourists aware of the importance of biodiversity. This idea came from our experience in the area, in which we could notice the amount of environmental education projects that were just lectures, without involving the community. Also, we note that some fishers are involved in struggle for estuary conservation and that they do touristic activities as boatmen/women in the area, doing unique and curious experiences that bring interesting stories. We will also use this scenario when conducting workshops and participatory activities aiming to promote the empowerment of them, who will become agents of environmental education for tourists. Therefore, we intend to motivate the discussion about the importance of biodiversity conservation within the Fishing Association itself, extending to the environmental agencies the participatory stimulus of fishers in environmental education that also affects people who frequent the estuarine zone as a vacationers, visitors or tourists. In addition we will promote ways to integrate researches, fishers, local people and government in the workshops.

The Rio Formoso estuary

The estuarine complex of Rio Formoso is located in the state of Pernambuco, on the northeast coast of Brazil (08°39'50"S 3°09'32"W). It features mangrove, phanerogamous meadow and coral reef ecosystems with a great diversity of animals and plants, scenic landscapes. Mangrove is of fundamental importance in the life cycle of over 70% of marine fish species that use it as a nursery, refuge and food. In addition to its value for the conservation of this diversity, it is responsible for providing various fishing resources used as the main protein source of the local population. In addition, this ecosystem is inserted in the Protected Area of Guadalupe, created in 1997 (Decree No. 19,635). However, due to the lack of regulation and supervision, they have been suffering several anthropic impacts from pollution, disordered tourism, and mangrove deforestation.

These disturbances negatively affect biodiversity and all people who depend on these fishing resources for their living. The municipality of Rio Formoso has 23,000 inhabitants and part of its population conducts small-scale fishing as a source of income and subsistence and are associate to the Fishing Association. It includes men and women who fish for various species of fish, crustaceans and mollusks and the activity is mainly in the interior of the estuary, but also in coral reef ecosystems and the open sea. Our past researches in the area confirm the knowledge of this people and the strong relationship that most of them have with nature in search of their conservation to survive. Due to the richness of biodiversity still in site and the conflicts that exist due to the negative impacts of anthropogenic disturbances on the ecosystem, we believe this area is a great “in situ” laboratory for our study.

Workshop

The workshop was attended by 7 fishers and was held in Rio Formoso on February 2, 2021. It was divided into two moments: i) mapping of tourist attractions; and ii) characterization of the tourist activity. The mapping was done through a representation of the estuary area on a cardboard. Participants were able to list potential tourist attractions and mark their position on the map, while the project coordinator identified and wrote them for viewing. The map was passed through graphic editing software and is shown in Figure 2. Then, the fishermen characterized the attractions. In the second moment, the diagnosis and description of the tourist activity was carried out. Participants were able to discuss the preferences of tourists, the characteristics of the tours they took, as well as identify the perspectives and strategies for the dissemination of community-based ecological tourism (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Participants and the project coordinator during the workshop using participatory methods to characterize the tourist activity. The meeting was held outdoors due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.



Figure 2. Participatory mapping of attractions for the community-based Ecological Tour Route in the Rio Formoso estuary (PE).

Our main findings

The boxes below contain a summary of the discussions held with the Fishermen in the workshop.



Attractions

- Available all year.
- Depend on tidal phases.
- Transport that should be used for visitation:
 - Car: For points called “Reduto” and “Engenho Estrela do Norte”.
 - Boat: For the other attractions.
- Suggestion: On each descent take a fisherwoman.
 - She will be able to speak her traditional knowledge about fishing;
 - Income generation for the fisherwoman.

Tourist Profile



- Most tourists prefer the most famous sites (*mass tourism*).
- There are tourists who ask curiosities about the environment and ask to teach how to fish. Others also want information about cultural aspects (sometimes boatmen do not know about the information).
- There is usually a preference for the summer season.



Tour Profile

- Boatmen do not offer ecological tours. This practice needs to be encouraged through the project.
- Generally, boaters make shorter trips (1 to 2 hours in duration) to be able to do more than one and profit more.
- To be ecological, the duration must be 2 to 4 hours.
- Different alternatives of tour routes must be planned and established, stipulating the necessary duration time (so that the tourist can choose according to his preference).
- Place garbage collection points in the attractions.
- Each fisher must have a first aid kit.

Dissemination



- Currently, the contact of fishers who already do ecological tours takes place only by telephone with people previously interested.
- Proposals:
 - Contact professors from universities in Recife (PE) that may be interested in or disseminate to potential tourists.
 - Partnership with the owner of Engenho Machado, interested in involving the fishing community.
 - Partnership with APA de Guadalupe to publicize the tours.
 - Develop a banner with the project's logo, information, and tourist points, as well as citing the participation of the Fishing Association and its contact.

Final considerations and perspectives

The participatory methodology was very efficient for the success of the workshop. All fishers were able to give their opinions on the topics covered. This report was the first step towards structuring a group organized with the Fishing Association of Rio Formoso for the articulation of community-based ecological tourism. The map produced will serve as a basis for future discussions and may be improved and increased according to the establishment of the routes for sightseeing. Such tours should be designed with small boats as the main means of transportation. They should last between 3 and 4 hours, to include ecological and cultural aspects. Despite the increased circulation of tourists during the summer, it is important that there is planning and organization throughout the year to consolidate the activity and include visitors who may come during other periods of the year.

Dissemination and *marketing* strategies should be developed in partnership with the university, local private owners, and the Guadalupe Environmental Protection Area. To disseminate this innovative and distinctive way of making sightseeing tours in the region. Also, during this project, the search for articulation through community-based tourism associations or cooperatives will be stimulated, which fishers can do for long-term perpetuation, even after the work is completed.