

Award Rationale

Awamaki

in Peru



Prof. Dr. Ludwig Ellenberg

on behalf of

Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e.V.

December 2018

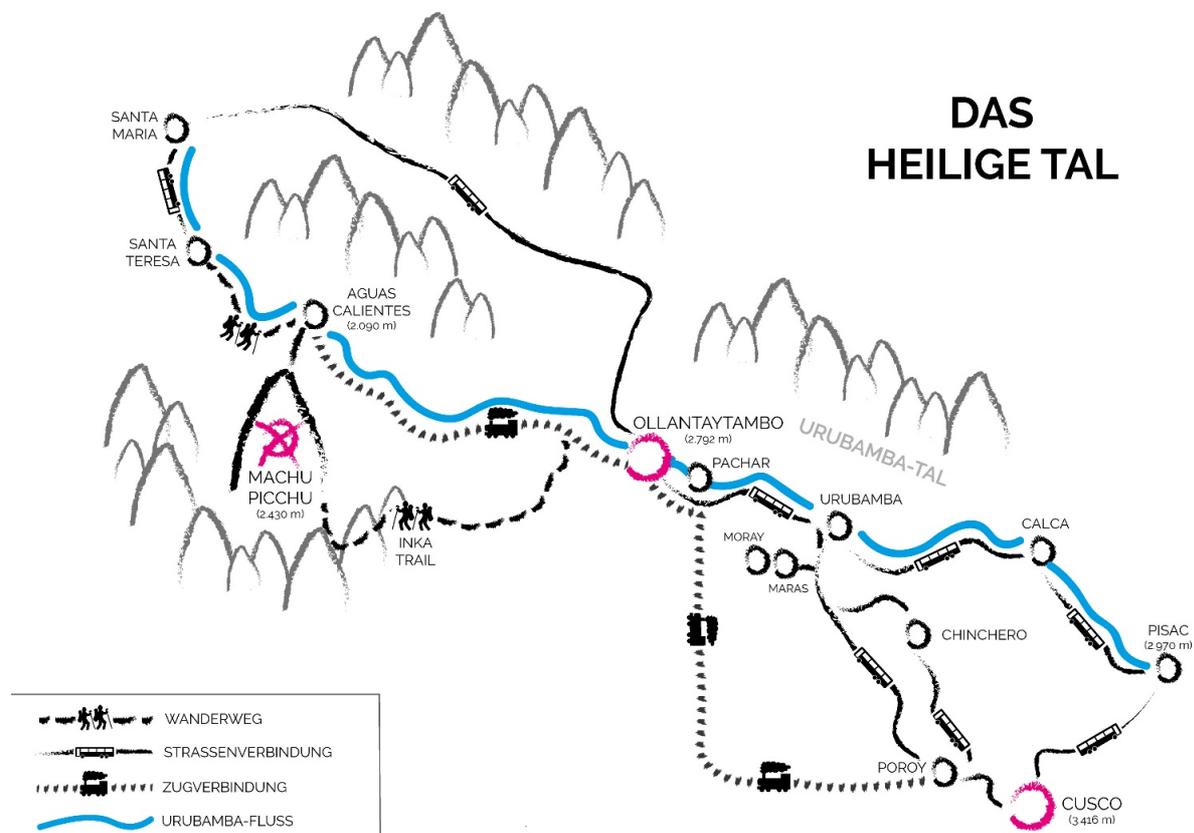
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Maps



The Sacred Valley of Peru (Valle Sagrado del Perú) and the 30 km route from Ollantaytambo to Patacancha



The Sacred Valley of Peru between Cusco and Machu Picchu



Valle Sagrado

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1 MACHUPICCHU | 5 MARAS |
| 2 OLLANTAYTAMBO | 6 CHINCHEROS |
| 3 URUBAMBA | 7 CUSCO |
| 4 MORAY | 8 CALCA |
| | 9 PISAC |



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Important tourist destinations in the Sacred Valley of Peru

1 Introduction

The application for the TO DO Award 2019 was submitted by the NGO Awamaki from Ollantaytambo in Peru and the project was nominated by the jury for the TO DO Award. The expert Prof. Dr. Ludwig Ellenberg visited Peru from 7th to 14th December 2018 on behalf of the Institute for Tourism and Development (Studienkreis für Tourismus und Entwicklung e. V.) in order to check on location the information provided in the documents submitted by Awamaki.

On the basis of his insights and findings, the author recommends awarding the project **Awamaki** with the TO DO Award 2019.

The project evaluation began on 7th December 2018 in Ollantaytambo in the Sacred Valley (Valle Sagrado) of Peru. Right upon arrival, the author had a detailed discussion with the four Peruvian leaders of the NGO: Yovana Candela (Operations Director), Mercedes Durand (Head of Women's Artisan Cooperatives), Martha Zúñiga (Production Coordinator), Melissa Tola (Tourism Coordinator) and met three of the foreign supporters: Mollie Mae from the US (International Partnerships Manager), Annasofie Williams from the UK (Sales Coordinator), and Brianna Griesinger from the US (Marketing and Communications Coordinator). The group jointly selected the places for the author's visit, planned the itinerary and compiled a list of people the author wanted to talk with. On Skype Kennedy Leavens (Founder and Executive Director of Awamaki) from Seattle in the US also participated in the discussions. The author presented the Institute for Tourism and Development, its history, and its role in Germany. He explained the importance of the TO DO Award and the need to check Awamaki thoroughly, due to diverging assessments in the jury. This discussion and all the following ones in Ollantaytambo were possible in Spanish. The English, Italian, and French speaking members of the staff are well settled in Peru and the volunteers are also expected to speak Spanish well.

Very pleasant: Great serenity, sure to be welcome, and the possibility of spending a week clarifying in curious, diverse, deliberative, inquiring ways the history of Awamaki, assessing the current situation, and learning about their plans for the future.

During the days of the evaluation, Mr. Ellenberg spent most of the time with Melissa Tola who has since May 2018 been in charge of Awamaki's tourism programme. A very efficient cooperation with the possibility of making progress on any topic raised, usually obtaining clarity! Due to her wit in Spanish (mother tongue), English (fluent), and Quechua (well aquired), Melissa Tola is one of Awamaki's team members with particular abilities to build bridges between visitors who came at short notice and without any deeper knowledge of Peru, the Awamaki team, and the partners in Ollantaytambo as well as the village communities in Huilloc (Willoq) and Patacancha, where a careful approach, nuanced empathy, and acceptable Quechua are needed to build and maintain trustful relationships.

At a workshop on work organisation in Huilloc the author met the moderator and consultant Pabel Aimituma from Cusco and was able to experience his style of organising a workshop. Together with a small group of young people from Spain, the author went to Patacancha. He enjoyed the way in which information was provided and how Melissa Tola "influenced" the tourists during the journey. For five hours, the author got insights into the encounter between a dozen women from the village situated at an altitude of almost 4000 m and their visitors. Dyeing wool, spinning, and weaving were explained. Several members of the Spanish group practised and learned at least the basics. A question and answer session on every day life gave surprising insights with an emotional tinge. Food was prepared jointly in the earthen and stone oven and the closing meal became a touching celebration.

On the antepenultimate day in Ollantaytambo, taxi drivers, vendors, tour guides, restaurant owners, women in the market, policemen, teachers and students, travelling traders, and tourists at the Plaza de Armas were interviewed about Awamaki. Though there were also a few negative remarks, in most of these cases envy and competition provided an explanation. Praise, hope for continued success, and amazement at the achievements over the past ten years dominated. Awamaki is known and appreciated and is regarded as a force for good in the vulnerable tourism web in the Sacred Valley of Peru.

On 13 December 2018, the entire team including the volunteers came together in Awamaki's seminar

room. The author presented the results of the evaluation and the reasons why Awamaki will get the TO DO Award 2019. The presentation was followed by an exchange of ideas regarding what Awamaki can improve and what shall be the next steps. On 14 December 2018, during the drive to Cusco to catch the flight to Lima, Madrid, and Berlin, this could again be discussed in a final round with Melissa Tola.

2 Background

With an area of 1,285,000 km² (3.3 x larger than Germany), Peru is the 20th largest country in the world. There are huge contrasts between the "costa" with its deserts, oases, cliffs, harbours, Lima; the "sierra" with its high plains, gorges, mountain ranges, volcano peaks, Inca ruins, peasant traditions; and the "oriente" with its amphibian peripheries, seemingly endless forests, and pioneer forest aisles – Peru seems to be a continent rather than a country. The climatic differences are extreme; there are only a few countries in the world with such huge contrasts.

There is a high diversity of ethnic groups, even though today 83 percent of the 32.5 million inhabitants state Spanish as their mother tongue. For 14 percent of the Peruvians, Quechua is the first language. The Human Development Index is 0.75 – Peru ranks 89th among the almost 200 countries of the world. The quantitative increase of the population (1950: 7.7 million inhabitants, 1980: 17.4 million inhabitants, now almost twice as many) and the social disparities are shocking. Mismanagement and maladministration lead to hopeless life situations. Emigration is an enforced valve out of this misery – 2.5 million Peruvians live abroad, mainly in the US and Europe.

Peru has been attractive for visitors for more than 200 years – since the reports by Alexander von Humboldt. Until 1970, however, visitor numbers remained small and Peru was a destination mainly for visitors from the US. More visitors from Europe were able to travel to Peru when cheap flights to Lima were introduced in the 1970s. In the 1980s and 1990s, Peru suffered under the guerrilla activities of the "Shining Path" ("Sendero Luminoso"). The political disruption also kept the number of foreign visitors low. However, in the meantime tourism has become Peru's third biggest earner of foreign exchange, with high growth rates. In 2016, 4.6 million foreigners visited the country, mainly from Chile, the US, and Ecuador. In Europe, Spain and France are the main source markets, while there are currently almost 100,000 tourists from Germany visiting Peru per year. One third of all visitors to Peru (and more than half a million Peruvians) visit the exhilaratingly scenic Sacred Valley of Peru with its fascinating Inca history and travel from Cusco to Machu Picchu via Ollantaytambo.

Only a few kilometres off the Urubamba river valley, tourists used to be exotic intruders until a few years ago. Even today, the contrast between the visitors in Ollantaytambo at an altitude of 2,750 m and the remote villages of Huilloc and Patacancha at 4,000 m could hardly be bigger.

3 The Awamaki Project and its Importance

Off the economically diverse and bustling touristic Urubamba river valley, life in the villages at high altitudes of the Sacred Valley of Peru had remained more or less the same for centuries, from generation to generation: cultivation under difficult conditions (steep slopes, nutrient-poor soil interspersed with stones, long dry periods, the danger of erosion due to incidents of heavy rain, terracing necessary almost everywhere, built in an impressively solid manner and carefully maintained), alpaca and sheep husbandry on largely treeless mountain pastures, very modest housing situations with very little space and in a cold environment, fixed male and female roles in every day life passed on by tradition, processing of wool into woven textiles and continued repetition of patterns and forms in handicraft production, little mobility and hardly any exchange with settlements in the valley, a few scraps of Spanish as an exception besides the daily Quechua, late overprinting of traditional religious rituals by Catholicism, and even later in some places protestant mission and monopolisation by groups which would then sharply distinguish themselves from others, episodic sale of agricultural products and weaving works, hardly any cash in circulation, high child mortality and short life expectancy, only gradual increase in population and therefore no emigration yet. Emigration started when school

education in the villages opened new horizons and when road access was built into these peripheries – in many places not until 20 years ago.

3.1 History and Objectives

Kennedy Leavens left her native country USA for the first time as a young student in 2001. Ollantaytambo was her chosen destination, where she got hooked on the Sacred Valley of Peru by the fascination of the new, Inca ruins, mountain sceneries, and the encounters she experienced with Peruvian class mates and their families. She got to know the hard life people lived there and felt a growing desire to create new opportunities for families in the villages and paths out of the poverty that was limiting them. Between her school days and her later studies in public administration at the University of Washington, she returned to Ollantaytambo and worked as a volunteer with an NGO that tried to support local handicraft production, extending her stay several times.

There are many NGOs that were founded with the ambition of improving the living conditions in the rural areas of Peru. Almost all of them start with foreign funding, with ambitious objectives, but poorly rooted at the local level, with the wish for self-realisation lived charismatically, but a lack of participation of the supposed beneficiaries. In most cases, these newly founded organisations collapse after one, two, or three years.

Kennedy Leavens was well-settled and had social contacts when she took a chance and founded Awamaki (Quechua for „handmade“). In 2009, she started to work with ten female weavers, together with the Peruvian Miguel Galdo and supported by a few recruited volunteers. At the beginning, language studies, health initiatives, and cooking classes were part of the activities, but as the cooperation with women in their handicraft production in neighbouring villages increased she fully concentrated on what Awamaki stands for today in and around Ollantaytambo: support in solidarity with women’s groups, especially in Huilloc and Patacancha, handling the sales of their woven handicraft items at an Awamaki shop in Ollantaytambo (and in addition also in the US), training programmes for women including Spanish classes, organisation of tourist visits who learn to dye wool, spin, weave and cook in ways that are enjoyed by both parties – building bridges between the centre in Ollantaytambo and the peripheries in the surroundings.

Kennedy Leavens returned to the US, lives in Seattle, and visits Awamaki every year in April and in October. She raises donations in the US, which today constitute about 20 percent of Awamaki’s income. By now, the daily operations are fully managed by the Peruvian members of the NGO and by volunteers from the US and Europe, under the leadership of Yovana Candela. The team operates in a very considerate manner, is in an active and trustful exchange, ensures participation in all aspects, and knows that too rapid growth may represent a serious danger for the quality of cooperation.

Awamaki’s objective is clear. The NGO describes itself as “a small non-profit organization that works to create economic opportunities and improve social well-being in parts of the Valle Sagrado del Perú“, concentrates on a few village communities, and focuses on the cooperation with women in these villages.

3.2 Concept and Programme

The concept of Awamaki is to economically empower women in remote villages around Ollantaytambo. Awamaki helps with the marketing of woven products produced by the women’s groups. Together with them, Awamaki may not create new patterns, but introduces modern ways of processing textiles into bags and other utensils that go beyond the traditional products and may be bought more readily by tourists. Creativity in the designs is supported by volunteers with ambitions and experience in handicraft production.

In the cooperation with the village women, Awamaki uses a four step approach through “Awamaki sponsored workshops (women’s empowerment, weaving/knitting techniques, quality standards, fashion, marketing, exportation, tax brackets, computer classes)“. The time frame planned for these programmes varies between 18 and 36 months.

Level 1: Formal structure of organisation (board, registration)

Contract with Awamaki

Begin of quality control

Level 2: Establish their own business relationships

Begin to manage orders and invoices independently

Market themselves

Deliver only quality products

Level 3: Make an independent sale and follow-up

Establish client relations

Manage their own book of sale

Pay taxes

Level 4: Cooperative is affirmed as autonomous

Support of Awamaki remains available if requested by cooperative

Graduation

Participation in the workshops is free of charge for women who are interested. However, Awamaki ensures regular participation in the classes and active involvement of the participants. Almost all the workshops take place in the villages. The mothers bring young children with them, and babies who need to be breast-fed. This does not really cause any disturbance in the classes. Awamaki provides simple food during these days.

4 Evaluation Against the TO DO Award Criteria

Introductory remark: Within one week of net duration available to evaluate the project, there was no time to visit the one dozen women's groups connected with Awamaki. The evaluation was splendidly organised by Melissa Tola and took the author to extreme altitudes. The accommodation prepared for visitors in Patacancha was not used – which was regretted! The author preferred to return to Ollantaytambo in the valley, at 2,750 m of altitude. As at the beginning and at the end of the evaluation the Awamaki team was available for discussions for several hours and every member of the staff could in between be interviewed in depth, and as the author conducted a random survey on Awamaki in Ollantaytambo, he became increasingly certain that he would be able to adequately assess Awamaki in regard to the TO DO Award criteria.

Assessing Awamaki's activities against the contest criteria for the TO DO Award leads to the following evaluation.

4.1. Participation

How were/are the interests and needs of the local population taken into account in the planning phase and throughout the project?

Participation in the cooperation with outsiders is new to the women in the remote villages. If they had ever been in contact with strangers before, they had perceived them as paternalistic or as a threat. In the first years after Awamaki was founded in 2009, Kennedy Leavens and her first staff succeeded in winning their confidence step by step. Awamaki proceeded extremely slowly, cooperated with only a few women at the beginning and helped them to market their products and to expand their range of handicraft products. More women joined, not recruited by Awamaki, but the pioneers in the cooperation had made them curious. In 2012, there were 36 weavers involved, now there are about 120. So far, only five villages are connected with Awamaki. The objective for the future is a merely gradual expansion, exclusively upon request of individual weavers or small groups.

The path to “graduation“ is presented and explained to every newcomer. In the workshops, already well-versed women work with others who are not experienced yet. The language in which the courses are conducted is Quechua, even if Spanish would partly be possible, and even if parallel Spanish classes increase their wit.

Currently, about 750 tourists per year visit the three village communities. The group size never exceeds ten persons. The conversations between the village women and the tourists are in Spanish. If necessary, there is English-Spanish interpretation. This divides the women’s roles into active and passive ones, as far as conversations are concerned. During the dyeing, spinning, weaving, and cooking demonstrations, however, the differences rather depend on their temperament and on the situation. Awamaki would like to increase visitor numbers in the villages to up to 2,500 per year, provided that more women’s groups get involved in a reliable manner. During each visit to the Awamaki office, a former hostel adapted to office needs, the author met women from the villages. Before and after their visit to the market or other things they had to do in their little town Ollantaytambo, which has been upgraded to a “major centre“, they come to take a break with the Awamaki staff, presenting their wishes, discussing changes, fixing workshop dates, getting answers to their questions. “Relaxed“ may sound counterproductive from an economic angle, but to build trust, to be actively involved in planning processes and to strengthen cooperation, such processes are suitable.

4.2. Economic Benefit

Ensuring the economic participation of broad local population strata in tourism

It is critical to mention that Awamaki’s mission is not the “participation of broad strata of the local population“. Awamaki has so far remained personal, selective, modest. “Ensuring economic participation“, however, is offered in a solid manner. Awamaki takes handicraft products on consignment, has the sales price fixed by the producer, displays the products at the Awamaki shop which is strategically well-located in Ollantaytambo (between Plaza de Armas, railway station, and the Inca ruins by the side of the road through the Rio Urubamba valley), adding 20 percent to cover their own costs. Customer service and sales are handled by Awamaki’s volunteers. The weavers often come to visit the shop and add “local colour“.

If products become shelf warmers, the Awamaki staff and the producers discuss price reductions. Several times there has been criticism in Ollantaytambo with regard to the 20 percent added, but this percentage is justified. Without the Awamaki shop (which cannot be run free of cost) the women would have to sell their products at dumping prices to traders with business experience and would not get any feedback regarding the demand for their items.

In the Sacred Valley of Peru there is a huge amount of junk folklore made elsewhere, but not in Peru. Awamaki pays attention to quality and discusses modernising designs with the village women. The partners of Awamaki get advice and guidance in economic matters. Awamaki also helps if initial investments are needed, but only if trustful relationships already exist.

4.3. Awareness Raising

Enhancing the awareness of local people with regard to the chances and risks of tourism development for their economic, social and cultural lives

The village women are often involved in Awamaki's planning meetings. In this manner, they get insights into the risks and opportunities of tourism development. In 2018, significantly fewer tourists visited the Rio Urubamba valley than in previous years. However, none of the women's groups experienced declining sales. "Handmade" by Awamaki partners has become a successful label. Belonging to a widely known NGO that is considered solid seems to have instilled pride in many of the weavers involved. In addition, Awamaki strengthens the team spirit among the women in the villages, e.g. in cases of illness in a family, the emigration of men, or financial shortages.

4.4. Cultural Identity

Strengthening local culture and the cultural identity of local people, avoiding/minimising any social and cultural damage caused by tourism, supporting intercultural encounters and exchange between hosts and guests

For the women's groups in the villages, the valorisation of their woven art happens through their successful sales. That traditional handicraft fetches good prices with the visitors is an experience that strengthens the women's self-confidence. Identification with their own production, comparisons with the artistic skills of the other women can increase their pride in their own skills, or at least serve as a motivation.

As tourists do not only buy traditional products, but react curiously and open-mindedly to new designs (e.g. bags, gloves, belts), this stimulates a continued development of local handicraft. This is not so much an orientation towards the taste of tourists, but rather a confident attempt to try new ways while remaining conscious of the old roots.

The "intercultural encounters" have been ritualised by Awamaki. The visitor groups are small and they get an introduction to the lives, the problems and upheavals in the Quechua communities. The two hours' journey to the villages serves this purpose – with several stops and brief presentations of the farming and husbandry techniques used by the farmers and information about the daily lives of the villagers. In the villages, eight to twelve women receive the visitors. As several of these groups have been formed in the villages and as they take turns, every single woman will be part of such an encounter only once a week at most. The meetings take place at the edge of the settlement where Awamaki and the villagers have set up the infrastructure for this purpose. The welcome includes a short presentation of each of the village women and each tourist. The women demonstrate how sheep and alpaca wool are processed and some of the tourists join them or copy the process. Small weaving works can be produced by talented visitors when the women teach them! At the same time, a festive lunch is prepared in the earthen and stone oven and the visitors may join in the preparation. The food will be taken together. Finally, the women offer their products individually, improvising a small market. The revenue is a personal income. For their work during the previous hours, however, the women will get an averaged fixed amount.

Financial compensation for the differences between the most outgoing, Spanish speaking women and the quiet, reserved ones does not always seem to happen in the same manner. Answers to this question were contradictory.

4.5. Decent Work

Creation of qualified jobs and/or improvement of the working conditions in tourism with regard to social security, working hours, education and training, and remuneration

There had never been any "skilled jobs" in Awamaki's partner villages. Only through the work of the NGO have ethics and safety in working processes become values worth pursuing and possible to assess. The training in how to deal with tourists, to improve the women's Spanish and to create handicraft products takes place on a continuous basis and in small steps. As the trainings are in Quechua, all the women can

benefit.

What was impressive was that tourist visits never take place on weekends and that there are no encounters with tourists during holidays. Awamaki introduced this rule at an early stage and has strictly maintained it to date. For a while, there have been suggestions from the village communities to weaken this rule.

4.6. Gender Equality

Equal participation of women and men in planning and implementation processes within the frame of their cultural background and values

There is no gender equality at Awamaki! Women are the NGO's partners, not men! Awamaki started to work with individual women in 2009, then expanded to include other women; men were not meant to be involved. This is partly due to the fact that the processing of wool is traditionally a female occupation. There is no equal involvement of women and men in the planning and implementation process in the cooperation with Awamaki.

The lack of consideration of men is in this case not meant as a criticism of Awamaki's work. It is not about neglecting men, but simply about empowering women in a field of their work that generates an income and increases their control. Awamaki does not in any way intend a feminist exclusion of men. If a workshop participant is ill, her husband may jump in (and pass on to his wife what he has learned). As a new product, trekking tours for tourists starting from the villages at high altitudes have been introduced. The groups are guided by the male partners of the women connected with Awamaki.

Melissa Tola's predecessor was a man. Her male competitors in early 2018 were not rejected for gender reasons. Melissa Tola was considered the most suitable candidate, both in terms of experience in tourism and in terms of language skills and her ability to work in a team.

There is currently only one man on the Awamaki team (Tomás). He takes care of the workshop at the Awamaki office in Ollantaytambo and is in charge of the production of bags, belts and clothes when these are to be given a new design.

4.7. Environmental Sustainability

Taking into account criteria of low environmental and climate impact and sustainable use of natural resources

Sustainable ways of using natural resources are also a topic at the workshops conducted by Awamaki. So far, the production and dyeing of wool with natural dyes has been environmentally friendly to a major extent. Overgrazing on the mountain pastures has a long tradition and can hardly be corrected; it has not increased through the cooperation with Awamaki.

The tourists are being familiarised with the vulnerable environmental system at high altitudes in the Sacred Valley of Peru. Their visit to the villages is almost like tip-toeing without leaving any traces and without posing any risk to the natural resources.

4.8. Future Sustainability

Ensuring the economic and institutional sustainability of the project

Awamaki is dependent on being able to continue to sell the handicraft produced by the village women to tourists and to export it. This dependence on potential buyers presents a remaining risk. As Awamaki does not only sell traditional woven products, but also reacts to changing tastes by continuously developing the products, and probably also by successfully expanding the circle of buyers, economic sustainability seems to remain well attainable.

The evolving competition by NGOs with similar objectives could endanger Awamaki's long term success. That's a fact which must not be played down. It remains to be seen how Awamaki will react to that. After the evaluation in the Sacred Valley of Peru, the author trusts that Awamaki will be able to react to new challenges in a considerate, fair, creative, and effective manner.

5 Conclusion and Comments

Touristically, Peru is a magnet in Latin America, the area between Cusco and Machu Picchu is a core area for visitors, and indigenous handicrafts are in high demand. The structures built by Awamaki have grown slowly, are not targeted at quick growth. This means that the stabilisation of livelihoods benefits only a few village communities, but it has been constructed in a solid manner, it is fully participatory, and has so far been able to react to changes adequately and confidently.

Given the author's experiences in the evaluation of Awamaki in December 2018, he is convinced that Awamaki deserves to be awarded with the TO DO Award on 7th March 2019 at ITB Berlin.

About the author: Prof. Dr. Ludwig Ellenberg, * 1946, geographer, retired from Humboldt University Berlin after 90 semesters as a university professor; since 1975 he has been personally and professionally connected with Latin America. In 2012 and 2014 he checked projects for the TO DO Award in Uganda and Costa Rica respectively.

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