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*Los Pedrenses: Alternative Tourism, the Spectacle of Youth, and Struggles for Local Authority
in La Pedrera, Uruguay*

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By Gwendelyn Gardner

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion
Of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies
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Abstract

Tourism has been a longstanding industry in La Pedrera, a rural beach town along the Atlantic coast of Rocha, Uruguay. The effects of recent forms of tourism massification in the form of *los boliches* and *Carnaval* have prompted residents to develop a local discourse and sociopolitical front against youth and mass tourism. This discourse has roots in the strong connection between residents and the environment that has shaped the development of the community as caretakers of the region. Such reasoning is based on interviews with La Pedrera locals, social media analysis, and articles for local and national newspapers in conjunction with pre-established works analyzing tourism theory in alternative tourism communities. This work not only adds to the growing repertoire of research on tourism theory and ethical tourism, but also highlights the necessity for intentional tourism development in areas where the industry is still growing.

Keywords: Uruguay, alternative tourism, community well-being, socioenvironmental change

*Special thanks to the residents of La Pedrera who generously shared
their time and experiences for the purposes of my investigation.*

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Introduction

Since the return to civil rule following the military dictatorship (1973-1985), Uruguay has progressively integrated itself into the global economy (Nahum 1999). Uruguay's internal economy has historically centered on agriculture and cattle farming, but more recently has developed an emerging tourism industry (Brida et al. 2021). The national government and private investors have cultivated tourism markets to attract foreign visitors from across Latin America, Europe, and the United States (Campadónica 2019). Large-scale tourism investment has focused on the capital city of Montevideo and near-by Punta del Este as they receive over 80% of visitors ("Anuario Estadístico 2019."). Smaller-scale investment has concentrated on Atlantic coastal towns as alternative nature-based and beach-oriented destinations (Campadónica 2019).

Alternative tourism destinations along the Atlantic coast have developed differently than Punta del Este or other major beach resorts in Argentina or Brazil. Coastal residents are more actively involved in managing local markets to ensure community well-being and ongoing sociopolitical authority. Nevertheless, some alternative tourism destinations have experienced uneven periods of intense tourism flows that challenge local authority and generate socioenvironmental harm.

Research Question and Study Location

This study investigates the challenges of uneven tourism flows and their socioenvironmental impacts on coastal communities within Uruguay's alternative tourism industry. I highlight a specific case study: the beach tourism town of La Pedrera. La Pedrera is home to just over two hundred permanent residents ("La Pedrera, Rocha" 2020). It is a popular summer tourist destination and, during the busiest points of the high season, welcomes tourists of

all ages, representing nearly 20% of total visitors to the eastern coast of Uruguay (“Anuario Estadístico 2019”). In the past, the majority of tourists were families with young children enjoying the town’s plentiful beach rentals and the sounds of the ocean alongside local flora and fauna. Visitors and inhabitants of the region reflect fondly upon days exploring the rocky coastline and soaking up the sunshine. In recent years, however, the market has changed. In the last two decades, the tourism industry in La Pedrera has undergone an uneven process of massification centered around large-scale outdoor festivals called *boliches* that occur during short holiday periods. These *boliches* are advertised to young, middle-class Uruguayans interested in spending the least money possible. *Los boliches* and similar activities, such as *Carnaval*, are associated with mass tourism and detrimental socioenvironmental impacts.



Fig. 0.1 “Departments of Uruguay Map” (2021)



Fig. 0.2 “Rocha Department” 2022. La Pedrera is marked with a star.

This study asks the primary question: How does the La Pedrera beach tourism community understand and respond to the socioenvironmental impacts of uneven tourism flows and massification related to *los boliches* and *Carnaval*? I break this question down into three sub-questions: 1) How do local residents understand the socioenvironmental values that define La Pedrera as a place-based community?; 2) How do residents understand the positive and negative socioenvironmental impacts of uneven tourism flows and massification in this region?; and 3) How are locals organizing against *los boliches* and their perceived negative impacts on the present and future wellbeing of La Pedrera? These questions will be addressed in each of my empirical chapters.

The Argument

My main argument is that tourism massification in La Pedrera has led residents to develop a local anti-*boliche* discourse and an emerging sociopolitical front of opposition to massification. Massification refers to the increasing intensity and magnitude of tourism activities. Residents perceive *los boliches* to have negative socioenvironmental impacts: 1) they undermine the image of a natural, peaceful environment; 2) they disrupt community social life; and 3) they undermine the imagined futures of La Pedrera envisioned by locals. This anti-tourism massification perspective foregrounds *los boliches* and *Carnaval* festivities that occur between early January and late February. These periods of uneven massification have occurred outside of the sociopolitical authority of La Pedrera locals and thus are considered an invasion of an otherwise peaceful community. As a result, this thesis recommends that for tourism ventures to be accepted in small, alternative tourism communities, they must consider the desires and well-being of locals.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study of the La Pedrera alternative tourism community and local perceptions of the socioenvironmental impacts associated with uneven tourism flows and tourism massification. The study is based on data collected from interviews, social media posts, and newspaper articles. The inspiration for this project was a trip taken to La Pedrera in June 2022 and informal conversations I had with tourism operators, business owners, and residents. These initial conversations defined what local issues were most concerning to residents. I decided to develop a research project that would highlight local anxieties over *los boliches* as a contribution to emerging research on tourism, culture, and society in Uruguay. This project uses a participatory research

design to promote the voices, frustrations, and perspectives of La Pedrera residents as they struggle to gain control over tourism development in the region.

Firstly, the study is based on interviews (n = 9) conducted with residents of La Pedrera and the surrounding communities. This includes those who have lived in La Pedrera for their entire lives, those who were born in the area and left as adults, and those who moved into the area as adults and live there presently. These interviews were conducted remotely by Zoom and on the phone following the IRB approval process. Initially, I reached out to contacts I made during previous visits to the region. Using a snowball sampling method, I expanded my pool of interviewees as initial research subjects recommended other people to contact. I transcribed and then coded the interviews based on categories and sub-categories related to the interview questions. I then repeated the coding process twice to collect the most data possible. The coding process revealed patterns and themes that emerged inductively across the interview data. All of the interviews were conducted in Uruguayan Spanish. Any quotations from interviews have been translated into English with the original Spanish in the footnotes. All translations are my own.

Secondly, the study draws upon data collected from social media. For my social media analysis, I first compiled a list of relevant social media pages on Instagram and Facebook. These consisted of businesses hosting and promoting *los boliches* and *Carnaval*, visitors to the area during the tourist season, and local organizations involving *los pedrenses* (locals in La Pedrera). I cataloged posts relevant to my research topic. I also included posts that had tagged La Pedrera as the location in order to include representations of the community constructed by outsiders. For my analysis, I categorized and coded the posts to generate themes and sub-themes that emerged inductively from the social media content, making sure to pay attention to the time and date during which they were originally posted.

Finally, I collected and analyzed newspaper articles from local and national news sources to provide context to the debate over *los boliches* between the proprietors of the events and *los pedrenses*. These were collected from local and national newspapers such as *La Paloma Hoy* and *El Observador*.

Overview of Thesis

This study is broken down into four chapters. Following this Introduction, the Literature Review (Chapter 1) outlines the history of the region, the development of the tourism industry in Uruguay, socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors influencing the direction of the tourism industry, and global tourism theory. Chapter 2 examines local understandings of La Pedrera as a community with specific socio-environmental values connected to the physical landscape. Chapter 3 investigates local perspectives on *los boliches* and *Carnaval* and the socioenvironmental impacts associated with uneven tourism flows and massification. Chapter 4 discusses local sociopolitical efforts to control mass tourism and assert community authority over the tourism industry as they relate to distribution of social power.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

This chapter reviews scholarship about the coastal alternative tourism industry in Uruguay and the challenges of uneven tourism inflows (short bursts of intense tourism activity) and socioenvironmental impacts. I begin with a brief history of Uruguay and an overview of tourism development. I then discuss social, political, and economic factors facilitating the expansion of an alternative tourism industry in La Pedrera. Finally, I discuss key concepts in tourism theory that pertain to recent tourism massification in La Pedrera.

Brief History of Uruguay

Following over three hundred years of Spanish colonialism, the Republic of Uruguay gained independence in 1828. Like a lot of South America, much of the land was still controlled by European investors, especially Great Britain, and the economy centered around export-based agriculture. During the middle part of the century, *los blancos* (conservatives) and *los colorados* (liberals) fought one another in the *Guerra Grande* (Great War). Up until the beginning of the 19th century, disputes continued internally between political parties and externally as other nations in the Southern Cone solidified newly-established borders (Nahum 1999).

In the early 20th century, President José Batlle y Ordóñez initiated a number of widespread political, social, and economic reforms that focused on social welfare and workers' rights. These included the introduction of a modern welfare system and unemployment benefits (Nahum 1999). During this time, Uruguay also underwent significant urban development. In rural areas, landowners gained power as livestock production maintained prominence in exports. However, financial gains were limited as the agrarian class structure determined that wage laborers and other rural workers earned little so long as they did not own the land (Piñeiro and Cardeillac 2016).

During the 1940s-1970s, the economy experienced reform encouraging reduced dependence on imported goods, known as import substitution industrialization (Nahum 1999). Technological development in these industries further limited economic growth amongst rural workers as employers only required very few permanent, skilled workers. As a result, unskilled laborers were limited in their ability to demand better pay and working conditions (Piñeiro and Cardeillac 2016).

Between 1973 and 1985, Uruguay was ruled by a civic-military dictatorship that cut social spending and promoted privatization of state-owned companies. The military-backed government took strong measures against ground-level organization, such as workers' unions. During this time, the economy suffered and the unemployment rate skyrocketed. Such difficulties led to strong pushback against neoliberal policies that limited state intervention and allowed strong influence from external markets, limiting the influence of wage laborers and unskilled workers (Nahum 1999; Oyhantcabal 2019).

Between 2005 and 2020, the progressive governments of the Frente Amplio opposed neoliberalism and sought to promote socioeconomic development and the expansion of rights and non-discriminatory practices based on gender, race, and sexual orientation (Piñeiro and Cardeillac 2016). They have also increased spending on agriculture and rural development ("Uruguay Country Profile, 2005-2020" 2020). Additionally, they promoted ground-level organization amongst workers for increased wages and better conditions, as well as laws in favor of land investment for small-scale and family farmers (Oyhantcabal 2019; Piñeiro and Cardeillac 2016).

Tourism Development in Uruguay

Although the Uruguayan economy has maintained historical emphasis on agriculture and cattle ranching, tourism revenues and the annual number of visitors have increased steadily since the early 2000s (“Tourism in Uruguay” 2021). Following years of financial crises linked to poor banking and debt management, Uruguay has established recovery techniques effectively avoiding extreme booms and busts. This has resulted in increased confidence in the economic system leading investors to feel more secure and has allowed a greater degree of stability within the Uruguayan economy (Rojas-Suarez 2005). During the early 2000s, the government also promoted real wage gains, agricultural exports and tax-reforms that contributed to a 2.2-point decrease in the Uruguayan Gini Coefficient, indicating increased economic equity and efficiency (Oyhantçabal 2018, 129-130; Martorano 2014, 708). Tourism investment has expanded since the early 2000s and in 2018 saw a \$406 thousand increase in revenue as compared to 2016 (“Anuario Estadístico 2018”). Despite recent downturns as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Uruguayan tourism industry has proved resilient with a continued desire for development in the industry and plans for future travel within the region (Brida et al. 2021). Additionally, Uruguay has acted as an important tourist destination for Argentinian visitors for many years, and is growing in popularity amongst wealthy Latin Americans due to the desirability of the country having a perceived Europeaneseque society, relative economic, political, and social stability as compared to others in the region, and a high level of safety (Juan Gabriel Brida et al. 2009). Growth in this area also aligns with emphasis on rural development by the Frente Amplio (Piñeiro and Cardeillac 2016).

With easy access to its Atlantic coastline, Uruguay has become well known for its “sun and beach tourism” (Campodónico 2015). Some scholars have highlighted postcolonial representations of Uruguay as a tropical getaway with images of palm trees along a sandy coastline

(Dabezies 2020). It is important to note that the specific species of palms idealized in this imagery are influenced by neocolonial perspectives of exoticism and are not species native to the area. There have been recent movements towards reinstating native palms along with other indigenous fauna within the international image of the region (Dabezies 2020). Additionally, representations of Uruguay as a tropical getaway contradict the perception of the country as a European, and therefore anti-tropical, island in South America.

Outside of the capital, Punta del Este is one of the most popular resorts for sun-and-beach tourism in Uruguay (Cardona and Fernández 2022). This region attracts almost 80% of the yearly visitors to the eastern coast of Uruguay (“Anuario Estadístico 2019”). More recent tourism development has extended into the departments of Salto and Paysandú (Campodónico 2020). These are alternative tourism centered around natural hot springs connected to the Guaraní Aquifer (Lazzerini and Cardoso da Silva 2019). Along the Atlantic coastline, such as in Rocha, alternative and eco-tourism emphasize beach-oriented activities such as swimming, surfing, and hiking (Campadónica 2019). Previous to the 1990s, large-scale tourism development did not extend to Rocha due to a lack of infrastructure, so growth in that region is relatively recent. For example, Rutas 9 and 10 connect the southern Atlantic coastline of Uruguay to the east of Montevideo, passing through the departments of Canelones, Maldonado, and Rocha, but until recent years, these roads have been unreliable for residential development (“Ruta 9 (Uruguay)” 2020; “Ruta 10 (Uruguay)” 2022).

Factors influencing the development of coastal tourism in Uruguay are economic stability, increased accessibility to the rural coastline, foreign investment in La Paloma (a small coastal city about 8 kilometers southeast of La Pedrera), the creation of protected areas, and the increasing efforts by communities to control tourism planning and development (“La Pedrera, Rocha” 2020).

Foreign investment in port infrastructure has generated popular concerns about ecosystem degradation. In 2012, Brazilian investors offered to finance a deepwater port in La Paloma; however, it has yet to have been built (El Observador 2012). Foreign interest in the region reflects economic viability. Arguments in favor of the port cited increased availability of jobs and economic stimulation. Locals, however, cited concerns about the well-being of the community and the physical environment, which was reflected by local and national news outlets (Cien18chenta 2011). Environmental and community concerns have persisted into recent years, acquiring the attention beyond local news agencies via *La Mañana* and *Montevideo Portal*, as well as government publications citing a need for economic revitalization in the region (“El puerto oceánico...” 2021, “Opinión: un puerto oceánico de aguas profundas...” 2021). However, concerns regarding biodiversity and environmental degradation persist. Tourism may offer an alternative to such development, so long as the industry focuses on maintaining the well-being of the surrounding communities and environment.

In Uruguay, there are a series of seventeen protected areas included in El Sistema Nacional de Áreas Protegidas (SNAP) (“Rocha Lagoon: Protected Landscape of Uruguay”). The Rocha department is home to 6 of these protected areas: Laguna Garzón, Laguna de Rocha, Cabo Polonio National Park, and Cerro Verde, Laguna de Castillos, and San Miguel National Park. As of 2020, Laguna Negra is under review to join SNAP, potentially naming Rocha home to nearly half of the protected areas in Uruguay. All of these protected areas are located along the coastline, demonstrating the connection between coastal communities and protection of the natural environment.

Finally, community involvement has become crucial to new tourism development (Campodónico 2020). Heather Mair and Donald Reid (2007) argue that tourism development must

meet the needs of the community to be successful. Planning should include and value the desires of community members and reject the perceptions created by outsiders (Mair and Reid 2007). These perceptions include images of non-native species of palms framing beach tourism in Uruguay and the intentional dismissal of such images in recent years, especially in Rocha (Dabezies 2020). This intentional involvement of the community is further promoted by Murray C. Simpson, using the example of Maputaland, South Africa, and the limited benefits of outsider-oriented tourism for community members (2007).

Tourism Theory

In *Spaces of Capital Towards a Critical Geography*, David Harvey (2001) relates tourism to global capitalism, explaining that tourism destinations are forms of “symbolic capital” that global tourists can symbolically consume and which are controlled and monopolized by businesses, governments, and community residents. These destinations are cultivated and commodified for capitalistic gain (2001, 398, 404-405). Consumption and commodification of destinations is also seen through the “tourist gaze.” In *The Tourist Gaze*, John Urry (2002) theorizes that symbolic consumption of tourist locations to a “gaze” shape how destinations are imagined and experienced by visitors. The intensity of the “tourist gaze” can change tourist locations into “spectacles” for visitors (131). This promotes mass tourism as the spectacle becomes more established and draws new visitors. This consumption of tourism is dependent on the tourist gaze creating a spectacle regarding a particular people, landscape, and environment.

Noel Salazar (2010) highlights the tourist imaginaries that shape global destinations. In *Envisioning Eden*, Salazar describes the interactions between “imagined realities” promoted by the tourist industry and the real lives of locals who are impacted by the industry (2010, 154).

Salazar explains how guides in Tanzania and Indonesia often promote idealized versions of the location to sell the culture and natural landscape, whether or not it is based on truth (78-110). Nevertheless, the global tourism industry does promote intercultural communication while also reinforcing boundaries between those of differing ethnicities, nationalities, and socioeconomic status (170-183). Salazar's research in Tanzania and Indonesia reflects on modes of idealism similar to the version of La Pedrera that is marketed to young people attending *los boliches* versus the La Pedrera promoted by locals. Harvey, Urry, and Salazar demonstrate some of the problems relating to mass and alternative tourism markets within the global economy.

Other tourism scholars have studied the perspectives of local communities and their efforts to assert authority over tourism markets and development projects while highlighting the socioenvironmental impacts caused by the industry. In *Producing Knowledge, Protecting Forests*, Light Carruyo (2018) focuses on the experiences of women living in rural communities in the Dominican Republic. Carruyo draws attention to gendered inequalities in work and education outside of the home, as well as the developmental needs of communities. Though there were development projects in the works, locals did not consider them socially beneficial. Carruyo proposes that for development in such communities to be successful, they must respond to the needs and desires of locals. They cannot be solely based on the opinions of outsiders with no practical experience in the community (72-74). Similarly, in La Pedrera tourism locals desire authority over the local tourism industry as caretakers of the community. In *The Patagonian Sublime*, Marcos Mendoza (2018) discusses the ecotourism industry in Patagonia. Focusing on the village of El Chaltén, Mendoza shows how residents have struggled to maintain local authority over tourism markets and to protect their vision of sustainable development from that of powerful politicians such as Presidents Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández. Relevant to La Pedrera,

residents of El Chaltén recognized the socioenvironmental harms produced by massifying tourism markets, such as unplanned urban development, water pollution, impacts on wildlife, threats of forest fires, and growing social inequality. Residents also organized politically to counter efforts by social elites to privatize wilderness spaces along the border with Chile and politicians to build roads into Glaciers National Park.

Contributions

This study contributes to the emerging scholarship on coastal alternative tourism in Uruguay. This is the first tourism study of La Pedrera as an emerging destination, adding a significant case study to Uruguayan tourism scholarship that has focused more on mass tourism destinations like Punta del Este. The discussion highlights the desires of local communities in alternative tourism destinations to exercise sociopolitical authority over the tourism industry and its development trajectory. Scholarship on alternative tourism destinations is limited, often due to the small size of these communities. As a result, this study is meant to bring attention to such communities and emphasize the importance of local discourses, values, and aspirations in tourism planning.

This study adds to growing scholarship on community-centered tourism-based development. The modern tourism industry must more effectively incorporate the concerns of local communities. Without such attention, their needs are likely to be overshadowed by capitalistic gain. Additionally, the history of La Pedrera reflects a historical emphasis on the community first and tourism second. Recent developments in southeastern Uruguay promoting mass tourism have generated conflicts between locals who view the region as their home and outsiders more interested in profiteering. My research highlights how the La Pedrera community has generated a local anti-

boliche discourse and sociopolitical front of opposition to tourism massification associated with outdoor youth festivals.

Chapter 2: The State of Tourism and Community Development in La Pedrera, Uruguay

This section highlights how local residents understand La Pedrera as an emplaced community defined by specific socio-environmental values. I draw on tourism scholarship focused on processes of place-making and contested struggles over value to frame how La Pedrera's residents understand their tourism-based community and the surrounding environment. This chapter draws on interviews conducted with La Pedrera residents. They differ regarding the industries they work in and how they came to the community, but they are united by their shared sense of belonging to the town. I use the concept of the social imaginary of an alternative tourism beach community. By "social imaginary" I mean the ways in which locals perceive themselves and their community based on popular conceptions of their and their community's purpose and moral order (O'Neill 2017). This chapter argues that the social imaginary developed by La Pedrera residents is based on a communal connection to the natural environment, longstanding traditions of self-rule, and a distinct separation from outsiders, which has informed and shaped the emergent alternative tourism industry.

¿Por qué La Pedrera? - Why La Pedrera?

La Pedrera grew slowly until the late 20th century, originally composed of vacation homes for a distinct group of families who would pass the summer months enjoying the natural beauty of the coastline (Ferrer 2005, 19-33). Everyone knew one another in town, given its small size. People spent evenings chatting with neighbors and hosting *asados* (cookouts) (Ferrer 2005). The community has existed mostly outside the scope of the Uruguayan state and the reach of law enforcement, instead developing an informal system of self-regulation and local forums for dispute resolution.

María Ferrer's (2005) *La Pedrera: vida y milagros* highlights a key aspect of the social imaginary shaping La Pedrera: how *los pedrenses* perceive themselves to belong to the place through generations of deep socio-emotional attachment to the people and the land. For Ferrer, this suggests that La Pedrera has a distinct identity and a culture separate from commercialized images of the region as a coastal paradise. Ferrer writes, "La Pedrera continued to function for 'all of us,' since newcomers integrated into the historical manner of peaceful coexistence and a natural life," reflecting the idea that La Pedrera exists for the community that feels a sense of belonging to the town (2005, 177). Such emphasis on community solidarity bleeds through Ferrer's work, noted in everything from dances, to *asados*, to the growth of "el Bar" and "el Club Social y Deportivo" as centers for community development (2005, 119 and 156). Indeed, the history and names of the founders have persisted for more than seventy years (Ferrer 2005, 62-63). This contrasts with growing interpretations of La Pedrera (and similar coastal communities) as existing solely for touristic pleasure.

Current residents have articulated a social imaginary of La Pedrera based on how the natural environment is connected to daily life. This connection to the natural environment is part of what draws the community together and unites them in their desire for the well-being of La Pedrera as a whole.

Interview A: Here, there is no cinema, and there is no neon light. None. It's a small town that doesn't even have a gas station. You have to go to La Paloma, which is a city 10 km away, to get gas. So those people, who just keep coming back, are not interested in nightclubs because the nightlife is everywhere. They are not interested in the music that they can hear anywhere in the world. They are interested in the music of the sea, falling asleep to the sound of the ocean... There are a lot of young people your age who come to see the sky. The Milky Way Galaxy from the South. It's in the Southern Hemisphere. Because there are no signs or lights competing [with the stars].¹

¹ Acá, no hay cine, no hay luz de neón. No hay. Es un pueblito que no tiene siquiera una estación para poner nafta. Tienes que ir a La Paloma, que es una ciudad, que está 10 km, para poner nafta. Era entonces a esas personas, que, que solo que se mantienen viniendo, no les interesa la

This statement reflects how nature is an important aspect of what draws people to the region. It highlights sensory images of the human-environmental world in La Pedrera: “the music of the sea” and the ability to see the “Milky Way Galaxy.” The well-being of nature is strongly connected to the well-being of the community. Additionally, social imagery in La Pedrera highlights a sense of collective belonging and how this belonging to the natural landscape unites residents as a community and gives them a reason to protect and care for the town and the surrounding area. As a result, tourism endeavors that threaten nature also threaten the community.

Such sentiments are further reflected by those who have moved into La Pedrera from other regions.

Interview D: For my whole life, I’ve been living in cities, far away from nature. And there came a time when I felt the need to be in a quieter place and more in touch with nature.²

Moving to a place that is envisioned to be more tranquil and more in touch with nature gives them a greater opportunity to connect with those around them through their shared attachment to the land and sea. This quote reveals how they had previously experienced alienation through urban life, but living in this coastal town has allowed them to become part of the community.

Residents also expressed a sense of responsibility toward the well-being of the community.

Interview F: And this is a *chacra marina*, which means, a group of people that is living and cohabiting, co-proprietors with the idea of maintaining the place as it is.³

The term “chacra marina” (marine chakra) is based on the Hindu term relating to the alignment of one’s inner self (“Chakra”). This usage reflects how the connection between La Pedrera residents and the town is so strong that it connects to the essence of their existence. Such sentiments further

discoteca porque la discoteca está en todas partes. No les interesa la música que pueden oír en cualquier parte del mundo. Les interesa la música del mar, dormirse con el ruido del océano... Hay muchos jóvenes de tu edad que vienen a hacer observaciones del cielo. La galaxia de la vía láctea desde el sur. Está en el hemisferio sur. Porque al no tener indicios ni luces que compitan grandemente.

² Estaba durante el resto de mi vida, había estado viviendo en ciudades grandes, lejo la naturaleza y llegó un momento en que sentí la necesidad de estar en un lugar más tranquilo y más en contacto con la naturaleza.

³ Y este es una chacra marina, lo cual quiere decir una un grupo de gente que estamos viviendo y cohabitando, copropietarios con la idea de mantener el lugar como eso.

emphasize how it is the natural landscape and the desire to maintain it that unites residents of La Pedrera and the surrounding area. This shared aspiration creates an ideal state of cohabitation and equality among residents that further promotes the desire to protect La Pedrera.

Interviewees often emphasized the sentiment of *pertenencia* (belonging) and *hogar* (home). One interviewee explained that when she describes her home in La Pedrera, she is not solely describing her house and her property. She explains how she, like others, has come to care for the entire community.

Interview D: I mean, it's my home. It's really everything I've done here, from I don't know, taking care of the lighting, the maintenance of the Rambla, that everything is pretty, that everything is nice, you know... We smile as a consequence of the love that we have for this place and for the community. I know this; you experienced this. For me, it is mine. I have my house; I have my garden. But, for me, my home is the whole town. It's not just my property and the people that live here. I'm not going to tell you that I have a friendly relationship with everybody, but, yes, I have a lot of friends. I think people know me because I have lived here for a long time and they see me all the time. So, well, I feel like part of the town.⁴

While this interviewee emphasizes that they cannot claim to have a friendly relationship with everyone in La Pedrera, they explain that their work in the community has allowed them to connect with others who share similar aspirations. This allows them to feel united toward a shared goal: to protect La Pedrera and the natural landscape that makes it unique. Residents do not simply live and work in La Pedrera; they *are* La Pedrera.

In sum, the social imaginary of La Pedrera is focused on themes of self-rule, the environment, the community, and a sense of belonging. Therefore, when this imaginary is threatened, all of these elements are at risk.

⁴ O sea, es, es mi hogar. Es, realmente todo lo que he hecho aquí, desde no sé, ocuparme de la de la iluminación, de la, del mantenimiento de la Rambla, de que todo es bonito, de que todo sea amable, viste.. Sonriamos como el, la consecuencia del amor que tengo por este lugar y por la comunidad, qué sé yo, es hiciste. Para mí, es mío. Tengo mi casa, tengo mi jardín. Pero, pero para mí, mi hogar es todo el pueblo, no es desde aquí hasta los límites de este lugar y la gente que vivía acá. No te voy a decir que tenga una relación de amistad con todos, pero, sí, tengo muchos amigos. Creo que la gente me conoce porque hace mucho tiempo que vivo acá y me ven siempre. Entonces, este, bueno, me siento muy integrada a lo que dice el pueblo.

El medio ambiente - The Environment

The social imaginary of La Pedrera promotes a range of socioenvironmental values. One of these is the connection between residents and place, and consciousness of one's impact on the environment. One resident shared their experiences working with environmental protection projects in the region.

Interview E: Well, I worked for a month with a foundation to protect the turtles. That was worthwhile for the community as a tourist destination because, I mean, [tourists] take it as a sign that [the environment] is healthy, right? To be aware of the marine fauna and take care of it. The other time, a few days ago, a young whale was stranded in the plaza. So, the community says, well we need you to put on your wetsuit and come help us if you have time.⁵

The image of a stranded whale being rescued by the community draws attention to the collective responsibility that residents show for the coastal environment and marine life. *Los pedrenses* demonstrate belonging and community well-being through actions to protect vulnerable species such as whales and turtles. Since there is not as much direct support from the government in this relatively unpopulated area, residents are responsible for maintaining the environment.

The Comisión Patrimonio y Medioambiente de La Pedrera (La Pedrera Committee of Heritage and the Environment) is one organization that is dedicated to conservation through environmental education. This group consists of a team of long-term residents of La Pedrera who come together to discuss issues within the community and then propose solutions and ask for assistance from local and departmental governments as needed. One interviewee describes their purpose as follows:

⁵ Pues, me sacaron un mes en una fundación que salgan tortugas. Eso sí valía la comunidad como de turismo estaba porque, o sea, sacan como bandera de eso que está buena, ¿no? Tener conciencia con la fauna marina que hay y cuidarla. La otra vuelta hace unos días, hubo un varamiento de una ballena joven un vallenato en la plaza. Entonces, como que la comunidad dice, bueno necesitamos que si tienes tiempo que te pongas el wetsuit y vengas para ayudarnos y vengan adentro.

Interview D: One of the objectives of the Comisión Patrimonio is to preserve progress and that does not end up damaging what identifies La Pedrera as a special place, right? It's about, then the environment. Trying to do what? Trying to preserve the environment, which is very important for La Pedrera.⁶

The existence of the Comisión Patrimonio reflects how the community has come together intentionally to protect the local cultural and natural heritage. At the base of this is a recognition that La Pedrera is a “special place” that could be damaged by unplanned, out-of-control tourism. Protecting the natural environment is especially integral to maintaining the well-being of the town.

Another interviewee described how this same consciousness extends to the tourist industry. Interviewee E remarked: “And all of it is connected. Tourism with consciousness, with the community, and with the environment.”⁷ This “conscious tourism” links economic development in La Pedrera to environmental and cultural protections that facilitate a society based on connection. This interviewee is raising the issues of sustainable development and eco-tourism grounded in awareness. The social imaginary of La Pedrera promotes environmental consciousness and encourages a mode of sustainable tourism.

Desarrollar la comunidad – Building Community

Among the socioenvironmental values promoted by the local social imaginary is an emphasis on community development and well-being. Residents have worked to strengthen La Pedrera as a community and provide improved access to resources within the region. One interviewee described how it is essential to have community spaces, such as bars, restaurants, and social clubs, where residents can meet and share ideas.

⁶ Una de las, de los objetivos de la Comisión de Patrimonio es preservar eso que no, que digamos que el progreso y eso no termine dañando lo que tiene lo que lo que identifica La Pedrera P como un lugar especial, ¿no? Es de, bueno. Por un lado, es de, después el medio ambiente, bueno. Tratar de de, ¿qué? De preservar el medio ambiente, que es importantísimo para La Pedrera.

⁷ Y todo eso está conectado. El turismo con la conciencia, con la comunidad y con el entorno.

Interview E: The Club [Social de La Pedrera] is always open for talks, and proposals, to nurture, and to share the things that are happening, right? That is, if you want, you can contribute.⁸

What is special about spaces such as The Club Social de La Pedrera is that they are open to the public. They are not restricted to those involved with official governing systems, so anybody who is part of the community of La Pedrera is equally able to voice their concerns. This is especially important as La Pedrera does not have a local government and the town is reliant on the neighboring municipality of La Paloma and the departmental government of Rocha for formal public services.

Having shared public spaces to voice the concerns of locals is vital to creating community solidarity that can articulate priorities and problems.

Interview D: Well, because we are a small community it is obviously important to be united. To achieve things, for example, to have a better dialogue with the municipality, and with the authorities in general. And, well, because I think you understand that one of the good things about living in a small place is that you have more influence over what happens in the place. It is not a big city; we are just a small dot. In a small place like this one, what you do or don't do has a lot of influence on the environment.⁹

Within a small community, one's actions have a great impact. As a result, when it comes to caring for La Pedrera, residents have power, authority, and agency over what happens to the town. They aspire to have a mutually respectful dialogue with local and departmental governments to provide necessary public services to improve well-being, but in ways that allow residents to maintain control over local affairs.

⁸ El Club [Social de La Pedrera] siempre está abierto para, para charlas, para propuestas, para nutrir, para compartir las cosas que están sucediendo, ¿no? O sea, si uno quiere, o sea, usted para contribuir.

⁹ Bueno, porque somos una comunidad pequeña y, obviamente, es importante estar unidos. Para lograr cosas para, para que sé yo, para, por ejemplo, tener un mejor diálogo con, con la, con el municipio, con las autoridades en general. Y bueno, porque me parece viste que una de las cosas buenas de vivir en un lugar pequeño es que uno tiene más incidencia sobre, sobre lo que pasa en el lugar. No es una ciudad grande de, somos un puntito más. En un lugar chico como éste lo que haces o no haces influye mucho en el, en el medio.

Political leadership is also important. A number of local leaders have emerged from different subgroups to coordinate popular interactions with the government. Interviewee I remarked: “The way the community functions are by depending on certain people rather than institutions.”¹⁰ Without any formal governing system, these individuals act as voluntary representatives of La Pedrera. They call for actions that benefit the majority of residents. This means improving access to resources by expanding the school system or improving amenities by repaving the roads and installing street lights, to give just a few examples. A political tradition of local democracy shapes social life in La Pedrera as representatives have worked hard to advance community well-being and bring needed public services.

Social Tensions

However, not all of *los pedreneses* share this viewpoint. Amongst some residents, the community is not something that is shared by all, but only between certain groups. They point to stark social divisions. For example, there are those who wish to increase traffic to their business versus those who want to maintain the tranquility of a quiet, beach town.

Interview I: But don't believe that there is so much community. Those of us from La Pedrera don't want to have anything to do with Punta Rubia [a rural community located alongside La Pedrera] ... I'm not going because I don't like everything. I don't know what it is, but the streets are all dirt and full of people. I don't know if they live from stealing, or if they live from what they grow, or if they live on drugs. I don't even care. What do I know. This is a town that has almost all taxes paid, and everyone has electricity and water. There it is then. It is not even 3 kilometers away. There is not so much community.¹¹

¹⁰ En lo que la comunidad funciona es lo que depende de ciertas personas, pero no son ni siquiera instituciones.

¹¹ Pero no te creas que hay tanta tanta comunidad. Los que somos de la Pedrera no queremos saber nada con punta rubia... No me voy, no me gusta porque todo. No sé si ha sido, pero las calles son, todas las pistas de tierra lleno de gente que no sabe si de qué vive porque no se sabe si viven de robarse viven de lo que plantan viven drogados. Ni me interesa. Qué sé yo, esto es un pueblo que tiene casi se pagan impuestos, que se todo el mundo tiene luz y agua, ahí está entonces. Destacados 3 kilómetros está tampoco. No hay tanta comunidad.

According to Interviewee I, La Pedrera is much “nicer” than much of the surrounding area as they typically have access to more resources and amenities and have a low rate of crime. As a result, they do not perceive there to be much of a community that exists beyond the border of the town center, and they consider those who live in more rural areas to be separate from them. This perspective highlights class differences in La Pedrera, which is a solidly middle-class, small-business community. Outsiders are perceived to be poor, dirty people who presumably don’t pay their taxes.

Other social divisions focus on the differences between part-time versus year-round residents. Year-round residents view part-time residents as wanting to welcome more tourists to increase business revenue. These are typically people who only stay in La Pedrera during the busiest part of the tourist season. Alternately, others wish to maintain the peace and tranquility of the beach town and the small-scale, family-oriented tourism that has flourished for years.

Interview B: Not all those who have businesses in La Pedrera are from La Pedrera. So, of course, they bring a new way of thinking or a way of being, or a way of seeing the world and understanding what generates a lot [of income], all of these differences. Because if you come from another place and you do not really care that La Pedrera grows, but that your restaurant grows, then we are wrong. Because it's good that you are achieving something. Well, that depends on you. What you put forth that you want. How you propagate it and how you cater to the public. That depends on you. Well, the other thing depends on everybody. If you don't have it, there is no way out.¹²

This perspective highlights the stark difference between the La Pedrera promoted by those who are solely interested in economic growth versus those who are invested in the community. While those who are focused on business want strong growth in the tourism industry and the number of visitors to the town, those invested in the community prefer a moderate, controlled growth.

¹² Porque, porque no todos los que tienen negocios en La Pedrera son pedrenses. Entonces, claro, arrastran un pensamiento o una forma de ser o una forma de ver la cuestión el mundo y entender lo que eso genera mucho, mucho estas muchas diferencias. Porque si vos venís de otro lugar y no te importa realmente que crezca La Pedrera, pero que crezca tu restaurante ahí estamos mal. Porque está bien que quieras captura estarán. Bueno, pero eso depende de ti. Que publicó quieras. Cómo lo, cómo lo propagan desde y como también atiendas al público. Eso depende de ti. Pues, pues, lo otro depende de todos. Pues, si no lo tiene, no hay, no hay salida sino.

Social tensions arise out of perceptions by some full-time residents that part-time residents are extractivists. One interviewee presents this conflict as follows:

Interview B: Well, La Pedrera is, in itself, united and disunited at the same time. It has its complexity. Because there are not many businesses. There are people who have businesses, but they are not from La Pedrera, they are not inhabitants of La Pedrera. That is, they just come, they run their business, and then they leave. So, that's it. There is the one who has his business and leaves, the one who has his business and stays and lives, and the inhabitant who does not have a business and works. So, it generates a kind of tension, you see. It is very complex.¹³

Much of the social tension in La Pedrera is rooted in the question of who benefits from newer, mass-oriented types of tourism that involve the arrival of thousands of young people into the region. Those who feel a sense of belonging to La Pedrera desire a slower, controlled flow of tourists while those who view the town as an opportunity for economic gain desire continued massification. The core debate is over what kind of tourism residents *want* to invite into the region: that promoting alternative, family-oriented activities, versus promoting massive amounts of visitors during a short period of time.

El turismo - Tourism

Tourism in La Pedrera has historically involved small groups of visitors, mostly Uruguayan families with young children, who come to enjoy the natural amenities like beaches and walking trails. This type of tourism is accepted and promoted by locals who live in the area for all or a majority of the year. More recent forms of tourism refer to *los boliches* and large-scale festivals. These are punctuated, sporadic, and uneven forms of mass tourism which include the arrival of

¹³ Bueno, La Pedrera es, en sí, unida y desunida a la vez. Es, tiene, como su, que tiene su complejidad. Sí, si, porque, porque como hay muchos, este, hay pocos, no hay muchos negocios, pero en, sí. Hay gente que tiene negocio, pero no es de La Pedrera, no es habitante de La Pedrera. Sí, o sea que solo viene, abrió su negocio, su local y luego se va. Entonces, el que tiene su negocio, y se va. Entonces, ta. El que tiene su negocio y se va, y el que tiene su negocio y queda y vive, el habitante que no tiene negocio y trabaja. Entonces, te genera como una rispidez, viste. Cómo es muy complejo.

thousands of young people to the zone. It is important to note that the use of the term “mass tourism” is a relational term that is opposed to alternative, community, or local tourism. The use of the term “mass tourism” highlights the difference between the tourism of *los boliches* and that of smaller groups and families who come later in the season. The tourism of smaller groups and families is usually described as “alternative” or “conscious” tourism.

Interviewees favored activities that fall under “alternative” tourism rather than “mass” tourism, reflecting the implicit tensions within the community regarding issues of extractivism, profiteering, and disruptions to daily living.

Interview D: They charge up to \$40 to sleep on a mattress in a shared room with a shared bathroom. So, those people continue to defend that type of tourism. That is a part of the population that I would say is a minority. The majority of the people here, the homeowners, those of us who live here,¹⁴ who have been coming here for many years, this, well, we are against that, right?

Profiteers who come during the busy season are mainly concerned with making as much money as possible while offering the fewest amenities. This not only threatens the social community by allowing massive influxes in tourism but also threatens established businesses that offer more amenities meant to invite in a more conscious tourist base at a higher price. Furthermore, the emphasis on “homeowners” highlights how full-time residents consider themselves genuine citizens of a La Pedrera who invite local, sustainable development. These “genuine” citizens consider tourism profiteers to be partial or non-citizens who are extracting from the well-being of the town.

Interview H: Within the community, there is a group of older people who don't want so many young people to come. Because they say that they are disruptive and that the loud music and the alcohol and drugs are serious problems in La Pedrera, especially in the

¹⁴ Se cobra hasta \$40 por dormir en un colchón en un cuarto compartido, en, con un baño compartido. Entonces, esa gente sigue defendiendo ese tipo de, de turismo. Esa es una parte de la población que te diría es minoritaria. La mayoría de la gente acá en lo que tienen casa, los dueños de casa, lo que vivimos acá, a lo que venimos acá desde, hace muchos años, este, bueno. Estamos en contra de eso, ¿no?

summer. And there is another group that does want young people. Because in reality, La Pedrera is no longer like before with family tourism. Now it is all young people. La Pedrera in summer is like a giant *boliche*. There is division [in the community] regarding what people want.¹⁵

Genuine citizens do not want the uncontrolled tourism massification associated with *los boliches*. This is based on the disruptions to daily living associated with loud music, drug and alcohol use, and massive numbers of young people. Profiteers and extractivists who are only interested in generating income do not mind these disruptions because La Pedrera is not their home. In sum, there are key social divisions rooted in recent changes in the tourism industry, specifically regarding uneven tourism flows and massification during holidays.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the social imaginary that defines La Pedrera according to residents. I argue that this social imaginary of La Pedrera is grounded in connections to the natural environment, ideals of self-rule, and separation from outsiders, which shape local notions of alternative tourism. This social imaginary has promoted socioenvironmental values based on sustainable development, environmental responsibility, grassroots democracy, and community well-being. This social imaginary contrasts with recent changes in the tourism industry that include uneven tourism flows and large-scale festivals. As a result, social tensions have emerged between full-time and part-time residents regarding concerns over belonging, profiteering, quality of life, and extractivism. This has culminated in a debate over “mass” tourism that threatens the

¹⁵ Dentro de la comunidad hay como, sí. Hay un grupo de gente, que más gente mayor que no quieres que vaya tanta juventud de repente. Porque dice que hacen disturbios y que la música fuerte y que así alcoholizan que esté la droga que es un problema grave en La Pedrera de sobretodo en verano. Y hay otro grupo que sí queremos a los jóvenes. Porque en realidad La Pedrera ya no es como antes que vivían en turismo de familia, ahora vive más del turismo desde jóvenes. En La Pedrera en verano es como un boliche gigante. Hay como una desconexión de una parte del pueblo no quieren una cosa, otro quieren otra.

community versus “alternative” tourism that promotes well-being. In the following chapters, I will delve more deeply into this issue, analyzing the specific concerns regarding *los boliches*.

Chapter 3: *Los boliches*

This chapter examines recent trends toward uneven tourism flows and massification linked to *los boliches* and *Carnaval*. These activities bring forth many problems associated with a massive influx of tourists, including theft, destruction of property, excess noise, and the use of drugs and alcohol. From a socioeconomic standpoint, this type of sporadic massification is linked to the growing tourism profile of La Pedrera and its intersection with youth tourism markets across Uruguay. I argue that *los pedrenses* have articulated an anti-*boliche* discourse and front that highlights socioenvironmental harm and the threats these events pose to the alternative tourism identity embraced by residents. These mass tourism events challenge the values that relate to the social imaginary of La Pedrera. This chapter will discuss *los boliches* and *Carnaval* as mass tourism events, how they are perceived by locals, and how this impacts the alternative tourism identity that predominates in La Pedrera. The data in this chapter is based on news articles and social media posts related to *los boliches* and *Carnaval* in La Pedrera.

Tourism Massification and the Spectacle of Youth Tourism

David Harvey theorizes that the tourism industry is connected to changes in global capitalism and the ability of some people to create monopoly capital. This means establishing monopolies over assets, territories, or cultural services. Tourist locations are types of “symbolic capital” that tourism consumers can experience and which can be cultivated and commodified by the tourism business owners for capitalistic gain (2001, 398, 404-405). Harvey’s analysis raises the question of who benefits from commodification, especially when outsiders are running tourism-centered businesses but are not necessarily invested in protecting local communities (407-409). Tourism massification in La Pedrera has involved the creation of “spectacle” that promotes

youth tourism. Spectacle refers to how La Pedrera is being marketed to young people as a location for discos, nightclubs, and beach parties. However, this process of creating a youth spectacle has emerged at the expense of local perspectives.

John Urry discusses tourism commodification and its social and environmental costs. There is a “congestion cost” of mass tourism as locals struggle to carry on with their day-to-day activities when there is a large influx of tourists (2002, 40). This relates to La Pedrera and the struggle for the community to provide sufficient resources and amenities to the sudden, uneven influx of mass tourism over the course of the last fifteen years. In addition, Urry discusses the intensity of the “tourist gaze” upon the local community that accompanies mass tourism (52-53). This is further reinforced by the cost to workers providing services to tourists, the blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure, and the increasing complexity of management systems (59-73).

¿Qué pasa con los boliches? What is Up with los boliches?

In Uruguay, *boliche* is a term used to refer to nightclubs, bars, discos, and dances frequented by young people, usually in their late teens to early twenties. In seaside communities such as La Pedrera, the term is used colloquially to refer to beach parties and festivals as well. These *boliches* are common in the department of Rocha, which is well known for its large expanses of nature, perfect for anyone wishing to escape from the stresses of day-to-day living and partake in the use of recreational drugs and alcohol. *Los boliches* that take place in and around La Pedrera attract approximately 10,000-13,000 visitors annually, the majority of which begin around New Year’s Eve (Noticias Rocha 2017; El País 2017) The majority of *los boliches* occur within the first two weeks of January.¹⁶

¹⁶En los primeros días de enero, este, vengan miles y miles de jóvenes que están ocupando todos los espacios desde la Rambla, la calle principal, los hostels en diferentes puntos del balneario.

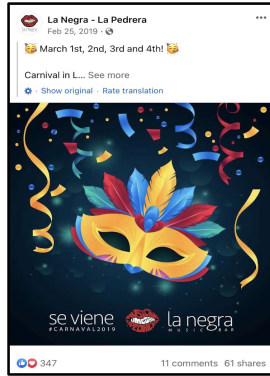


Fig. 3.1 Post from La Negra-La Pedrera, February 25th, 2019 advertising dates for Carnival.



Fig. 3.2 Post from La Negra-La Pedrera, December 27th, 2019 advertising *los boliches* for New Year's 2020.

One location for *los boliches* is La Negra, a bar/restaurant in La Pedrera. *Los boliches* include concerts and dances, typically advertised to young people, and are heavily associated with the consumption of drugs and alcohol. Additionally, the majority of these activities take place during early January and early March with *Carnaval*. These activities are advertised on social media (see Figures 3.1-3.4).

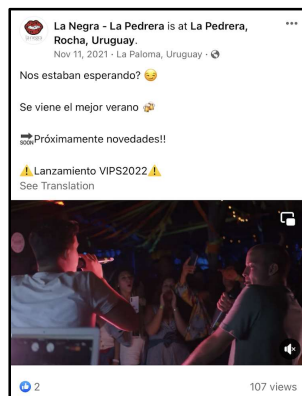


Fig. 3.3 Post from La Negra-La Pedrera, November 11th, 2021 advertising *los boliches* for January 2022.



Fig. 3.4 Post from La Negra-La Pedrera, January 30, 2020 advertising dates for Carnival.

These images are advertisements for *Carnaval* in 2019 and 2020 and *los boliches* in 2020 and 2022. They demonstrate how festivities are shared with the larger public outside of La Pedrera and the surrounding areas. Figures 3.3 and 3.4, displaying young people partying at La Negra leading up to the festivities, demonstrate how *los boliches* are advertised to young people as an

opportunity to “cut-loose” and have fun, effectively commodifying the “youth spectacle” and selling La Pedrera as a center for youth party culture.

La Negra presents a more traditional example of *los boliches*, which take place in bars and nightclubs and are limited in size. However, the venue is located on the main street in La Pedrera, La Avenida Principal, so the intensity of *los boliches* has an effect on other businesses in this area (“La Negra - La Pedrera”). Where the culture that is being promoted is young people drinking and “letting loose,” *los pedrenses* frequently must deal with excessive noise levels and out-of-control, drunken young people meandering the streets. Such activities associated with this commodified youth spectacle are disturbing to the daily lives and well-being of those who live in the community full-time.

Some of *los boliches* are held in outdoor concert venues. One popular example is Alma, an outdoor festival venue located along Ruta 10, just a few kilometers outside of the center of La Pedrera. Unlike La Negra, Alma is capable of hosting many more people at a time. As a result, the crowds attending the festivities reach upwards of 5,000 attendees, placing a great deal of stress on nearby communities, mainly La Pedrera and La Paloma (Montevideo Portal 2022). Figure 3.5, from the Alma La Pedrera Instagram page, depicts *los boliches* during the summer of 2022, promising attendees that they would see them again soon. The image demonstrates how these activities are centered towards young people, in their late teens and early twenties, and how the events are essentially massive parties where they can relax and have fun. This imagery is reinforced by the depiction of people dancing, spraying foam, and throwing confetti. Additionally, the center of the picture focuses on a young woman posing on the shoulders of another attendee, throwing her arms back, reflecting the ideal, carefree spirit of the youth culture associated with *los boliches*.

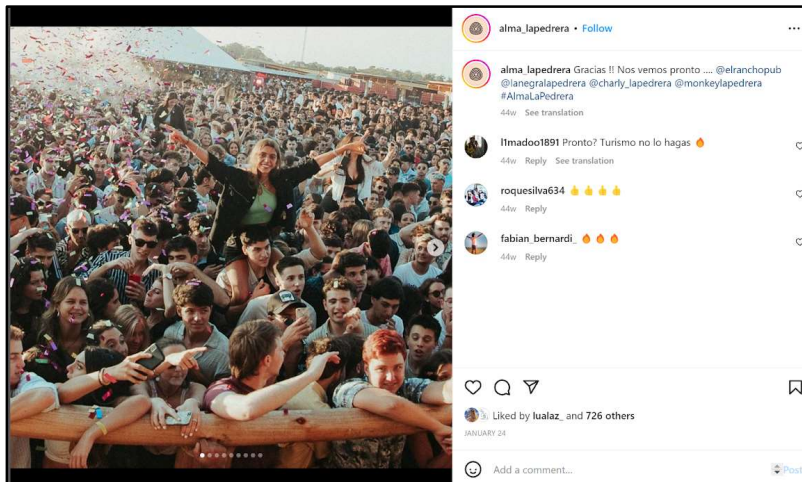


Fig. 3.5 Post from the Alma La Pedrera Instagram page from *los boliches* (@Alma_LaPedrera, January 24, 2022).

Many of *los boliches* that occur in and around La Pedrera are advertised via word-of-mouth and are, therefore, more difficult to track via quantitative methods. Photographic examples of *los boliches* are available under the location tag for La Pedrera on Instagram (Figures 3.6, 3.7, and 3.8). Additionally, many photos are available online of *los boliches* mentioned above via news websites discussing the effects of the festivities on the surrounding communities and physical environment (Figure 3.9).



Fig. 3.6 Post from an attendee to *los boliches* in January 2023

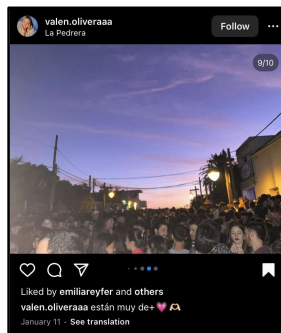


Fig. 3.7 Post from an attendee to *los boliches* in January 2023



Fig. 3.8 Post from an attendee to *los boliches* in January 2023



Fig. 3.9 Photo from *El Observador* in an article discussing the impacts of *los boliches* on La Pedrera (El Observador, 2022).

The photos above reflect not only the size of the events, with streets so full of people that it appears difficult to move between them, but also the emphasis on the consumption of drugs and alcohol often associated with youth party culture. Figure 3.6 in particular depicts a young man holding a sign advertising brownie that “could kill King Kong” (presumably containing marijuana). These examples further reinforce the youth spectacle associated with *los boliches* in La Pedrera.

Carnaval y la locura - Carnival and the Madness

Like *los boliches*, *Carnaval* in La Pedrera has brought forth a great deal of controversy, especially regarding its ever-increasing size. The festivities in La Pedrera are some of the largest outside of the nation’s capital, and in recent years they have attracted increasing attention from younger generations as a location for large-scale parties.

In February 2017, the controversy regarding *Carnaval* in La Pedrera came to a head. The festivities were set to begin on the 27th of February and the community, based on previous years’ experience, was expecting approximately 10,000 visitors. To prepare, Rocha authorities brought in 72 chemical toilets, fences to protect houses and private property, and first-aid tents to provide

medical attention. These measures were considered relevant due to the limited establishment of a formal sanitation system in La Pedrera, previous instances of destruction of property and theft, and the widespread use of drugs and alcohol. The Chief of Police in Rocha also announced at this time that they would be bringing in 150 police officers to provide security and act as traffic controllers. Additionally, the Ministerio del Interior announced that they would be providing a drone team to monitor the events. The festivities were expected to close at about 7 a.m. on February 28th, and formal cleaning operations were set to commence at 10 a.m. the same day. The information put forth by authorities did not specify the size and duration of the cleaning operation nor the size of the staff working the event at any given time but did specify that they expected to find the beaches and event area “totalmente limpias” (“completely clean”) following formal cleanup operation (Noticias Rocha 2017).

Following the festivities in 2017, local and departmental authorities came forth to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures they had planned to implement before they started. They described *Carnaval* operations in La Pedrera to have occurred with few issues, despite an unspecified number of thefts and arrests committed against both attendees of the event and nonparticipant residents of the community. Mayor José Luis Olivera of the neighboring city of La Paloma explained that "In the face of a massive presence of tourists, there is always someone who takes advantage of carelessness."¹⁷ Additionally, the number of attendees reached about 13,000, which equated to about 10% fewer visitors than previous years' events, but 3,000 more than anticipated for 2017. Starting at 9 p.m. on February 27th, visitors flooded the streets of La Pedrera “con disfraces y spray de espuma” (“with costumes and foam spray”), and continued their celebration until 6 a.m. the following morning when police finally cleared the area. During the

¹⁷ “Ante una presencia masiva de turistas, siempre hay alguna persona que se aprovecha de los descuidos”

event, there occurred forty reported cases of health and police entities having to intervene regarding the use of drugs and alcohol. Thirty-six of the forty reported cases were amended via “trabajos de hidratación” (“hydration efforts”), and only four of the reported forty cases required people to be evacuated from the event premises. The remainder of the medical attention was related to the irritation of the eyes due to contact with spray foam and various bodily injuries due to fights. Authorities stressed in this release that the magnitude of the fights, however, was much less than during previous years. Reduced altercations were at least partly attributed to the heavy restriction of motorized vehicles and the sale of alcohol by authorities. Authorities described the event overall to be “fluida” (“smooth”) compared to previous years’ festivities (El Pais 2017).

Locals did not reflect on these events as kindly. Many went as far as to describe *los boliches* as “una invasión” (“an invasion”) and refused to call them tourism, but something entirely different and unwelcome. Furthermore, they viewed the crime and violence associated with *los boliches* as a risk to the well-being of accepted tourism practices. Interviewee A described how during *los boliches*, due to the lack of control and excess use of drugs and alcohol, “They break your door, they break your window, they rob you because they do not know what they are doing... They come and they rob [other’s] documents, money, bags, and everything that they have.”¹⁸ One example of such chaos occurred during *Carnaval* in 2017 when Rocha authorities put in place fences and extra security measures around private and commercial properties belonging to those not involved in the festivities (Noticias Rocha 2017). Broken windows and stolen property from stores and residences were still reported following *Carnaval* (El Pais 2017). The limited effectiveness of preventative measures against the destruction of property has caused many community members to feel that *los boliches* should not have a place in La Pedrera.

¹⁸ Te rompieron la puerta, te rompió la ventana, te robaban porque no sabía ni lo que estaban haciendo... vulelva y le robaron los documentos, el dinero, la mochila y todo lo que tenía.

Additionally, while authorities have claimed to clean following *Carnaval* and *los boliches*, it is clear, via pictures shared on social pages, such as La Pedrera Comunidad Activa, that these efforts are limited in their effectiveness. Figures 3.10, 3.11, and 3.12 are posts from the La Pedrera Comunidad Activa Instagram depicting the waste left behind after *los boliches* and *Carnaval* in 2019 and 2022 after the supposed clean-up operations.

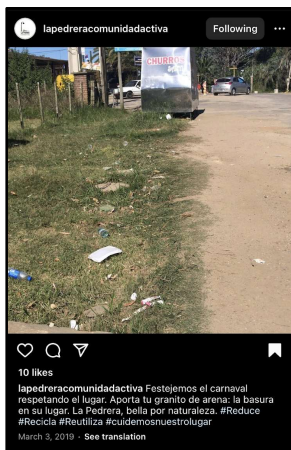


Fig. 3.10 Post from La Pedrera Comunidad Activa in March, 2019

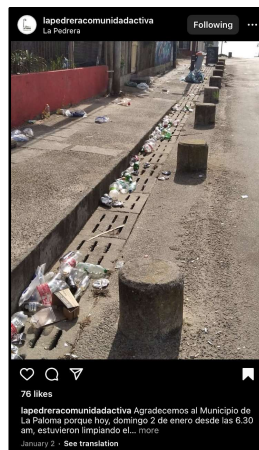


Fig. 3.11 Post from La Pedrera Comunidad Activa in January, 2022

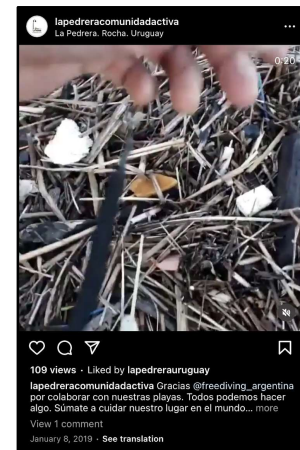


Fig. 3.12 Post from La Pedrera Comunidad Activa in January, 2019

As discussed in Chapter 2, *los pedrenses* value the beauty and integrity of the coastal environment and the town. The degradation of such resources is detrimental to community well-being. One interviewee described how tourism in La Pedrera is connected to the environment: “[Tourism] exists because, it is because, we live in a very wild, very natural place. With a, with a vast, with a vast space, as they say, of nature, right? Rocha is, for its excellence, nature, isn't it? We have lagoons, we have land, we have beaches, we have countryside, and a great variety of vegetation, right? So, we also have a lot of vegetation, we have fauna, and we have birds.”¹⁹

¹⁹ [El turismo] existe porque, es porque, cómo vivimos en un lugar muy agreste, muy natural. Con una, con una vasta amplia, con un vasto amplio, como que se dicen, de naturaleza, ¿no? Rocha hace, por su excelencia, naturaleza, ¿no? Tenemos lagunas, tenemos tierra, tenemos playa, tenemos campo y mucha variedad de vegetación, ¿no? Entonces, tenemos también mucha la vegetación, tenemos lo que es la fauna, tenemos el pájaro.

Interviewees perceive La Pedrera and the surrounding area as natural and full of life. Furthermore, this description reflects how identity for locals is connected to the natural environment. Therefore, anything that threatens the natural environment also threatens the community.

In September 2017, despite the positive affirmations put forth by regional authorities, El Observador shared a video depicting several long-term residents of La Pedrera speaking out against the intensity of *Carnaval* in the area. When asked about the benefits of *Carnaval*, many claimed that “no hay ninguno” (“there are not any”), and that they were often forced to shut down their businesses due to the high rate of theft (00:01:27). Residents explained that in the past, *Carnaval* has been welcomed by *los pedrenses*, but they now view the celebration with distaste (00:02:25). They describe the festivities of recent years as “sucio, feo” (“dirty, ugly”) and full of violence, going on to describe that it “no es Carnaval” (“is not *Carnaval*,” 00:03:33-00:04:20). Many go on to explain that it is difficult, and even dangerous, to leave their homes during this time and that they avoid doing so all together (00:04:58). The video ends with a series of photos (Figures 3.13 and 3.14) depicting drunk adults unconscious in the streets, physical altercations, and trash on the streets alongside the text, La Pedrera belongs to no one. La Pedrera does not want this *Carnaval* anymore” (El Observador 2017).²⁰



Fig. 3.13 Screenshot from 00:05:35



Fig. 3.14 Screenshot from 00:05:52

²⁰ “La Pedrera no es la tierra de nadie. La Pedrera no quiere más este Carnaval”

I present this example of *Carnaval* in 2017 for three reasons. First, it highlights much of the conflict that exists between those promoting the events, authorities, and residents of La Pedrera. Secondly, it demonstrates how the narrative presented by each of these entities is quite different and the difficulty for locals to put forth their voices and be taken seriously. Finally, the conflict reflects how *los pedrenses* feel threatened by tourism massification.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates how uneven tourism flow and massification associated with *los boliches* and *Carnaval* has negatively impacted La Pedrera and encouraged residents to develop a local anti-*boliche* discourse and front rooted in issues of noise pollution, destruction of property, overcrowding, and the use of drugs and alcohol. Furthermore, imagery presented by the proprietors of *los boliches* and *Carnaval* depict how such activities are advertised as youth spectacles. This portrayal directly contrasts with the social imaginary promoted by locals that emphasizes alternative tourism activities related to the natural environment. As a result, the anti-*boliche* discourse and front has evolved to encompass a serious debate regarding what kind of tourism *los pedrenses* wish to invite into their community: that of traditional and alternative, nature-based tourism, or that of youth culture associated with *los boliches* and *Carnaval*.

Chapter 4: The Future

This chapter investigates sociopolitical mobilization by community members in relation to the threats associated with youth spectacle and mass tourism. I discuss the political economy of social power within La Pedrera that determines who has influence over the tourism industry. The parties with social power are youth tourists, regional authorities, and local residents. I argue that the extension of social power to youth tourists conflicts directly with the social imaginary of alternative tourism promoted by local residents. Furthermore, based on interviews and data collected from social media posts and newspaper articles, it is clear that the controversy regarding *los boliches* centers around *los pedrenses* and the proprietors of the festivities rather than regional authorities. This struggle is primarily based in the contest for social power necessary to direct the type of tourism that is invited into La Pedrera.

Residents and the Anti-*boliche* Movement

There is an ongoing legal struggle over the right to host *boliches*. In late spring of 2021, the Comisión Patrimonio y Medioambiente de La Pedrera published a petition calling for an end to *los boliches*. The petition was based on an ongoing series of complaints regarding excess noise, difficulty moving through the area amongst massive crowds, and worries about economic insecurity (El Observador, January 2022). This was supported by a video published by the Comisión Patrimonio y Medioambiente on YouTube in November 2021 titled “No habrá boliches dentro de La Pedrera” (“There will be no *boliches* in La Pedrera”). In this video, a local representative explains how *los pedrenses* are excited to announce that *los boliches* will no longer be permitted within La Pedrera. The community will be able to regain control over tourism

development. The video juxtaposed imagery of La Pedrera as a peaceful, ocean-side community to that of *los boliches*, overrun with youth tourism (Figures 4.1 and 4.2).



Fig. 4.1 La Pedrera as it exists from day-to-day



Fig. 4.2 La Pedrera during *los boliches*

This petition has since been updated to reflect more recent decisions put forth by the Intendencia of Rocha (the primary governing office) in August 2022 to ban *los boliches* in this area, as well as a declaration in October of the same year that *los dueños* (hosts) of *los boliches* are working through the courts to establish their legal rights to continue hosting. The Comisión explained that the decisions put forth in August were met with “alegría” (happiness) by La Pedrera residents. However, they also clarify that they know their fight is not over until the proprietors of *los boliches* no longer have the permits necessary to host the festivities. They are clear in their intentions, claiming “We do not want *los boliches* in La Pedrera”²¹ in capital letters (“Basta de boliches en La Pedrera” 2021).

Just before New Year’s 2023, El Observador, an Uruguayan newspaper, released an article in support of the Comisión. The article explained that this was due to pushback by *los pedrenses* involved with the anti-*boliche* movement. However, it is important to note that this declaration

²¹ NO QUEREMOS BOLICHES BAILABLES EN LA PEDRERA

only applies to the Alma *boliche* and not all of the festivities in the area (El Observador, December 2022). Residents have been clear that they do not blame the authorities for this decision.

Interview D: In fact, this is not really the intention of the Intendencia.²² They had the intention to move *los boliches*, to take them farther away. The mayor, who is now in office, wanted that. He listened to the complaints of the residents and decided that he was going to take action so that *los boliches* would be in a place where they would be less of a disturbance.²³

This quote emphasizes that the conflict is not between *los pedrenses* and the local government, but between *los pedrenses* and those promoting *los boliches*. It is important to note that the government does not necessarily support *los boliches* but upholds the permits because they are legal and that is their duty as the governing body in the region.

Departmental Government vs. *boliche* Hosts

The Alma *boliche* opened for the first time in the summer of 2022 along Ruta 10, hosting approximately 5,000 visitors. The venue is located only a few kilometers outside of La Pedrera, so many tourists stay in and frequent the town during this time (Montevideo Portal 2022). As a result, La Pedrera is directly affected by the activities associated with *los boliches*, such as congestion of people, the use of drugs and alcohol, and loud music. In response, on June 15, 2022 the Intendencia of Rocha declared that “2022 is a ‘year of transition’ and in 2023 [they] will seek a ‘permanent solution’” regarding the controversy, stating that *los boliches* will now only be allowed along Ruta 15, farther from the town center (El Observador, July 2022).²⁴ This declaration was put forth by the mayor of Rocha, Alejo Umpiérrez, and set forth to revoke Resolution No. 2412/2021 (dated

²² Name for the office of the local government

²³ En realidad esto no es de la intendencia. Tuvo la, la intención de cambiar a los boliches del lugar, de llevarlos más lejos. El intendente que está ahora en el poder, él quería eso. Él escuchó los reclamos de los vecinos y decidió que iba a tomar medidas para que los boliches estuvieran en un lugar donde molestaran menos a todos los balnearios.

²⁴ 2022 es un ‘año de transición’ y en 2023 se buscará ‘una solución definitiva’

November 19, 2021) that previously allowed *los boliches* to be hosted along Ruta 10. The resolution also notes that “future projects for entertainment and dance venues for beach towns between La Paloma and Santa Isabel should be located along Ruta 15 where it intersects with Ruta 10 and 9” (Montevideo Portal 2022).²⁵ Furthermore, the new resolution supports the intentional planning of event venues, as well as the hosting of parties and dances, that considers the well-being of local communities (El Observador, July 2022). This declaration was received by *los dueños de los boliches* (“the proprietors of *los boliches*”) as an “atropello” (“outrage”) and as inhibiting “el derecho de trabajo” (“the right to work”). They also cite the resolution as a loss in terms of cultural exchange between young people who frequent *los boliches*, and they claim that they will be combating this resolution in court in the coming months (El Observador, July 2022).

In October 2022, the Intendencia de Rocha notified the Comisión Patrimonio y Medioambiente de La Pedrera, as well as other organizations in the area, that the Intendencia does not have the legal grounds to prevent Alma from hosting *los boliches*. This means that previous resolutions claiming to end *los boliches* were invalid. Furthermore, they reported that Alma was working within the courts to solidify and ensure their right to host *los boliches* along Ruta 10. Alma reinforced these sentiments online by sharing the tag “#AlmaSeQueda” (Figure 4.3) on their Instagram, as well as other social media platforms, to promote the festivities that were hosted in January of 2023 (“Boliche Alma lanzó un comunicado Bajo el hashtag #AlmaSeQueda”, July 9, 2022). They claimed that expelling *los boliches* to the cross-section of Ruta 15 with Ruta 9 and Ruta 10, 8 kilometers away from the nearest facilities for lodging, puts visitors at risk, especially since they would need to drive or walk this distance late at night after taking part in the heavy use of drugs and alcohol. Furthermore, they state that closing Alma would be directly in contrast with

²⁵ los proyectos para futuros locales bailables y de espectáculos para los balnearios comprendidos entre La Paloma y Santa Isabel deberán ubicarse sobre el eje de la ruta 15 en su trayecto comprendido entre rutas 10 y 9

public opinion, as upwards of twenty thousand people attend their events annually (@alma_lapedrera, July 8, 2022). This statement was further reinforced in November of 2022 (“Boliche de la Pedrera abrirá en el mismo Lugar Pese a la Resolución de la Intendencia”).

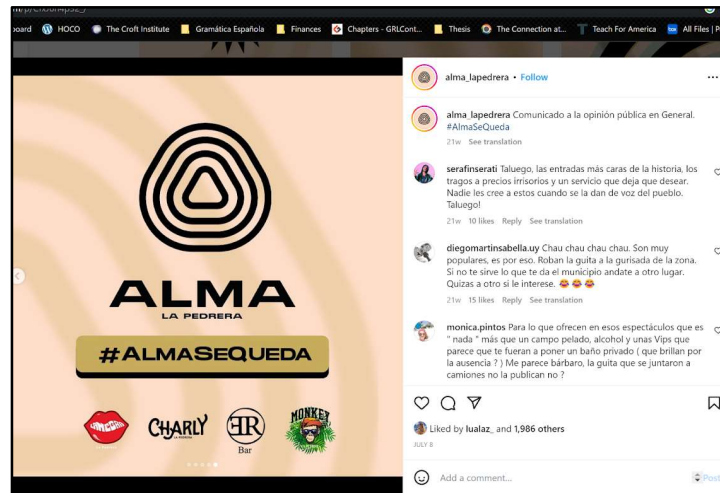


Fig. 4.3 Screenshot from the Alma la Pedrera Instagram (@alma_lapedrera) presenting Alma's defense from relocating *los boliches* away from Ruta 10.

El futuro que queremos - The Future We Want

Difficulties regarding *los boliches* have led some people to adopt a pessimistic outlook regarding the community's future. Much of this is rooted in the belief that change is slow, if not impossible, in a small country like Uruguay. One interviewee explained how, despite recent massification in the tourism industry, little regarding access to resources has changed since they first visited the region in the 1990s.

Interview I: Things change very little in Uruguay, Wendy. It takes a lot of time to make a change. Look, from '95, when I came for the first time, the summer of '96, until 2009 when I really came back to stay, 15 years had practically passed. It hadn't changed. What changed? That they paved the main street, which was a dirt road. They put one more business, one more restaurant, and some houses.²⁶

²⁶ Las cosas cambian poco en Uruguay, Wendy. It takes a lot of time to make a change. Mira, del '95 que viene por primera vez con el verano del '96, hasta el 2009, que volví realmente a quedarme un tiempo largo, sí habían pasado 15 años prácticamente. No había cambiado. ¿Qué cambio? Que asaltaron la calle principal, que era de tierra. Que pusieron algún negocio más, un restaurante más. Alguna casa.

This selection emphasizes, again, the small size of La Pedrera and how that limits the force of their voice in controlling and implementing change regarding the tourism industry. They are limited in what they can do and prevent.

Many people believe that conflict within the community rooted in *los boliches* is further inhibiting progress because development is limited by the lack of a united front. One interviewee explains how this topic often stalls community meetings.

Interview E: How do you manage to have a meeting every once in a while at the end and you kind of get lost, well. What is the objective of this meeting? ²⁷

Overall, the issue of *los boliches* in inhibiting La Pedrera from offering a united front, and in a small community, this greatly inhibits any progress in their ability to control and promote the style of tourism that they *want* in the area, as well as improving the types of resources that are available. For some interviewees, this promotes a pessimistic outlook regarding the future of La Pedrera and the ability of the community to move past the issue of *los boliches*.

In general, the pessimistic view of the future of La Pedrera is grounded in the feeling of being unsure, especially regarding the ongoing nature of the debate over *los boliches* and the lack of security associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Interview D: It is difficult with this new news [that they are going to ban *los boliches*], it would seem that things are going to continue as they have been in the last 10 years. We have been fighting for 10 years to reverse this situation. And, well, still without success.²⁸

As presented above, the debate surrounding *los boliches* is all-encompassing for *los pedrenses*. It feels like it has been going on forever, and it seems that it will continue as such. More pessimistic outlooks regarding the future of La Pedrera view the trajectory of its growth and the continuation of *los boliches* as continuing to be outside of the control of the local community and detrimental

²⁷ Como se logra tener una reunión cada tanto al final y como que se pierde uno, bueno. ¿Cuál es el objetivo de esta reunión?

²⁸ Es difícil con esta nueva noticia parecería que las cosas van a seguir siendo como, como fueron en estos últimos 10 años. Nosotros hace 10 años que estamos luchando para qué, para revertir esta situación. Y, bueno, y sin éxito todavía.

to the well-being of the natural landscape. Many of these same people believe that La Pedrera, as a community, is incapable of changing with the times and will be overrun by *los boliches* as a consequence of its stagnancy. However, there are equally as many who view these pessimistic outlooks as fear-mongering and posit that La Pedrera is already on track to reclaim control of the tourism industry to promote the well-being of the community.

Based on testimony from several interviewees who have stayed in La Pedrera since infancy, the town has already witnessed incredible levels of development and is well on its way to being one of the most respectable tourist destinations in the region, welcoming visitors not only from the neighboring countries of Brazil and Argentina but from across the world. Access to goods and services has increased as well with the development of better roads and more efficient transportation systems. Similarly, the school system has grown immensely to support a growing population of parents with young children who are moving to the area to escape the chaos of city life and feel more connected to the peace and tranquility of the natural world. Moreso, by establishing a growing online presence, local businesses and organizations are better able to advertise the needs of the community and what La Pedrera has to offer to an increasing number of tourists.

Finally, they view the community as increasingly united against the out-of-control nature of *los boliches* and *Carnaval* and hope to see a future in which the community is able to establish greater control over these new forms of tourism. Such viewpoints are reflected below.

Interview D: I aspire, that is, as an older person, I aspire to be like the young people who are currently here... I imagine that these young people are going to occupy these positions and it is necessary that they are the ones who continue the work of protecting this place. I do not know if it is only an aspiration.²⁹

²⁹Yo aspiro, o sea, yo soy una persona mayor y yo aspiro a que sean los jóvenes, que actualmente están acá... Yo me imagino, viste, que estos jóvenes van a, van a ir ocupando estas posiciones que, que, bueno, que es necesario que, que sean ellos, las que, los que sigan el trabajo de proteger este lugar. No sé si es una aspiración solamente.

Interview E: Ideally, it would be good if there was [a way] ... that people could connect and have the power to develop better services. To work together, they can do more as a unit. How to think of things, how to complement one another in order to make the region more attractive for people to come to because there is a lot [to offer]. Because here in Rocha, there is a lot.³⁰

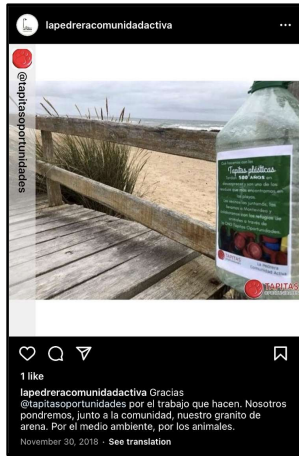


Fig. 4.4 Screenshot from the La Pedrera Comunidad Activa Instagram (@lapedreraunidadactiva) reflecting community efforts to prevent littering associated with tourism.



Fig. 4.5 Screenshot from the La Pedrera Comunidad Activa Instagram (@lapedreraunidadactiva) reflecting community efforts to prevent littering associated with tourism.

The first selection, from Interview D, reflects how there already exists a flood of young voices in La Pedrera who are continuing the longstanding effort to protect and promote the community with a heavy emphasis on the wellbeing of the natural environment. The second, from Interview E, reflects the desire amongst *los pedrenses* that the strength of the community will continue to grow, with emphasis on working together for the good of the whole. In a way, these efforts are already in the process of realization, as community members hold events emphasizing the upkeep of La Pedrera (Figures 4.4 and 4.5). Despite the negativity associated with the debate on *los boliches*, *los pedrenses* are hopeful for a future in which they are able to regain control of the tourist industry, and therefore the community, that they belong to.

³⁰ Como que idealmente estaría buena que haya una, una... que la gente se conecte y se tenga potencia para poder generar mejores servicios. Que haya más como integración, de que hacer, pueden hacer más como paquetes de cosas, como pensar cosas, como complementarse para poder, que el destino sea más atractivo para que la gente venga porque hay mucho. Porque acá en Rocha, Rocha es un departamento que tiene mucha.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the discourse presented above involving *los boliches* and similar instances of tourism massification demonstrate that there exists incongruity regarding how these activities are received. The proprietors who have invested in the festivities are dependent on the income generated by *los boliches* to pay back shareholders, tourists who come to attend *los boliches* are invested in the continuation of the festivities as a means of cultural exchange and escaping the stressors of day-to-day life, residents of La Pedrera and the surrounding area want to return to an alternative tourism industry, and the authorities in the region are dually trying to protect residents and uphold the legal rights of the proprietors of *los boliches*. Therefore, distribution of social power amongst the proprietors, locals, and authorities has resulted in an ongoing debate regarding the continuation of *los boliches* and how locals envision the future of La Pedrera. The shifting balance of control over this political economy of social power creates tension and unease in a community that identifies itself with peace and tranquility, reinforcing sentiments amongst locals against tourism massification.

Conclusion

The primary objective of this investigation has centered around how the La Pedrera alternative tourism community perceives and responds to the socioenvironmental impacts of uneven tourism flows associated with tourism massification. I argue that tourism massification has caused residents to articulate a local anti-*boliche* and anti-mass tourism discourse as well as an emerging sociopolitical front of opposition. This argument is based on interviews with locals and the analysis of social media posts and news articles relating to the massification of youth tourism in and around La Pedrera.

Chapter 2 highlights the social imaginary of La Pedrera residents based on generational connections to the natural landscape, traditions associated with self-rule, and a distinct identity rooted in alternative tourism. This imaginary causes residents to feel responsible for the well-being of the town and the surrounding environment so that they act out against any force that threatens its well-being. With the onset of uneven tourism massification in the form of *los boliches* and *Carnaval*, this identity has been threatened with damage to the daily well-being of the La Pedrera community, degradation of the environment, and a loss of social power necessary to determine the type of tourism that is welcomed in the region. Interviewees explain that changes in the tourism industry have resulted in tension between residents, regional authorities, and mass tourism operators.

Chapter 3 investigates the sporadic flow of tourism associated with *los boliches* and *Carnaval*, as well as the negative socioenvironmental impacts of such large influxes in the tourist population in a town without the infrastructural resources to support them. In La Pedrera, this has resulted in the articulation of a local anti-*boliche* discourse and front promoted by year-round residents. Additionally, excess noise, use of drugs and alcohol, congestion of roads and walkways,

theft, and destruction of property directly contrast with the social imaginary of La Pedrera embraced by locals, further reinforcing their opposition.

Chapter 4 examines the social power struggle that exists between *los pedrenses*, regional authorities, and youth tourists. Due to massification of *los boliches* and *Carnaval*, youth tourists and mass tourism operators have gained increase social power to determine what kind of tourism is invited into La Pedrera. Similar to the negative socioenvironmental impacts discussed in the previous chapter, this change in the division of power directly conflicts with the local social imaginary. Additionally, the ongoing debate regarding the right of the proprietors of *los boliches* to host them in La Pedrera that has drawn the attention of local and regional authorities demonstrates the limited role of such entities in rural beach communities in Uruguay. Such changes have further reinforced the emerging sociopolitical front amongst *los pedrenses* in opposition to mass tourism.

The study also suggests that changes in the tourism industry should be community-based. Unchecked tourism massification harms local communities because it is not led with the intention necessary to promote growth while maintaining the aspects of the tourist location that draw visitors in the first place. This is especially relevant in La Pedrera as the community identity reflects a strong correlation between residents and the natural landscape, and tourism massification specifically threatens the socioecological wellbeing of the region. These same sentiments are reflected by Carruyo (2008) and Mendoza (2018) in the Dominican Republic and the Patagonia, respectively.

This work not only adds to the growing repertoire of research on tourism theory and ethical tourism, but also highlights the necessity for intentional tourism development in areas where the industry is still growing. This concept is especially relevant for Rocha and Uruguay as the country

and the region are growing to attract international attention for the intrinsic beauty of the natural environment. The commodification of the youth spectacle in the form of *los boliches* and *Carnaval* threatens the community and places increased pressure on already limited resources, and, as stated above, local and regional authorities are able to do little to protect the interest of locals. As a result, development of the tourism industry in La Pedrera must be intentional, meaning that it considers the well-being of the local community and natural environment in the same way that it considers the economic development of the industry.

Due to the limited size of this study, future research in this area should strive to include not only local voices but also those of the proprietors of *los boliches* and the youth tourists who are attracted by this form of mass tourism. Additionally, this research is meant to prompt further investigation of the relatively new industry of tourism in Uruguay, especially in small communities that have historically lacked a voice in the development of major industries.

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