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**Perceived Positive Social Impacts of Tourism:  
Case Comuna 13, Medellín**

Tourism Research, TourCIM

Master's Thesis

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**University of Lapland, Faculty of Social Sciences****Title:** Perceived Positive Social Impacts of Tourism: Case Comuna 13, Medellín**Author:** Salla Airaksinen**Degree Programme / Subject:** Tourism Research, TourCIM (Tourism, Culture and International Management)**The type of the work:** Master Thesis**Number of pages:** 63**Year:** 2024**Abstract**

Tourism creates a lot of different kinds of impacts on people and societies but often the negative impacts are emphasized in the discussion. It is crucial to be aware of the negative impacts to be able to find solutions to them but at the same time, we must not forget the positive impacts of tourism. It is important to remember that tourism also causes many good things to be able to learn about the positive impacts to increase them and find a balance between positive and negative impacts.

The research phenomenon in my master's thesis is the social impacts of tourism. It is essential to research the social impacts of tourism to be able to understand locals' perspectives on tourism. My theoretical framework includes inclusive tourism, participation, empowerment, and power relations. By using these concepts, I aim to answer the research questions and understand the phenomenon better. My main research question is: How can tourism create positive social impacts? The sub-questions are: How are the positive impacts perceived by locals involved in tourism? How do locals participate in tourism? How can positive impacts be planned and managed? This research was conducted with qualitative methods. The research data was collected through semi-structured interviews with local tour guides from Comuna 13, Medellín. The data consisted of six interviews. The analysis was conducted by using theory-guided content analysis.

The findings of the research showed that positive social impacts of tourism can be created through inclusive tourism which consists of empowerment, participation, and power relations. Many of the positive social impacts of tourism are strongly connected with empowerment, as they increase the empowerment of local community members. Locals' participation in tourism means they have a chance to benefit from tourism. When tourism is based on the locals' businesses and stories, it is also more likely that tourism is beneficial to them and creates positive impacts from the locals' perspective. However, to be able to create the positive social impacts of tourism, tourism needs control and management. The aim would be to find a balance between tourism impacts, by minimizing the disadvantages of tourism and maximizing the benefits of tourism.

**KEYWORDS:** positive social impacts, tourism impacts, inclusive tourism, participation, empowerment, tourism management

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1. INTRODUCTION .....                        | 5  |
| 1.1 Background of the study .....            | 5  |
| 1.2 Empirical context.....                   | 6  |
| 1.3 Previous research .....                  | 8  |
| 1.4 Purpose of the study .....               | 11 |
| 1.5 Data.....                                | 12 |
| 1.6 Structure of the thesis .....            | 13 |
| 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....                | 14 |
| 2.1 Social impacts of tourism .....          | 14 |
| 2.2 Inclusive tourism .....                  | 16 |
| 2.3 Participation.....                       | 17 |
| 2.4 Empowerment.....                         | 19 |
| 2.5 Power relations .....                    | 22 |
| 3. DATA .....                                | 24 |
| 3.1 Semi-structured interviews as data ..... | 24 |
| 3.2 Theory-guided content analysis.....      | 26 |
| 3.3 Ethical considerations.....              | 30 |
| 4. FINDINGS.....                             | 32 |
| 4.1 Perceived positive impacts .....         | 32 |
| 4.1.1 Locals' perspectives .....             | 32 |
| 4.1.2 Empowerment.....                       | 33 |
| 4.2 Locals' participation .....              | 38 |
| 4.2.1 Decision-making.....                   | 40 |
| 4.2.2 Community .....                        | 41 |
| 4.3 Planning and managing tourism .....      | 42 |
| 4.3.1 Need for control.....                  | 43 |
| 4.3.2 Planning the future .....              | 46 |
| 5. CONCLUSION .....                          | 49 |
| 5.1 Discussion.....                          | 49 |
| 5.1 Limitations of the study .....           | 53 |
| 5.2 Proposals for future research .....      | 54 |
| REFERENCES .....                             | 56 |

|                                       |    |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| APPENDIX 1. Letter of consent .....   | 61 |
| APPENDIX 2. Interview structure ..... | 62 |

### **List of Figures**

|   |    |
|---|----|
|   | p. |
| 1. The map of South America.....              | 6  |
| 2. Theoretical framework of the research..... | 11 |
| 3. Inclusive tourism.....                     | 17 |

### **List of Tables**

|   |    |
|---|----|
|   | p. |
| 1. Signs of empowerment of communities involved in tourism.....       | 21 |
| 2. Creating simplified expressions from the original expressions..... | 27 |
| 3. Combining the simplified expressions under subclasses.....         | 28 |
| 4. Creating the top classes and connecting them.....                  | 28 |
| 5. The summary of the results of the analysis.....                    | 29 |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the study

Tourism is a societal phenomenon that greatly influences people, environments, and societies. The impacts caused by tourism can be perceived as positive or negative. Often the negative impacts are emphasized in public discussion. Tourism causes harm to the environment and also to the local people's lives. These impacts are very important to acknowledge and find solutions to them but at the same time, we must not forget the positive impacts of tourism. For locals, tourism is an important source of income and for tourists, it is a great way to learn about different cultures. Tourism is affecting positively basic needs from which well-being is built, such as health, housing, education, and reduction of poverty (the World Travel & Tourism Council, 2021, p. 1). These are such essential improvements we should not forget. Although tourism is a very wide phenomenon with positive and negative impacts, we should embrace the positive impacts and try to maximize them. In my master's thesis, I want to research what kinds of positive social impacts can be created by tourism.

In our Tourism Research studies at the University of Lapland, we have focused a lot on the problems caused by tourism. That is a very important part of our expertise to find solutions to the challenges to be able to improve tourism. However, sometimes it gives me a very desperate feeling knowing that I am an expert in a field that causes lots of problems that will not be possible to fix. Because of this, I wanted to take a more positive perspective on my research and focus on the positive impacts of tourism. With my research, I would like to indicate that despite all the problems caused by tourism, tourism can also offer a solution to social problems and have many positive impacts on local communities.

In the literature, it is emphasized how important it is to research the social impacts of tourism (Deery et al., 2012; Alamineh et al., 2023). This is the way we can understand the locals' perspectives and avoid conflicts between locals and tourists (Deery et al., 2012, p. 64). If residents are unsatisfied with tourism, they might start acting against it. Understanding social impacts is the only way to manage tourism responsibly (Alamineh et al., 2023, p. 1). By researching the social impacts of tourism, we can understand how largely tourism affects the locals and changes their lives in the local area.

## 1.2 Empirical context

The empirical context of the research is Comuna 13 which refers to a set of neighborhoods in the city of Medellín in Colombia. Colombia is located in South America and its neighboring countries are Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, and Panama. The location of Comuna 13 on the map can be seen from Figure 1 below. The city of Medellín is divided into zones which have separated communes inside them. Comuna 13 is one of these communes and still inside of Comuna 13 there are 31 different neighborhoods that form Comuna 13 together. Of the total of 31 neighborhoods only a few of them are touristic areas. In my research, I only focus on the touristic areas of Comuna 13.



Figure 1. The map of South America. Source: Adapted from Collidu.com. (2024). South America Map. Retrieved May 6, 2024, from <https://www.collidu.com/presentation-south-america-map>

Colombia has a very dark and violent history which has affected Comuna 13 as well. Colombia suffered from the war for around 52 years, starting from 1964 when the guerrilla army FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) was founded and ending in 2016 when the peace treaty was concluded with FARC (Leskinen, 2023, p. 11–12). Paramilitaries were local troops whose aim was to destroy guerrillas and their potential supporters. The war

was between the Colombian Army, paramilitaries, and guerrillas. 260,000 people died and 8 million people had to leave their homes (Leskinen, 2023, p. 11). Drug business in Colombia is directly connected with the armed conflict, as all the warring parties were financing their operations with drug business (Valtonen, 2020).

Comuna 13 became famous because of the kidnaps happening in the area (Valtonen, 2020). Comuna 13 was one of the most brutal scenes of Colombia's drug war and all the warring parties and narco-traffickers were having conflicts in Comuna 13 (Valtonen, 2020; BBC, 2023). The state was aiming to catch guerrillas from Comuna 13, and they ended up having 21 military operations in the area in the early 2000s. Locals were suffering a lot and a lot of innocent people died during the operations. After years of violence, locals of Comuna 13 started to do a lot of art: graffiti, paintings, rap music, and dance. The colorful street art started to attract tourists to the area (BBC, 2023). As Comuna 13 is located on the mountain, in 2011 the city of Medellín built escalators in the middle of the neighborhood as a form of transportation (CNN, 2015). Still, nowadays, the escalators are one of the main sights in Comuna 13.



Picture 2. View from Comuna 13. Source: Personal photo archive.

The word “comuna” refers to the areas on the side of the city where people were forced to move because of war (Naef, 2016, p. 1). These areas often have a lot of criminality and

narco-traffic. Medellín is the second largest city in Colombia and has been known as the most dangerous city in the world (Naef, 2016, p. 1). However, the city has changed a lot in the last decades and Comuna 13 as well. Tourism has had a significant role in the transformation and it has offered ways to make money for people who used to make a living through criminal activity. I chose Comuna 13 as my empirical context of research while I was visiting the area last summer. I was participating in a guided tour in Comuna 13 where the guide showed us different places, people, and art while telling us about the history of the area. The guide emphasized how tourism has made the whole area better and safer and how grateful people are to get visitors from all over the world. This inspired me and made me think we should learn more about the good things we can make happen by tourism, especially in the local areas. In some places in the world, tourism is essential and improves the quality of the local community's life.

### **1.3 Previous research**

There is earlier research done from the area of Comuna 13 in Medellín. For example, Patrick Naef (2016, p. 1) has been researching the transformation of the area and its resilience as a city brand. Comuna 13 and Medellín as a city are very famous for the transformation, they have gone through from a city full of criminality into a modern and innovative city. This transformation has increased tourism a lot in Medellín where “Comuna tours” are very popular program services for tourists. However, Naef approaches transformation and innovation as resources, ways to make business opportunities, and change the image of Medellín. Naef (2016, pp. 1–2) claims there is still a lot of criminality in Comuna 13 but it is promoted to tell a story about the transformation of Medellín and tourism works as an excellent driver in it.

Other research from the area has been focused, for example on slum tourism, graffiti tours, and host communities' perceptions. According to Zapata-Aguirre et al. (2020, p. 59), the first tour in Comuna 13 was held in 2009 with inspiration from the hip-hop culture. There is also research on military operations and human rights violence in Comuna 13 (Rojas-Páez, 2018, p. 901). The government has a big role in the traumatic history of the area. The government aimed to remove paramilitaries from Comuna 13, but their operations failed many times and innocent residents died. This has left a mark on the locals and is still affecting their



lives nowadays (Rojas-Páez, 2018, p. 901). Dolores Herrero Amo et al. (2019, p. 140) have been researching the host community's perception of slum tourism in another neighborhood in Medellín, Colombia that is called Moravia. Moravia was a landfill where people started to build their houses. It became a very dangerous area but now it is an urban neighborhood offering tours for visitors (Dyson, 2021). According to the research of Dolores Herrero Amo et al. (2019, p. 140) locals in Moravia feel proud that the visitors are coming to see their neighborhood and are telling other people about the place.

Earlier research on the social impacts of tourism is criticized for not having a deep enough understanding of social impacts because of the specific focus and specific research methods used (Deery et al., 2012, p. 64–65). Most of the earlier studies concentrate on particular social impacts which means the other impacts are forgotten and not being researched. Also, most of the social impact research is done with quantitative methods while qualitative research could bring more understanding from different perspectives. It is claimed earlier research is made from a specific focus without seeing the wider picture of the phenomenon. According to Deery et al. (2012, p. 64–65), there is a need to have more research on residents' perspectives on tourism. Wider research on the social impacts of tourism is needed to understand better the phenomenon.

Despite the emphasis on negative impacts, positive social impacts are also very important and can make a big difference in people's lives. One positive impact of tourism which is being emphasized, is gaining an understanding of different countries and cultures. According to Hunziker (1961, as cited in Mason, 2015, p. 48), tourism brings distant people together and may help start the dialogue and understand different beliefs. Based on this, tourism can connect people together. Locals' attitudes towards tourism are seen as a very important part of understanding the social impacts of tourism (Deery et al., 2012; Ryan 2003; Ramkissoon 2023). Residents' perspectives on tourism in their local area matter a lot and the community can benefit from tourism in many ways. Ryan (2003, p. 275–277) emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the nature of visitor and resident exchanges. Governments and the whole industry need to understand how tourism affects the local communities and how they perceive it (Deery et al., 2011, p. 64). According to Ramkissoon (2023, p. 452), depending on how locals' wishes and opinions are being heard, affects if they support tourism in their area or not.

Locals' attitudes might also change over time, especially if tourism grows a lot in the area. Ryan introduces Doxey's irridex (1975, as cited in Ryan 2003, p. 275) model about changing attitudes of host communities. In Doxey's irridex model, it is described how locals' attitudes towards tourists are changing over time. In this model, the attitude starts from euphoria which is a very positive attitude but then changes from a negative to a more negative attitude. After euphoria comes apathy which is a very neutral attitude towards tourists. After that becomes an annoyance, which is followed by antagonism, In the last stage, locals are showing their dissatisfaction with tourism openly. The model describes well why it is important to follow how tourism is developing in the area and how it affects the locals.

While reading about the social impacts of tourism, negative impacts are usually emphasized in the discussion, and positive impacts have less attention (Ryan 2003; Mason 2015; Beeton 2006). Beeton (2006, pp. 17–18) has divided the social impacts of tourism into three different perspectives: tourism development, tourist-host interactions, and cultural impacts. In tourism development, it is mentioned for example that tourism divides the community into those who have and the ones who have no relationships with tourists. In tourist-host interactions, it is listed that the nature of contact influences attitudes, behavior, and values relating to tourism. In cultural impacts, it is mentioned that arts, crafts, and local culture are being revitalized. On the list, it is not divided whether the impacts are positive or negative. The same impacts can be seen as either negative or positive depending on the person looking at them.

Beeton (2006, p. 17) pointed out women's and children's earnings through tourism as having a negative impact from the point of view of men. It was mentioned that it can cause loss of pride and depression. It can be also seen as a positive thing that tourism offers new opportunities for women to make money. But of course, it is true that in some cultures it can cause conflicts between women and men. When speaking about the impacts, it always depends on the perspective of whether they are seen as negative or positive. In my research I focus on the locals' perspective and the positive social impacts that are defined by them, affecting local community members' lives positively.

Höckert (2015, p. 59), has been researching community participation in Nicaragua, and according to her, the discussion about community participation is focused on whether local

communities should participate or not. Also, the importance of local communities' participation is emphasized by tourism experts but not by the local communities themselves. This means the people outside the community are deciding whether locals should participate in tourism or not. Empowerment is also strongly connected with participation. According to Höckert (2015, p. 59–76), new connections from outside the community and the growth of self-esteem and pride toward the local area can increase the empowerment of the locals.

#### 1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to research positive social impacts that have been created by tourism in the neighborhood of Comuna 13 in Medellín, Colombia. My main research question is: How can tourism create positive social impacts? The sub-questions are: How are the positive impacts perceived by locals involved in tourism? How do locals participate in tourism? How can positive impacts be planned and managed? Theoretical concepts help to gain a deeper understanding of the research phenomenon, and therefore I examine the research phenomenon through the perspective of inclusive tourism. To understand inclusive tourism better I have chosen three key concepts which are participation, empowerment, and power relations. The theoretical framework and the relations between concepts are illustrated in Figure 2.

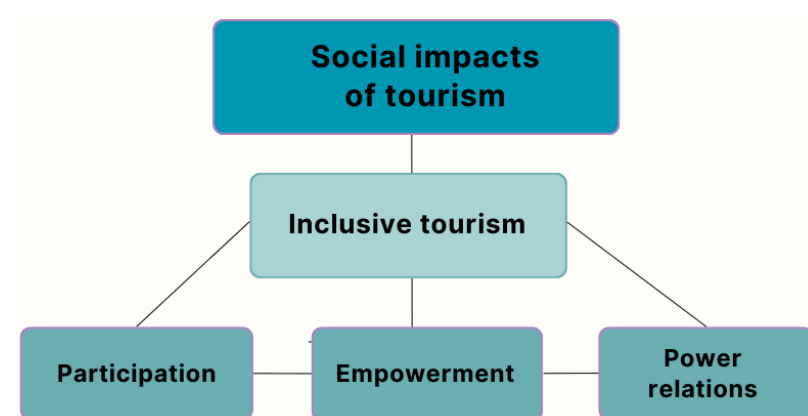


Figure 2. The theoretical framework of the research.

Inclusive tourism is the main concept in my research. The key concepts of participation, empowerment, and power relations can be seen as elements of inclusive tourism. These elements are also part of the research questions and help to answer them. I will observe the

social impacts of tourism through these concepts. All of these together, form the theoretical framework of the research. I will use the theoretical framework together with research questions as a base for the interview questions for the data collection. Furthermore, the theoretical concept is part of the theory-guided analysis as well.

### **1.5 Data**

The research is based on an interpretive social sciences paradigm which can be described as a constructivist paradigm. According to Jennings (2010, p. 40) the interpretive social sciences paradigm is based on the idea of having multiple realities instead of one truth. There can be many explanations of the phenomenon and not only one theory. Therefore, subjectivity should be recognized in the research process instead of an objective approach. Usually, in research based on the interpretive social sciences paradigm, qualitative methods are used to collect empirical materials. The aim is to get insiders' perspectives on the research phenomenon.

This research is carried out using qualitative methods. I collected the data by doing semi-structured interviews with local guides from Comuna 13. I conducted six interviews in March and April 2024. All the interviews were conducted remotely and lasted from 30 minutes to 1 hour. After the interviews, I transcribed them, and the length of the data was 85 pages in total. Two of the interviews were held in Spanish so I translated them into English after transcribing them. All the other interviews were held in English.

I used theory-guided content analysis as an analysis method in my research. According to Puusa (2020, p. 148), content analysis is one of the most common methods to analyze qualitative data. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, p. 91), content analysis is an analysis method that can be used in many different studies and all traditions of qualitative research. It can be defined as a loose theoretical framework that is used to analyze written, heard, or seen content. According to Vuori qualitative content analysis is like thematization. Content analysis focuses on the material's themes, issues, and topics. Qualitative content analysis is based on the researcher's coding. Coding aims to find elements in the material that the researcher can name and identify.

## **1.6 Structure of the thesis**

In the first chapter, I have introduced my research context and the background of the research. I also went through the previous research done on the phenomenon and introduced the purpose of the study and the research data. The second chapter is about the theoretical framework of the study, which consists of the research phenomenon, main concept, and three sub-concepts. In the third chapter, I discuss the methods and research ethics I used in the research. I collected the data by conducting semi-structured interviews and analyzed the data using theory-guided content analysis. In the methodological part, I also go through the ethical considerations of the research. In the fourth chapter, I introduce the findings of the research, by connecting the data and the theory. The fifth chapter is the conclusion and discussion part, where I summarize the findings, make interpretations of them, and consider how the results can be used. Finally, I reflect on the actions of the research and proposals for future research.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework of the research consists of the research phenomenon, main concept, and three sub-concepts. The research phenomenon is the social impacts of tourism and in my research, I focus especially on the positive social impacts of tourism. I aim to understand the research phenomenon through the concepts. The main concept of the research is inclusive tourism which forms from the key concepts of the research. The sub-concepts of the research are empowerment, participation, and power relations. All these concepts are connected with the research questions.

### **2.1 Social impacts of tourism**

Tourism affects the local region in many ways. Impacts can be viewed from socio-cultural, economic, and environmental perspectives. Despite dividing the impacts into different categories, it is good to remember that they are usually multi-faceted and complex, so they have interrelated dimensions (Mason, 2015, p. 30). Social impacts can be described as impacts that affect society and local communities (Stainton, 2021). According to Burns and Holden (1995, as cited in Mason, 2015, p. 46), the social impacts of tourism will be stronger, the bigger the contrast between the culture of the tourist's home country and the local destination is.

The impacts can also be divided into positive or negative ones depending on whether they are beneficial or detrimental. Dividing the impacts depends on who is evaluating them and what kind of value position the person has (Mason, 2015, p. 30). In this research, positive social impacts of tourism are defined as impacts of tourism that cause benefits to the majority of the local community from the community members' perspective. The research data consists of interviews where local people have described the positive things tourism has caused in their neighborhood.

Tourism is seen as a very important way of making a change in society and improving community development. According to Beeton (2006, pp. 17–19), tourism is the main agent of change from the perspectives of society, economy, and the natural environment. Beeton points out that the big challenge of the change is to notice it too late when negative impacts

have caused the damage already. According to Swarbrooke (2002, p. 69, as cited in Höckert, 2011, p. 11), social impacts occur slowly and are difficult to recognize. However, social changes are usually permanent. According to Beeton (2006, p. 16), tourism is a very important tool in community development, especially in rural communities.

Positive social impacts of tourism can be seen as the aim of tourism development. This goal can be accomplished by inclusive tourism which is the main concept in my research. To reach positive social impacts, the tourism impacts must be controlled and managed. That is why tourism management is essential for sustainable tourism development. One of the main goals of tourism management is to maximize tourism's social, economic, and environmental benefits and minimize the costs related to them (Weaver & Lawton, 2014, pp. 254–267). To achieve this, it is important to understand the impacts and the way they form. When destination managers are aware of the circumstances where negative impacts form, they must examine if these circumstances are found in the destination. If cautionary circumstances are present, improving actions must be implemented. Negative impacts can be minimized for example by development restrictions, tourist education programs, infrastructure improvements, and limits on non-local ownership (Weaver & Lawton, 2014, pp. 254–267).

According to the Cape Town Declaration in 2002 (Goodwin, 2011, p. 28) responsible tourism aims to: minimize the negative impacts of tourism and maximize the positive impacts, improve the well-being and working conditions of host communities, improve access to the tourism industry, engage local people and other stakeholders in decision-making, provide more meaningful encounters with locals and ensure culturally sensitive tourism. In this declaration, inclusiveness, and community-based tourism can be seen as strongly included to execute responsible tourism. These points are certainly not easy to implement but they are seen as the aims of responsible tourism.

Tourists are looking for more authenticity and meaningful encounters which can lead either to positive or negative impacts. Tourists want to gain experiences by getting to know the local everyday life and get to know more authentic parts of it (Haanpää et al., 2018, p. 45). According to Beeton (2006, p. 18), nowadays people are more interested in finding experiential encounters while traveling. The risk in this is that it can lead to the loss of privacy or the commodification of the community. On the other hand, it can also lead to many positive

things like offering a chance for locals to make tourism business by showing their everyday life to tourists.

## **2.2 Inclusive tourism**

Inclusive tourism is a very wide concept that can be approached from very different perspectives and different forms of tourism (Haanpää et al., 2018, p. 47). Some perspectives focus on the diversity of tourists and some focus on locals' perspectives (Harju-Myllyaho & Jutila, 2021, p. 2). All in all, inclusive tourism should cover both, it should take into consideration all the tourism stakeholders. In my research, I will use this perspective based on the Biddulph and Scheyvens model (Figure 3). However, my research focuses on studying the inclusivity of local people in tourism in Comuna 13. I observed the research phenomenon through inclusive tourism to be able to understand how locals are taking part in tourism and do they benefit from it. I define inclusive tourism as a way to give the chance to everyone willing to be part of tourism.

The tourism industry is growing all the time, and it is important to think about how to make it more inclusive (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, pp. 1–4). Tourism is often criticized for being very exclusive and accessible only to rich, middle, and upper-class people. Tourism might not offer opportunities for poor and marginalized people to participate. The aim of inclusive tourism development is to give a chance to poor and marginalized people to access tourism by widening benefit-sharing. Also, there should be new places added to the tourism map. Inclusive tourism development should be focused on giving the chance for silent voices to be part of decision-making and benefit-sharing. In inclusive tourism, it is important to remember that tourism production and consumption should be ethical (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, p. 1–4).

According to Craven (2016, as cited in Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, p. 5) many people have been excluded from tourism and inclusive tourism aims to find ways how to include them. However, we must also remember that not everyone wants to be part of tourism. Scheyvens and Biddulph (2017, p. 6) have formed seven elements to describe inclusive tourism (Figure 2). The theoretical concepts of research can be found in the figure as well. Participation can be connected with the widening of participation in tourism decision-making,



empowerment can be connected with self-representation in dignified and appropriate ways and power relations can be connected with power relations transformed in and beyond tourism.



Figure 3. Inclusive tourism. Source: Adapted from Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, p. 6.

These seven elements introduced in Figure 2 form a conceptual framework that can be used as a measurement: how ambitiously the tourism development is trying to implement these elements, tells how inclusive it is (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, p. 5). Hence, these elements should be the aim of tourism development as inclusive tourism can be seen as a goal in tourism development. This framework helps to examine the overall picture of inclusive tourism by naming the separate parts of it that take into consideration different stakeholders. I have used this framework in my research to evaluate the inclusiveness of tourism development in Comuna 13 in Medellín. However, my research is focused on the locals' perspectives on tourism.

### 2.3 Participation

I have chosen participation as one of my key concepts in the research to get a deeper understanding of inclusive tourism. As introduced in the previous chapter, in Figure 2, adapted

from Scheyvens and Biddulph (2017, p. 6) inclusive tourism aims to involve marginalized people in tourism, as producers as well as consumers. This can be directly connected with participation, to give more opportunities to people to participate in tourism, to people who do not belong to the elite or middle class for example. Inclusive tourism seeks to add new groups of people and new areas to the tourism map. Adding new areas as part of tourism also involves more people in tourism. The other important aim is to expand participation in tourism decision-making (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, p. 6). It is not enough to involve locals in tourism if they cannot take part in tourism decision-making to be able to influence tourism development in their local area.

In social sciences, the importance of participation is emphasized and ways of strengthening it are being considered. Participation refers to belonging to a society or community and political culture (Bäcklund et al., 2002, p. 7). As Koskiaho (2002, p. 36) claims, in its deepest sense, participation refers to a long-term contractual relationship and includes the requirement of commitment. Pretty's (1995) typology of participation defines seven different levels of participation. The levels are manipulative participation, passive participation, participation by consultation, participation for material incentives, functional participation, interactive participation, and lastly, self-mobilization (Pretty, 1995, p. 1252). These levels can be divided into passive and active participation (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 56). In active participation, local communities should be aware of the benefits and disadvantages of tourism and be able to plan and manage tourism the way they want and are capable of doing (Scheyvens, 2002, p. 56).

According to Couch (2007, as cited in O'Meara and Spittle, 2009, p. 6) it is common to think that participation should be part of any community development process. Participation can be seen as a process of shared involvement in decision-making about the matters of the community (Hart, 1992, as cited in O'Meara and Spittle, 2009, p. 6). Community participation in development can be seen as the strengthening of social networks which can be called social capital (Wallerstein, 1992, as cited in O'Meara and Spittle, 2009, p. 7). Many factors affect community participation in tourism planning. Bramwell and Sharman (2000, p. 28) have split them into three different categories: scope of the participation by the community, intensity of the participation by the community, and degree of the consensus among community participants. The scope of the participation refers to whether all the stakeholders of

the community are represented and the amount of representatives is equal. The intensity of the participation refers to whether all the community participants are involved in respectful dialogue and can learn from other participants. The degree of the consensus among community participants is about participants reaching a consensus even across the inequalities (Bramwell & Sharman, 2000, p. 28).

Freire-Medeiros (2012, p. 175) points out that locals can benefit from slum tours but at the same time, it is usual that the local population's involvement in tourism at the democratic level is extremely low. The studies show that tourism companies are often the only ones who get economic benefits. However, according to Freire-Medeiros' (2012, p. 181) study about Rocinda, the biggest favela in Brazil, 84 percent of the residents see tourists' presence in the area as a positive thing. It is good to remember that local communities are not homogenous groups and the individuals' attitudes range from both extremes supporting and resisting tourism to everything between them (Weaver & Lawton, 2014, p. 266). According to Hall and Richards (2000, p. 6–7), the word community often refers to common interests and possessions, which is a bit misleading from reality. Not all the community members benefit from tourism in the same way, which might also affect their attitude towards tourism in their local area. Communities are often considered very homogenous groups without internal conflicts (Hall & Richards, 2000, p. 6–7). However, it is a fact that there are a variety of voices inside the community as well. This gives a new level of community participation in tourism development. It raises the question of how to include all the voices in tourism development.

## **2.4 Empowerment**

The second key concept of my research is empowerment. It can be also seen as part of inclusive tourism and therefore helps to understand it better. In the framework of inclusive tourism made by Scheyvens and Biddulph (2017, p. 6) which was introduced in Figure 2 above, one of the elements of inclusive tourism is self-representation in dignified and appropriate ways. This can be seen strongly connected with empowerment, the locals having the chance to tell about their culture and the local area the way they want and feel comfortable with, and what's more, can be proud of it. Another element of inclusive tourism that connects strongly with empowerment is the promotion of mutual understanding and respect (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, p. 6). Locals and tourists should treat each other with respect and

kindness and respect each other's boundaries. Respectful relationships most likely affect both positively and give them opportunities to learn from each other.

Empowerment is strongly connected with participation. Buysse & Wesley (1999, as cited in O'Meara and Spittle, 2009, p. 7) claim that active participation in community development is most likely going to empower the local community. According to Skelton (1994, as cited in O'Meara and Spittle, 2009, p. 7) empowerment of community members gives them more power in decision-making. Empowerment can be described as the capacity that people have for controlling the factors that affect their lives (Cole, 2009, p. 97). Empowerment can be seen as the highest level of active participation where community members can be seen as active change agents. In this stage, people can recognize the problems, find solutions to them, and implement the needed actions (Cole, 2009, p. 97). As Minkler (1997, as cited in O'Meara and Spittle, 2009, p. 8) claims, from the perspective of the community, empowerment can increase people's willingness to join the groups and organizations in the community.

Koens et al. (2012, p. 236) claim that slum tourism can be used as a tool to empower local communities. It can shift attention from problems to cultural diversity and the development of the slums (Koens et al., 2012, p. 236). According to Freire-Medeiros (2012, p. 183–189), tourism emphasizes the local culture and creates opportunities for social and cultural projects in the area. The reputation of slums is often very one-sided when people only hear about violence and criminality. Tourism is a way to show a more versatile picture of the area. Doing so can also give a sense of importance and dignity to local people who are used to seeing their residential area in the media only as a place of crime (Freire-Medeiros, 2012, pp. 183–189). In the best scenario, tourism also reduces violence and criminality in the area.

Scheyvens (2002, p. 59) has introduced an empowerment framework that can be used to analyze the impacts of tourism on local communities. Empowerment can be defined as a process where locals; as individuals and groups can make their lives and the society the way they want and feel comfortable to live in (France, 1997, p. 149, as cited in Scheyvens, 2002, p. 59). The empowerment framework is divided into four different elements: economic, psychological, social, and political empowerment (Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). The framework describes the signs of empowerment and signs of disempowerment from each dimension.

Below you can see the summary of the empowerment framework (Table 1) including signs of empowerment.

Table 1. Signs of empowerment of communities involved in tourism.

| ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT   | PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT   | SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT  | POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT   |
|--|---|---|---|
| Tourism brings lasting economic gains to a local community.  | Self-esteem of many community members is enhanced because of outside recognition of the uniqueness and value of their culture, their natural resources and their traditional knowledge. | Tourism maintains or enhances the local community's equilibrium.  | The community's political structure fairly represents the needs and interests of all community groups.  |
| Cash earned is shared between many households in the community.  | Access to employment and cash leads to an increase in status for traditionally low-status sectors of society, e.g. youths, the poor   | Community cohesion is improved as individuals and families work together to build a successful tourism venture. | Agencies initiating or implementing the tourism venture seek out the opinions of a variety of community groups and provide opportunities for them to be represented on decision-making bodies, e.g. the Wildlife Park Board or the regional tourism association |
| There are visible signs of improvements from the cash that is earned (e.g. houses are made of more permanent materials; more children are able to attend school) |   | Some funds raised are used for community development purposes, e.g. to build schools or improve water supplies  |   |

Source: Adapted from Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247.

The signs of empowerment introduced in Table 1 above, give a wide understanding of empowerment and its possibilities in tourism development. According to the empowerment framework, empowerment influences strongly locals' lives and their local environment (Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). The signs of empowerment can also be seen as positive impacts of tourism. In the best scenario, tourism would affect this way in the local community to empower them.

In Scheyvens' (1999, p. 247) empowerment framework also the signs of disempowerment were introduced. The signs of economic disempowerment refer to profits of tourism going to local elites or outside operators or only a few families gaining direct financial benefits from tourism. The signs of psychological disempowerment are that the locals feel their culture is lower than the tourists' cultures or the locals feel confused and frustrated by tourism. The signs of social disempowerment are that the locals take values from outside and lose respect for their own traditional culture or families compete for the benefits of tourism instead of cooperating with other families. The sign of political disempowerment is that the local community members feel like they cannot decide on matters of tourism (Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). If the signs of disempowerment can be recognized in the community, it means that empowerment is not implemented in the community.

## 2.5 Power relations

Power relations is the third key concept of my research. In the inclusive tourism framework of Scheyvens and Biddulph (2017, p. 6) introduced in the figure above (Figure 2), there is an element strongly connected with power relations. It is power relations transformed in and beyond tourism. Tourism might have the ability to change some of the harmful power relations. The power of the local community can be strengthened by tourism development. Tourism can offer a platform for the local community to be heard and have the ability to influence how things are developed in their local area.

Participation can be seen, for example, from the perspective of power, because it is about who has the power to decide. In many cases, it is not obvious who is participating and who is being involved (Hakkarainen, 2020). The power of tourism raises a lot of questions about who has the power to control tourism at the destination, for which groups tourism should be sustainable, which group is allowed to gain, and which one must lose (Din, 1997, p. 155). In the end, someone is making these decisions, but who should have the power to do so? Local communities' involvement in tourism is nowadays seen as a very important part of tourism development. However, the question is whether involvement means control (Mowforth & Munt, 1998, pp. 103–4, as cited in Scheyvens, 2002, p. 55).

Equitable involvement can be seen as the aim of participation. It means that everyone has equal access to participation in the decision-making process and they can take economic benefits from tourism (Din, 1997, p. 155). The host community should also be able to share the benefits of tourism the way they want (Din, 1997, p. 155). This is also connected with power. According to Friedmann (1992, pp. 9, 72, as cited in Din, 1997, p. 155), locals and the disadvantaged should get their power back to control their own lives and the resources of their local environment. They should not be excluded or victims of the development, their lives should improve with development (Friedmann, 1992, pp. 9, 72, as cited in Din, 1997, p. 155). This should be one of the core values of tourism development, to improve locals' lives instead of impairing them. This connects with finding the balance between positive and negative impacts of tourism, the power of positive impacts should be stronger than the negative impacts.

Empowerment is also strongly connected with power. According to Hall & Richards (2000, p. 7) from a generative perspective of power, empowerment can be seen as the result of everyone using their power for the common good. The generative perspective sees that everyone has power and capabilities, while from a distributive point of view, resources are limited. Unfortunately, most of the current power structures nowadays are distributive. That is the reason why different actors must compete for scarce resources. According to Hall & Richards (2000, p. 7), in tourism development, top-down models are often used to form distributive empowerment in local communities, and generative empowerment is not applied.

### **3. DATA**

This research is carried out using qualitative methods. According to Juuti and Puusa (2020, p. 9), qualitative research aims to understand the research phenomenon from the perspective of people who are the subject of the study. The focus of the research is on the thoughts, experiences, and feelings of the people who are the subject of the study. It is important to research what kinds of meanings people give for the research topic. In my research, I investigate what kinds of perspectives the local guides have on the positive impacts of tourism in their local area in Comuna 13 in Medellín. I aim to see how the positive impacts of tourism are perceived by the locals and how can the positive impacts be created.

#### **3.1 Semi-structured interviews as data**

According to Juuti and Puusa (2020, p. 9), methods are developed for facilitating the research process. Methods offer ways to approach the research topic and answer the research questions. Methods can be described as concrete ways to collect research data. In my research, I have interviewed local guides from Comuna 13, Medellín, Colombia. The interview involves direct interaction with the researched and it offers the opportunity to direct the data acquisition during the situation. The interview is a suitable method for my research because with the help of the interview, the interviewee's speech can be placed in a wider context and the information obtained can be deepened.

A semi-structured interview method, which is known as a thematic interview, is suitable for my research. A semi-structured interview is characterized by the fact that the interview proceeds based on certain central themes (Hirsijärvi & Hurme, 2000, pp. 34–48). According to Puusa and Juuti (2011, p. 81), the purpose of a semi-structured interview is to offer the researcher the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the research phenomenon, of which the researcher has already clarified the most relevant factors before the interview. According to Puusa and Juuti (2011, p. 81), a semi-structured interview is characterized by the fact that the researcher has pre-decided some of the starting points and is, therefore, able to carefully guide the interview.



Before conducting the interviews, I prepared an interview structure (Appendix 2), which serves as a basis for the thematic interviews. The pre-prepared interview structure facilitates the interview process itself and helps to ensure that the interview provides meaningful insights into the research phenomenon (Puusa & Juuti, 2011, pp. 82–83). It will also allow the researcher to consider in advance whether the themes will guide the interview in the desired way. According to Puusa and Juuti (2011, pp. 82–83), thematic interviews are semi-structured interviews, so the researcher must find a balance between guiding the discussion and free discussion.

I started to plan the interview structure by defining the themes of the interviews. The themes I used in the interviews were tourism in Comuna 13, community, participation, and future. I chose these themes because they are connected to the theoretical framework of the research and through them it is possible to open the research phenomenon to find answers to the research questions. I also wrote down questions under each theme and basic questions to gain knowledge about each interviewee. At the beginning of the interviews, I went through the letter of consent which is Appendix 1, and gave an introduction of myself and the research. During the interviews, I followed the interview structure but also asked some extra questions connected to what the interviewee said, or possibly I skipped some of the questions if I already got an answer to them. Sometimes I also changed the order of the questions according to what the interviewee was telling. I had the interview structure both in Spanish and English as I also had interviews in both languages.

When I started the research, I knew only one person from Comuna 13 who was working as a tour guide in the area. I knew it was going to be difficult to find interviewees from Colombia while I was in Finland, and I only had one contact in the area. When I was searching for the interviewees, I decided to use snowball sampling as a method to contact the person I knew and asked if he knew more people whom I could interview. Therefore, I decided to interview local tour guides because I thought it would be easier to reach them and find them on social media. Another good thing was that they would have prior knowledge about tourism and a strong relationship with tourism in the area. Most of the interviewees I found through Instagram. After I had some interviews, I asked if they knew more people whom I could interview. The people I contacted, are working as tour guides in Comuna 13. I aimed to have a minimum of six interviews.

I had six semi-structured interviews with local guides from Comuna 13 and the interviews were conducted between March and April in 2024. All the interviews were done remotely, one of them via Microsoft Teams, one via FaceTime video call, and the others via WhatsApp video calls. All the interviewees' native language is Spanish and two of the interviews were held in Spanish. The other four interviews were in English because the interviewees speak English fluently. Interviews lasted from 35 minutes to 1 hour. I recorded the interviews and transcribed them using Microsoft Word. When Microsoft Word had formed the base for the text I went through it with the recording and corrected all the mistakes. All in all, I had 85 pages of transcribed data from the interviews. All the interviewees were from Colombia and had lived most of their lives in different neighborhoods in Comuna 13 in Medellín. Most of them were around 25 years old, and two of them were over 30. Four of the interviewees were males and two of them were women. Most of them had worked for seven years as tourist guides, as that was the time when tourism started to grow in Comuna 13.

To protect the anonymity of the interviewees, I removed the names of the interviewees from the data before starting to analyze them. I also removed the date of birth, their workplace, and other personal data they had mentioned. I made sure any other people could not be recognized from the data either. To protect the anonymity of the interviewees I used the following abbreviations of them: H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6. Also, the documents were saved on my personal laptop in a separate folder named by numbers only. I made sure no one could access the data other than myself.

### **3.2 Theory-guided content analysis**

According to Puusa (2020, p. 149), content analysis aims to help organize the data into a summarized and clear form without losing the important information. In this way, it is possible to increase the knowledge and the value of the data. Content analysis can be described as a tool to structure the empirical data for interpretation. The analysis should be made in as truthful a way as possible and to be able to justify the decisions made during the analysis. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018, as cited in Vuori) with the help of content analysis, the researcher should be able to form a verbal and clear description of the research phenomenon. I chose theory-guided content analysis because it has elements of both data-driven and

theory-driven content analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, p. 97). In theory-guided content analysis, theory can be used as a tool, but the units of analysis are selected from the data. In this case, prior knowledge has a clear influence on the analysis, but the aim is to form new ideas on the research phenomenon (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009, p. 97).

After transcribing the interviews, I started to do the analysis one by one separately from each interview. I did the analysis first separately on each of them and then in the end analysis of all the separate interviews combined. I started the analysis by underlining parts of the transcribed text that seemed relevant to the research. I marked them with different colors and divided them into different categories. After that, I made mind maps of them to visualize and understand the data better. Then I collected the most important sentences of the underlined texts and placed them on another Word document. I formed a table from these original sentences and simplified forms of them. Table 2 shows an example of the original expression and the simplified expression. Sometimes it felt difficult to make the simplified forms because there were so many important things said in the data. However, I tried to summarize the original sentences by writing the most important parts of them.

Table 2. Creating simplified expressions from the original expressions.

| Original expression  | Simplified expression  |
|--|--|
| "And we knew that money that come from tourism is big money. So this big money is gonna resolve problems, like problems of education, problems of opportunities and problems of jobs." | Tourism was seen as an economical solution to social problems. |

After finishing the table of original sentences and simplified forms, I created another Word document with another table. In this table, I combined the simplified forms by making subclasses that were based on the data. In Table 3 there is an example of the combined simplified forms under the subclass. In this stage, it was difficult not to think about the theory yet because I knew the theory would come in the next stage. However, I decided to focus on just one step at a time and this is the reason I made all the stages in separate documents and tables as well. I created the subclasses based on what was mentioned in the data.

Table 3. Combining the simplified expressions under subclasses.

| Simplified expression  | Subclass             |
|--|----------------------|
| Tourism has helped the locals to understand the value of their local area. | More value and power |
| Tourism has offered more opportunities and connections.                    |                      |
| Tourism has brought more visibility and power to the place.                |                      |

After creating the subclasses, I created a new document with a table. The next step was to combine subclasses and put them under top classes which were based on the theory. First, it was challenging to think about which parts of the theory I should bring to the analysis, but I decided to bring the key concepts of the research as they fit well with the data. Besides the key concepts, there were some theory parts of my research questions in the top classes. The last step of the analysis was to connect the top classes. As I already had the key concepts as top classes, they all combined well with the main concept of my research. Examples of the top classes and connective actor can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. Creating the top classes and connecting them.

| Subclass   | Top class       | Connective  |
|--|-----------------|---|
| More value and power                                 | Empowerment     | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Connective</div>        |
| More work and study opportunities                    |                 |   |
| Improved economy                                     |                 |   |
| Attracting tourists                                  |                 |   |
| Improved mental health                               |                 |   |
| Showing example to other areas                       |                 |   |
| The area is unique                                   |                 |   |
| Organizing tourism in cooperation                    | Participation   | <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;">Inclusive Tourism</div> |
| Everyone in the community can be involved in tourism |                 |   |
| Reducing criminality through social work             |                 |   |
| More value and power                                 | Power relations |   |
| The government paying more attention                 |                 |   |
| Government's role                                    |                 |   |

After I had done all of these stages for each interview, I made a summary of the analysis by putting all the results together in one document. I summarized it a couple of times to get as concise a picture of the results as possible. In Table 3 can be seen the top classes and the connective concept which are based on the theory and a few of the subclasses from the whole data. This picture gives an overview of the whole analysis.

Table 5. The summary of the results of the analysis.

| Subclass                          | Top class                       |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Transformation of the area        | Empowerment                     |
| Positive impacts on the community |                                 |
| Positive future                   |                                 |
| Community-based tourism           | Participation                   |
| Social work and projects          |                                 |
| Decision-making                   |                                 |
| Government's role                 | Power relations                 |
| Conflicts in the area             |                                 |
| Visibility and power              |                                 |
| More control                      | Tourism planning and management |
| Leadership                        |                                 |
| More innovation                   |                                 |
| Planning the future               |                                 |

In the beginning, when I started the analysis it felt very challenging to make the decisions about what I take into consideration and how I create the different classes. After I had analyzed the first interview, it got easier because it got clearer to me how should I do the analysis. In the first stages of the analysis, there is so much text that it makes the analysis more difficult. Going on with the stages, the data gets more summarized and easier to process.

While writing the thesis, I used the Grammarly program's free version to correct the grammar mistakes and spelling mistakes in the text. I did not use it extensively during the process but in the end, before returning the thesis I wanted to go through the text and correct grammar

mistakes. Grammarly showed the points which had errors and I went through them one by one to estimate if the suggested correction by Grammarly seemed right or not. Sometimes the correction might change the meaning, and therefore, it is important to check them carefully before correcting. Grammarly also gave suggestions on some sentences and how to write them more fluently. I also checked these carefully one by one, and some of them I used, some of them not.

### **3.3 Ethical considerations**

According to Kuula (2006, pp. 23–64), every researcher has a responsibility to uphold good scientific practice and to address misconduct. Participation in research must always be voluntary and the researcher must be able to withdraw from the research at any time, even after the research has been carried out. Interviewees should have the right to determine what information they provide for research purposes. The researcher must ensure that the interviewees remain anonymous and that no individual interviewee can be identified from the research texts. In addition, the researcher must ensure that data protection law is respected. Trust must be maintained between the researcher and the interviewee that promises will be kept and that the data will be used as agreed (Kuula, 2006, pp. 23–64). For that reason, before the interviews, I sent each interviewee a letter of consent which is Appendix 1, asking for the interviewee's permission to record the interview and informing them of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage. The form also assures that the data will be treated anonymously. In my thesis, I have used abbreviations to refer to the interviewees, so that none of the interviewees cannot be identified.

According to TENK (2012, p. 6), the most important thing is to identify the issues that have influenced the research and to be as open as possible about them. According to good scientific practice, transparency and responsible scientific communication should be the norm when publishing the results of research. For this reason, I have described all the stages of the research in my thesis, as openly as possible. At the end of the thesis, I have a subchapter where I reflect on the limits of the research.

The research context of my research is located on the other side of the world which means that the people I interview come from different cultures than myself. This must be considered

when doing the interviews. Cultural sensitivity is important when researching people from different cultures (Liamputtong, 2010, p. 86). As a part of cultural sensitivity is important that the researcher has cultural knowledge about the interviewees (Liamputtong, 2010, p. 87). I have gotten familiar with the place by visiting there, listening to stories about it, and reading versatile literature about it. However, I believe many cultural and historical things are difficult to understand as an external person. The research topic is also challenging in the way that social impacts can be seen as positive or negative, depending on the person looking at them. I must remember that I might have a very different perspective on the impacts compared to the interviewees' perspectives. When analyzing the data, I must focus on the interviewees' opinions, not my own. I must define the impacts I am going to focus on in my research to make it clear and transparent for the reader.

I had two of the interviews in Spanish which I transcribed and after that translated into English. I wanted to translate the whole text to make it easier for the analysis. First, I translated the texts with Google Translator and then went through the text myself comparing the translation to the original text. I corrected the parts which I wanted to use in the analysis. The people I interviewed were Colombians which means their vocabulary and way of speaking varies from standard language. Some of the nuances or meanings might have changed or lost in the translation. That is why I wanted to compare the translated text carefully with the original text.

## 4. FINDINGS

The findings of the research will be introduced in this chapter. I aimed to find answers to my research questions from the data through theory-guided content analysis. The main research question is: How can tourism create positive social impacts? The sub-questions are: How are the positive impacts perceived by locals involved in tourism? How do locals participate in tourism? How can positive impacts be planned and managed? In this chapter, I answer the sub-questions with the findings from the research data and its connection to the theory. I refer to the interviewees using the following abbreviations: H1, H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6.

Inclusive tourism was the main concept of my theoretical framework and for that reason, I observed the sub-questions and the data through inclusive tourism. I observe how the elements of inclusive tourism appear in different sub-areas. Therefore, the concept of inclusive tourism leads through the findings chapter. In the theoretical framework, I introduced the elements of inclusive tourism in Figure 2 by Scheyvens and Biddulph (2017, p. 6) When we look at the seven elements of inclusive tourism, some of them are visible in the data as well. I also use other theories in analyzing the data.

### 4.1 Perceived positive impacts

#### 4.1.1 Locals' perspectives

All the people I interviewed, were working as tourist guides in Comuna 13. Because of their job, they were aware that tourism is very beneficial to them personally. At the same time, they knew that as they get benefits from tourism, they are also more tolerant of the negative impacts that tourism is creating in the area. However, they were describing how for people who do not get any benefit from tourism, it might be difficult to handle all the negative impacts that are caused by tourism in their neighbourhood.

According to the data, most of the locals in Comuna 13, see tourism as a positive thing for their area. Tourism has offered a lot of opportunities and economic benefits, and it has had an important role in the transformation of the area. However, some of the locals feel frustrated with tourism because of the negative impacts it creates. They have lost their privacy in their local neighborhood and as a result, some of their habits have changed because of



that. Before it was common for locals to go out of their house in a towel or pajamas but nowadays, they cannot do it. One other big thing is that mobility has become very difficult in the neighborhood. It is impossible to ride a bike or play on the streets, even coming home from work takes a lot of time because of the thousands of tourists in the narrow streets of the neighborhood.

Locals' behavior and perspectives towards tourism have changed over time. When tourism started in Comuna 13, it was a completely new thing for locals, and they were genuinely interested in people coming from different countries. Nowadays, according to one of the interviewees, locals are focusing more on the benefits they get from tourists (H6). Probably the change in the relationship between locals and tourists has happened also because tourism has grown so much in the area that locals are overwhelmed with the number of tourists. In this situation, it might be more difficult to find authentic and genuine encounters between locals and tourists. As Doxey's Irridex shows (Doxey, 1975, Glasson et al, 1995, as cited in Rátz & Puczkó, 2002, p. 132), locals' attitudes toward tourism usually change over time. When the number of tourists grows over a certain level, locals start to get irritated about tourism. When they get irritated, they also lose their curiosity towards tourists and only focus on the economic benefits.

Despite the negativity towards tourism, based on the data, most of the locals in Comuna 13 support tourism in their local area and see it as a positive thing. Especially people who have lived a long time in the area and experienced the violent history, appreciate the increase in safety which tourism has affected. Nowadays, there are fewer conflicts in the area and for example security cameras on the street, in front of locals' houses. All the interviewees thought that people who work in tourism are very happy with tourism because they get lots of benefits from it.

#### *4.1.2 Empowerment*

Interviewees of the research described the positive impacts tourism has brought to their lives and the local area. One of the most important things was that they saw tourism as a solution for some of the social problems that the community had. Many of the positive impacts that were mentioned in the data can relate to empowerment. Empowerment of locals can be seen

as one of the factors to create positive social impacts of tourism. The interviewees emphasized that tourism offers a lot more opportunities for locals. One of the interviewees said that the area of Comuna 13 means opportunities for him (H6). Nowadays, they have more opportunities for education, jobs, and creating their businesses.

One of the elements of inclusive tourism is very strongly connected with empowerment. It is very clearly seen in the transformation of Comuna 13 that self-representations have been facilitated by marginalized people, so their stories can be told, and their culture represented in ways that are meaningful to them (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, p. 5). One of the interviewees was saying how tourism's significant role is exactly storytelling (H4). Without tourism, locals would not have anyone to tell the story of transformation. All the tour guides I interviewed, had grown in the neighborhood and the area was very meaningful to them. That is why they enjoyed telling their story to the tourists. However, they saw that in the future there is a risk that there will be more and more tour guides who are not locals and they do not know the history of the place well. Therefore, tour guides should be controlled to be able to keep it the way the locals want to have it.

So for me, tourism is like a really important part because it's the people who gave us the chance. We're here, we're listening to you, we're going to help you, we're going to go with you through this, we can help you change this. So I think for me, the tourism has the high, like the most important part about this storytelling, you know. Like giving us your time to listen to our history and like then go to your country and be like "I was there and you should go there", "I was there and I loved it". I think that's like the most important thing. (H4)

According to the interviewee, the local community in Comuna 13 got support from tourists after experiencing a traumatic past full of violence. Tourists were listening to their stories and helping them. Tourism offered a platform for the locals to tell about their history to other people. By storytelling, they can also change other people's image of the place when the tourists go back to their home countries and tell how amazing the place Comuna 13 is and how amazing stories they heard about the place.

Another element of inclusive tourism is also connected with empowerment. Encouraging learning, exchange, and mutually beneficial relationships that promote understanding and respect between hosts and guests (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, p. 5). Interviewees described that the relationship between tourists and locals is good in general, and they respect

each other. Especially, the guides saw their job as very valuable because they had the chance to learn about different cultures and improve their language skills. From the guides' perspective, they get a lot of benefits from their job and most of the tourists are very happy to learn about the history of the area and are behaving respectfully toward the locals.

So I'm the guide. So for me, it's amazing that tourists visit us because I have everyday tourists and making some money for my job. And also my relationship with them is amazing because it's very professional. I'm so excited because I feel so curious to learn. (H5)

For the interviewee, tourism is amazing because she is working as a guide and tourism is a way to make money for her. She sees the relationship with the tourists very positively because it is a professional relationship as the interaction is happening between the guide and the customers. She enjoys her job because it gives her opportunities to learn a lot of things, she feels curious about. This way her work in tourism brings a lot of positive things to her and can make her feel empowered.

In the theoretical framework, I introduced the empowerment framework in Table 1. According to the framework many of the positive impacts that were mentioned in the interviews, can be seen as signs of empowerment. From the perspective of economic empowerment, all three signs are visible in Comuna 13. The first one is that tourism brings lasting economic gains to a local community (see Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). This can be seen in the community in many different ways. Locals have been able to improve their quality of life as they have more opportunities for work and studies. Interviewees mentioned that many locals have been able to buy their own houses and support their families because they have gained money from tourism.

Now these places that benefit from tourism, the main benefit today is money. The quality of life changed. People today have a different economic capacity, they have the possibility of having their own house, they have the possibility of renting their houses, they have the possibility of having many things that they could not have in their life before. (H3)

According to the interviewee, tourism has changed the economy a lot and offered a platform for locals to create their economic capacity which they almost did not have at all before tourism. Earlier the locals were very poor, as almost half of Colombia's population live in poverty (Reuters, 2023). Most people will not ever have a chance to buy their own house,

but for people in Comuna 13, tourism has created this opportunity for them. Besides that, they have the possibility to do business for example by renting their house.

The money earned from tourism is shared between different households in the community (Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). According to the interviewees, locals are involved in tourism in many different ways, and everybody has the chance to be part of tourism, therefore also the money is shared between different community members. According to one of the interviewees, tourism has brought diversification to the economy: “And it has brought diversification of economy, the money has been diversified, so people have more, more incomes.” (H6) The other interviewee was saying there are a lot of guides and families in Comuna 13 benefitting economically from tourism: “Today there are more than 300 independent guides, there are more than 1,200 families that make a living from tourism” (H3). These numbers tell that the cash earned from tourism is shared among many of the community members.

Another sign of economic empowerment is that there are visible signs of improvements from the cash that is earned (Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). Examples of the visible signs are for example social projects in the area, more young adults can attend university and other education, and there are courses and mental health services in the area. Most of the interviewees mentioned the economy as the main positive impact. The influence on the economy of the very poor area has been huge and has enabled a lot of improvements and opportunities.

From the psychological perspective of empowerment, both signs can be found in Comuna 13. The self-esteem of many community members has been enhanced because of outside recognition of the uniqueness and value of their culture and knowledge (Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). This came up in some of the interviews that tourism has helped the locals to understand the value and uniqueness of their neighborhood. Because of that, they see Comuna 13 as an example to other areas to transform and overcome the violence.

Access to employment and cash has led to an increase in status for traditionally low-status sectors of society, such as youths and the poor (Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). Most of the people I interviewed were young people from very poor families and had been working in tourism for seven years because that is when tourism in the area started to grow. Their work as tourist

guides enabled them to a better status in society and also allowed them to support their families. In Colombia, people are split into different economic levels based on the areas where they live. Interviewees mentioned they have been on the lowest level in their childhood but have been able to climb up multiple levels because they are working in tourism. Therefore, from the guides' perspective, economic gains are huge.

We got 6 levels economy system in Colombia, one is poor, 6 is rich, right. So I was always level one, between 1 and 2. That's my family, right. So the salary that I have right now, salary that I received for tourism it's a level 5 salary right now, so I mean, 1 to 5 is a big transition so it's just great. So I mean, in terms of economy, it's way better. In terms of like opportunities, I mean I went to college and I graduated. Just because I got some money and some support for this job. And without this job, I would have potentially never gone to university. (H1)

The improvement of the economy can greatly influence the future of the youth. Instead of not knowing what to do in the future or possibly considering taking part in the gangs, tourism offers an opportunity to have a proper job and to be able to finance the higher education which most probably opens more doors in working life. These impacts can affect a lot the whole generation and the future of the community. The fact that the youth have more opportunities also reduces violence and criminality in the area.

As the 3. generation in like 40, 50 years who doesn't have violence ideas. They have not listened gangstas. They have no aspiration for violence. And do you know how big is that? Having the generation without violence, having the generation who thinks that they have options and jobs. (H1)

Locals feel like they have been able to change the generation to act differently than the old ones. The new generation sees more options where to choose from, instead of criminality and violence. They have opportunities and jobs available, and they do not have aspirations for violence. This has been a big change for the community and tourism has been supporting this change in Comuna 13.

From the social perspective, also all the signs can be seen at least at some level. Tourism maintains or enhances the local community's balance (Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). Probably on some level tourism enhances the balance because it gives everybody a chance to earn money and be part of tourism. This way it can reduce inequality inside the community. Cohesion in the community has increased as individuals and families work together for tourism

(see Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). This has happened at some level in Comuna 13, but this was also an issue that interviewees were hoping that the community would improve. Working more together and for the common good instead of focusing on personal goals and benefits. Some of the money gained from tourism is used for community development (see Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). There have been improvements in the community because of tourism and there is a lot of social work and social projects done in the area. Locals are aiming to offer hobbies and free time activities, especially to youth to keep them away from criminal activities.

The political perspective is more difficult to estimate because the interviewees did not have clear information about the political structure. However, it seems like it is very unorganized. The community's political structure would need a clearer structure to represent the needs and interests of all community groups (see Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). Also, the other sign is not very visible in Comuna 13, which is agencies initiating or implementing the tourism venture seek out the opinions of a variety of community groups and provide opportunities for them to be represented on decision-making bodies (see Scheyvens, 1999, p. 247). In Comuna 13 it seemed unclear even to define what kind of decision-making body there is. Most probably different community groups are not represented on decision-making bodies, but this is something that should be developed in the future in Comuna 13.

#### **4.2 Locals' participation**

Interviewees emphasized how the local community has worked hard to enable tourism in Comuna 13. They knew tourism would be beneficial to them, to improve the economy and to have more opportunities in education and work-life. They were doing a lot of street art and sharing pictures of it on social media. This was one way to attract tourists to come to the area. The neighborhood represents overcoming violence and creating a transformation. Different arts like graffiti, rap, and dance had a big role in the transformation.

In the data, it can be seen a lot of different ways how locals can be involved in tourism. Things that were mentioned were mostly different ways of being tourism producers. Locals are working as tour guides, doing arts, being rappers or dancers, owning businesses, or renting their homes. According to the data, everybody has a chance to be part of tourism but it

is also good to remember that not everyone in the community wants to be involved in tourism. Even though there are plenty of ways to be part of tourism, interviewees were describing how everybody wants to do the same things, instead of inventing new ways to be involved. For example, many people are selling souvenirs, and they often copy the products from the others.

Comuna 13 has been a very isolated and violent area, where people have been living in poverty. Tourism has its role in the transformation of the area, and it has offered plenty of opportunities for the local community members to create their businesses and take part in the tourism business. One of the seven elements of inclusive tourism (see Scheyvens & Bidulph, 2017, p. 5) takes place in Comuna 13 because they have overcome barriers for disadvantaged groups to access tourism as producers. “There are some families, very poor, they don't have a good job. So they are selling souvenirs. Yeah, to make some money for their families as well. So in a good way it's amazing for the neighborhood” (H5). According to the interviewee, there are very poor families in the neighborhood who do not have a proper job or education. For them, tourism offers a platform to make money. One of the most accessible ways is to sell souvenirs on the street. For this, you do not necessarily need any business space and some of the people even make the souvenirs themselves. This way they can make money for their families. This way tourism affects the neighborhood positively.

Despite the variety of tourism businesses and opportunities in the neighborhood, some of the interviewees also described the challenges of accessing tourism as a tourism producer. Nowadays, there are so many tour guides in Comuna 13 that new guides need to pay to access the business. This makes it impossible for some people to start working as guides. Also, gangsters are involved in tour guiding. By paying to the gangsters, you can become “a local guide” and start having tours. Usually, in this case, you do not have any experience or training for the job.

In the Comuna there is a group of guys that are wearing blue T-shirts. And they call themselves local guides. They're not guides, many of them, but they call themselves local guides. When you, if you want to be part of that group, you have to pay. So it's not like a company hiring, that is you pay for your spots in the place to be able to run the tours. It is out of control, anyone, anyone could basically run tours. – – This man has paid to the gangsters so the gangsters just allow you to run the tours. (H6)

According to Pretty's (1995, p. 1252) typology, in active participation, the locals are aware of the benefits and disadvantages of tourism and are also able to plan and manage tourism the way they want. According to the data, it seems that in Comuna 13 people are aware of the both positive and negative impacts of tourism but tourism in the area is not planned or managed properly. Also, locals are aware, that tourism needs more control and planning but are not capable of doing it themselves because they do not have a proper structure to it, and agreeing on things among the community is difficult.

Also, another element is visible in Comuna 13, which is providing opportunities for new places to be on the tourism map (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, p. 5). This can be seen in the transformation of Comuna 13 because before that, the area was not part of tourism, it was a dangerous and completely isolated area. Tourism in Comuna 13 started around seven years ago, and now it is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Colombia. According to one of the interviewees, tourism was a platform to show the work done in the area. Tourism put Comuna 13 on the map.

What is important is that tourism was the platform that made it possible to show this work, to show the city and the world that some very beautiful things were happening here and that they needed to be consented. Tourism allowed us to put Comuna on the map. (H3)

Before tourism, there was a lot of work done by the locals to transform the area. According to one interviewee, art, especially rap music was essential for the transformation of the area. Rappers were writing songs about the things happening in the area and telling their stories through music. Also, graffiti was a way for the locals to express themselves. However, tourism was a way to bring the audience to these artists to listen to their stories. Comuna 13 became a famous tourist destination thanks to work done by the locals in the neighborhood.

#### *4.2.1 Decision-making*

One of the elements is widening the range of people who contribute to decision-making about the development of tourism (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, p. 5). Based on the data, it seems that this would be a future goal for Comuna 13. Locals did not seem to have a very clear image of decision-making in tourism in the area. They thought that locals should have the power to decide but at the same time, they thought it would be too unorganized if local



people would make the decisions alone. Many of the interviewees thought decisions should be made together by locals and the government.

Regarding tourism decision-making, the interviewees had very different perspectives. It seemed like the current situation in the area is not very clear and many people do not know who is making decisions. As Freire-Medeiros (2012, p. 175) has claimed, locals can benefit from slum tours but at the same time, it is usual that the local population's involvement in tourism at the democratic level is extremely low. Many of the interviewees mentioned government or the mayor is making the decisions, but the presence is not very visible. Almost all the interviewees were hoping to see more presence from the government.

Also, among locals, there are different groups, for example, groups for the guides or groups for the shop owners. However, it seems like these groups are not very organized and the communication between them does not work. One of the interviewees emphasized the importance of leadership. From his perspective, they need leadership to make things happen. Also, illegal actors like gangsters are influencing the decisions made in tourism. This makes it even more complicated and hidden, and for the regular people is very difficult to know how the decisions are made.

Some of the interviewees thought that the local people should be the ones to decide on the matters of tourism in Comuna 13. It could be also someone whom the community selects democratically. Others thought that the mayor or the Ministry of Tourism should make the decisions. It seemed like all the interviewees would like to see more cooperation between the community and the government. The community members have a lot of development ideas but the government has more power to implement them by regulations and laws.

#### *4.2.2 Community*

Community is very important in Comuna 13. For many locals, Comuna 13 means their whole life. They have lived there their whole lives, they have their jobs there, they know many people from there and they feel a strong belonging in Comuna 13. Locals of Comuna 13 feel proud about the area and they love the place. Most probably the transformation of the area plays an important role in it.

One interviewee described their relation with tourism like this: “Love is the only thing that will save us. This, what we do, we do for the love of territory, love of family, love of people who live in this territory, love of ourselves, love of art” (H3). According to the interviewee, the community does tourism in Comuna 13 because they love the area and the people and art there. I think it is a good foundation for tourism if they do it because the area is so meaningful to them. All the people I interviewed were tour guides and told how the place is so important to them. From the perspective of tourism, it is very good that these kinds of people are showing the area to tourists, people for whom the area is extremely meaningful. Maybe they can transfer the appreciation and respect for the area to the tourists as well so that tourists understand the value of the area. On the other hand, I hope the tourists show respect to the guides and towards this area and do not put the guides in a vulnerable position.

#### **4.3 Planning and managing tourism**

Even though my research was focused on the positive impacts of tourism, the negative impacts are inevitably emerging as well from the data. I did not want to close my eyes to the negative impacts and ask the interviewees only to tell positive things about tourism. We all know that tourism has a lot of challenges, and the aim is to find a balance between positive and negative impacts. Usually, by minimizing something negative, we create something positive. To create positive impacts of tourism, we must also find solutions for the challenges of tourism. According to the Cape Town Declaration in 2002 (Goodwin, 2011, p. 28) responsible tourism aims to minimize the negative impacts of tourism and maximize the positive impacts. To find the balance, we need tourism planning and management. Also, one of the main goals of tourism management is to maximize tourism’s social, economic, and environmental benefits and minimize the costs related to them (Weaver & Lawton, 2014, pp. 254–267).

Another element of inclusive tourism is challenging dominant power relations (Scheyvens & Biddulph, 2017, p. 5). This element is more difficult to estimate because power relations are usually very hidden. It seems like the locals are respecting the government, but they are also aware that the government does not know everything about the area as well as the locals do. In that sense, they were confident about their power and challenging the government’s power. Also, if we look at the history of the area, people have been suffering because of the

conflicts where the government had its role as well. Locals started to make art to recover from the violence and created tourism in the area themselves. Therefore, tourism can be seen as a way how the locals to challenge dominant power relations and change the future themselves.

#### *4.3.1 Need for control*

All the interviewees were hoping to see changes in the future in tourism in Comuna 13. Most of the interviewees emphasized the importance of tourism being more controlled. They were worried about how things would go if tourism would continue the way it is now, without control. The reason why the need for control has become so high is that there are so many tourists in Comuna 13. Comuna 13 has transformed from a neighborhood to one of the most popular tourism destinations in Colombia.

How I wanted to see that, I'd love to see that bigger, but with more control. I mean, I don't think we have control, I don't think we have 100% control of what is happening in that place. -- But you know, we have to be more aware that we have to start paying more attention to where we go, I think. -- I just want to add that tourism without control at that big level could really have consequences. (H1)

One of the interviewees saw the growth of tourism in the area positively but was aware that the growth was not fully controlled. He was worried about the future of tourism in the area and he thought that the locals should plan how they want the tourism to develop in the future. His perspective was that there might be a lot of negative impacts if they don't make regulations and plan the future of tourism. Also, the other interviewee was worried about the future of tourism in the area. His perspective was that the negative consequences could be avoided through cooperation and control. However, the actions should be done as soon as possible, to maintain the positive sides of tourism.

But the truth is that the concern that many of us have is very big. Because the way things are being done, tourism in the future in Comuna 13 is going to be negative tourism. If we don't work today, I don't know. If we do not unite today, if we do not generate controls in about 4, 5 years, tourism in Comuna 13 is not going to be positive, it is going to be very difficult tourism, tourism like in other places in the world, tourism of disorder or tourism of drugs or sex. And we are going to lose the beauty of tourism if we do not take care of it. (H3)

When tourism grows in the area, locals start to lose their power in certain things. For example, in the beginning, there were mainly curious people coming as tourists to Comuna 13 who were very interested about the place and its history. Now when the number of people is growing and there is not enough control, there are more and more unwanted people, for example drug users coming as tourists to Comuna 13 and it is something that the locals cannot decide or control. One of the interviewees said that so far there are no drugs or prostitution in Comuna 13 but if tourism continues the way it is, soon those will arrive in the area.

The locals who are working as guides have the power to influence tourists who come to their tours. They can advise them on certain things, how to act, and how not to act in their local neighborhood. Of course, it is not guaranteed that the people would listen, but probably most of them do. However, there are also a lot of tourists coming independently, without any tours, and that being the case, the guides do not have the power to influence them by giving advice.

I'm the guide, I always put emphasis that the tourists will never give the money to the kids. Because some of them they use the money just to buy drugs or fight it or maybe it is like an excuse to never go back to the school. Because there are all the tourists and they come in there alone and doesn't know how is the situation, the situation happening with the children there. (H5)

According to the interviewee, it does not lead to good consequences if people give money to the local kids. They might use the money to buy drugs or stop going to school completely. For that reason, as a guide, she always advises the tourists not to give money to the kids on the street. The tourists who come independently to the area might imagine they are helping the kids by giving money to them. This is because they are not familiar with the reality of what is happening in the neighborhood.

Negative impacts of tourism can be minimized for example by development restrictions, tourist education programs, infrastructure improvements, and limits on non-local ownership (Weaver & Lawton, 2014, pp. 254–267). As Comuna 13 is a regular neighborhood, the streets are narrow and infrastructure causes problems when there are so many people in the same place. One of the interviewees brought up the lack of control on the streets. From his perspective, the disorganization of the streets affects tourism negatively. When the streets

are so fully packed with sellers, cars, motorbikes, and people, tourists are not able to enjoy the street art which is one of the main attractions in the area.

I would like tourism to be more controlled, that's the main thing. Because when I started about 7 years ago, it wasn't like that with so much commerce. And I would also like the streets to be organized, that's the main thing. For me that is essential so that people can walk in peace, so that there is not so much commerce in the same road with cars or motorbikes, so that the space is bigger. Or that the road would be pedestrian, so that people can enjoy all the murals, the graffiti, the shops, among other things. (H2)

According to the interviewees, the amount of commerce in the area should be limited or moved to a separate area. "I hope that the government make like a special area for people selling some stuff. And then, in the tour we can see all the graffiti that are there." (H5). Otherwise, the sellers take too much space on the streets and at the worst cover all the walls with amazing graffiti which is a significant part of Comuna 13. Another option would be to remove the cars and motorbikes from the main streets and make them pedestrian streets. This would release a lot of space for tourists and make the experience more comfortable.

Tourism has both sides, it can either make things better or worse. According to one interviewee, you can make a lot of amazing things happen by tourism but if you do not control tourism, it can destroy everything. That emphasizes, how important tourism management is. Tourism management is needed in all tourist destinations to be able to control tourism and its impacts.

I believe that tourism has enormous power that many have not seen and that tourism itself can change lives for better or worse. If you do it right, tourism is wonderful. If you do it wrong, it ends everything. So it's like having a weapon, a weapon that can save the world or destroy it. For me, tourism is something like that. It has the ability to do wonderful things, but if you don't regulate it, if you don't control it, it ends with everything. – – I believe that tourism can generate beautiful things and I feel that I can do a lot through tourism with the community. (H3)

Tourism in Comuna 13 has grown very fast and it has surprised the locals how popular their local neighbourhood has become. Tourism has brought a lot of positive things to the area but as the tourism business grows, also the negative impacts grow. That is why tourism planning and management are needed to limit the number of tourists in the area and to set development goals for the future.

Currently, there have been lots of protests for example in Malaga and Gran Canaria against tourism (Huttunen, 2024). However, the locals said they are not against tourism itself, but they are against the endless growth of tourism which must be controlled. This is the case also in Comuna 13. Locals are happy that tourists are coming, and they are aware of all the benefits they get. Nevertheless, they know that many of the negative impacts of tourism could be limited by controlling tourism.

#### *4.3.2 Planning the future*

Interviewees were aware that the future of tourism in the area must be planned, and they have to think about which direction they want to go. One of the challenges of developing tourism is that there are not enough resources for it (Harju-Myllyaho & Jutila, 2021, p. 149). Usually, tourism companies live in the middle of hectic everyday life, and they do not find time to plan their future and development goals. Therefore, it is very important to pay more attention to social issues and inclusive tourism (Harju-Myllyaho & Jutila, 2021, p. 149).

Interviewees had concrete ideas on how to develop tourism in the area in the future. Mostly they were hoping the tourism would be more controlled. Besides that, they were hoping the streets would be more organized and tour guides more controlled. They wished to have more laws and regulations, and more presence from the government. They were hoping that possibly the number of tourists entering Comuna 13 could be limited, and the infrastructure could be improved by having multiple exits in the area. They thought streets would not be so fully packed if there were a separate area for sellers or a separate street only for pedestrians. Currently, all of them, cars, motorcycles, tourists, sellers, street art, everything is on the same street. From the perspective of safety, there should be some health center or first aid station if something happens because the closest hospital is very far away.

Many of the interviewees thought tourism should be more focused on the common good instead of everyone's personal benefits. One of the interviewees thought that tourism in the area should be community-based tourism. From her perspective, tourism should not be only focused on the locals getting money or pleasing the tourists. She emphasized the importance of people getting together and working for their common goals, instead of personal goals. Thinking about the future of the area and the future of the city and the whole country. The

local area and the local people should be respected the way they are, without the need to change them. Locals should understand their value and not focus only on pleasing tourists at any cost.

So I want them to understand people is going to like us, people is going to enjoy us the same way we did, we did it before. And most likely they would like us more if we show them like that we recognize our value to please ourselves for more than pleasing others. Because that's the problem that we have in nowadays. People is focusing so much in only pleasing the tourists that they're leaving their own like people behind. (H4)

According to the interviewee, locals focus so much on pleasing the tourists and getting economic benefits that they do not think about the community. They do not think whether their business causes harm to locals or not. She said: “They wanna prioritize the image of what the tourists want to see, more than what the tourists need to see.”(H4) The interviewee’s opinion on that was that the locals are changing their roots and themselves so much that they do not feel comfortable anymore. They do these changes only to please tourists and to get economic benefits themselves. For the tourists also it could be more necessary and pleasant to see the authentic parts of the area and locals’ life.

One of the interviewees was hoping tourists could get to know more about the authentic life of the locals. How they live, what they eat, and maybe to stay at locals’ homes. He thought this kind of tourism would affect positively Comuna 13 and also other Comunas in Medellín. He hoped tourists would not come to see the poverty, but to get to know local culture and habits, and most importantly the local people.

I would like the people to go to see how they actually live. Not like the perception of, like, the poverty, “all these guys live in a poor area”, not. Literally going and seeing where we eat and what we eat and you know something like that, that's what I would like to develop in the Comuna. Yeah. And I would like that this happened in other Comunas too, because that would take away all these like negative impacts in all over the city. And the positivity factor is bigger. In fact, the entire Comunas too. So I would like the other Comunas to think is promoting tourism like this but it's complicated because there is a lot selfishness and everyone wants to make their own money. No one cares about everyone's money. -- I would love that maybe people could stay in the house with someone like seeing house life in a place. That'd be nice.

This interviewee also thought that people should work for the common good to make the changes happen. If everyone is just focusing on making their own profits, it is very challenging base for cooperation. However, the cooperation between different areas of Medellín could multiply the benefits of tourism and affect positively the whole city of Medellín. In many of the changes, there would be a need for changing attitudes and perspectives as well. This might be difficult but also possible to change over time. When people realize the possible benefits of the change, they have the motivation to work with it as well.



## 5. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I summarize the findings of the study and discuss about them. In the previous chapter I answered the sub-questions of the research and in this chapter, I answer to the main research question based on the findings. After that I reflect on the limitations of the study and proposals for future research.

### 5.1 Discussion

The findings of the study show that locals in Comuna 13 have different perspectives about tourism depending on their relationship with tourism. The ones working in tourism see tourism as very beneficial to them and are also tolerant of the negative impacts caused by tourism. Based on the research, empowerment of the locals can be connected to most of the positive impacts of tourism which were mentioned in the data. Different dimensions of empowerment were recognized from Comuna 13. However, some dimensions clearly need development in the future.

Locals in Comuna 13 are participating in tourism in many different ways as tourism producers. However, the participation in tourism decision-making seems low. Interviewees' picture about tourism management was quite unorganized and they were hoping to see more presence from the government. Locals have a lot of development ideas, but they see that for the government is easier to implement them. All the interviewees emphasized the need for control of tourism in Comuna 13. They thought that tourism in Comuna 13 could not go on the way it is now, there should be more control and regulations. The interviewees were also worried about the growth of tourism because they thought the number of tourists is too high. They were hoping the community could work more together in tourism, to work for their common goals instead of prioritizing individuals' economic benefits.

The main research question of my research was how can tourism create positive social impacts? The sub-questions were: How are the positive impacts perceived by locals involved in tourism? How do locals participate in tourism? How can positive impacts be planned and managed? It is not easy to answer the question of how positive social impacts of tourism can be created. There are lots of different perspectives and ways positive social impacts form.

Based on the research, all the sections of the Findings chapter answer this question because the sub-questions complement the main question. The creation of positive social impacts consists of all these parts which are connected. In addition, all these parts are part of inclusive tourism.

Positive social impacts of tourism can be created through inclusive tourism. Inclusive tourism is an entity of different factors, aiming to offer for all the stakeholders to be part of tourism. In my research, I focused on the locals' perspectives. I focused on the concepts of empowerment, participation, and power relations. The realization of these concepts in a meaningful way can help to create positive social impacts of tourism. These can be guided to be implemented in the desired way, through tourism planning and management which is an important way to set the goals and necessary actions for tourism development.

All the elements of inclusive tourism can be seen in Comuna 13 but also in many of them, there is still a lot of work to do to implement them properly. Some of the elements are at risk of deterioration in the future if tourism keeps on growing uncontrollably, and not on the terms of the local community. However, by fulfilling different elements of inclusive tourism, we have a lot of tools to create positive social impacts of tourism. Many of these elements are processes that need to be maintained continuously and probably there will always be things that can be improved. Also, none of the tourist destinations stays stable all the time, tourism evolves and locals' perspectives change as well.

Both, positive and negative impacts will always be part of tourism and we should observe both to understand the overall picture of tourism. We need knowledge of all kinds of impacts to be able to plan and manage tourism sustainably. The positive and negative impacts go hand in hand, and it is very difficult to imagine a tourist destination without any negative impacts. But the question is, are the benefits of tourism so valuable that they are worth experiencing all the negative impacts beside them?

In a place like Comuna 13, the benefits of tourism are emphasized because people have been living in very bad conditions before tourism. When we compare the locals' lives before tourism and during tourism, the difference is huge. However, according to the locals, tourism has not been the only reason for the improvement of the area. One of the key things was that

the locals started to express themselves and tell their stories and the things they had been going through. Their story and their ways of expressing themselves made people very interested in the place. Together with locals' work and the government's investment, the escalators were built in the middle of the neighborhood and have been one of the main attractions in Comuna 13.

In the end, most of the tourism impacts are both, positive and negative at the same time. Even if we focus only on the local community's perspectives, for some of the community members it is positive and some other community members perceive it negatively. Also, it depends on the scope of the impacts. For example, the growth of tourism is some level might mainly bring benefits for the community, but after the growth reaches a certain level there will be more disadvantages for the local community. The streams of tourism are very uncontrolled phenomenon and when some area has high international interest, the power of locals in controlling tourism is only limited. That is why the number of tourists often grows bigger than the locals would desire. How to limit the number of tourists in a regular neighborhood?

The findings showed that tourism management is very unorganized in the area but the question is, is it unorganized from the perspective of the locals? It might be that the locals are not aware of all the structures and the decision-making and therefore it might seem very unorganized for them. So that does not tell directly how the tourism management is organized. However, most probably the aim of tourism management is that the locals would be aware of it and how they can affect it.

There are also a lot of illegal actors like gangsters and corruption which affect tourism in Comuna 13. As they are so hidden structures, it is difficult to estimate their influence on tourism. These things probably reduce the power of locals as the decision-making is not transparent. It raised the question of how locals can affect tourism and what is their role. Do locals have the power to decide on the things considering their local area?

When I was traveling in Latin America last year, it disturbed me how locals were focusing on selling things in a very pushing way. This happened in Comuna 13 but also in the other city of Colombia, in Cartagena, it was difficult to walk on the street when people were trying

to sell you something all the time. Also, in the Dominican Republic, we were a bit disappointed not to find authentic encounters with locals. Most of the encounters with locals were when they were trying to sell something.

One reason for the behavior of the locals is probably the huge number of tourists. Locals have got fed up with the tourists and probably are on the stage of antagonism in Doxey's irridex (Doxey, 1975, Glasson et al, 1995, as cited in Rátz & Puczko, 2002, p. 132). In the beginning, when there were not so many tourists, locals' attitude might have been curious. But as time goes on and the number of tourists grows extremely high, locals might get tired of it. One other reason might be that the locals are prioritizing the economic benefit, which is understandable in poor countries. However, I see that nowadays tourists are looking for authenticity and hope to see the locals' lives instead of buying souvenirs. Maybe, if there would be more tourism education for locals, they would see more opportunities for themselves also to offer as tourism producers.

As mentioned in the data as well, there should be more innovation in tourism. Often locals do not see all the opportunities of tourism or might also they do not have the resources to implement them. As was mentioned in the findings chapter, in Comuna 13 most of the locals are offering the same services or products to the tourists. Most of them sell souvenirs which are exactly the same products as the others are selling. Also, there are a huge number of people who want to be tour guides in Comuna 13. Hopefully, new forms of tourism will be developed in the future and change the perspectives that we are used to in tourism. The interviewees had many great ideas on how to re-think tourism and what are the most meaningful things in tourism. I hope these ideas can spread more widely and people will be open to approaching tourism from new perspectives.

One important question is how the positive impacts of tourism can be developed and strengthened in the future. It is important to plan and manage tourism to be able to estimate the impacts of tourism and how they affect different stakeholders. All the stakeholders should be taken into consideration and included in tourism. To be able to understand locals' perspectives, locals should be involved in tourism planning. There should be structures to control tourism so as not to let it grow endlessly. This helps to balance the positive and

negative impacts of tourism. If we aim to strengthen positive impacts on the local community, they are the only ones who can tell us how to do it. Therefore, we must listen to the locals.

### **5.1 Limitations of the study**

The people I interviewed in my research are participating in tourism and are also getting benefits from it. They are all working as tour guides, so they also have similar perspectives on tourism. People who are not involved in tourism or getting any benefits from it might see tourism very differently. Also, most of my interviewees are young male adults, and their perspective might vary from a feminine perspective. According to Hitchcock and Brandenburgh (1990, as cited in Scheyvens, 2002, p. 9), it is more likely for adult multilingual males to benefit from tourism.

The language has affected my research as I have conducted the thesis and the analysis in English while my native language is Finnish. Some of the interviews were done in Spanish as it is the interviewees' native language. I translated the interviews into English to be able to analyze them in English. That is why some of the words and meanings might have changed in the translation. However, most of the interviews were done in English which is not neither mine nor the interviewees' native language.

In Comuna 13 there are a lot of illegal actors affecting tourism and the decision-making. The drug traffickers still have a lot of power in the area and they are involved in the decisions made in the neighborhood. I did not focus on the illegal actors and their involvement in tourism in my research as it would have made the research too wide. Therefore, I could not estimate the level of the influence of these actors in tourism in Comuna 13. Most probably these structures are so hidden that nobody can know the real level of the involvement.

There are certain limits in qualitative research. In this research, there is one data that the research is based on. If the empirical context of the research would be different, probably the findings would be different as well. However, in the data, there were many examples of what tourism has created in the area and many of these things are universal. The data is based on the interviews which means they are peoples' perspectives. They have different opinions

and different ways of seeing things. They might understand the research questions in different ways. It depends also on what comes to their mind or what they remember in the moment of the questions being asked during the interview.

## **5.2 Proposals for future research**

During my studies, I noticed I was always very interested in the social impacts of tourism and especially how tourism affects the locals. I also wanted to know what kinds of positive things can be created by tourism. For this reason, when I heard in Comuna 13 that they really appreciate tourism and are very grateful to have tourists visiting them, I was very happy to finally hear something positive about tourism from locals. It was a good reminder that some people still focus on the benefits of tourism. I hope my thesis will be a reminder for the readers to think about all the positive things we can create by tourism. By thinking about the positive impacts of tourism, it is easier to also think of the opportunities of tourism, and to create a positive future of tourism, we need to have the opportunities of tourism as our goals.

My research can offer valuable knowledge about locals' perceptions of tourism and how positive social impacts of tourism can be created. I believe locals themselves can get new ideas from my thesis and thoughts on how they can improve tourism in a suitable way for them. The findings of the research can be used in tourism development as an example of locals' perspectives and how tourism can affect the locals in a positive way. As the empirical context of the research was a neighborhood in Colombia, there could be similar research done in other parts of the world. For example, in Finland, the results would be probably quite different but at the same time, it would be interesting to see how many similarities there are even if the empirical context is on the other side of the world.

In the future, there should be wider research about locals' perspectives on tourism and how they perceive the tourism impacts in their local area. It would be also important to hear the perspectives of people who are not involved in tourism themselves but whose lives it inevitably affects. Locals' perspectives on a wider scale would be very important knowledge for tourism development. Lastly, it would be interesting to have research on how widely illegal actors affect tourism. Probably it happens everywhere in the world but for example, in Co-

muna 13 people are aware of the gang members' role in tourism because they have a significant role in general in decision-making. In Colombia, people are used to the presence of the gangs. It would be interesting to evaluate the influence of the illegal actors in tourism.

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**APPENDIX 1. Letter of consent**

Dear XXXXX,

My name is Salla Airaksinen. I am a master's student at the University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland under the supervision of Senior Lecturer Minni Haanpää. You are invited to participate in my master thesis study entitled Positive social impacts of tourism: Case Comuna 13, Medellín. The purpose of the study is to research positive social impacts that have been created by tourism in the neighborhood of Comuna 13 in Medellín, Colombia. The result of the study will be published as part of my master's thesis. The thesis is conducted as part of the master's degree program in Tourism, Culture, and International Management (TourCIM).

By signing this letter, you give consent to use the interview material confidentially and exclusively for research purposes. The research follows the principles for responsible conduct of research dictated by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research. The data will be handled anonymously. Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw your permission even after signing this document, by informing the below-mentioned contact person.

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor if you need further information regarding the study and the use of the research data.

Sincerely,

*Salla Airaksinen*  
TourCIM Master student  
phone: XXX  
email: XXX

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I give consent to use the interview as data for the purpose mentioned above.

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Signature

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Date

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Print Name

## **APPENDIX 2. Interview structure**

### **Presentation of the research and introduction of the interviewer:**

Hello, my name is Salla Airaksinen, and I am a master's student at the University of Lapland, Rovaniemi, Finland under the supervision of Senior Lecturer Minni Haanpää. You are invited to participate in my master thesis study entitled Positive social impacts of tourism: Case Comuna 13, Medellín. The purpose of the study is to research positive social impacts that have been created by tourism in the neighborhood of Comuna 13 in Medellín, Colombia. The result of the study will be published as part of my master's thesis. The thesis is conducted as part of the master's degree program in Tourism, Culture, and International Management (TourCIM).

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The interview is informal but follows certain themes. First, I will ask you about your background, and then we will proceed with the interview by themes. Do you mind if I record the interview for data analysis? The recordings will be used for research purposes only. Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor if you need further information regarding the study and the use of the research data.

### **Basic questions:**

Can you tell me about yourself...

#### **1. Tourism in Comuna 13**

-Would you like to tell me about tourism in Comuna 13 and your relation to it?

-How does tourism affect your personal life in the area?

-What kinds of tourists are there in the area?

-How are the relations between locals and tourists?

-What do you see as positive things that tourism has brought to the area?

## 2. Community

- What is your personal perspective of Comuna 13? -What does the area of Comuna 13 mean to you?
- How would you describe the reputation of Comuna 13?
- Has Comuna 13 changed? How?
- What kind of role tourism has had in the change?
- How would you describe local people in Comuna 13? -Do they have similar perspectives about tourism?

## 3. Participation

- How do locals participate in tourism?
- What kinds of roles do they have? (-Are there tourism actors in the city government for example?)
- What kinds of possibilities do locals have in tourism?
- Who do you think should decide on matters related to tourism?

## 4. Future

- How would you like to see tourism development in the future?
- Do you have ideas about what kinds of things should be done in the area related to tourism?
- Would you like to continue working in tourism?

## Closure

Before concluding the interview, what was the main thing that stayed on your mind from the interview?

- Is there anything you can think of that I didn't ask but that you think would have been important to bring up?
- Do you know some local guides from Comuna 13 who could join the interview? Could you send me the contact information?
- If I have any further questions, can I contact you by phone or email?

If you have any further questions, you can contact me by e-mail at [sairaksi@ulapland.fi](mailto:sairaksi@ulapland.fi)

THANK YOU!