



**University  
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

**Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Master of Arts**

of

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BSc (University of British Columbia, 2007)

**“Waste System Responses to Peak Tourist Visitation Periods: Case Study of  
Barra de Valizas, Uruguay”**

Department of Geography

Friday, April 22, 2016

8:30AM

David Turpin Building

Room B215

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Jutta Gutberlet, Department of Geography, University of Victoria (Supervisor)

Dr. Michele-Lee Moore, Department of Geography, UVic (Member)

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## **Abstract**

Rural communities that depend on tourism for their economic well being, such as Barra de Valizas, Uruguay, rely on their social and ecological integrity to attract tourists to their communities. Peak tourist seasons and associated augmented consumption patterns can saturate the solid waste systems of these tourist destinations. Peak periods of waste production in these communities can lead to the degradation of ecological and social integrity, thereby reducing tourist visitation rates and thus affecting the local economy. The evident degradation and shake in the local economy can raise awareness about the implications of increased waste production and can thus be a driver to develop waste reduction and diversion strategies. As part of developing this thesis, I implemented a case study of the waste management system in Barra de Valizas, Uruguay. The condition of interest in this study is communities that are economically dependent on tourism, have a small permanent resident population, experience peak periods of tourist visitation, and have difficulty managing their fluctuating waste system. This case study, founded in Participatory Action Research, identified waste system components and processes and determined some feasible improvements by way of iterative processes of research and action. Seven semi-structured interviews, 54 household structured interviews, four focus groups and community mapping were applied with diverse stakeholders to collaboratively develop and implement waste system improvement strategies. The implementation of these strategies elucidated upon waste system components, processes, linkages and general state. This research demonstrated that permanent residents of Barra de Valizas consume more packaged goods during the tourist season and as such produce, on average, four times more waste during the peak tourist season as compared to the off season. Peak periods of waste production, associated with the peak tourist visitation period, were found to saturate the local waste management system and weaken local social and ecological integrity. Research participants highlighted awareness building, improved waste containment, and waste diversion as key strategies for reducing this saturation.