

From Agriculture to Ecotourism: Socio-Economic Change, Community
Development and Environmental Sustainability in a Costa Rican Village

By
Josephine Howitt

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Master of Arts in Globalization and International Development

School of International Development and Global Studies
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Ottawa

© Josephine Howitt, Ottawa, Canada, 2012

Abstract:

This research is an ethnographic case study of the emerging ecotourism economies in the agricultural village of San Gerardo de Rivas, Pérez Zeledón, Costa Rica. Due to the village's location as the main entry point to climb the country's tallest mountain within Chirripó National Park, the majority of households in San Gerardo now derive some income from tourism. I conducted twenty household surveys, followed by twenty-one semi-structured interviews with male and female heads of households and representatives of local organizations and tourism businesses. Drawing on local perspectives, I found that ecotourism was a complementary income source to agriculture and that men and women were engaging differently in ecotourism employment. Local organizations were involved in the participatory management of ecotourism activities within Chirripó National Park. Ecotourism has affected environmental practices and local people are strategically negotiating the direction of tourism development, including through using environmental discourses, to optimize the benefits to their community.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the individuals from San Gerardo de Rivas who participated in my research and shared their time and experiences with me. I am so grateful to the community members who welcomed me to their village and invited me to community events, to visit their farms or to enjoy a coffee and *pan casero* (homemade bread) while waiting for the rain to ease. A special thank you to the Arce-Prado family for hosting me and introducing me to *tico* life and also to the Proyecto San Gerardo committee members for your friendship and inspirational work.

My supervisor, Deborah Sick, largely facilitated this research and I thank her immensely for the opportunity to extend my academic interests and challenge my preconceptions through doing fieldwork. It was a privilege to work as a research assistant in Costa Rica, which provided much-needed practice for my own interviews and greatly increased my coffee-farming vocabulary in Spanish. Alexandra Arellano and Marie-Josée Massicotte also offered valuable critical contributions to this work - merci beaucoup. I greatly appreciate having had such in-depth feedback from all committee members.

Thank you also to my friends and family both in Aotearoa/New Zealand and here in Canada for your encouragement and interest; in particular to my parents, who instilled a love of learning from a young age and to my partner Court who has shared with me the ups and downs of these past two years and provided support, humour, proof-reading and love, depending on what was needed. Lastly, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my dear grandfather who passed away while it was being written. A farmer and man of the land, he taught me to appreciate the natural world in a way that only those deeply connected to it can. It is this same passion for nature and the rural way of life that is embodied by many community members in San Gerardo, as reflected in this thesis.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	2
RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY.....	3
OUTLINE OF THESIS	10
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF ECOTOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT LITERATURE.....	11
ECOTOURISM: GLOBAL FORMULATIONS.....	11
LOCAL IMPLICATIONS: CASE STUDIES OF ECOTOURISM	13
<i>Ecotourism and agricultural production</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Gender, socio-economic status and ecotourism employment.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Ecotourism and environmental sustainability.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Negotiating the direction of tourism development.....</i>	<i>20</i>
CHAPTER THREE: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN COSTA RICA	22
MAJOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS	22
FROM COFFEE TO TOURISM: COSTA RICA'S EVOLVING RURAL ECONOMY	24
REGIONAL CONTEXT: PÉREZ ZELEDÓN, COSTA RICA.....	30
ECOTOURISM IN SAN GERARDO DE RIVAS, PÉREZ ZELEDÓN	32
CHAPTER FOUR: HOUSEHOLD INCOME STRATEGIES IN SAN GERARDO DE RIVAS	39
THE CHANGING ROLE OF AGRICULTURE.....	40
TOURISM EMPLOYMENT, GENDER AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS.....	48
<i>Tourism jobs by gender</i>	<i>49</i>
<i>Perceptions of women's work and economic decision-making.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Business ownership and social mobility.....</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>Perceptions of agricultural versus tourism work</i>	<i>61</i>
COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND INCREASING RELIANCE ON TOURISM INCOME	64
TOWARDS A DIVERSIFIED RURAL TOURISM ECONOMY?.....	66
CONCLUSION	72
CHAPTER FIVE: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGING ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT.....	74
IMPROVING TOURISM EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES: LOCAL AND STATE INVOLVEMENT.....	74
<i>Vocational training</i>	<i>76</i>
<i>Meeting the aspirations of youth</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>Expanding employment opportunities for women.....</i>	<i>79</i>
<i>Promotion of attractions within the village.....</i>	<i>82</i>
MANAGEMENT OF ECOTOURISM ACTIVITIES IN CHIRRIPO NATIONAL PARK	83
LOCAL OPINIONS OF THE STATE'S ROLE IN TOURISM DEVELOPMENT	90
NEGOTIATING MORE FAVOURABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES	93
CONCLUSION	97
CHAPTER SIX: ECOTOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY	99
SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL CHANGE IN SAN GERARDO	100
<i>Environmental practices facilitated by ecotourism.....</i>	<i>102</i>
<i>Negative environmental impacts of tourism.....</i>	<i>110</i>
CONCLUSION	112
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION	114
REFERENCES.....	120
ENDNOTES	128

List of Figures and Tables

Chapter One.

Table 1-1. Summary of phases of data collection.....	5
---	----------

Chapter Three.

Figure 3-1. (photograph - San Gerardo de Rivas village site)	37
---	-----------

Chapter Four.

Figure 4-1. (photograph - tourism business signs)	40
Figure 4-2. (photograph - tomato production).....	44
Table 4-1. Characterization of survey sample households by landholding size, age and wage labour participation.....	49
Table 4-2. Distribution of positions by gender of members, Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica	49
Figure 4-3. (photograph - coffee farm).....	67

Chapter Five.

Figure 5-1. (photograph - crafts made by a local woman)	80
Figure 5-2. (photograph - lodge within Chirripó National Park)	85
Figure 5-3. (photograph - banner for the Chirripó race).....	95

Chapter Six.

Figure 6-1. (photograph - recycling facilities).....	103
Figure 6-2. (photograph - sign advertizing organic coffee).....	106
Figure 6-3. (photograph - hotel sustainability signage).....	109

List of Abbreviations

ACTUAR: Community-Based Rural Tourism Association
CANECO: Costa Rican National Chamber of Ecotourism
CBT: Community Based Tourism
CDA: Community Development Association
CST: Certification for Sustainable Tourism
COOPRENA: Cooperative Consortium – National Ecotourism Network
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
HDI: Human Development Index
ICA: International Coffee Agreement
ICT: Costa Rica Tourism Board [Instituto Costarricense de Turismo]
IMF: International Monetary Fund
INEC: National Institute of Statistics and Censuses [Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos]
MINAE: Ministry of Energy and Environment
NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
PSG: Proyecto San Gerardo
SAP: Structural Adjustment Program
UN: United Nations
UNDP: United Nations Development Program
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USAID: United States Agency for International Development

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This research looks at local perspectives of ecotourism development in a rural village in the canton of Pérez Zeledón, Costa Rica. Costa Rica is a small country of 4.3 million people located in Central America. The Costa Rican economy throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was based on export agricultural production, primarily of coffee. However, particularly since structural reforms beginning in the 1980s, the economy has diversified to include the processing of microchips and medical technologies, as well as a broader range of traditional and non-traditional export crops. Notably, tourism has provided an increasing source of foreign exchange and employment. In some parts of the country, due to commodity market instability, household economic diversification has included participation in the country's growing ecotourism industry.

While promoted as a way of increasing income revenue for local people that aims to have minimal environmental impacts, ecotourism has often proceeded without sufficient attention to its socio-cultural consequences (Carrier & McLeod, 2005). Studies of ecotourism in Costa Rica have focused on its effectiveness as a tool for sustainable community development (Aylward et al., 1996; Timothy & White, 1999; Matarrita-Cascante, Brennan & Luloff, 2010), rather than on specific issues concerning gender or its relation to agricultural production. I address areas of knowledge that scholars have identified as being deficient, such as the anthropological study of ecotourism impacts (West & Carrier, 2004). Furthermore, gender inequalities are often overlooked in ecotourism research (Scheyvens, 2000), as are other forms of social inequity related to age or land ownership and size.

This research contributes to the growing body of literature on ecotourism in developing countries as an alternative or complement to agricultural production. I engage with debates on the role of ecotourism development, as well as the environmental and gendered aspects of economic diversification in rural communities. The aim of this research was also to highlight the ways in which local people are involved in shaping how ecotourism is developed in their community and the ways in which they are involved in protected area management. It is important to seek local perspectives on the multifaceted issues surrounding ecotourism in order to assess its potential contributions to equitable and sustainable development.

More specifically, my objective was to better understand the emerging ecotourism economies in an otherwise agricultural community in Pérez Zeledón. The village of San Gerardo de Rivas, situated at the base of Costa Rica's highest mountain, provided the site for this case study. The village is the main entry point to Chirripó

National Park and a major annual event is a running race up Mt Chirripó. Ecotourism is a source of income for the majority of families, while many also remain engaged in agricultural production. My focus was on the following key questions: 1) How are some households engaging in ecotourism employment as an alternative or complement to agricultural income? 2) In which ways are men and women participating in ecotourism and how are these activities being managed within households? 3) How do local people define, shape and negotiate the direction of ecotourism development? 4) How has ecotourism influenced local environmental perspectives and practices?

Theoretical Framework

I employed an actor-oriented approach in this research. In response to the shortcomings of structural and generic theories of development in the 1980s, Long (2001) proposed that an actor-oriented perspective would highlight the interactions between various social actors in order to better understand contemporary development interventions and social transformations in the era of globalization. This theoretical and methodological contribution to development sociology sought to expand ethnographic approaches to explore “the links between the ‘small’ worlds of local actors and the larger-scale ‘global’ phenomena and actors, and the critical role played by diverse and often conflicting forms of human action and social consciousness in the making of development” (Long, 2001: 15). Whereas structural approaches to development such as Marxist political economy have tended to focus on relations of domination and exploitation, drawing on a Foucauldian understanding of power as relational and exercised on multiple levels rather than possessed (Foucault, 1977), can allow more room for the agency of marginalized peoples (Butchart, 1998). The actor-oriented approach has been employed to draw attention to the role of local peoples in rural development and is suitable for understanding actors’ views on a situation or phenomena such as ecotourism.

Based on a constructivist perspective, Long also acknowledged the varied outcomes of processes of social change in different contexts, stating that these are “complex, often ambivalent, and highly contingent upon the evolving conditions of different social arenas. They also entail networks of relations, resources and meanings at different scales of organisation” (2001: 2). Importantly, Long focused on aspects of human agency: that individuals and groups would draw on their available knowledge and capabilities to solve or avoid problems and “thus actively engage in constructing their own social worlds” (2001: 24). The actor-oriented approach is therefore applicable to examining the specific lived experiences of members of one community affected by the global processes of agrarian change and participation in global commodity and tourism

markets. It also was useful to shed light on how ongoing exchanges in relationships shape the direction of ecotourism development.

A Foucauldian conceptualization of power relations is pertinent to the study of discoursesⁱ and practices around the environment and ecotourism. It also encourages the avoidance of reductionist explanations of complex socio-ecological systems and an acknowledgement of the various influences on changing environmental perspectives and practices (Carrier and West, 2009). Ecotourism sets the stage for “encounters in which people and institutions with multiple ideological agendas, knowledges and methods negotiate the meanings and practices of environmentalism” (Vivanco, 2006: 17). From broader socio-political processes and structures to national and regional forms of governance, as well as local relationships with tourists and among themselves, this approach can be useful for identifying the factors affecting the way that individuals view the environment and their place in it.

There has been a theoretical turn towards different approaches to power relations in tourism studies. Diverse issues in tourism, such as gender and economic development, can be better analyzed through recognizing that the significance of tourism is varied for different participants and power relations can alter these meanings (Davis, 2001). In contrast to associating power only with individuals or groups in authority, Foucault asserted that power can emanate from different levels simultaneously (1977). Hannam, (2002) reiterates that power relations are not simple binary structures, but omnipresent and localized. Within tourism, there are local centres of power-knowledge, for example states, NGOs and local guides, implying multiple sites of power and regulation. While I aimed to have a non-reductionist understanding of power dynamics and recognize the plurality of power foci (Foucault, 1977), I endeavoured to also examine the imbalances in the exercise of such power relations. This has particular relevance for processes of accumulation and participation in ecotourism employment, as well as relationships between various actors within ecotourism.

Research Design & Methodology

In order to better understand the economic, social and gendered dynamics of rural ecotourism development, I undertook an exploratory ethnographic study of the emerging ecotourism industry in the village of San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica. Focusing on one town allowed for more detailed research within the time constraints of the project, given that I wanted to familiarize myself with the village and establish some relationships with people before delving straight into interviews. Case studies allow for “in-depth, ethnographic detail that is often essential for understanding why and how changes are occurring” (Eakin et al., 2003: 161). This case study approach offers

insights into local perspectives of ecotourism in an otherwise predominately agricultural community. While recognizing the village's unique location at the base of the country's highest mountain, whenever possible I tried to relate what was occurring in San Gerardo de Rivas to broader national and international socio-economic, political and cultural transitions.

I spent six weeks in the village between the end of May and the beginning of July 2011ⁱⁱ. I used a mixed methods approach for my data collection including brief household surveys, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and examining tourism promotional materials. San Gerardo has a population of approximately three hundred and fifty people. The majority of households participate in tourism work and many also remain engaged, at least seasonally, in agricultural practices including dairy farming, vegetable production, sugarcane and coffee growing. Upon arrival in the village, I copied a map from the Emergency Committee of the local Community Development Association. The map identified the location of all households and other buildings in the village.

To select the households for surveys, I used cluster sampling (Bernard, 2002). From the map, I divided the village into five distinct sections based on geographical location. I numbered every household within each section. Using the random number function in Microsoft Excel, I randomly selected twenty households, the number in each section being proportionate to the size of the cluster. For example, there were more houses in the central area of the village, so a greater number of households were selected from that area. The cluster sampling ensured that a geographically dispersed sample of households was obtained. Extra random numbers were generated so that if a household was unoccupied or unable to be contacted, I sampled the next household on the list of random numbers. The survey identified key economic activities and I stratified the households depending on their participation in agriculture, tourism or a mixture of both these income sources. Next, I selected ten households from among the twenty households surveyed, with which I conducted semi-structured interviews. I chose the ten households purposively, aiming to get a proportionate number of those receiving income from agriculture, tourism or both, but also to cover a range of ages, family arrangements, perceived socio-economic levels and geographic location. For additional semi-structured interviews, I used purposive sampling to select seven representatives of local tourism-related institutions, organizations or businesses.

Table 1-1: Summary of phases of data collection

Phase of data collection	Total Number
Brief household surveys	20
Semi-structured interviews: heads of households	14
Semi-structured interviews: organization and business representatives	7

Surveys

Brief household surveys were done orally, with either the male or female head of twenty households. Women were more often available to answer the survey questions, therefore information was provided by thirteen women and three men from mixed-couple households, as well as three single men and one single woman. The survey generally lasted around ten minutes and a tape recorder was not used. Notes were taken on the names and ages of the heads of household, how long they had lived in San Gerardo, their occupations and other sources of income, number of children, whether they own land, the size of landholdings, food grown for household consumption and other types of agricultural production.

Semi-structured interviews

The next phase of data collection involved a total of twenty-one semi-structured interviews with heads of households and representatives of institutions, organizations and businesses. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, except for one that was with a first-language English speaker. All interviews but one were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Key quotes were later translated into English for inclusion in the text. For the ten households selected, I aimed to interview both the male and female head of household, either together or separately at their convenience. Four couples were interviewed separately, four couples were interviewed together, one woman was interviewed whose husband was not available and the final interviewee was a single woman, which explains why there were fourteen interviews from the ten households. All interviews took place at the homes of the interviewees. The interview was divided into five main sections:

- i) General questions about tourism development: local, organizational and government involvement, importance of tourism to the village and its impacts, preferences for future tourism development.
- ii) Participation in tourism: information about specific tourism jobs, hours, pay rates, vocational training, obstacles for those not employed in tourism or wishing to start a tourism business.

- iii) Participation in agricultural production: types of production, work hours, income, comparison between agricultural and tourism work, agritourism, organic farming, growing food for household consumption.
- iv) Perspectives on ecotourism and community development: knowledge of the term “ecotourism” and related initiatives in the village, environmental impacts, alternative options for development outside of tourism, household environmental practices.
- v) Summary: the most important perceived benefits and problems of tourism, perceptions of tourists, changes in quality of life, women’s work in tourism, household financial decision-making, and any additional comments.

Interviews lasted an average of fifty-one minutes, ranging in duration from eighteen minutes to ninety-three minutes, depending on how much time the interviewee had or how much they wished to commit. In the text, these interviews are cited as interviews #1 to #14.

I also interviewed representatives of the local chamber of tourism, a women’s group, the Community Development Association, a Costa Rican non-profit, a hotel business, an organization of organic coffee producers and a government institution. Interview questions were asked from an organizational rather than personal perspective and addressed the following:

- i) Basic organization/business information: position of interviewee, type of organization, year began, number of members, principal activities, involvement in community development.
- ii) General questions about tourism development: importance of tourism to the village and its impacts, if and how the organization has contributed to tourism development, government and other organization involvement, preferences for future tourism development.
- iii) Participation in tourism for local people: skills most required for tourism work, whether access to vocational training is sufficient, obstacles for those wishing to start a tourism business, women’s tourism work, other disadvantaged sectors of the village, if and how the organization helps with support or training for local people in tourism work.
- iv) Marketing of tourism: how San Gerardo is promoted, current organization or business marketing strategies, whether more marketing is needed to attract tourists.
- v) Perspectives on ecotourism and community development: organizational definition of the term “ecotourism” and related initiatives in the village,

environmental impacts, alternative options for development outside of tourism, organizational or business environmental practices, potential for agritourism.

- vi) Summary: the most important perceived benefits and problems of tourism, perceptions of tourists, additional comments.

Further questions were asked about specific projects or topics that required clarification and some questions were modified depending on whether it was an organization or business being interviewed. The duration of the interviews was, on average, one hour. In the text, these interviews are cited as interviews #15 to #21.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was used to gain first-hand experience of some aspects of daily life in the village, establish relationships with people and learn more about cultural protocols. I kept a record of some of these interactions by taking field notes. Living with a local family in a homestay arrangement while in San Gerardo exposed me to their daily routines, perspectives and life experiences. My host mother informed me of the appropriate times to conduct an interview in the community. She also notified me about any special events in the village that meant that people would be busy or not want to be disturbed. I also volunteered two and a half days a week in a local community-run café project that provides employment and training for women and raises funds for community development projects in the village (Metta Media, 2009). This allowed for informal interactions with local people, at times helping to expand or clarify data from interviews. Being a white Anglophone researcher and volunteer from the Global North, I was attuned to the fact that I was not a part of the community and that my presence could be problematic. With this in mind, I endeavoured to participate with respect in activities with local people when invited, adopt a collaborative rather than guiding role in my volunteer work and adhere to my ethical obligations by prioritizing concerns for local people.

Specific activities engaged in to enhance understanding of my research area included staying in two local hotels, eating at locally-run restaurants, participating in a coffee farm tour, attending village cultural events, going on a horseback tour, climbing Mt Chirripó with a local guide and visiting people's houses and farms when invited outside of formal interviews. I also took photos of tourist attractions and public spaces within the village to document the village setting and types of tourism activities present. On a return visit to San Gerardo in February 2012, I participated in the Chirripó race, gaining additional insight into how the event is carried out and its importance to the village. I was able to observe communal work efforts to cook the large amounts of food required for guests, listen to speeches from invited guests and politicians at a gala dinner the

evening before the race, take note of forms of sponsorship and advertizing and interact with other runners on the day of the race.

My objective to privilege local perspectives involved prioritizing relationships and interactions with locals while in the village, at times politely declining invitations from foreigners predominately from North America and Europe who were living there, particularly given my limited amount of time. While undoubtedly, foreigners perspectives form an important part of the overall picture, with their already privileged global economic status and disproportionate influence as recent arrivals in the village, my study focused on the narratives of the local people. Nonetheless, two foreigners formed part of my survey sample and another was interviewed as an organization representative.

Tourism promotional material

I collected a sample of marketing materials for indications of the types of tourism being promoted in the region. Ecotourism promotional materials include signage and brochures within the village, regional publications featuring San Gerardo, websites for tourism businesses or with general information about the village and tourist attractions. I took photos of signs and tourist attractions. These forms of data were important for understanding how the village markets itself as a tourist destination and how this relates to participants' views on tourism marketing and desired forms of tourism development. Additionally, they indicated the tourism discourses that were being used to highlight specific environmental aspects of the area.

Transcription, Coding and Analysis

Preliminary data analysis involved creating an Excel spreadsheet with information from the household surveys. Basic descriptive statistics were generated to create a profile of the twenty participating households with respect to types of employment. The transcription of semi-structured interviews was assisted by open-source software ExpressScribe. TAMS Analyzer software was used to code interviews and field notes from participant observation by subject themes. Interviews were organized by the participants' involvements in employment types: only agriculture; agriculture and tourism; only tourism, followed by the business and organization interviews. This allowed me to note more easily whether there was a difference in responses due to household employment type and to compare responses between household and organization representatives. Word documents were created for each of the ninety codes and sub-codes. Content analysis of qualitative data involved reading through each document and creating a summary of differing opinions and common themes, as well as key quotes to identify particular viewpoints. Attention was also taken

to compare perspectives relating to gender and other socio-economic factors such as occupation and land ownership. The way data is analyzed is also a subjective process and I aimed to use data from local interviewees to form the basis of my conclusions, while information received from foreigners interviewees was regarded as additional. While it is recognized that the interview process produced mediated texts, I include large segments of texts directly from the transcribed interviews as much as possible in my analysis.

Ethical considerations

Further to meeting the requirements established by the University of Ottawa Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board including obtaining informed consent and ensuring anonymity, engaging in forms of reciprocity was important for this research. Several researchers had undertaken studies in the village previously and people were aware that they were helping me by giving information that could lead to personal gains in the form of a Master's degree or enhanced career options. While my volunteer work also presented opportunities for informal interactions with local people, I felt it was an appropriate way to give back to the community. Some participants were not aware of my association with the community café project, however others commented that they appreciated my help there and saw it as a form of exchange for the assistance the village was giving me with my project. At the café, I assisted in training staff members and volunteers, collaborating with them to develop the menu and cooking, serving and cleaning when the café was open. Furthermore, I delivered a free workshop for members of the women's group on making necklaces and bracelets, later receiving feedback from one woman that she had been successful in selling many items made with this design.

On a return visit to the village in February 2012, I fundraised by getting family and friends to sponsor me for the Chirripó Race, in order to make a donation to an education scholarship fund. The scholarship provides assistance to children from low-income families in San Gerardo and nearby Herradura to attend high school and university. On completion of my thesis, a copy will be sent to the Community Development Association along with shorter summaries in Spanish with information specific to organizations and institutions involved in the research. Rather than sending a version to all participants, who would be identified in the process as all mail is received at the village store, I will make a brochure with key findings in Spanish to be available at locations frequented by local people.

Outline of Thesis

The thesis comprises seven chapters. In the present chapter, I have outlined the major issues relating to the thesis topic, my key research questions and the theoretical and methodological tools that were used to address them. In Chapter Two, I provide a literature review of ecotourism and development, focusing on research that relates to agricultural communities, gender and socio-economic status, environmental sustainability, as well as a discussion of power relations in tourism. To provide context, in Chapter Three I begin with outlining some of the recent socio-economic indicators of Costa Rica, a brief overview of the country's history of export-agricultural production and the rise of ecotourism. This will be followed by a discussion of economic and social change in Pérez Zeledón and a description of San Gerardo de Rivas, drawing on previous research conducted in the village.

Chapters Four, Five and Six present the findings from my research. Chapter Four provides an overview of participants' involvement in tourism and agricultural work, with respect to gender and socio-economic factors. I show how men and women are participating differently in tourism employment and perspectives on women's involvement in tourism work. The declining role of agriculture is also discussed. In Chapter Five, I demonstrate how local people and organizations are negotiating among themselves and in interaction with government institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in order to improve local prospects for ecotourism employment, participate in protected area management and to actively define desired forms of ecotourism development. Environmental practices related to ecotourism are explored in Chapter Six, with attention to the multiple socio-ecological factors that may be influencing environmental change in San Gerardo. Finally, Chapter Seven will offer concluding remarks, a synthesis of how the findings relate to the broader context and issues in international development, as well as suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF ECOTOURISM AND DEVELOPMENT LITERATURE

Ecotourism: Global formulations

The concept of ecotourism itself is contested, as are its contributions to local and international development. Ecotourism has been defined in many ways by industry and academic representatives and the term has evolved over time. A content analysis of eighty-five definitions of ecotourism showed that certain variables were better represented in more recent definitions, including conservation, education, ethics, sustainability, impacts and local benefits (Fennell, 2001). For the purposes of this study, I define ecotourism as a form of tourism that takes place in environments purported to be relatively undisturbed, with experiences focusing on scenery, plants, animals and local culture.

The rise of ecotourism began in the 1980s as a niche market opportunity and has since been promoted by many as an exemplary example of sustainable development. Butcher (2006) documents the role of United Nations (UN) agencies in formalizing ideas surrounding ecotourism and development. This culminated in the UN declaring 2002 the International Year of Ecotourism. Whereas development and the environment appeared often to be in conflict with each other, ecotourism became a way for UN organizations, governmental donors and NGOs to partially resolve this tension. It also was an opportunity for conservation groups, long accused of putting nature above people, to combine conservation with community goals. NGOs have embraced this strategy and there has been a convergent growth in the demand for ecotourism.

The production of ecotourism discourse at an institutional level has consequences at localized levels. Butcher argues that UN discourse of ecotourism ties development to nature, “in a fashion completely alien to the historical experience of development in more economically developed societies” (2006: 147). Education of local peoples that promotes particular views regarding conservation and development often occurs under the guise of participatory processes in ecotourism. “Traditional” ways are romanticized when they fit the philosophy of ecotourism promoters, while education and tourism revenue are used to change traditions that are deemed unsustainable (Butcher, 2006). In this way, Butcher (2006) shows how discourses from influential international agencies regarding ecotourism can privilege certain forms of knowledge over others. Despite appearing to involve local communities, these discourses systematically structure the ways in which local peoples can participate. Butcher’s outlook on ecotourism for national development is pessimistic, stating that “a progressive rhetoric masks a limiting and limited view of development” (2006: 153) and that ecotourism is a

piecemeal approach to bring some respite to rural communities that denies them the option of choosing modern ways.

Ecotourism appears to be congruent with other types of neoliberal development. The kinds of pronouncements on sustainable development existent in official ecotourism discourse have been described as a new form of conditionality for developing countries (Duffy, 2006). At the level of international institutions, new types of constraint can include environmental stipulations on top of economic and political liberalization. Donors, global environmental NGOs and, at times, local organizations commonly promote the idea that once an area has been protected it will attract foreign investment through ecotourism and pay for itself. These arguments reflect the wider context of economic conditionalities and liberalization, whereby some countries are encouraged to develop their 'comparative advantage' in tourism (Duffy, 2006: 740).

Ecotourism has further been described by West as an example of "eco-neoliberal practices and policies [that] attempt to meet the social and economic needs of rural peoples through fostering, facilitating, and supporting the retreat of the state and putting private industry and nongovernmental organizations in their places" (2008: 619). Environmental conservation has become a central preoccupation of Western societies, affecting development policies significantly and resulting in the greening of aid (Butcher, 2006). Concerns have been raised that the localized basis of aid to rural areas may undermine national structures of governance (Butcher, 2006) and it has been noted that in Costa Rica, there has been a shift in control over sustainability-oriented development initiatives from national government to the NGO sector, with NGOs providing services once of the domain of the state. Vivanco (2006) claims that environmental groups and scientists have often presumed that they know what is best for rural Costa Ricans, without assessing possible negative effects such as the concentration of lands for nature reserves that may exacerbate historical problems of structural inequality. As Horton puts it:

Government officials and many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have lauded ecotourism as a qualitatively distinct market-based process that improves the quality of life and empowers local communities with minimal negative environmental impact. Critics contend, however, that, as Costa Rica's latest transnational activity, ecotourism perpetuates historical patterns of inequality, social exclusion, and environmental degradation associated with past patterns of dependent, agro-export led growth in Central America (Horton, 2009: 94).

Therefore, there is significant controversy over the merits of ecotourism as a development strategy on environmental and socio-cultural grounds.

Local implications: Case studies of ecotourism

Case studies of ecotourism provide examples of how distinct communities have been affected by and responded to ecotourism industries. Researchers have addressed topics of relevance to my key research questions, including: ecotourism and agricultural production; how gender and socio-economic status affect participation in ecotourism employment; ecotourism and sustainable development; and how communities negotiate power relations that alter tourism development outcomes. Below, I synthesize research related to these areas using case studies from Costa Rica and other international settings.

Ecotourism and agricultural production

While some argue that ecotourism development, particularly near protected areas, can push out agriculture, others have found that ecotourism can contribute to economic diversification in agricultural communities. In a Belizean community, tourism did not signify abandonment of agricultural activities, but became a way of broadening the region's economic base (Timothy & White, 1999). In this way, ecotourism allowed for "greater economic integration and balance with traditional forms of primary economic activities" (1999: 239). In Monteverde, northern Costa Rica, tourism now coexists with the previously dominant industry of dairy cattle and cheese production. An example of this is the viewing of quetzals, a native bird, on agricultural property, which provides additional income for farmers (Vivanco, 2001: 87). In La Fortuna, a Costa Rican community situated near Arenal Volcano National Park, it was found that traditional agricultural practices have been retained alongside developing ecotourism initiatives. The community recognized that ecotourism, while it can offer optimal income generation, is part of a diversified economy and that keeping self-reliance through local production and consumption of goods and services was integral to achieving sustainable goals (Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2010).

However, the types of jobs available to rural peoples through ecotourism may differ significantly from their past occupations in that these new jobs are aligned with certain views about the natural environment. Carrier and West (2009) are concerned with how Western economic assumptions about people can reduce livelihoods to be relating solely to income. This is seen in the promotion of alternative livelihoods for people who are dependent on using the natural resources that a conservation project is striving to protect. It is often understated that most of the jobs provided by such alternatives as ecotourism are in low-level wage labour such as cooking and cleaning. How these jobs differ and change people's relationships to their surroundings is

therefore overlooked. In an example from Jamaica, Pugholm (in Carrier and West, 2009) found that fisher people associated fishing with autonomy and self-reliance and tourism work with subordination and dependence; meanwhile, it was these tourism jobs that Western NGOs or others assumed would satisfy local peoples. Rural people may lose important rights to agricultural lands for grazing, cultivation or subsistence practices through the establishment of protected areas, affecting local livelihoods in ways that ecotourism income may not adequately compensate for (West, Igoe & Brockington, 2006).

An emphasis on increasing local linkages within Community Based Tourism (CBT) projects in Costa Rica aims to distribute the benefits of ecotourism more widely within rural communities (Trejos & Chiang, 2009). These linkages refer to tourism businesses sourcing local services and supplies and employing local people whenever possible. In 2006, the Costa Rican Cooperative Consortium – National Ecotourism Network (COOPRENA) launched a nationwide rural community tourism project, financed by the Inter-American Development Bank, with the goal being for tourism to complement, rather than displace, agricultural activities. Moreover, agricultural livelihoods were considered an attraction in their own right. Nevertheless, the study of one CBT project on Chira Island, in the Gulf of Nicoya, Costa Rica, showed that despite the attention given by one lodge to prioritizing local economic linkages, such as buying eggs and milk from local farms, these linkages were found to be sporadic and dependent upon the availability and quality of materials and supplies, which were often brought in from outside the community (Trejos & Chiang, 2009).

Some communities have sought to maintain their rural identities by combining agricultural and touristic activities. Agritourism is viewed as a subset of rural tourism and, like ecotourism, has been defined in various ways. Common definitions involve the use of working farms as tourist attractions (Phillip, Hunter & Blackstock, 2010). A more precise description is: “tourist activities of small-scale, family or co-operative in origin, being developed in rural areas by people employed in agriculture” (Kizos & Iosifides, 2007: 63). Jackiewicz (2005, 2006) describes the rural village of Quebrada Grande in Guanacaste, northern Costa Rica that has been capitalizing on small-scale volunteer tourism, where volunteers pay to stay with and experience the life of a farming family, while also contributing to community development projects. Volunteer tourists participate in local labour, such as picking pineapples, milking cows, and building trails (Jackiewicz, 2005: 266). A fish farm cooperative for women has also been set up, providing an extra source of income and protein for families in a way that is consistent with their rural lifestyles. The scale of the tourism initiative had not significantly altered the infrastructure

of the village or the livelihoods of local people, yet it offered periodic additional income (Jackiewicz, 2006).

The interaction between tourism and coffee farming can be seen in the promotion of coffee farm tours. The website of a coffee cooperative in Monte Verde, states that agritourism “has diversified the local tourism opportunities, and at the same time created new income options for the cooperative and their producers” (Cooperative Santa Elena, 2007). In promoting tours of coffee farms, they highlight that the cooperative “promotes sustainable agriculture practices” and that producers “have voluntarily reduced the use of chemicals on their crops” (Cooperative Santa Elena, 2007). Tourism may therefore be a factor influencing coffee farming practices and the marketing of sustainably grown coffee. Thus we can see that ecotourism brings new opportunities, yet as with prior forms of economic development, the distribution of these is likely to be unequal.

Gender, socio-economic status and ecotourism employment

There is gender inequality within ecotourism industries. Scheyvens (2000) states the need for more research into the gendered impacts of ecotourism, as does Vandegrift (2008) who highlights the lack of studies on how reproductive labour intersects with women’s tourism work. Vandegrift (2008) asserts that women perform the majority of labour that creates the experiences of tourists. However, positions that are higher paid and require greater skill levels are more often obtained by men, with women occupying low-wage service jobs (Horton, 2009). Women are more likely to find employment in less stable, more informal types of tourism work (Vandegrift, 2008). Projects designed to counter this have had varying success. For example, in Lombok, Indonesia, a women’s guided walking tour project was co-opted by a male guiding company (Schellhorn, 2010). Nepal (2002) recommends that mountain ecotourism projects consider equitable opportunities for both men and women and that advancing gender equity needs to take into account community-specific contexts.

In a Belizean community, McKenzie Gentry found that ecotourism employment was exploiting traditional gender roles, whereby women experienced the ‘housewifization’ of labour (2007). These women effectively had a double workday by being expected to complete all household chores on top of paid work. Moreover, they were offered low wages and had few opportunities to improve education levels. Yet with regards to household economic decision-making, social interaction, business ownership, and levels of autonomy, employment seemed to be offering some opportunities to challenge gendered norms (McKenzie Gentry, 2007). Mothers working in tourism in Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica were disadvantaged as access to childcare was limited (Vandegrift, 2008). While some women were able to combine their own paid work with

domestic responsibilities by running their own businesses within their houses, they were often not in the most suitable business locations. Scheyvens (2000) shows how a women-led ecotourism cooperative was able to give women autonomy over their finances, generating political and psychological empowerment. In Monte Verde, Costa Rica, Vivanco (2001) found that women who made craft products to sell to tourists were able to increase their financial independence from their husbands and fathers, as well as enhance their self-esteem.

In Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica, Vandegrift (2008) found that not only were women more likely to work in hospitality, customer service and cleaning jobs, but they were further partitioned by their ethnicity. Women migrants from the Global North were more likely to hold higher-paid sales, serving and front desk positions. Employers claimed that these women were more obedient and that they could save money by not paying their social security. Nicaraguan migrants occupied the lowest wage jobs, often cleaning, while Afro-Costa Ricans could capitalize on their cultural “authenticity” to cook and serve Afro-Caribbean food, providing that they had financial resources to establish their own restaurants. However, few Afro-Costa Ricans held higher-level jobs and among Costa Ricans, tour guide and interpreter jobs were male-dominated. In this case, the pressures of sourcing low-cost labour and meeting the cultural expectations of tourists created a situation where possibilities for work were somewhat constrained by ethnicity and gender (Vandegrift, 2008).

Other forms of social stratification exist within ecotourism economies, based on land ownership, access to capital, age, education and ethnicity. While it was not uncommon for Costa Ricans to own businesses in Puerto Viejo, huge increases in land prices have made it very difficult for those who sold their land early or had never owned valuable coastal land to buy or rent a formal business location (Vandegrift, 2008). In Tortuguero, Costa Rica, there were few efforts by the Costa Rican government to support local people to benefit economically through ecotourism associated with the creation of Tortuguero National Park (Place, 1991). Subsequently, high levels of non-local and foreign ownership of tourism businesses, with the associated leakage of profits, have meant limited options for local people both in terms of economic gains and achieving conservation objectives (Campbell, 2002).

According to Almeyda et al. (2010: 815), at a luxury ecolodge on the Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica, employees of the ecolodge had, on average, spent less time on the peninsula, were significantly younger and had two or more extra years of education than neighbouring residents not employed by the lodge. Those with higher capital levels were more likely to participate in the tourism sector. Furthermore, tourism-related inflation of both real estate and consumer goods often most impacted those not

receiving additional income through ecotourism employment, leaving some locals worse-off than before tourism development (Almeyda et al., 2010: 815).

Unlike other countries that have used Indigenous identities to promote tourism, such as Peru (Arellano, 2008), the Costa Rican government has shown little encouragement for the potential participation of Costa Rican's Indigenous population in the tourism industry. Wherry (2007) argues that the government could well have helped to establish a thriving Indigenous art and culture scene. Instead, in its marketing of the tourism sector, the state has not drawn attention to Indigenous cultures and traditions, but rather focused on promoting the modern infrastructure and nature-based attractions of the country. Thus, it is clear that participation in ecotourism employment is affected by socio-economic status and without additional training and support, forms of inequality can be increased by the ecotourism economy.

Ecotourism and environmental sustainability

Much of the research on ecotourism in developing countries has centred on the evaluation of its potential for sustainable community development. Potential benefits promoted by advocates of ecotourism include increased income for local people, community control over tourism development decision-making, raising environmental awareness, generating financial benefits for conservation, revitalizing local cultures, and strengthening human rights and democratic movements (Horton, 2009). However, in case studies of coastal ecotourism in Central American and Caribbean countries, researchers have found significant negative impacts on both local peoples and the environment, due to displacement from parks and environmental degradation caused by hotels (Carrier & MacLeod, 2005) and improperly managed foreign investment (Moreno, 2005). These negative impacts lead Carrier and MacLeod to state: "like conventional tourism, ecotourism is a form of environmental exploitation, one that often displaces previous forms" (2005: 319). Horton contends that despite positive intentions, ecotourism is still driven by the dynamics of capital accumulation and does not challenge power structures (2009).

Despite these constraints, there are factors that can lead some ecotourism projects to be more sustainable than others. In a meta-analysis of 215 case studies of ecotourism from academic literature, Kruger (2005) found that local community involvement was an important predictor of whether an ecotourism project was perceived as successful in attaining sustainability goals. Within sustainable projects, revenue creation was considered a factor that led to changes in land-use patterns from consumptive to non-consumptive. Establishing small-scale initiatives over large-scale operations has likewise been shown to contribute to sustainability. Detailed case studies

of community agency in ecotourism projects (Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2010; McAlpin, 2008) also reveal a need for comprehensive consultation and inclusion of community members. For example, in La Fortuna, Costa Rica, sustainable goals have been discussed through informal and formal local gatherings and communication regarding sustainable practices has led to their promotion and adoption (Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2010)

On the other hand, there have been numerous failings of ecotourism to provide sustainable community development in Costa Rica. In some cases, there are insignificant direct revenues generated by ecotourism, as aside from park entry fees, only small amounts of money are spent locally on food and souvenirs. As Weaver found in his study of Tortuguero, despite job creation from ecotourism, there was little improvement in material standards of living in the town (Weaver, 1999). While at times providing only negligible economic benefits, ecotourism has also created or exacerbated environmental problems. The case of solid waste management has been described as an environmental justice issue (Meletis & Campbell, 2009), where host communities of ecotourism unfairly assume the responsibility for managing waste that is generated by the tourism industry. In Tortuguero, residents were disproportionately bearing the burden of waste generated by lodges, the majority of which were foreign owned. In addition to being those benefitting the most from tourism revenue, the lodges were placing strains on the village waste system (Meletis & Campbell, 2009). Inadequate waste disposal facilities, stemming from a lack of funding and rapid visitation growth rates, have also affected Manuel Antonio National Park, where at one stage the monkeys the park intended to protect had become garbage feeders (Weaver, 1999).

There are many factors, both internal and external, that may influence a community's ability to establish and maintain a sustainable tourism project. In Costa Rica, several studies have been conducted on the Monte Verde ecotourism project, which is often lauded as a successful example of ecotourism. Báez, (2002) points out that considerable community involvement has led to the creation of jobs for people and local business ownership has been retained. The case has elsewhere been praised for its commitment to sustainable principles (Aylward et al., 1996). While Vivanco, (2001) describes many of these positive outcomes for the community in an ethnographic study, he also reminds readers of the impacts of ecotourism on local culture. He shows how simplified representations of local peoples by tourism entrepreneurs and environmental activists do not reflect complex realities of communities. Ecotourism is often painted as a mutually beneficial project for conservation and community objectives. This downplays significant struggles and conflicts, long-term environmental degradation and social

divisions (Vivanco, 2006). Environmental practices must be seen as the result of complex socio-ecological relations.

Pro-environmental perspectives among community members have been linked to involvement in ecotourism (Stem et al., 2003), but this relationship has been inadequately assessed. Several case studies point to the adoption of more environmentally sound practices, but the multiple factors that are causing these changes are not always identified. In their study of ecotourism in Belize, Timothy & White observed that community members were, on their own initiative, slowly adopting more sustainable uses of the rain forest, such as small-scale, selective lumber cutting by hand rather than by heavy machinery (1999). However, whether another form of additional income would have led to the same results is unknown. In a study involving participants from four Costa Rican communities nearby national parks, Stem et al. (2003) showed that one reason why people directly employed by ecotourism were hunting less was because they had less time to do so, rather than because of an implicit environmental awareness. Rather, they found that *indirect* involvement in ecotourism, such as attending forums where community ideas were exchanged or receiving training were more likely to influence pro-environmental perspectives than employment alone (Stem et al., 2003). It is likely that the processes and factors that affect pro-environmental perspectives and practices vary significantly between context-specific ecotourism initiatives.

Ecotourism can lead to local peoples expressing understandings of their surroundings that differ in some ways to their prior perceptions. For example, in La Fortuna, Costa Rica, Matarrita-Cascante et al. (2010) found that local attitudes towards nature have changed, as interactions with tourists have provided information and opinions about the environment. Although they are seemingly co-opted into dominant Western environmental discourses through ecotourism, local peoples may demonstrate personal nuances in their understandings and practices of environmentalism. Vivanco (2006) argues that ecotourism is a site of cultural production where certain ideas are privileged, forming new relationships among diverse actors and institutions. In Monteverde, some villagers said that while they were gaining an appreciation of the quetzal (a bird traditionally dismissed as having little use compared to other forest resources such as timber and medicinal plants), it was more because of its economic benefit through ecotourism than its aesthetic or ecological value local women were incorporating representations of the quetzal in their crafts to sell to tourists, despite some of them having never seen one and without necessarily changing their view of the bird (Vivanco, 2001: 89). Biologists and other natural scientists tend to simplify the interactions of people and the environment into topics that are easily conveyed (West,

Igoe & Brockington, 2006). Beyond assessing the environmental impacts of ecotourism, it is pertinent to examine how the redefinition of social relations affects socio-ecological domains.

Carrier and West (2009) problematize the role of complex social factors in contemporary conservation projects. Attempts to change people's relationships with the local environment, for example through establishing a national park, highlights values, as well as social, political and economic relationships and practices that may otherwise be overlooked. For local peoples, the meanings of landscapes "reflect, reproduce and affect social relations and cultural values" (Carrier and West, 2009: 161). Environmental conservation projects engender changes to non-static relationships of local peoples, both among themselves and with their surroundings. For example, NGOs often rely on the Western concept of the division between nature and culture to present human activities that affect the environment as unnatural. On the other hand, local peoples have been able to form strategic alliances with NGOs and state institutions by employing these very discourses of sustainable development and environmentalism (West, Igoe & Brockington, 2006). Avoiding essentialisms is important in research regarding conservation, which takes place at the intersection of local people and broader politico-economic institutions. This intersection "reflects and shapes the ways that people see themselves and their surroundings, as well as the ways that these people and surroundings are seen by others" (Carrier and West, 2009: 163). Environmental interventions therefore aim to reshape both people and nature.

Negotiating the direction of tourism development

Employing a Foucauldian understanding of power as being non-hierarchical facilitates an examination of how relations between institutions, organizations and local peoples affect the operation of ecotourism in developing countries. One dominant group does not hold power; it instead radiates throughout society and forms part of all human interactions (Foucault, 1987). How local people control and negotiate the direction of development is mediated at several levels. It is within the everyday experience and performance of tourism that subtle forms of resistance to power-knowledge regimes can be witnessed (Hannam, 2002). Local peoples from tourist destinations have a range of levels of involvement in ecotourism, therefore are presented with different opportunities to negotiate how it proceeds in their communities (Wearing & McDonald, 2002). Those directly involved in tourism formulate and implement standards of ethical conduct in the tourism industry, while also collaborating with others to negotiate the type and extent of development, balancing concerns of the public with those of profit. Locals not earning income from ecotourism do not necessarily play a passive role in its development, but

may possess different cultural values and norms than those with vested economic interests in tourism.

Within tourism studies, Cheong and Miller (2000) have sought to analyze tourism from a Foucauldian perspective, proposing that rather than solely the tourist exercising power over members of visited societies, “there is power everywhere in tourism” (Cheong & Miller, 2000: 372). Cases of local people resisting tourism development and negotiating their involvement show that power can be multidirectional and demonstrates the suitability of applying Foucault’s conceptualization of power to studies of tourism (Mason, 2009). Local peoples exercise agency through displays either of support or opposition to ecotourism. Where locals have opposed tourism, it has in some cases been in proactive ways, such as blocking the entry of tourists into regions or protesting against proposed developments (Cheong & Miller, 2000). Opinions regarding the values of ecotourism can be polarized. For example, a cattle rancher from Monteverde, Costa Rica argues, “It [conservation and tourism] simply means more controls on the *campesino*” (Vivanco, 2006: xii), while other farmers actively participate by hosting bird-watching tours on their properties. The negotiating positions of local peoples can be strengthened by the need of tourism operators to include friendly interactions with locals as part of marketing their ecotourism experience. Local peoples can therefore influence the outcomes of tourism projects.

An understanding of the fluidity of power relations serves to broaden current knowledge of the complexities of how ecotourism operates and identify new options for its management, whether at the level of policy-making or within local communities directly impacted by ecotourism development. Paying closer attention to the voices of local people who are most implicated by tourism development practices, can shed light on how they themselves see these processes and the ways in which they negotiate the directions of development within the broader context of globalization. Importantly, it may allow for an analysis of whether ecotourism is creating more equitable and sustainable livelihoods or instead contributing to further social differentiation and environmental degradation.

CHAPTER THREE: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN COSTA RICA

Major socio-economic indicators

Costa Rica's comparative performance across a range of socio-economic indicators is varied. The country is recognized for providing high standards of health and education to its population, yet addressing income and gender inequality remain significant challenges. In 2011, Costa Rica ranked above the Latin American and Caribbean regional average on the United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI) and sixty-ninth worldwide (United Nations Development Program [UNDP], 2012). Areas of strength include indicators of health, with the life expectancy at birth being 79.3 years and prevalence of undernourishment at less than five percent of the total population. Access to a range of basic services including electricity, sanitation and suitable housing, is generally high and ninety seven percent of Costa Ricans have access to improved water supplies (World Bank, 2007). The adult literacy rate is 96.3 percent and mean years of schooling 8.3 years. Costa Rica's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita (2005 PPPⁱⁱⁱ US\$) is \$10,085 (UNDP, 2012), although policies of economic integration and trade liberalization implemented since the 1980s have had uneven outcomes for development. Inequality has risen in Costa Rica: its Gini coefficient, a measure of the deviation of the distribution of income from an equal distribution, increased from 44 in 1989 to 50.3 in 2011 (UNDP, 2012).

Despite being classified as an upper middle income developing country by the World Bank (2012), the effects of poverty are still significant in Costa Rica, particularly for certain sectors of the population. Less than one percent of the Costa Rican population lives below the internationally comparable \$1.25 PPP per day poverty line (UNDP, 2012), but Costa Rica's 2010 official national poverty figures from household surveys consider 21.3 percent of the population to be living in poverty, with 6.1 percent living in conditions of extreme poverty (Williams, 2010). The distribution of poverty is uneven, disproportionately affecting people from larger households, households headed by women (especially in rural areas), households whose main source of income is from the informal sector or in agriculture and people from rural areas in the Brunca and Chorotega regions (World Bank, 2007). Costa Rica's population is 64.9 percent urban, 35.1 percent rural (UNDP, 2012).

There are eight main Indigenous ethnic groups in Costa Rica, of which Bribri, Cabécar and Chorotega are the most populous. 104,143 people, or 2.4 percent of the population, identified as Indigenous peoples in the 2011 Census (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos [INEC], 2012), the majority of who live in the twenty-four

reservations that were established by law in 1977. Indigenous peoples have long been marginalized by the Costa Rican state; they were not granted the right to vote until as recently as 1994 (Herforth, 2007:4). Compared to the general population, Indigenous peoples have higher infant, child, and general mortality rates, as well as higher rates of malnutrition and infectious disease. Much of the areas of the country that lack potable water occur on Indigenous reservations and while 92 percent of the population as a whole have access to sewage disposal, only 40 percent of the Indigenous population has access (Herforth, 2007:1). Health and agricultural interventions have often lacked cultural considerations, while geographic isolation and poor infrastructure contribute to ongoing challenges in reducing poverty measures (Herforth, 2007).

While Costa Rica elected a female president, Laura Chinchilla in 2010, there is still much to be done to improve gender equality. Costa Rica's 2011 gender inequality index, based on reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market was 0.361, compared to 0.140 in Canada (UNDP, 2012). However, Costa Rica has been undergoing significant demographic changes that affect gender relations. Along with Chile and Cuba, Costa Rica has been identified by the Comisión Económica Para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL) as being in an advanced stage of demographic transition (Flórez-Estrada, 2011: 1). The birth rate has reached replacement level, 2.1 children per female, due to increased availability of and access to birth control, women staying longer in the education system and higher participation rates in the workforce (Flórez-Estrada, 2011). At the same time Costa Rica is undergoing changes in religious affiliations. With a decline in practicing Catholics and an increase in those identifying as non-religious, family structures are becoming more diversified and the Legislative Assembly has been debating recognizing same-sex civil unions (Flórez-Estrada, 2011).

Female participation in the paid labour market increased from 30.4 percent in 1988 to 41.7 percent in 2008. Flórez-Estrada (2011: 2) linked the changes from women's traditional role as the "ama de casa" or housewife towards paid work to the influence of neoliberal structural reforms that have occurred in the country since the 1980s. Firms have sought additional labour to work under more precarious contractual arrangements, often relying on women's labour, where gender discrimination or less experience in the job market ensure women receive lower salaries than men. Nonetheless, women have been able to increase their economic autonomy through paid work, producing tensions with some men who may see this as a threat to their masculinity and control over their partners (Flórez-Estrada, 2011: 7). Changes in gender relations in Costa Rica have tended to be overshadowed by concerns about poverty and inequality and these changes require more attention as a crucial aspect of a national culture in transition (Flórez-Estrada, 2011).

From coffee to tourism: Costa Rica's evolving rural economy

The export-agriculture model of development is widely debated. Advocates, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), emphasize the potential for developing nations to earn foreign exchange through their comparative advantage in agricultural exports, which can then be invested in national development projects or to service debts (Sick, 2008a: 7). Critics point to negative consequences of agro-export economic strategies, including the conversion of land from domestic food production into monocrops for export, reduction of local food security, the integration of small farmers into precarious contracts with global agribusiness companies and the dispossession of peasants, driving rural migration towards urban centres and slums (McMichael, 2009: 154). In Costa Rica, the results have been somewhat less dire. Some scholars believe that favourable state policies towards small coffee farmers enabled a rural middle class to develop (Sick, 2008a). Nevertheless, the impacts of neoliberal policies on the coffee commodity sector have led to volatile prices and increased competition for coffee producers. Facing this crisis, many coffee farmers have sought to diversify their income generation strategies (Sick, 1997). The Costa Rican state has also tried to stimulate economic growth in a wider range of industries, including microchip manufacturing, growing non-traditional export crops such as tropical fruits as well as the burgeoning tourism industry.

Coffee production has been the basis of many economies throughout Latin America, with differing outcomes. Coffee is the second-largest legally exported commodity from the South, after oil and there are nearly 25 million coffee-farmer families worldwide (Fridell, 2007a: 94). In the early 1840s, Costa Rica was the first Central American country to establish regular coffee exports. By the 1880s, coffee had become a major export crop in Central America and Colombia. In Guatemala and El Salvador the concentration of landholdings into large coffee plantations and control of labour by elites have been associated with political repression and high levels of poverty and inequality (Brockett, 1990 in Sick, 2008a). In Costa Rica, small and medium sized household-producers have, by contrast, prospered and achieved relatively high levels of human development (Sick, 2008a). One attributing factor is that Costa Rica was geographically and culturally isolated during the colonial period, with a relative scarcity of labour. Without large Indigenous and slave populations that were exploited in other Central American countries, elites in Costa Rica needed to attract and incentivize labour from other colonists. The elites controlled the processing and exporting side of coffee production, rather than large plantations, therefore it was in their interests for small domestic producers to stay nearby in order to supply them coffee. This included selling

or giving land to settlers who might otherwise take advantage of opportunities to claim unoccupied land in frontier regions (Samper, 1990 in Sick, 2008a).

After gaining independence from Spain in 1821, export agriculture in Costa Rica was supported by state policies, such as providing credit to farmers. The Great Depression created a major disruption to coffee-growing economies, resulting in severe balance of payments deficits. In Latin America, attempts at crop diversification and regional economic integration to decrease the risk associated with dependency on one or two commodities have had limited success. Most farmers in the region have therefore been at the mercy of the booms and busts of the global market. However, the Costa Rican state as well as international regulation has cushioned these cycles. Since the late 1940s, Costa Rica has employed a state-led development strategy, including an extensive welfare state. The Partido Social Demócrata (Social Democratic Party, PSD) which seized power in 1948, promoted the development of agricultural production and processing, credit and savings, purchasing, transportation and housing cooperatives (Fridell, 2007b). In 1953, they set a minimum price for farmers and employed favourable taxes and regulations to support the industry (Sick, 2008a).

At a global scale, from 1962 until 1989, the International Coffee Agreement (ICA) involving producer and consumer countries employed a quota system to maintain some price stability and dampen fluctuations of the global commodity market (Fridell, 2007b). The agreement was plagued by difficulties including contravening the quota by selling to countries outside of the agreement, speculation, limits on high quality beans, technological advances perpetuating oversupply, geopolitics and the rise of neoliberalism. Despite its problems, the ICA resulted in a greater retention of coffee income in the South. In the 1970s and 1980s, thirty-three percent of coffee income remained in producing countries, while fifty percent ended up in consuming countries. After 1989, seventy-five percent went to consuming countries, with just fifteen percent of global coffee income being accrued to producing countries (Fridell, 2007b). The ICA therefore had managed, to an extent, to regulate the international coffee market.

Internationally, from the 1970s onwards there has been a shift towards neoliberal globalization as a development project, presenting comparative advantage and specialization as the paths to economic success (McMichael 2008). During and after the Third World debt crisis of the 1980s, the IMF placed conditionalities on loans to developing countries by requiring the implementation of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) to restructure economies through neoliberal policies, including the liberalization of agriculture. Concurrently, proponents of the modernization development paradigm encouraged the use of industrial farming techniques to increase yields. In the 1970s, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) implemented a technology

transfer strategy to increase coffee production in several Central American and Caribbean countries. Over eighty million dollars were spent in the technification of small producers in the region, much of it through a Costa Rican agency (Pratt & Harner, 1997). When the ICA was abandoned in 1989 as part of this neoliberal trend, it brought the end of the quota system. The subsequent flooding of the market, particularly by the entry of new producer countries such as Vietnam and others who were being encouraged to develop export-oriented crops to service IMF debt repayments, resulted in a coffee crisis of volatile prices that reached as low as \$0.42 per pound in 2002 (Fridell, 2007a: 145). The majority of small-scale coffee farmers were therefore unable to cover the costs of production (Sick, 2008a: 133).

Although in March 2011 Arabica coffee prices reached a 34-year high (Nicholson, 2011), there is some evidence that climate change is contributing to decreasing yields in some countries, meaning that higher prices still may not be able to adequately compensate farmers who have low production volumes^{iv} (Butler, 2011). Several impacts related to the coffee crisis in other Latin American countries include increasing rural unemployment, social unrest, growing poverty, malnutrition and migration (Eakin et al., 2003). Coffee growing communities have had to seek various means of adapting to volatile market prices. For smallholder farmers, the diversification of crops and income sources have been common strategies to increase their resilience. In Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala, responses to the coffee crisis included changes in land area planted in coffee, the introduction of alternative crops for sale or subsistence (e.g. sugarcane, maize and beans), engaging in organic coffee production and seeking employment in tourism or other local industries (Eakin et al., 2003). Factors influencing these responses included access to market and technical information, financial resources and land area size, as well as the involvement of the public sector, rural credit unions and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Coffee certification schemes are touted as a way of lessening the negative effects of global market participation on coffee producers and the environment. Fair Trade certification, which combines agri-environmental standards with social objectives, offers a guaranteed price for coffee above that of the international market. The more environmentally focused organic or Rainforest Alliance certified coffees generally receive a premium, although there are no set minimum prices (Bacon, 2010). Community development can be enhanced through participation in certification schemes (Lyon, 2007). However, major shortcomings of Fair Trade are that gender inequality has persisted, despite certification guidelines to address it (Lyon, 2008) and that market access is a major barrier to more producers receiving the benefits (Murray, Raynolds & Taylor, 2006). Furthermore, buyers favour larger, established cooperatives (Smith,

2007). Due to the shortage of buyers, the majority of certified cooperatives sell only approximately twenty percent of their beans on Fair Trade markets (Fridell, 2007b). Certification schemes reliant on consumer demand fail to provide long-term economic security for the majority of coffee farmers. In Costa Rica, Fair Trade certification is growing, but it is not widespread. While the premium is the same worldwide, the cost of living and the price of labour are higher than in many other coffee-producing countries, therefore it is less effective in Costa Rica (Sick 2008b). Costa Rican farmers have instead concentrated on quality to attract higher prices from specialty buyers.

While coffee remains the primary form of income for over 78,000 farmers in Costa Rica (Sick, 2008a), tourism, non-traditional exports such as banana and pineapple crops, as well as industrial goods, particularly microchips, now surpass coffee export values. By 1993, the tourism sector had become the number one earner of foreign exchange (Honey, 2008: 163) and by the late 1990s employed twelve percent of the labour force (Horton, 2009: 93). In 2011, 2.2 million international tourists visited Costa Rica (Costa Rica Tourism Board [ICT], 2012a) and the country received the highest per capita number of tourists in Central America. With earnings nearing US\$2 billion in 2011, compared to US\$752 million from bananas and US\$375 million from coffee, the tourism industry accounted for 4.8 percent of Costa Rica's GDP and nineteen percent of foreign exchange earnings (ICT, 2012a).

Costa Rica has been described as "ecotourism's poster child" and a "laboratory for green tourism" (Honey, 2008: 160). The success of ecotourism, a variant of tourism focusing on experiences in the natural environment, stems from a number of ecological and political factors. Costa Rica's ecotourism boom was predicated by the national expansion of protected areas in the 1970s and 1980s, now covering twenty five percent of the country. This was supported by transnational conservation networks and the Costa Rican government, but not without significant social struggles (Horton, 2009). As an isthmus connecting North and South America, the country hosts species from both, resulting in a highly diverse fauna and flora. With 850 species of birds, more than the United States and Canada combined, conservation scientists have determined that Costa Rica, with a land area of only 0.035 percent of the earth's surface, contains five percent of the world's biodiversity (Honey, 2008). Costa Rica is also part of the Meso-American biodiversity hotspot, one of only twenty-five such areas worldwide. Using a categorization system based on levels of endemism and degree of threats to species, the hotspot approach is intended to prioritize conservation efforts (Myers et al., 2000). As indicated by the over one hundred local and international environmental NGOs that have offices in Costa Rica and the proliferation of over one hundred and sixty protected areas, calls to protect Costa Rica's environment have been answered (Honey, 2008).

Besides the establishment of National Parks, a number of other state policies and initiatives have contributed to the strong growth of ecotourism in Costa Rica. The country abolished its military in the 1950s and became known as a secure and safe democratic country in the troubled Central American region. While the first National Park was established in 1969, the start of the ecotourism boom has been associated with President Oscar Arias being awarded the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize, clearly distinguishing Costa Rica apart from its unstable neighbours. In the mid-1990s, the Costa Rican Tourism Institute created the voluntary Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) program to show government and tourism industry's commitment to sustainable tourism practices. The Costa Rican National Chamber of Ecotourism (CANECO) was established in 2005, promoting the CST and hosting workshops. Specific organizations such as the Cooperative Consortium – National Ecotourism Network (COOPRENA) and the Community-Based Rural Tourism Association (ACTUAR) were formed to help rural communities develop and market small community-owned ecotourism businesses, also running a trade show for the Costa Rican domestic tourism market. At the national level, in 2007 Oscar Arias launched the Peace with Nature Initiative, aiming to plant five million trees per year and for Costa Rica to become a carbon neutral nation by 2023 (Honey, 2008). Costa Rica is also party to many international environmental agreements, helping to secure their green reputation.

Participation in ecotourism, like export-agriculture, is reliant on international markets and conditions. Dependence on tourism income has been noted in Costa Rican communities (Honey, 2008), with as much as seventy percent of regional income around Monte Verde coming from ecotourism (Vivanco, 2001). Overreliance on ecotourism can lead communities to be vulnerable to the effects of external factors, such as declines in tourist numbers due to economic recession or political instability. The number of tourists to Costa Rica dropped by eight percent between 2008 and 2009, with the decline being attributed to the global economic recession and the H1N1 virus (Arces, 2010). Following the crisis, there was a three percent increase in poverty from 2009 to 2010 (Williams, 2010). Organized crime is also becoming more prominent, as Costa Rica's Pacific coast is increasingly used as a drug smuggling route due to crackdowns on organizations in Colombia and Mexico as well as efforts to limit smuggling through the Caribbean (Archibold & Cave, 2011). Without the military means to combat this trend, in 2010 Costa Rica was added to the US government's list of the world's twenty major drug trafficking or producing countries. Costa Ricans are increasingly concerned about security issues and some believe that if not addressed, it will impact the country's growing tourism sector (Williams, 2011). In May 2011, the United Kingdom Foreign Office issued a travel warning about Costa Rica, citing an increase in violent crimes

against tourists and unsolved cases of missing tourists whose disappearances may be related to criminal activity ("Official U.K. travel," 2011). While increasing crime is a very serious threat, for the most part, these issues have remained obscured as Costa Rica continues to market itself as a safe destination and tourist numbers have risen.

Honey (2008) draws attention to numerous other concerns about ecotourism development in Costa Rica, including foreign land and business ownership, high levels of economic leakage, lax environmental standards and the underfunding of National Parks. While the Costa Rican state has facilitated ecotourism, many of those to capitalize on establishing ecotourism ventures have been private foreign investors (Horton, 2009). By the early 1990s, eighty percent of beachfront property in Costa Rica had been purchased by foreigners and a 1996 survey found that the majority of hotels and resorts on the Pacific coast were foreign-owned (Honey, 2008). Combined with rising land prices, these forces have excluded local Costa Ricans from both visiting these areas and establishing tourism businesses. Private reserves similarly displace rural peoples. According to Honey, the government has not sufficiently addressed the concerns of the rural poor and has become increasingly intolerant of illegal occupations of land within these areas (2008: 201).

High levels of leakage are a concern for local peoples striving to benefit economically from tourism, as a growing number of tourists use prepaid packages, charter flights and cruises, and stay in large beach resorts and international chain hotels. Costa Ricans only receive minimal income from these tourist practices. Furthermore, resorts have a history of ignoring or getting around environmental regulations, including using bribery to get licenses, despite already having additional advantages by being favoured by tax incentive laws for importing goods to set up hotels (Honey, 2008). These resorts and international chains are now incorporating some modest environmental initiatives, such as tree planting or donating to local non-profits. However, with a focus on sustainable rather than ecotourism, there may be a greenwashing^v effect rather than attaining significant safeguards for the environment.

The funding of the national park system is given much attention by Honey (2008), who sees this as crucial issue. Problems with insufficient funding occurred in the mid-1980s, when the IMF, the World Bank and USAID forced budget cuts to national parks. In the late 1980s, the government creatively raised \$45 million of revenue for the park system through debt-for-nature swaps. This was a system where lending institutions or countries forgave part of Costa Rica's foreign debt in return for the nation's implementation of conservation projects. While the number of foreigners visiting parks doubled in number from 511,000 in 1990 to over a million in 2005, an austerity budget from 1998 to 2005 again restricted funding for parks (Honey, 2008: 170). During that

period parks generated more revenue than they consumed, partly due to charging higher entrance fees. With restrictions on parks funding, the surplus was being used to reduce the national deficit rather than to improve national park services.

By 2005, the national park service faced numerous difficulties: a shortage of funding, personnel and infrastructure; uneven usage with pressure to the point of environmental damage in some parks and none at all in others; and incursions by local peoples to use natural resources within parks. As Costa Rica's national parks were set up with a preservationist approach, rather than one that sought to bring income and employment to local peoples, most do not have visitor centres, roads or other facilities (Honey, 2008). Costa Rica's private reserves, estimated to cover up to five percent of the country and many with infrastructure superior to the national parks, have also been competing with national parks for tourism revenue. In response to these concerns, the government took out a twenty million dollar loan from the Inter-American Development Bank in 2005 to develop national park infrastructure and to train park personnel in financial and tourism management (Honey, 2008). Support for national parks is necessary in order to provide income for the Costa Rican government through entrance fees, as well as jobs for local people providing ecotourism services.

Regional context: Pérez Zeledón, Costa Rica

The canton of Pérez Zeledón provides an example of the convergence of historical and contemporary agricultural production, emerging tourism opportunities and changing socio-economic conditions. Pérez Zeledón currently has a population of 135,000 (INEC, 2012) and was largely settled following the expansion of the Pan American highway in the 1940s (Sick, 2008a: 35). Many settlers came from other coffee-growing regions and soon established the crop in their new home. Untitled land could be claimed by anyone who worked it and this brought relief to those coming from the Meseta Central, the plateau around San Jose, which was facing land and population pressures (Sick, 2008a). The region was suitable for coffee growing and the Banco Nacional built the first coffee-processing plant in 1949. Combined with road improvements, an additional twenty thousand immigrants were attracted to the region between 1950 and 1958 (Sick, 2008a). The economic development of the region was therefore largely based on coffee exports.

While many farmers remain engaged in coffee production, the regional economy has diversified, providing more options for household income generation. The volatility of coffee prices following the collapse of the International Coffee Organization agreement, as well as increasing costs of production, meant that by the early 1990s, many families were struggling to make a living from coffee (Sick, 2008a). While the coffee crisis of the

early 2000s exacerbated these problems, coffee-growers in the region had already been seeking alternative or supplemental income strategies, including reducing areas planted in coffee and diversifying their crops. Unfortunately the boom and bust cycles do not only pertain to coffee as beef and dairy are also at the whim of regional markets and variable prices (Sick, 2008a). In the lower lying, flatter areas, some farmers have increased their land area dedicated to sugarcane growing. Others have experimented with growing different vegetables to sell at local markets, or established their own microenterprises (Sick, 2008a). People also have taken up full or part-time agricultural wage labour jobs, for instance at a large pineapple plantation and packing plant, while working the coffee harvest for other farmers has been a long-standing option to earn additional income.

San Isidro de El General is a hub for regional economic activity. With a population of 46,000 (INEC, 2012), the city now provides more non-agricultural wage labour opportunities for people from nearby rural communities. An increasing importance is being placed on education, particularly as many youth are unlikely to inherit sufficient land to support themselves from farming and wage employment can provide a more stable income than agriculture (Sick, 2008a). For those continuing to grow coffee, the major coffee cooperative of the region, Coopeagri, has made efforts to assist farmers to increase and stabilize their incomes as well as provide social support, including access for members to loans, veterinary services and a medical clinic (Sick, 2008a). While Coopeagri became Fair Trade certified in the mid-2000s, this has yet to make a significant difference in terms of prices farmers receive because the cooperative has been unable to find sufficient number of buyers who will pay the Fair Trade price. There has also been a proliferation of independent small-scale coffee processing plants, receiving assistance from the Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture and international agencies, with the aim of producing high quality, sustainable coffee to be sold at higher prices to specialty buyers.

Despite all of these measures, for many, heavy reliance on volatile coffee markets has meant unstable and often meager income and has led to high levels of emigration from Pérez Zeledón. As early as 1973, the canton had a negative net rate of immigration (Sick, 2008a). Some migrants seek out work in other areas of Costa Rica, such as in industry and construction in San José, or banana plantations on the Caribbean coast. However, for many, unskilled or semi-skilled jobs in the United States provide a way to save relatively large amounts of money to pay off debts, buy land or build a house. For those staying behind, remittances received from family members relieved household financial pressures. The remittance money appears to have stimulated economic growth and construction in the canton (Sick, 2008a).

The gender division of labour within coffee farming households in Pérez Zeledón, Costa Rica, has been documented ethnographically by Sick (2008a). Her study of farming households in the early 1990s found that there was a strict division of labour, where men were responsible for most coffee farming activities and women generally carried out domestic work, sometimes participating in the coffee harvest if male labour was in short supply. Social, cultural and economic factors were perpetuating these divisions, as it was more difficult for female farmers to access agricultural information, technology and credit and land was predominately owned by males. Men had greater authority and control of coffee income, but a woman's position in decision-making could be enhanced by contributions of land and labour to the household. Sick found that women who had land ownership had more sway in economic decision-making and were consulted in major decisions. By contrast, some women without title to land had to ask their husbands for money even for small household purchases (2008a). Although they engaged in informal part-time ventures, such as selling food, sewing clothes and cutting hair, women had few employment opportunities outside the home. Development projects had tended to focus on cooking, sewing and handicraft activities for women and allocated little support to female farmers, therefore reinforcing more traditional gender roles. Yet, while crafts were easily integrated with household work, women faced difficulties in marketing and selling them (Sick, 2008a: 115).

Ecotourism in San Gerardo de Rivas, Pérez Zeledón

Pérez Zeledón is not a major tourist destination in Costa Rica, but has a small and growing tourism industry. One of the major tourist attractions in the canton is the country's highest mountain. At 3820 metres high, Mt Chirripó and the national park surrounding it attracts thousands of domestic and international tourists each year. Chirripó National Park was established on the 9th of August 1975, covering 50,150 hectares. It is also part of the international La Amistad Biosphere Reserve that was declared a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Site in 1983 and encompasses several protected areas in Costa Rica and Panama (Pucci & Montero, 2001). The Crestones, a unique rock formation of spiritual significance to Indigenous peoples, was declared a national symbol in 2011, meaning it can be used by the Costa Rican Tourism Institute to promote the country (Vargas, 2011). Indigenous peoples have used this area for thousands of years and several Bribri, Cabécar and Guaymí reservations are within the Biosphere Reserve. The Indigenous name Chirripó means "land of eternal waters." The mountain and surrounding valleys are the origin of significant watersheds that run both to the Pacific and the Caribbean coasts (Pucci & Montero, 2001). With annual rainfall of up to 3500

millilitres, water is a dominant feature of the area, but forest fires have also shaped the ecology of the region. Fires in recent decades have been more often attributed to human negligence, from out-of-control agricultural burning and even arson. A fire in 1976 destroyed ninety percent of the rare high altitude *paramo* vegetation and a fire in 1985 burned 8,000 to 9,000 hectares of the park (Pucci & Montero, 2001).

At the entrance to Chirripó National Park and twenty kilometres northeast of San Isidro de El General is San Gerardo de Rivas. This village has undergone a transformation in a short period of time from an agricultural frontier town to a global tourism destination. Marciano (2010) documents how people from Santa María de Dota, a coffee-growing region with a similar environment, came to San Gerardo between 1930 and 1950. Indigenous people were living in the area at this time, but they then moved further into isolated mountain terrain. The 1939 Ley General de Terrenos Baldíos (General Law of Uncultivated Lands) permitted title to land if a person had been established there for five years, had cultivated at least a fifth of the area claimed and constructed a house with at least two rooms and a kitchen (Marciano, 2010). The people who came to San Gerardo from the Dota region desired to claim this uncultivated land, as land lower down in the Valle del General of Pérez Zeledón had already been granted to other settlers. Once established, settlers then sent for other family members to join them and the community grew in this way.

At first, these settlers lived a subsistence lifestyle growing crops such as corn and beans, with families supporting each other in times of need. This collaborative spirit has been passed down over the generations, resulting in a highly organized community (Marciano, 2010). Given the distance from markets, hunting was the only means to obtain meat. As well as providing for necessary dietary needs, it was also a leisure activity for men, who would commonly partake in Sunday hunting trips with family and friends (Marciano, 2010). At this time, forested land was viewed as a loss of potential agricultural production and settlers set about the task of clearing the land in order to maximize earnings to support their families. Agricultural development and hunting defined the relationships of local people with the environment, leading to a decline in species abundance and diversity (Marciano, 2010). These relations were to be affected by the establishment of the national park and related tourism economies.

Even before the national park was created, interest in Chirripó's natural resources had brought income opportunities to local people. One community member recounted how his father used to guide mineral prospectors, often Germans, up the mountain. Another man's father worked as a guide for a biologist, earning a high wage relative to what one earned in agricultural work (Marciano, 2010). Therefore, working as guides and porters has a long tradition in San Gerardo. When the first tourists began

arriving in the late 1970s, there was no tourism infrastructure in the village or in the park, so visitors stayed in family homes or in the community hall. These informal arrangements gradually evolved into the first hotels, to meet the increasing demands of tourists (Marciano, 2010). The Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) did not have the personnel or the intention to provide services within the park, so community members continued and expanded their work as porters, guides and cooks, establishing an association to spread the benefits from this more evenly among its members.

In the year 2000, 5,660 people visited the park, forty three percent of them foreigners (Pucci & Montero, 2001). The majority of tourists come hike to the summit of Mt Chirripó. The trek traverses three ecosystems: low mountain tropical rainforest, mountain tropical forest and alpine rain tundra. Starting in San Gerardo at an altitude of 1400 metres, most tourists hike fourteen kilometres the first day to El Paramo Environment Centre lodge^{vi}, operated by MINAE. At an altitude of 3400 metres, the lodge sleeps up to sixty people, who then complete the final five kilometres to the summit the following morning. Climbing Chirripó is a very popular activity among Costa Ricans, as a physical challenge and to some, a personal journey of spiritual significance, inspiring many to return to climb the mountain on an annual basis. In 2010, Costa Ricans comprised sixty two percent of visitors to the park and foreigners thirty eight percent. Since the 2008 economic crisis there has been a reduction in foreign tourists visiting the national park (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

Although most tourism in San Gerardo is concentrated around climbing Chirripó, community members were seeking ways to attract tourists to the village itself (Marciano, 2010). Every year since 1987, a thirty-four kilometre running race up Mt Chirripó has been held, drawing participants from all over Costa Rica and abroad and attracting significant media attention to the village. There are also two private reserves in the village. The largest measures 1,600 hectares and also has a hotel (Talamanca Reserve, 2012). The other comprises 280 hectares and attracts scientists, volunteers and educational tours. It has some basic accommodation for volunteers but does not have hotel facilities (Cloudbridge Nature Reserve, 2012).

The engagement of local people with ecotourism has had economic, environmental and social impacts. In a survey of thirty-three households in San Gerardo, Stoll found that sixty seven percent of households profited directly from tourism, but only fifteen percent considered it their main source of income (2006). Marciano found that tourism and environmental education from park officials has reinforced environmental perspectives and practices. San Gerardo had improved waste management practices compared to a nearby village where tourism is less prevalent (Marciano, 2010). In addition, locals reported decreased incidences of hunting, due to the presence of park

rangers and laws prohibiting hunting within the park. The Association of Porters also has a code of ethics where if a member is caught hunting they are banned from work for three months (Marciano, 2010). The park administrator commented that there was less hunting from San Gerardo than other communities neighbouring the park and related this to tourism. Vegetation cover had also increased due to less dependence on agriculture for income and subsistence purposes and the buying of land by foreigners for conservation. A GIS analysis showed that forest cover around San Gerardo increased 10.8 percent between 1979 and 2007, compared to a mere 0.3 percent near the neighbouring community of Herradura where there is less tourism (Marciano, 2010). Increasing forest cover and decreasing hunting mean that animals are returning to the community, some previously not seen there before.

Negative environmental impacts associated with tourism included problems with solid waste, human-wildlife conflicts, water pollution, lack of environmental impact studies for small hotels and large houses being built by foreigners (Marciano, 2010). Adverse social impacts of tourism identified by locals were an increase of drugs in the community and minor crime. The arrival of increasing numbers of foreign expats who live at least part of the year in the village has been contentious. Locals viewed negatively the amount of land bought and the exclusion of locals from passing through land by putting up private property signs. However, others pointed to the positive impacts of job creation by foreigners (Marciano, 2010). The local economy is changing and many youth are aspiring to work in tourism, rather than agriculture, seeking training in English and other tourism skills.

To provide context for the following chapter that discusses employment, I shall outline major forms of income in San Gerardo, under the categories of tourism work, agricultural work and other village services. As expected for a tourist destination, accommodation and food provision accounted for a number of tourism jobs. At the time of this study, the village had nine hotels, ranging in size from small guesthouses with capacity for around twenty people to the largest having sixty-five beds plus three cabins (Metta Media, 2011). Six of the hotels were locally owned, two were foreign-owned and one was owned by a Costa Rican / US couple. Employment opportunities in hotels include reception services, cleaning rooms and landscaping. All but two of the hotels have restaurants, most of which are licensed to serve alcohol, providing further jobs in cooking, serving and cleaning. At the smaller hotels, employees were often other family members and two of the more popular and larger hotels, while both owned by San Gerardo families, were known to seek employees from other towns where they had family connections. While some of these businesses created very few extra jobs in the

community, one foreign-owned hotel employed up to sixteen local people in the high tourist season (Marciano, 2010: 32).

Besides hotels, there were various other short or long-term accommodation options in the village. Some families had built cabins to receive tourists or rent to foreigners staying longer in the village. Homestays are used to host volunteer or school-groups visiting one of the nature reserves, as well as volunteers with a community organization, or for foreign English teachers who sometimes stay a year in the village. Furthermore, a homestay business had recently been established by a foreigner living in the village and involved six families. This was being advertized as an option for tourists seeking a cultural experience. The homestay arrangements most often involved providing home-cooked meals. In addition to the restaurants at hotels, there was a trout farm with a restaurant owned by a local family and a café run by a community non-profit organization. The village store and a small store in one of the hotels were other places where tourists bought food, often to bring along on the hike up Mt Chirripó.

Another major source of jobs were those associated with the national park. Around seven thousand people a year come to climb Chirripó, with a maximum of forty people a day permitted to enter the park (Interview #19, 2011, June 22). Local people work as porters, guides and cooks, providing services to tourists who climb Mt Chirripó. The majority of these were members of a local Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks. These services were most commonly used by package-tour groups mainly from other Costa Rican cities but also some groups of foreign tourists, who spend three days in the national park: the first day climbing to the lodge, the second day going to the summit and the third day walking back to the village. Porters are the most common of these jobs and carry gear to the lodge, returning the same day, whereas guides and cooks generally accompany the package-tour groups for three days at a time. Several hotels rent gear, such as camping stoves, sleeping bags and warm clothing, to hikers. The national park office is also a source of employment, however at the time of this study only one employee out of eight was from San Gerardo (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

There are several other tourism attractions, as well as goods and services provided by local people. Hotels, reserves and local businesses offer a variety of tours. These include horseback tours to natural or cultural sites, as well as walking tours of botanical gardens, reserves and farms. Other jobs associated with reserves were in reforestation and maintenance. There is a locally owned thermal springs which was popular for weekend visitors from San Isidro. Selling crafts was a further, albeit minimal, income source from tourism. Crafts made by local women were mostly sold during events and festivals, while a few hotels had crafts on display year-round for tourists to

purchase. Therefore, tourism represents a large variety of income-earning opportunities for local people.

Figure 3-1.



View overlooking the village centre and largely forested surroundings of San Gerardo, with the Chirripó River running through the centre.

Source: Author's photograph

Before the rise of tourism, San Gerardo was predominately an agricultural village. While much farmland had been converted into reserves or voluntarily reforested by local people, agriculture continues to be an important source of income for many local families. For some families, it remains the primary income source, while for others it provided the opportunity for seasonal employment. The most prevalent types of agricultural production were coffee, fruit and vegetable growing and raising livestock for dairy and beef production. The majority of coffee farmers in San Gerardo sold their coffee to Coopeagri, a regional cooperative and the largest coffee processor in the canton. Tomatoes were the next most significant commercial crop, while avocados, chile peppers, coriander and red beans, among other crops, were also grown, mainly for sale at the regional market in San Isidro (Stoll, 2006: 7). Some households also sold or exchanged vegetables within the village, either to friends and family or to restaurants. Cattle raised for beef were generally sold at regional markets. Dairy farmers took their milk to a truck that came daily to the village from San Isidro. I was informed that only one dairy farmer had invested in milking machines, while the rest milked by hand. Most of the farms in San Gerardo are small-scale. In my sample of twenty households, fifteen

households owned land. Average size of landholdings was 6.15 hectares, ranging from 0.01 hectares to twenty-eight hectares. Thus, besides employing family labour, many only provided seasonal employment opportunities for specific tasks such as fertilizing, pruning or harvesting crops.

Other sources of employment in the village sought to provide local services, the most notable of which were the primary school and the village store. While the primary school employed a local cook, most of the teachers came from outside of San Gerardo. The village store sold food, as well as a limited range of homeware and hardware items, mainly employing family labour. Other economic activities were run from within family homes, such as making and repairing clothing, or selling jewellery, clothing and household goods from catalogues. In other villages in Pérez Zeledón, Sick (2008a) found that these types of micro-entreprises provided additional income in a way that was easily combined with coffee production. There was also a significant generation of jobs from foreigners who resided part-time or year-round in the village. Foreigners employed local people and/or other foreigners in construction, landscaping and cleaning. Some local residents prepared specialty food items, such as organic dried fruit, to sell among the foreign resident population. Many of these additional income-earning opportunities are in some way related to tourism. For example, locals spending income earned through tourism employment can help support the existence of micro-entreprises. The engagement of locals in the aforementioned employment categories, particularly agriculture and tourism, are the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: HOUSEHOLD INCOME STRATEGIES IN SAN GERARDO DE RIVAS

This chapter examines the participation of local people in agricultural and tourism work and the contributions of tourism employment to household income strategies. The following section draws on data from the initial twenty household surveys to describe the employment strategies of individuals in relation to socio-economic factors such as land ownership, age and gender. In addition, data from fourteen semi-structured interviews of male and female heads of ten selected households, as well as participant observation, provide more detail regarding types of work, pay rates, working conditions and individual perspectives on agricultural and tourism work. Firstly, I will examine the factors involved in the declining role of agriculture in the village economy, including the impacts of increasing foreign ownership of land in the village. This will be followed by an overview of the types of tourism employment most commonly engaged in by men and women respectively, with reference to socio-economic factors. I will then discuss the changing perceptions of women's work and how their participation in tourism work has affected household economic strategies. I show local comparisons of agricultural and tourism employment and that although participation in tourism employment has been uneven, it has contributed to the wider local economy and quality of life in San Gerardo, perhaps to a certain dependence. Lastly, I outline how agritourism and niche agricultural production may provide ways to complement and sustain existing income sources, what local people thought of the potential for further agritourism development and how these options might be achieved.

Data from my survey sample of twenty households showed that tourism and agriculture were complementary sources of income, with the majority of participant households engaging in both. Fifteen out of twenty households (seventy-five percent) who completed the survey had at least one head of household receiving income from tourism^{vii}. Seventeen out of the twenty (eighty-five percent) households had at least one household head involved in agriculture, either farming or as an agricultural labourer^{viii}. Twelve (sixty percent) of the households therefore had some kind of engagement in both tourism and agriculture. A representative of a local organization described the common integration of both employment types: "Tourism and agriculture, tourism-dairying, tourism-vegetable production, or whatever it is, they combine it with tourism" (Interview #17, 2011, June 20). All households had multiple income strategies and people typically worked a variety of jobs, some of them seasonal. Therefore, it was not practical to

describe engagement in tourism without also discussing agricultural or other types of employment.

Figure 4-1.



Signs of tourism businesses beside a coffee receiving station highlight the complementary nature of agriculture and tourism in the village.

Source: Author's photograph

The changing role of agriculture

As noted above, types of tourism work are intertwined with agricultural livelihoods. The role of agriculture is changing, due to external market forces and local circumstances. Major problems affecting agriculture include productivity, uncertainties around prices and climate and the willingness to do agricultural work when the option to work in tourism is available. There is also the declining availability of agricultural land, especially due to the purchase of land by foreigners. Stoll (2006) found that productivity per unit area of dairy cows was lower in San Gerardo than in a town three kilometres down the mountain, due to the difficult grazing conditions on extremely steep slopes and the vegetation requiring more time to regenerate in the cooler climate. These issues were also mentioned by the representative of a community organization, who stated:

Now everyone is going with tourism, which it what earns the most. Agriculture is very difficult. The situation is that you can only produce very little here. (...) Perhaps because of the topography, it is very difficult here (Interview #17, 2011, June 20).

Speaking about agriculture in general, one woman who came from a farming family stated that agriculture had many uncertainties:

We don't know if the harvest will be good, if the season, if the climate is going to help us to have a good harvest and what the price of the crop will be like either. Because sometimes the crop is good, but the price is very bad, so that doesn't help the farmer, because you need to invest a lot, the seeds, time, fertilizers, all that and in the end the earnings that they obtain are not sufficient. Not even to pay the costs of the inputs. So at the moment, the situation in which we are in for agriculture is very difficult (Interview #4, 2011, June 7).

The challenges surrounding agriculture are multi-faceted and are impacted by both local and external factors.

One crop for which these uncertainties around prices and climate had been particularly pertinent was coffee. Coffee, although still an important part of several households' economic strategies, only appeared to be the primary form of income for one sample household. Among the eight coffee growers in my survey sample, the average land area planted in coffee was 0.9 hectares, with the largest at two hectares. One household rented land on which they grew their coffee. A hotel owner and coffee farmer, who I interviewed as a business owner outside of the survey sample, informed me that with three hectares, he had the largest amount of coffee of the farmers in the village. This same farmer previously had seven hectares of coffee, but when prices hit a low of 13,000 colones^{ix} per fanega^x in 2001^{xi}, he cut much of it as it cost more to harvest and care for it than the price he was receiving (Interview #16, 2011, May 13). Unfortunately, at that time his trees were only three to four years old and just starting to produce, so he had lost twelve million colones of investments in his coffee. Another local business owner had cut two hectares of coffee and converted it to grazing land (Interview #2, 2011, June 7). A porter and coffee farmer pointed out that the prices of inputs had risen: "The inputs, like fertilizers, are at very elevated prices - higher than before. In the end, the prices [received for coffee] are also irregular; today they are good, tomorrow they are bad" (Interview #11, 2011, June 16).

While prices have improved since 2001, climatic factors have been affecting yields, with unseasonal rains in 2010 having caused a very poor coffee harvest. Commenting on the low harvest due to the rains, one farmer expressed frustration that "When a hectare only gives twenty five fanegas, it is a loss" (Interview #2, 2011, June 7). Scientists predict that climate change will have large impacts on agriculture in Costa Rica, as temperatures as expected to rise and rainfall to decrease by fifteen percent on the Pacific side of the country (Soto, 2012). Coffee, like many tropical crops, is sensitive

to small changes in temperature ranges and is therefore susceptible to climate change. Landslides caused by extreme weather events can also destroy coffee farms (Allison, 2011). In Costa Rica, farmers in Santa Maria de Dota and Poás have noted the negative impacts of erratic weather on coffee flowering and subsequent yields. In Santa Maria de Dota, farmers observed that temperatures had warmed significantly since 2005, while in Poás, rain in the harvest season first occurred in 1997, a phenomena previously unheard of^{xii} (Allison, 2011). Heavier rains had also caused increased incidences of fungus on coffee plants, meaning more fungicide was needed and pushing up production costs. In response, national and international coffee research institutes were developing hardier tree varieties, but at twice the cost of regular coffee trees these were too expensive for many farmers (Allison, 2011).

Despite price and climatic volatility, recent elevated global coffee prices, as well as Costa Rican government incentives to replant coffee, had motivated half of the coffee farmers I interviewed to plant more coffee. Two families had planted between 3000 to 4000 seedlings (Interview #12, 2011, June 16), (Interview #11, 2011, June 16). One woman pointed out that even their one hectare of coffee was very important for their household, as “It is something fixed. We know that every year we will harvest coffee to invest it in the education of our daughters” (Interview #5, 2011, June 8). Nevertheless, another family said they were not planning on planting more, because there had been a shortage of harvest workers (Interview #9, 2011, June 13).

The main source of work for women in the village, aside from tourism, was during the coffee harvest^{xiii}. Similar to San Gerardo, Lyon (2008: 265) found that in a Guatemalan community coffee production was predominately managed by men but that women assisted with the coffee harvest (See also Sick, 2008a on Pérez Zeledón). Among my survey sample, seven women participated in the coffee harvest^{xiv}. Two of these women picked their own coffee, while the remaining five were paid to pick coffee for other farmers. All five women who picked coffee for others came from households where their husband was a wage labourer (either in tourism and agriculture or both) and only one of these was also a farmer. In contrast, two women who stated that they did not earn any form of income were from farming households in the largest land size category. This suggests that the income of the male head of household (affected by landholdings and occupation) could influence whether women needed to seek extra household income through strenuous work harvesting coffee.

One woman explained that during the peak of the harvest, she would work five days a week, from six in the morning until two in the afternoon. Workers were paid 1,250 colones^{xv} (US\$2.50) per basket filled and she could earn 2,000 to 7,000 colones (US\$4 to US\$14) per day depending on the stage of the harvest and ripeness of the beans

(Interview #5, 2011, June 8). Another woman said she could at times collect ten baskets in a day at the peak of the season and described her typical day as:

I need to get up at four in the morning, make my lunch to bring, go to pick coffee, come home and do jobs in the house, cleaning and everything. I finish very late in the night (...) and the next day do the same again. And under the sun, under the rain, it makes no difference. (Interview #4, 2011, June 7)

It was difficult work, often under pouring rain or harsh heat with the fear of poisonous snakes that live in the coffee bushes; one woman recounted informally how one fell into her basket while she was picking. With San Gerardo at times having a shortage of labour, women's participation in the harvest is also important for ensuring that coffee gets picked on time.

The other main forms of agricultural income were from keeping livestock for dairy and beef, as well as growing vegetables, particularly tomatoes, for sale in San Isidro and regional markets. In the survey household sample, three households had dairy cows (four, fifteen and twenty cows each), two had beef cattle and one owned thirty-five livestock, which were a mixture of both. To be a dairy farmer, a sizable amount of land was necessary, with the smallest dairy farmer in my sample owning five hectares and the largest fifty hectares. Combined with large initial capital investments, dairying was not a viable option for many. Beef appeared a simpler alternative, in terms of labour and time involved. Both beef farmers in my sample also work as porters.

A young farmer invited me to witness the milking process, which gave an insight into the work. From five cows, he was getting between fifty-five and sixty litres of milk per day and earning around 10,000 colones (US\$20) per day, which he said was enough to live comfortably. Milking required leaving around five in the morning in order to round up the cows, milk them and transport the milk by horseback half an hour to meet a truck that came every morning at 7:30am. The truck came from San Isidro to collect the milk from all the dairy farmers in the village. He commented that there used to be many more dairy farmers, but that they had sold land to foreigners and moved to the city or into tourism jobs. A dairy farmer that I interviewed said that he felt milk prices were only just sufficient to make ends meet. While prices did not vary as much as those for coffee, production levels changed at times and the costs for animal feed were expensive (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). Dairy farming has its own risks. A woman highlighted the financial risks in dairying and recalled how her brother had bought cows at 500,000 colones (US\$1000) each and lost three that got sick.

Figure 4-2.



Tomato production under plastic shading.

Source: Author's photograph

Vegetable production, primarily for sale but also for household consumption, was common outside of the centre of the village, with large areas dedicated to tomatoes shaded by sheets of plastic from the rain and sun. According to one older woman, they did not used to have access to markets: “We used to grow a lot but you had to use it all yourself because you couldn’t sell it” (Interview #6, 2011, June 8). Farmers’ markets have since been established in San Isidro and improvements in roads and transport have made it possible to grow vegetables commercially. Tomatoes were purported to be of better quality and longer-lasting when grown at the higher altitude in San Gerardo. However, one man who had worked in tomatoes stated, “What we do is purely tomatoes, but this is very, very polluting. It takes a lot of chemicals” (Interview #17, 2011, June 20). This made tomato growing expensive, while prices varied greatly depending on regional production levels and whether growers had an advance contract with a buyer. A woman who also worked in tomatoes shared her concern that workers used a lot of agrichemicals without wearing adequate protective gear.

Numerous factors, some of which have been discussed above, have combined to create a decline in agricultural production in San Gerardo. Several participants expressed this and as the representative of a local organization stated “I don’t know if we will keep doing agriculture because agriculture is disappearing in San Gerardo now

that we basically live off tourism, eighty percent of us” (Interview #17, 2011, June 20). A farmer and hotel owner reaffirmed this, saying:

With the attention towards tourists we have neglected agriculture and conservation a bit. Because some people don’t want to work in agriculture any more, or less than before. Now its like the people have opted more to serve tourists or work up Chirripó (Interview #16, 2011, May 13).

A commercial vegetable grower lamented that there was too little agriculture in San Gerardo:

I would like it if there was more [agriculture], because when there is more, one feels more supported. It would be easier to get some things, like maybe courses or, I don’t know, to form a cooperative or something. But here there is very little (Interview #8, 2011, June 9).

A member of a family-run organic coffee association also mentioned the lack of assistance for agriculture and that the government was no longer supporting farmers. To him, one of the problems was that the government had been more interested in attracting foreign multinationals and bringing in cheap imported food to the detriment of Costa Rican farmers, who were less organized in terms of protesting and fighting for farmers rights than they had been twenty years before (Interview #15, 2011, May 12). A young woman who works in tourism linked the decline in agricultural production to the recent emphasis on educating youth to work in other professions:

I think the farmer is disappearing (...) because all of our children go to study and farmers are disappearing. Only the old ones are left. (...) So we need to rescue a little more what is agriculture and maybe do agricultural tourism, right (Interview #4, 2011, June 7).

This woman highlighted the possibility of integrating agriculture with tourism, possibly to make it more of an attractive option to youth and also to obtain more income. The option of agritourism will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

Importantly, the declining availability of agricultural land and the impacts of foreign land ownership were having profound implications for local agricultural livelihoods in San Gerardo, with inter-generational consequences. Typically, as land is passed down through inheritance, it is of decreasing size, due to dividing land up among various heirs, a commonly occurring phenomena in Latin America that creates *minifundias*. While this exists in San Gerardo, the greatest concern about land was that of foreign ownership in and around the village, with some foreigners residing semi-permanently there. Costa Rica has relatively relaxed laws around foreign land ownership

(Honey, 2008). One man estimated that eighty percent of land in San Gerardo was foreign owned (Interview #15, 2011, May 12), while another believed the amount to be around five or six thousand hectares, possibly more (Interview #16, 2011, May 13). In any case, the two largest areas bought were likely the two reserves, sizing 1,600 hectares and 280 hectares respectively, very large areas of land compared to the average size of landholdings of 8.8 hectares in my survey sample. Generally, where foreigners had bought agricultural land, it had been at least partially replanted or left to reforest. Some of this land area had been put into private reserves.

Foreign land ownership has had economic and socio-cultural impacts. The most significant impact is that land prices have been pushed up so much that few locals can afford to buy land. In fact, many 'for sale' signs only advertized in English, as most land was beyond the reach of locals. This has reduced the amount of land being cultivated and the potential for future generations to buy land to farm. A young farmer told me informally that a small bit of land now cost 30 million colones (US\$60,000) so it was difficult to buy again if one did sell. A man from another town who works the National Park office shared an outsider perspective on the situation:

Many foreigners are coming into the community; they are buying land and are appropriating the soil resources. This is going to provoke a displacement of people from the community (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

A local farmer described the issue plainly: "Many people sell their land and then don't have a farm to work on" (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). His wife then further highlighted the consequences of selling farmland, meaning that one would have to seek wage labour:

There are many people who think it is better to go to the city. And there are other people who hold onto a little piece [of their land] only to live on. And they have to go out and look for work somewhere else (Interview #9, 2011, June 13).

A hotel owner and farmer was well aware that conservation of one's land was a luxury that one could afford if they did not have immediate economic concerns or subsistence necessities. Buoyed by income from the hotel, he himself had been leaving some of his farm to regenerate, but saw the economic means of foreigners at a different scale:

The only good they [foreigners] have brought is that they conserve more. As they don't need to work, because with dollars it's different, they buy a farm and leave it so it fills up with bush. They don't produce anything! Pensioners are receiving their dollars, so they don't need to think about

growing beans, rice, corn, coffee or anything at all (Interview #16, 2011, May 13).

While locals recognized foreigners' enthusiasm for conservation and the benefits gained through some employment, for example in construction and cleaning at foreigners' houses, others pointed out the clear socially marginalizing effects. A porter and small-scale coffee farmer reveals the tensions between conservation and foreign land ownership:

Foreigners put up Private Property signs at the entrance. Where people beforehand used to pass, no sooner is it bought by a foreigner that they don't let you go there and there's a gate and a wall and that's that. No more. But yes, they conserve nature a lot. That they do (Interview #11, 2011, June 16).

Another talked of a place where all the young people used to go to swim in a pool in the river, but a foreigner put up a fence so that locals cannot go there anymore (Interview #16, 2011, May 13). Interviewees discussed this as a cultural difference, saying that local people gave each other access to pass through their land. It is a cultural difference that has excluded local people from visiting parts of the river that they view as being a resource to be shared.

However, the most serious concerns expressed were about how land had been acquired by foreigners. One woman told how some foreigners had taken advantage of families in debt: "Maybe the family was going through a bad time and they thought to sell the property. And they got very little money and can't do anything about it" (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). The family would likely not be able to buy a place in San Gerardo again, due to high prices. Her husband pointed out cases of making a profit off locals who often were not aware of real estate prices, saying "The foreigners treat it like a business, because they buy it cheap and sell it to other foreigners very expensive" (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). The most alarming case was of one wealthy foreigner who had stolen land off local people, by putting his fences into their farmland and then claiming legal title. A farmer explained how their hugely unequal economic footing made it very difficult to contest these actions:

When one complains, the people here don't have money to hire a lawyer, so in the end their lawyer grants them the land. This is the most negative thing that has happened. (...) One foreigner stole from many farms. He took land from many families (Interview #11, 2011, June 16).

Some of these families may not have had legal title to their land, which could be a lengthy bureaucratic process (Interview #18, 2011, June 21). Moreover, they may not

have seen a need for it, as they respected the boundaries of neighbouring farmers. These cases demonstrate an abuse of foreigners' privileged access to information, money and resources, in obtaining land off local people.

Determined not to repeat the negative experiences of others, some local people had made it clear that they would not sell their land to foreigners, or only if it was on their own terms. One couple told me that they saw foreign ownership of land as the biggest tourism-related problem in the village. Their advice to their children was: "That they don't sell the land. This is what we tell them" (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). A young farmer, who has seen many of his neighbours sell their land to foreigners, told me that he thought people who sell are foolish. A foreigner had wanted to buy his brother's land, but declined when the brother responded that he would only sell it to them for one million US dollars. Migration has made people aware of relative monetary values – this man knew that what many foreigners were paying for a large amount of land in San Gerardo would hardly get them a small house in the US and thought they should pay what the land would be worth in their own country. Likewise, his father had been offered a large amount of money for his business but had worked hard for what he had and was adamant not to sell, regardless of the price. Another man said that he bought land many years ago when it was cheap (seventy hectares for 130,000 colones) and that foreigners were trying to buy his land, which he refused to sell for the prices they were offering. He pointed out that while he may not have much money, he could at least grow food on his land. It was evident that some locals were resisting the further sale of land to foreigners.

While I detail here the experiences and opinions of some households who were in a position to turn down offers for their land, what is missing are the voices of those that have already been displaced. I heard anecdotally about other people who had sold their land at what they thought was a good price, but after a few years the money was gone and they had to move to the city. The socio-economic impacts of expat communities require further research. In this case, it had been exacerbated by the difficulties that many farmers had to make a reasonable living from agriculture, while tourism employment was not sufficient to make up the shortfall for everyone. Having shown some of the issues affecting agricultural production and employment, I will now discuss employment in tourism.

Tourism employment, gender and socio-economic status

With the role of agriculture declining in the village, tourism has provided an important source of income for many families. Participation numbers in tourism was relatively even by gender, with twelve out of nineteen men (sixty-three percent) and eleven out of seventeen women (sixty-five percent) in the initial survey sample receiving

income from tourism work or businesses. However, the types of employment differed between men and women and were further constrained by socio-economic factors.

Table 4-1: Characterization of survey sample households by landholding size^{xvi}, age and wage labour participation.

	Do not own land (n=5)	Less than 1 hectare (n=5)	1 to 7 hectares (n=6)	8 to 50 hectares (n=4)	Total (n=20)
Average age (years) of heads of household	36	39	49	56	45
Participation in wage labour work	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	3 (50%)	0 (0%)	13 (65%)

Source: Author's field study, 2011.

Table 4-2: Distribution of positions by gender of members, Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica

Position	Male members	Female members
Guides	10	3
Porters	46	0
Cooks	14	6
Total	62*	9

Source: Author's field data, July 2, 2011.

* Note: Some people were registered as working more than one position, explaining the lower total number of members than would be expected.

Tourism jobs by gender

Participation in wage labour was higher for those households with very small or no landholdings, who were also, on average, younger (See Table 4-1). Men from these households who were not business owners worked in a variety of tourism, agricultural and construction jobs, apart from one man who had a full-time wage labour job in the town of San Isidro. There were three men who had full-time wage-earning jobs in tourism. Two were employed in reforestation and giving occasional tours at reserves, while the other worked as the administrator of a hotel. These men did not report having additional jobs, likely due to a lack of time and although one man also had coffee, he paid workers to look after it. Agricultural wage labour work was not available on a regular basis and although five men did this type of work, only one was employed full-time, for a

large Costa Rican landowner from San Isidro. A foreign resident in my survey sample^{xvii} was able to take advantage of his first-language English skills to work as a tour guide and in translation for hotels, as well as working in construction.

The most common occupation for men in tourism was as porters, and in a village of three hundred and fifty people, forty-six men were registered for this position (see Table 4-2 above). Men also work as cooks and guides and these jobs will be described further on. Four men out of the household survey sample worked as porters. Porters require additional income, whether from farming or wage labour, as porter work varied throughout the year: in the high season a porter might work three to four times a week, but only one to two times in the low season and not at all for the month of October and two weeks in May when the track would be closed due to rain^{xviii}. Of these four porters, one was not a farmer, one had a small amount of coffee and the two others had beef cattle. Cattle and coffee appeared complementary to porter work, while I was told that it was difficult to combine being a porter with having dairy cows, as the hours worked would mean they would not be available to milk. While one porter's only other income was as a coffee farmer, the rest worked in a combination of additional wage labour jobs in construction, agricultural labour and giving horseback tours. Sometimes these jobs, all involving physical labour, were performed in the afternoon after having completed porter work up the mountain.

Compared to agricultural labourers earning around 6000 colones (US\$12) a day (Interview #7, 2011, June 9), porters could earn up to 36,000 colones (US\$72) in a day. It was a physically challenging job; these men walk a return trek of twenty-eight kilometres to the mountain lodge and back, leaving around 2am and returning by 11am, while carrying a load of fourteen kilograms (Interview #11, 2011, June 16). Being one of very few income-earning options other than farming for men in the village (many of whom lacked secondary school education) it was a rigorous process to become a porter. According to one interviewee, to be part of the Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks, an individual has to pay 100,000 colones (US\$200) and have a letter of recommendation from two current members, as well as a letter of recommendation from the local Community Development Association (Interview #11, 2011, June 16). Therefore, to become a member, one needs strong social connections within the village, as well as an initial capital investment. One man, an agricultural labourer who was from elsewhere in Costa Rica, said that his lack of social networks in the village meant that he could not work in tourism, although he would like to. He stated, "I see the people who make the effort and work in that [tourism] and I respect what they do. But I am not included, you understand?" (Interview #7, 2011, June 9).

Wage earning jobs, such as in reforestation in private reserves, appeared to offer more stability than farming. One man, a full-time employee for the same reserve to whom he had sold some of his former farmland, explained: “The money is without any risks. (...) If I grow vegetables and there is a bad price or a fire or something and I lose the crop, I lose all the money in agriculture. In contrast, at the reserve I’m not risking anything” (Interview #12, 2011, June 16). Foreigners who had purchased land in San Gerardo, some after originally visiting the town as tourists, provided employment in construction and landscaping for local men. Some individuals even worked for the very people who had bought their land off them (Interview #16, 2011, May 13). Overall though, men tended to have more of the management-level or tough, physical jobs associated with tourism.

Women worked in a variety of tourism jobs but, different to men, these mainly comprised cooking and cleaning or the infrequent hosting of homestay guests and selling crafts. Women’s engagement in tourism work was also in some ways related to the size of landholdings. One woman from a larger farming household cooked for the family restaurant business that she and her husband owned. Of the four other women in the initial survey sample who received wages for tourism work, two came from households with no land and two who only owned the land around their house. One single woman was the only woman in the sample who had full-time tourism work, cooking and cleaning in a hotel. Another woman worked as a cook at the lodge on Mt Chirripó, while the two other women worked for hourly wages as cooks in a hotel restaurant and at a café, respectively. Non-tourism income in the sample included a seamstress, catalogue clothing salesperson and a retired woman who receives a pension.

More commonly, types of tourism work that women engaged in were cooking, cleaning, and reception duties in hotels, restaurants and bars, although many of these jobs in the smaller hotels were occupied by family of hotel owners. Several participants mentioned that tourism profits were concentrated among hotel owners and their families. One woman commented that, “There are not many women (working in tourism), apart from the wives of the hotel owners” (Interview #8, 2011, June 9). Despite being sought after, jobs cooking and cleaning in hotels and restaurants were not highly paid and it appeared that they offered difficult working conditions. One hotel cook earned around 1000 colones (US\$2) an hour and sometimes worked twelve hour days, but received free meals while working (Interview #13, 2011, June 20). Cooking and cleaning jobs relied upon flexible labour, as hours varied. For example, one woman would have to go in at 4am to cook breakfast for guests at short notice (Interview #4, 2011, June 7) and

most were not receiving social security benefits from their employers (Interview #18, 2011, June 21).

Women earned around 700 to 1 000 colones (US\$1.40 to \$2) per hour to clean in local hotels, which was a tiring job (Interview #3, 2011, June 7). A woman recounted how she was suddenly fired from a part-time hotel cleaning job (Interview #3, 2011, June 7). When I asked her whether she thought the pay she used to get cleaning was good, she replied “For the work that I did, I think not” (Interview #3, 2011, June 7). Another woman informally described how when cleaning in a hotel, she was given so much work that she did not have enough time to eat during her shift. She would then have to do housework when she got home. Balancing family responsibilities and tourism work often meant a long day for women – in this case getting up at 1am to make her husband breakfasts on days he worked as a porter, then again at 4am to clean the house and make breakfast for her children before going to work herself. Cleaning foreigners’ houses was seen as a more lucrative option – one could earn 1 500 colones (US\$3) an hour (Interview #13, 2011, June 20). A woman explained to me that there were additional advantages to working for foreigners, that once they were befriended they would often help out her family if she asked, while another woman had received valuable household items from a foreigner for whom she cleaned.

As shown in Table 2, nine women were employed as guides and cooks up Mt Chirripó, but in much smaller numbers than men. Cooks could earn 75 000 colones (US\$150) or more for a three day shift up the mountain catering to package tour groups (Interview #5, 2011, June 8), while guides earned US\$180 for three days (Marciano, 2010: 32) to accompany tourists on the trail and point out features of interest. Most of the cooks and guides were associated with one of the hotels that sold package tours and contracted out their services, with the hotels taking a portion of the profit. Other guides and cooks worked independently, advertizing via the internet and could earn more this way. I was told by a woman who worked independently that there were other advantages – people would generally book well in advance so she could plan ahead, whether those contracted out by hotels might only be notified two days before. However, independent cooks would have to go to the market town of San Isidro the day before to buy food, essentially adding a day’s extra work.

While the amount of money that cooks and guides earned was much higher than other local employment options for women, the job was very demanding. Three female cooks I met informally described their job to me. The first day, they would leave at 1 or 2am to walk up the mountain in the dark in order to prepare food before guests arrived. Sometimes they walked with porters, but often alone and at times in adverse weather conditions, or with the sounds of pumas. They would arrive at the lodge, 14.5 kilometres

from San Gerardo and a grueling 2000 metres higher up, around 7am. Once there, they may have a short time to rest, before making lunch, afternoon tea and dinner for guests. After cleaning up, they would go to bed around 8pm, having worked approximately eighteen hours. The second day involved getting up at 2am again to cook breakfast for hikers aiming to catch the sunrise at the mountain summit, then cleaning the lodge and making the other meals. On the third day, they would get up at 5am to cook breakfast then walk down the mountain. It was very demanding work.

Selling crafts and hosting volunteers, English teachers and tourists through homestays provided opportunities for women to work for themselves from home and these women came from households that owned land. Three women in the sample were homestay hosts, while four women in the sample made crafts for sale. A women's group made crafts to sell to tourists, but these tended to generate very small incomes as sales were generally made only during festivals or special events (Interview #21, 2011, June 28). In order to have a homestay, households needed an extra room and a certain level of material wealth and comfort. For example, the homestay houses I visited did not have any dirt floors, potentially excluding some households that did from this income-earning opportunity. Depending on when the guests arrived, women would cook up to three meals a day and some were given a list of extra food items that they should have in the house while foreigners were staying. Two women confided that they felt the amount of money they received to host homestay guests did not adequately compensate them for the work involved. One woman lamented that for the amount of money she received, "It's not worth it. It's very little, because I provide where to sleep and everything... so, for me it's not profitable (Interview #2, 2011, June 7). One woman who hosted volunteers working on community projects said

They don't pay much. But we do it to help out the village because always in the meetings of the Association, they said that it was to help out the village, that it wasn't so that we would earn money. (...) Even if they pay 4500 colones (US\$9) a day, you have to give them everything! A place to sleep, breakfast, lunch, dinner (Interview #1, 2011, June 7).

Another woman who hosted volunteers said that while she did not think she was paid much, she did not see having volunteers as much more work, because she had to wash clothes and cook for her family anyway and the extra money was very valuable for her household. On the other hand, all three women said they appreciated the opportunity for cultural exchanges. Some had received additional benefits such as gifts from volunteers and guests, who had in some cases remained in contact with families over several years.

It was unclear whether the concerns about inadequate payment were more prevalent among other women in the village that were involved with homestays, or if they had tried to negotiate for better pay. Despite this, the comments highlight some serious tensions around the value of women's labour and the unequal exercise of power relations by those involved in arranging homestays. To summarize, similar to the findings of Vandegrift (2008), women have benefitted from participation in ecotourism work, however the higher paid positions in tourism work in San Gerardo are more often held by men, with women doing the majority of low-wage cooking and cleaning jobs.

Perceptions of women's work and economic decision-making

Tourism has led to an increase in the number of women in San Gerardo in paid employment. This has been a change from the past, where the role of women was considered to be in domestic household duties. As one older woman described:

The women from here, before the only thing we did was be in the house and pick coffee and this is changing now (Interview #6, 2011, June 8).

This change has affected gender relations, within households and in the village. I shall discuss here the perceptions of women around women's employment, followed by how it may have affected intra-household decision-making. Interestingly, fifteen women in the survey sample answered that their principal occupation was 'ama de casa', meaning housewife, even though the majority of them had sources of income from other jobs, possibly reflecting the importance of this role to women and their families, as their primary responsibility. It could also be because other work opportunities tended to be part-time or sporadic.

When I asked participants whether they thought there were enough tourism work opportunities for women, I received a range of responses. A farmer, whose wife does not receive any form of income stated, "It is better than many years ago but still there needs to be more" (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). Others thought it was the responsibility of women to seek out work. The representative of the local Chamber of Tourism stated "Clearly, it depends a lot also on the goals that each person has. But yes, there are openings for work, as much for men as for women" (Interview #20, 2011, June 27). From one woman's perspective "Yes, there are opportunities, it's that sometimes we don't decide to get out from where we are" (Interview #6, 2011, June 8). Another woman I met talked about her neighbour who was always complaining about money, but would not look for work. Therefore, these people saw that there were job opportunities for women but that it was up to women to look for them.

The changes in employment were also discussed in terms of cultural norms around gender roles. One young woman saw tourism work as being defined by gender: “No, [there aren’t enough opportunities in tourism for women] because in general they are housewives and have other responsibilities. It is the men who are porters” (Interview #3, 2011, June 7). When I asked one man whether he would like his wife to work in tourism, he replied that it would be good for the money, but that he preferred her not to work because:

It [tourism work] suits a woman who is young and doesn’t have obligations to work outside of the house. (...) Mothers have more responsibilities; they have to be organizing the clothing for school and cooking lunch and dinner (Interview #12, 2011, June 16).

The representative of a local organization observed that while women were working, they tended to seek out familiar types of work, in that “Every time a woman comes up here [to the organization] looking for work, she’s looking to clean” (Interview #18, 2011, June 21). A local business owner pointed out that cultural change takes time, stating

It has been very difficult to change the culture. It is changing little by little. Twenty to thirty percent of women are now working. But still it is the men who work more. In the culture that existed, the man works and not the woman. But it can’t be changed overnight. It is slow (Interview #10, 2011, June 15).

On the other hand, one young woman who had worked a variety of tourism jobs was more enthusiastic about the ability for things to change, stating that there were women who had started their own projects and businesses and that this “gives the capacity or different thoughts to other women so that they have their own goals too” (Interview #4, 2011, June 7). Examples of entrepreneurship were the local women’s group (to be detailed later in the chapter), who had formed their own screen-printing business and women who worked independently as guides and cooks. A guide who was also a member of the women’s group had successfully combined her two jobs and was making t-shirts with her own design to sell to the tourists she guides (Interview #21, 2011, June 28).

While work opportunities for women certainly had increased, some of the cultural aspects that would support their more equal participation had been slower to change. In informal discussions with women, it was clear that they did the majority of domestic tasks. Without the conveniences of dishwashers, vacuum cleaners and clothes dryers, jobs such as washing clothes and sweeping the house involved many hours of work and women were expected to do these on an almost daily basis. For women who worked,

this could translate to a double workday, doing family chores (*oficios domesticos* as they are called in Costa Rica) as well as paid jobs. A woman told me how this was slowly changing, in that children were being encouraged at school and by government commercials, to help out their mothers by making their beds and doing other jobs around the home.

The female guides and cooks have faced forms of gender discrimination, as they participate in work alongside men, doing some of the same jobs. A local business owner and former porter confided how his personal thoughts around women working up Chirripó had changed over time:

When the first women went [to work] up Chirripó, it was very odd. I'm telling you my personal opinion. To go out at two in the morning by themselves to be up there [the lodge] at six was very unusual. Now lots of women do it. (...) They are friends with the porters and sometimes look to go with them [up the mountain]. But before, it was strange, something new. Also it has a lot to do with gender equality, which is changing at the same time (Interview #10, 2011, June 15).

While it appeared that the situation had improved for female guides and cooks, I heard from a local person that some people in the village, including porters, had been saying that the women cooks do very little work while they were at the lodge. This was interpreted as responses from men who felt that women doing a similar job as them were a threat to their superiority, or from women who were jealous. While I was in the village, there was a television feature on the porters of San Gerardo, in which they talked only about the male members of the Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks. A male cook was interviewed and there was no mention of the work that women did up the mountain. This was viewed by some of the female cooks as a deliberate exclusion of the women members.

The women guides and cooks have had to work hard to earn respect as professionals who do a very physically challenging job. When asked whether there were enough opportunities for women in tourism work, a woman who cooks up Mt Chirripó responded:

Not yet. There needs to be more. We need to change the mentality of many men who still think that their wife is only good to work in the home and raise children (Interview #5, 2011, June 8).

While this woman's husband did not have a problem with her working, she told me "I know some women whose husbands don't like that they work" (Interview #5, 2011, June 8). Another cook said that sometimes their husbands did not like the idea that they would

not being their domestic duties for the three days they are at the lodge. All women cooks were also mothers and had to prepare in advance, as much as possible, the food, clean clothes and school needs for their children while they were away. Those with younger children, or whose husband was away, also needed to arrange for their children to be looked after, most often by a family member.

For women who were seeking full-time work there were no options for childcare outside of informal family arrangements. For example, I met one woman who intended to look after her infant grandchild when her daughter went back to work in San Isidro. Perhaps the largest change that would affect demands on women's time has been decreasing family size. A young man told me how his parents had around ten siblings each, he himself had had three and that couples of his own generation were having even smaller families. In the survey data, the average age of those who had four to six children (eight households) was 56, compared to 36 for those who had one to three children (eight households), showing evidence for declining family sizes.

In San Gerardo, the opportunity for women to work in tourism may have affected intra-household economic decision-making and contributed to changing views of women's participation in paid employment. In all interviewee households, with the obvious exception of the single woman, the men paid the majority of core household costs. Yet, for some individuals and couples I spoke with, women's work was considered a valuable and necessary contribution to household expenses, particularly when their husband had a less stable or poorly paid job. One woman started to work as a cook to earn the extra money to enable her eldest daughter to attend high school (Interview #5, 2011, June 8). Her earnings therefore were put into savings for this purpose.

Women with part-time work or who sold crafts occasionally enjoyed having a bit of extra income to spend on personal items such as clothing, shoes or cosmetics for themselves. The representative of the women's group said that members spend money on "...personal things for themselves or maybe if they need something for their families. Because the money they earn is for them to keep" (Interview #21, 2011, June 28), adding that some women have no other form of income therefore otherwise would have to ask their husbands for money. Some women would save up in order to buy a kitchen appliance, while others said their income went towards common basic household expenses such as food and their children's education. A woman who used to have homestay guests recalled: "Always when I had people stay in my house, I took this money and bought something that I needed for the kitchen" (Interview #1, 2011, June 7).

There was a sense of pride for women in being able to provide for their own needs, even in part. One woman talked about how her new job had increased her self-worth and she felt good about not having to ask her husband for money to buy

something. A woman who earns money as a seamstress said of her earnings “If I want to buy materials with it, I do it. It’s that what is mine is mine and what is his is for both of us” and laughed. Her husband then explained “I take charge of buying the food and paying the things for the houses and all that. Like paying the electricity.” She went on to proudly say that she buys all of her own clothes, emphasizing that her husband does not spend money on them (Interview #8, 2011, June 9). Similarly, a woman who used to work cleaning in a hotel stated “I liked a lot being able to buy my own things with my own money. I like buying my own clothes and my things, so I like to always have a job, that’s why I’m always looking for somewhere to work” (Interview #3, 2011, June 7). She worked the coffee harvest every year and would save up to buy something for the kitchen like a blender or a rice-cooker. In her household, it was her husband that paid the basic living costs, but “Sometimes it is hard because (...) the work of my husband [as a porter] isn’t very good. Because it isn’t a job that is every day or permanent, it is like once or twice a week. So it’s not much work” (Interview #3, 2011, June 7). It is therefore easy to understand why having part-time work can be so important to these women (and their families) and also why women who pick coffee come from households where their husband is a wage labourer with less stable income.

All household interviewees stated that either income from the primary earner was shared, or that financial decisions were made as a couple. When interviewed separately, men and women from the same couples reiterated what each other had said about household economic decisions. For one young couple, where the woman did not have an income, they would have a meeting each week to figure out together what food or other expenses they needed to cover (Interview #7, 2011, June 9). Where both had a regular income, it appeared that responsibilities were at times divided between them. As one woman who was a cook in a restaurant explained “He buys the food and I buy little things that we need in the house. (...) We share everything. We don’t each keep our money for ourselves” (Interview #13, 2011, June 20). Likewise, their young adult daughter who was living with them also contributed her wages. In business-owning households, the profits were shared. The woman who ran a restaurant with her husband stated, “The income from here [the business] is for us to live on. For both of us” (Interview #6, 2011, June 8). However, the money she earned from selling crafts she would keep to buy clothes and shoes for herself. A hotel owner reiterated that profits were shared: “It is not like I carry the wallet and not my wife. It is equal” (Interview #16, 2011, May 13). Therefore, women’s participation in tourism employment may have allowed them to buy items that they may not have otherwise and at times to contribute to core household expenses. Given the broad and exploratory nature of this study, issues of financial autonomy and women’s empowerment were not specifically assessed,

although observations and data suggested that some gains had been made in these areas.

Business ownership and social mobility

Tourism-related business ownership was heavily influenced by land ownership and age. In the survey sample, all four business-owning households had land, two of which had between one and seven hectares and the remaining two had over eight hectares. This was pertinent to each case in different ways. Firstly, having land meant that they had a location on which to establish a business. Secondly, land can be used to generate income through agricultural production. Three out of four business owners also owned livestock for beef or dairy, which required a significant amount of initial capital input. Three out of four business owners grew coffee. Agricultural income may have allowed households to either buy an already-established business or to pay for construction costs of a new business without solely relying on loans. Thirdly, the location of land owned allowed one landowner to have a business renting parking spaces, as it was near the thermal springs. The average age of business owning households was fifty-six, compared to forty-five for the sample as a whole. Therefore older, land-owning residents may have been better positioned to establish tourism businesses earlier on. Business owners did not work additional wage labour jobs, presumably as they did not have the time or did not require the extra income. Similarly, men from the six households in the survey sample with the largest farms did not engage in wage labour work, either solely farming or also owning a business.

Data obtained from semi-structured interviews give insight into the perceived barriers to owning a tourism business. As established from the initial survey sample, those who owned tourism-related businesses were, on average, older and owned more land than the sample as a whole. As the representative of the Chamber of Tourism stated: “Certainly there are more opportunities for some, those who have their own projects and the means to carry them out (...) we are not all at the same level” (Interview #20, 2011, June 27). In my interviews, I asked business-owners how they had established their businesses and it was apparent that many of the earlier tourism businesses had been built up gradually. A restaurant business had used wood from their own farm and family labour for construction (Interview #6, 2011, June 8). A hotel owner described how his hotel had increased slowly in size from simply serving coffee to visitors to eventually having several cabins (Interview #16, 2011, May 13) and I heard similar descriptions of other local hotels. It is unlikely that the next generation of people from San Gerardo will be able to capitalize on tourism in the same way (although they may well find new opportunities, as detailed in the following chapters), as there are

already more hotel beds than there is demand for and it is unlikely that another small-scale family-run establishment would be able to compete. Furthermore, the more recently established hotels have included swimming pools and other features that would have required significantly larger amounts of capital and that have created a market for higher quality accommodation.

For those without their own business, the most common obstacle to starting a tourism business was economic. When I asked people about their ideal job or business in tourism, it was apparent that for the most part, they really did appear to be dreams. One man commented that with his wage he only just earned enough to get by (Interview #12, 2011, June 16), while another who worked in a reserve commented:

I would have liked to [have my own business], but being poor I can't. It would be a dream to have a beautiful tourist attraction, have gardens and everything. But I don't have any land or anything (Interview #14, 2011, June 20).

Land prices had increased dramatically due to foreigners buying up land, as previously discussed. Those without land, or with smaller amounts of land, were, on average, younger people (See Table 2). Other economic obstacles, besides owning land, were that initial business start-up costs, construction, labour and getting permits can all be expensive and taking out high-interest loans was a risky option. One small business owning family had needed to take out a small loan in order to expand and faced interest rates of up to 24 percent, so were fortunate to be able to repay it quickly (Interview #6, 2011, June 8). In addition, dealing with bureaucracy could be a complicated process, with some permits having to be renewed every couple of years. As well, there are taxes to pay. The representative of a local organization summed it up succinctly:

If they don't have money, then no, obviously they can't consider having their own restaurant or cabins, in reality. Those who don't have money have to dedicate themselves to other things like guides, porters and cooks, right? (Interview #17, 2011, June 20).

For those without significant landholdings and capital, business ownership is therefore not feasible.

People without land, higher education or specific skills valuable for tourism, such as speaking English, generally worked poorer paying wage labour jobs. In the case of porters, parallels to other touristic regions can be drawn. Porters working on the Inca Trail in Peru were often indigenous Quechua peasants from rural areas (Arellano, 2011). While the conditions for these porters was undoubtedly much worse than for porters in

San Gerardo, there were some similarities. Arellano found that “Tourism offered the peasants an employment opportunity that did not require them to be educated, skilled or speak English or Spanish; all they needed was their physical ability to work under arduous, high-altitude conditions” (2001:113). In San Gerardo, most of the adult population did not attend high school, there not being one nearby when they were younger, and very few porters could speak English. Arellano also saw that Peruvian porters did not have the economic means or basic education to accumulate sufficient capital to start their own businesses. Instead, they sought to earn enough to send their children to school in order that they would not have to work as porters. Likewise, rather than seeking social mobility through business ownership, families in San Gerardo were doing so through education, with children of porters planning to attend university.

There are other factors that can limit a person’s ability to start or run a business in San Gerardo. One barrier was lack of Internet access – in some places there was no signal and for most local people to use the Internet at a hotel was prohibitively expensive. One woman explained that if she were to become an independent cook and guide and advertize on the Internet she could earn double or more what she was currently receiving working via a hotel (Interview #5, 2011, June 8). Here, global forms of inequality were at play, as foreigners had installed a private Internet tower to receive fast and reliable coverage. Those who used it paid US\$50 per month - a price that was out of reach of most local people whose lives could be transformed dramatically by it. Other obstacles to establishing successful businesses raised by participants were not having adequate training in business management and accounting and, for women, not being able to work in tourism because they had young children. It is evident that economic and social factors limit people’s options in pursuing tourism businesses.

Perceptions of agricultural versus tourism work

Perceptions around agricultural versus tourism work varied depending on the type of work that each person was involved in: whether they worked in tourism wage labour, agriculture or a combination of both, or whether they were business owners, all of whom also were farmers. A porter who has a hectare of coffee noted that there were advantages in tourism work, as:

In reality we don’t invest in products or fertilizers, [as porters] all we need is breakfast and our health to be able to do the work. And the other advantage is that we have an established price per load and it is always the same. So you already know when you arrive up the top and come back how much you will earn. In agriculture it is the complete opposite (Interview #11, 2011, June 16).

Not all agree. Another porter said that he found going up Chirripó very tiring and that he preferred agricultural work. A young farmer who did not work in tourism pointed out that while porter work paid well, it was seasonal and that “The problem with tourism is that it isn’t very stable.” This was more typical of many statements around agriculture, but if porters did not save money during the high season, they may not have enough money in the low season. Comparisons of agricultural and tourism work were therefore subjective and related to one’s own background. For example, if the man who preferred agricultural labour did not work also as a porter, he may have been more likely to highlight the economic angle that porter work pays significantly more. Likewise, the young farmer who was able to make a living solely from his land was in a privileged position to comment on the downside of tourism work. The reality was that people did the jobs they could, given the land, resources and skills that they possessed and all employment options had a degree of risk, either financial or to their physical health.

Four women who picked coffee and worked in various tourism jobs shared their perspectives on each type of employment. One woman who worked cooking in the lodge up Chirripó and picking coffee, explained that while the pay was far superior in her tourism job and that coffee was more tiring, there were disadvantages in that she had to leave her family for three days at a time to go up the mountain. Another woman found that the pay was very similar between picking coffee and working in a hotel, but as she explained:

It is more difficult to pick coffee than to come and clean and work in the kitchen. Working in tourism, for example in my job cooking and cleaning, I work under a roof, so there are no problems if it rains or if the sun is very strong (Interview #4, 2011, June 7).

On the other hand, a woman who worked cooking in a restaurant said that she preferred picking coffee as it was more relaxing than having to make sure that each meal she cooked met the expectations of tourists. She also thought that the pay was comparable in both and whenever she could, liked to harvest coffee in the morning then work at the restaurant in the afternoon. The fourth woman compared with picking coffee was with the periodic sale of crafts:

For me, coffee is better, because I like it. I love picking coffee - it’s really neat. It’s only for four months, but during these four months you always have money (Interview #3, 2011, June 7).

This demonstrates that perceptions were very individualized, given that all four women worked in coffee and received tourism income.

Business owners, all of whom were also involved to some extent in farming and came from more privileged socio-economic positions, also expressed a range of opinions on agricultural and tourism work. For some, it was clear that tourism had reduced their dependence on tough agricultural work. A restaurant owner stated:

After I started with tourism I stopped growing vegetables commercially. Horticulture is harder, because you have those days that are just so exhausting. Tourism is more profitable and more relaxed (Interview #10, 2011, June 15).

His wife also noted that tourism posed fewer risks and added that they were getting too old to do the physical work on the farm. Tourism work as a porter assisted another business owner to increase agricultural production; a hotel owner recounted how he was among the first porters approximately three decades ago, when they earned four hundred colones a day. Farm labourers at that time only cost five colones a day, so he could work up Chirripó and have five workers on the farm, allowing him to expand his coffee fields. He eventually started a hotel. Much had changed since then, but he reflected that “Now I like the farm more, because it’s a bit less stressful. But also here in the hotel is nice too” (Interview #16, 2011, May 13). Without the necessity of working full-time on their farms, business owners almost presented their agricultural work like a hobby, with one man stating, “Well, for me I have the farm because I like it a lot. But what earns me money is the business” (Interview #2, 2011, June 7).

Members of three households principally dedicated to agriculture had stronger views on the relative ease of tourism work, citing the prices, harder work, time involved, risks and rising costs as problems in agriculture. According to a woman from a farming household, who had recently built a cabin to rent to tourists, “In tourism there is more money and it is easier. And in agriculture it is more work, more difficult and little money” (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). Her husband added that you had to use a lot of chemicals in farming and that farmers got sick more often. For those involved in agricultural wage labour, the working conditions were likely more difficult than those who owned farms. An agricultural labourer stated, “Tourism is better. In agriculture, the work is very hard and poorly paid” (Interview #7, 2011, June 9). In a town of 350 people where the majority of households receive some income from tourism, it is likely that those not directly employed in tourism would have known many people who were. Interactions with these people helped to form their opinions on tourism work. A commercial vegetable grower thought, “It is an easy way to make money. For some people, not for us, we don’t work in that [tourism]. But the people who work in tourism live well. Without working much” (Interview #8, 2011, June 9). He went on to say that while those in tourism may not earn

more than in agriculture, it was not such tough work, to which his wife then replied that being a hotel owner was hard work. But she did point out the differences in time involved: “They [porters] go to the mountain, climb two hours and come down and they get the money straight away, whereas with them [farmers] it’s not like that. They have to plant the tomatoes and care for them all the way until they produce fruit” (Interview #8, 2011, June 9). Compared to quick rewards from wage labour, those who grew coffee or vegetables had to wait until the harvest.

Community benefits and increasing reliance on tourism income

While I have demonstrated that the benefits associated with tourism employment and owning tourism businesses have not been even, all interviewees agreed that tourism had had a positive impact on the village economy and quality of life. As one woman stated “There are benefits for everyone [from tourism]” (Interview #3, 2011, June 7). The importance of tourism to the local economy cannot be understated. Facing the impacts of neoliberal agricultural policies and associated fluctuations in prices for agricultural goods, particularly coffee, farmers in the region have at times struggled to even cover the costs of production (Sick, 2008b). In San Gerardo, rural unemployment meant that some villagers migrated to the United States to obtain work. Some would go for several years, leaving their families behind and sending remittances, or save up to build a house when they returned. The National Park employee believed that tourism had helped to reduce levels of migration from the village (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

When asked about the quality of life in San Gerardo, all participants said that it had improved, except for one who thought that it had stayed the same. Some participants remembered when there was no electricity or running water in the village. A woman whose husband is a porter, stated

It is better. Before, there was a lot of poverty. The park didn’t exist. Now there are more opportunities for work and different kinds of work. Before tourism, there was only agriculture. Now people dedicate themselves more to tourism (Interview #3, 2011, June 7).

Through tourism income, “The people have more money so they have more ease to buy things” (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). More people now have cars than before, many people in the village have cellphones and some have computers with internet access. Other changes that participants of the study noted included better access to high school education and vocational training courses. It was also clear that from having a greater disposable income has meant increased food security for many families, although having less land may mean that a greater proportion of this food was being bought from the

store^{xix}. Several participants also noted that San Gerardo was wealthier than neighbouring towns, which did not have the same extent of tourism employment, but in other ways were similar:

Economically it [San Gerardo] is better and environmentally and culturally too. But economically, the people of San Gerardo live better than other [neighbouring] communities, because of tourism (Interview #5, 2011, June 8).

All participants recognized the economic importance of tourism to the village, even those not directly working in it. For instance, a farming couple said that they at times sold produce to restaurants and that they did not like to see fellow community members not doing well when tourism was low (Interview #8, 2011, June 9). Therefore, tourism has provided benefits beyond direct employment opportunities.

While ecotourism employment opportunities can be viewed in a positive light, when combined with the decreasing role of agriculture, there is also the risk of a growing dependence on tourism income. Communities that are over reliant on tourism can be vulnerable to the effects of declines in tourist numbers due to economic recession, political instability or the conditions of global oil supplies. Tourism numbers in San Gerardo are variable, both from year to year and seasonally during the year, affecting the income of local families. One hotel owner noted that the proportion of national to international tourists had been increasing, with numbers of foreign tourists declining following the 2008 economic crisis. During the time that I was in the village, the National Park was closed for a period of two weeks during May for track maintenance. It was also the rainy season and at times several days would go by without seeing tourists in the village. The economic effect on the families in the village clearly caused difficulties and it was a topic often discussed when I was around local people. As one woman explained, "At the moment in San Gerardo, eighty percent of people live from tourism. Like the Association of Porters, which is almost all of San Gerardo. They live off tourism. If there isn't tourism, there isn't income for families" (Interview #21, 2011, June 28).

When I asked interviewees the question of what options there were, other than tourism for economic development in San Gerardo, half of the participants were unsure of possible alternatives. The remaining half of participants said that agriculture was an alternative to tourism, but then added that it would be very difficult because prices are so low, or that tourism was a better option. An interviewee mentioned that trees would have to be cut down in order to produce enough quantity for agriculture to be profitable (Interview #8, 2011, June 9), showing the vulnerability of land currently in conservation. One person questioned whether people would have enough land to farm should tourism

decline. A representative of a local non-profit commented “That’s the million dollar question, right there. I don’t know. If you look across the whole mountain range, it’s not good for farming, I mean you can subsist on it, but you can’t really do much else” (Interview #18, 2011, June 21).

A further outcome of a decline in tourism could be increased migration in search of work. Despite increased opportunities through tourism, there is not enough work for all in the town. Migration is still an issue and a recent six-month work permit to Canada has made it easier to work abroad legally. Seven men from San Gerardo were participating in the program in 2011, mostly single men, but three were married. As one woman explained:

Generally, they seek to go to Canada or the United States or do different work. People from here have already left, because sometimes in Costa Rica it [the work situation] is bad (Interview #3, 2011, June 7).

While some men were able to save significant amounts of money, it was nonetheless a particularly difficult situation for those wives and children left behind.

I found that my questions regarding alternatives to tourism, or the impact of a decline in tourism on the local quality of life, sometimes provoked emotional responses from participants, who clearly saw that their family’s wellbeing would be highly compromised without tourism income. A local business owner postulated, “It would be like going back in time thirty years, because it was around thirty years ago that [tourism] began” (Interview #10, 2011, June 15). A woman whose work cooking at the lodge on Chirripó mountain plus her husband’s work as a porter have enabled them to send their daughters to high school stated “I don’t know what we would do if there wasn’t tourism. How would we live, ninety percent of families in San Gerardo, if tourism didn’t exist? I think that our quality of life without tourism would be very, very bad” (Interview #5, 2011, June 8). A hotel owner commented: “We hope that every day enough tourists come. (...) if we are depending on tourism (...) and there aren’t tourists we are in a bad state” (Interview #19, 2011, June 22). On a more positive note, one woman suggested that people would find alternatives: “San Gerardo would not die if tourism didn’t exist. Why? Because here there are people with many skills and intelligence who would look for the best option to keep San Gerardo going” (Interview #4, 2011, June 7). Despite this optimism, overall, participants confirmed a certain dependence on tourism income.

Towards a diversified rural tourism economy?

As discussed in Chapter Two, one possibility to make agriculture more viable is through combining it with tourism, thus I asked participants what they thought of the

potential for agritourism. I was also interested in niche agricultural production as a way of sustaining agriculture. During my first interview in San Gerardo with a hotel owner, the man described how he was looking to complement his farm with tourism, by giving farm tours: “I know that my farm has very beautiful things to see. The view is incredible, you can see the valley and everything, the forest” (Interview #16, 2011, May 13). During the coffee harvest, he shows tourists how to pick coffee and he discussed their interest in that: “What they [tourists] ask is, how is it produced, how do you pick it and where do you take it, what is the whole process? So I can explain it to them a bit” (Interview #16, 2011, May 13). At the hotel, he had rustic equipment for processing coffee to show to tourists. As the tours were relatively new, he asked for advice on how to promote them, for example whether using the word conservation or ecological in the name of the tour would be more attractive to tourists (Interview #16, 2011, May 13).

Figure 4-3.



Coffee plants as seen on a farm tour.

Source: Author's photograph

Later on in my stay, I participated in one such tour, where he took us for a three hour guided walk around his family's property. The tour took us through coffee trees, secondary and primary forest, past streams and up to a lookout over the village. Our guide also picked foods for us to try as we came across them: mandarins, bananas, cardamom and, at the end, cut fresh sugarcane with his machete for us to chew on. Clearly, he had recognized the novelty it was for tourists from other climates to eat these

straight from the plant. He was also planning on expanding the use of his farm for tourism purposes, by planting specific flowers along the edges of the path and converting the basic housing for coffee labourers into a cabin for tourists. The tour was fairly basic, but this added to its appeal for us and at US\$10 per person it was great value. Overall, we felt very privileged to have had such a unique experience, compared to what we imagined a coffee tour near San Jose run by a larger-scale tourism outfitter would be like.

Although most people I interviewed were not familiar with the term 'agritourism' itself, they were very aware of ideas surrounding rural tourism, including visits to farms and many had seen from personal experience that tourists were interested in it. One woman described agritourism as "It's like, the tourists come to a farm to see the process, how the farm works and they take them around all the places on the farm." This couple once had a local guide bring tourists to their farm to see their coffee and how they milk the cows and noted that: "They [tourists] love it! When these people came they wanted to pick coffee and they had never seen coffee before" (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). Several other interviewees had similar stories about tourists taking photographs of their avocado trees (Interview #8, 2011, June 9) their livestock, household vegetables or orchids. One woman commented: "The tourists who don't go up Chirripó love being here, doing horse treks and seeing the farms. This is the tourism that we have in the village" (Interview #6, 2011, June 8). A woman in a restaurant had tourists ask her how the blackberries in their smoothies were grown and where they were from (Interview #13, 2011, June 20). As one man stated "The tourists like it all, even to see corn, everything" (Interview #11, 2011, June 16). One woman described how they had gone out and picked coffee with two volunteers staying at her house, then processed it at home, dehusking it, roasting it in a pan, grinding it by hand and drinking it, an experience that the young volunteers had greatly appreciated (Interview #1, 2011, June 7). Other people discussed how they had informally brought tourists along to see the coffee or sugar-making process, saying "For them [tourists] it is something completely different" (Interview #4, 2011, June 7). It is therefore clear that tourists have shown an interest in these diverse types of experiences.

It was recognized by some that the community had not yet adequately been able to turn these interests into a source of profit. The examples listed above did not end up with the farm-owners being paid and when I asked participants how much they thought they could potentially charge for tours, most had no idea, or supposed less than ten dollars. One man who had taken tourists to milk his cows four days in a row stated: "No, no. I took them without charging. They wanted to know what it was like. So it was interesting for me and I liked taking them, to share with them" (Interview #2, 2011, June

7). I was invited on two occasions to visit local farms, with no expectation of payment. While for some, showing tourists their farms was an enjoyable cultural experience, and even a source of amusement to see how tourists were fascinated by aspects of farming that formed part of their everyday subsistence or work, others saw this as a real opportunity to capitalize upon:

We want tourists to come to San Gerardo and to stay. That they try to pick coffee. This is what we call rural tourism. That they go see the tomatoes, the chiles, the vegetables. To watch how dulce [compressed raw sugar] is made, all the things that there are in the village (Interview #5, 2011, June 8).

For this woman, agricultural attractions could form part of a deliberate strategy to attract tourists to the village. There were already other agritourism attractions in other towns near San Gerardo: a farm that gives tours of their worm compost and a biodigester that produces natural gas from animal waste, another where you can watch the cheese-making process and an orchid garden. In San Gerardo itself there was a trout farm, farm tours arranged by hotels and a couple had started doing coffee and sugar-making tours. Despite these, the representative of a local organization stated:

I think that we haven't worked enough in this area. Maybe in the future we could, but at the moment there is very little. Because what we have is tourism that goes to Chirripó, the thermal springs and the trout farm. But to give them little tours of coffee farms, we don't have this very well organized, although some people are doing it (Interview #17, 2011, June 10).

A local business owner suggested that "There is very little because the local people haven't woken up [to the opportunity] and shown interest, this is the reason" (Interview #10, 2011, June 15), while the representative of the local Chamber of Tourism said of agritourism: "It has a very strong potential and it is also necessary" (Interview #20, 2011, June 27). With the country now being predominately urban, Costa Ricans from cities may be interested in rural tourism within their own country.

There were interviewees who thought that people might not be that interested in agricultural tourism, or that it just needed to be better promoted. One man who worked at a reserve, when asked whether tourists were interested in coffee, stated: "No, they like trees more", while a local restaurant owner thought that: "Yes, they [tourists] like it [farms] but it's not something that really draws their attention, maybe we need to promote it more. At least here [in San Gerardo], it's not advertized much" (Interview #10, 2011, June 15). The representative of the women's group agreed that more advertizing

was needed and mentioned a plan to make an information centre in the village, where these tours could be listed. She thought that agritourism could present opportunities for women, as: “There are women who are guides so they could work as guides within that [farm tours] and also sell our own souvenirs” (Interview #21, 2011, June 28).

Besides better promotion, there were suggestions made surrounding how agritourism could be further developed in San Gerardo and potential obstacles were also highlighted. In San Gerardo, some local people still use trapiches, a process of using oxen to crush the sweet liquid out of sugarcane, which is then boiled down until it crystallizes into a solid block of raw sugar. People used this to mix with boiling water as a drink and it was also sold in small blocks in the village store. Whereas sugarcane grown on a larger scale would often be processed at a larger factory, in San Gerardo the small amount of sugar produced at higher altitude and distance from the factory meant that people grew sugar for processing in the traditional way. That these traditions have also been retained presents an opportunity for tourism and within my questionnaire sample, two extended families in my survey sample had trapiches. One couple had already considered trying to use their trapiche as a tourist attraction, for a full day tour of the whole process. With homemade food and coffee included, they were not sure how much they could charge but thought that perhaps 5,000 colones (US\$10) per person would be reasonable “Even if only two people came and we did the whole thing, because they are not taking the product away with them, you could still make some money (Interview #11, 2011, June 16). Nonetheless, the obstacle they identified was that in being able to have hotels refer tourists to their place, they would need to be affiliated with the local chamber of tourism, which would cost 50,000 colones (US\$100) per year.

The representative of a local non-profit saw the potential of agritourism and that farm tours were very lucrative in area around the capital of San Jose, but identified the need for people in San Gerardo to have a more “tourist-friendly approach”. Their organization would at times host groups of high school students, who could be a very good market for farm tours. But, the tours would need to be tailored to meet the needs of the group who may only be staying a couple of days in the village. With reference to tours of trapiches, he explained:

You know, you’ve got these kids here who have money, who you could easily funnel through something like that. But they’re not going to stay for the whole day to do it. So it’s how do you build the educational component of it into it, that means you might have to be able to demonstrate all of the steps within an hour even though in reality its an eight hour job. That means you have an almost-finished product, the syrup, put it into a small

cooker that they can actually see working and see the difference between the first step and the last step (Interview #18, 2011, June 21).

He added that even if the batch of sugar did not turn out well, the farmer would “make more off of having ten students there than he will off the batch of sugar” and that it could be a very positive opportunity for local people (Interview #18, 2011, June 21). He also discussed the importance of having a qualified guide to run the tours, as the farmer might not be the best person suited to do the tour, but that this had not really happened yet in the village. Similarly, the MINAE employee thought that San Gerardo had not yet attained a high enough standard of services required to develop a rural tourism industry:

The communities maybe don't have the structures or the logistical platform necessary to receive or encourage rural community tourism. Just because a group of tourists go to an organic farm doesn't mean that this farm is going to give them a good quality of service. Because it's a rural community. They still need better quality of service and I think that in this regard the communities need to advance (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

He pointed out that there were other parts of the country where rural tourism was more developed and that communities had been better organized. Nonetheless, as described there were already several agritourism ventures and the Chamber of Tourism and other organizations had been working at providing courses for local people to improve tourism services.

The cultivation of niche products also could provide additional income to local people, both in itself and when combined with tourism ventures. For the organic coffee family association mentioned earlier, crop diversification was also important. Despite receiving higher prices, 120 000 colones (US\$240) per fanega for organic compared to 70 000 colones (US\$140) for conventional in 2011, organic coffee had not been very profitable due to decreased yields while they slowly build up soil health. While selling directly to tourists was much more lucrative than through the organic alliance they belong to, they were not selling large quantities on the roadside. They were earning more money from selling organic baby bananas to a European company. These were grown within the coffee fields, providing more income than the coffee itself (Interview #15, 2011, May 12). One member of the organization also sold organic vanilla pods and black pepper to a Canadian buyer. Although I did not investigate these crops, they could perhaps provide a viable alternative being high value, specialty items, particularly if direct links with buyers are established.

The representative of a local non-profit thought that a viable alternative or complement to tourism could be niche production: “If you've got the niche, the odds are you can find the market for it. It may not be a local market. And yet there are local

markets that still amaze me no one's tapped. Like there's no San Gerardo de Rivas coffee" (Interview #18, 2011, June 21). One hotel owner has been thinking along similar lines, that he could perhaps sell his own coffee in the hotel in order to receive a much better price for it:

Well, all I know is that they pay us hardly anything [for our coffee]. And we buy it very expensive. So we could process the coffee. It's not that difficult. It's more that you have to take your coffee to San Isidro, as there is a roaster there. You bring your coffee and in twenty minutes they give you the roasted coffee, ground if you want (Interview #16, 2011, May 13).

A local restaurant owner saw the potential to involve more farmers and create jobs around the processing of local coffee:

There could be a project to process the coffee from the village and to sell it to foreigners. In that way the producer would receive better prices. The social side would be to create employment (Interview #10, 2011, June 15)

It was clear that there were several people in the village who were considering the local processing of coffee, with the advantage of being able to sell it to tourists from hotels or other local businesses.

Other advantages of combining tourism with agriculture could be that it may facilitate the use of organic or agro-ecological techniques, which otherwise may not be profitable. One couple that already had built a cabin on their land said that if they had more money, they would like to sell their dairy cows and make a reserve with more tourist cabins, retaining some organic crops for demonstration purposes and allowing the pastures to regenerate. The woman articulated their eventual goal that "Maybe the farm could be more for growing things for the tourists to see and not so many cows. That way we could conserve the land more" (Interview #9, 2011, June 13)^{xx}. The niche production of crops could provide a way for farmers not receiving tourists to receive higher prices for crops in local or international markets, if they are able to establish lasting links with committed buyers. In 2012, Proyecto San Gerardo, a local non-profit community organization, started a weekly local organic farmers' market in the village and I was told that foreign residents had attended and bought products from local farmers. Therefore, agriculture has the ability to co-exist with ecotourism in ways that are mutually beneficial for both the environment and the community.

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the changing income-generation strategies of households and how opportunities in ecotourism and agricultural work are affected by

factors such as gender and socio-economic status. There was a wide range of opinions regarding agricultural and tourism work, from numerous standpoints. Gender was a pertinent factor in terms of the types of ecotourism work engaged in, with a range of cultural factors both influencing and impacted by women's participation in ecotourism work. I assessed local perspectives of the potential to expand forms of agricultural tourism. Niche agricultural production, perhaps using agro-ecological techniques, could further provide an option for farmers in the community to capitalize on regional or global markets in a way that supports the rural economy and minimizes environmental impacts. While forms of agritourism and niche production already existed, local people appeared well positioned to benefit from their further development. In the face of the declining role of agriculture and potential over-reliance on tourism, it appears that if local people were able to make more money from their land, they may be less likely to sell land or seek opportunities in the city, options that disrupt social networks and family arrangements.

However, local people are not passive regarding land issues and are negotiating relationships, in this case with foreigners but also with government and NGOs, in order to have better control of local resources. The next chapter highlights other ways in which local people influence the direction of ecotourism development and employment. While the benefits of tourism are somewhat concentrated according to gender and socio-economic status, there are many active individuals and organizations that are working to generate further and more equitable employment opportunities.

CHAPTER FIVE: COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN MANAGING ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which local people and organizations are shaping ecotourism development outcomes, through addressing tourism employment issues and also by actively participating in management of Chirripó National Park. I will describe the types of community groups and government institutions that are active in San Gerardo, then outline some of the major challenges related to ecotourism employment, including the quality of tourism services, the limited amount of work for youth and women and the need for better promotion of community tourism attractions. I will discuss some of the responses of community organizations to these challenges. I then turn to relationships between community members and government institutions, particularly those concerning national park management, to show how these interactions can have beneficial results for both the state and the community. I highlight how local individuals and organizations are not passive recipients of tourism in their community; rather, their involvement determines how tourism proceeds.

Improving tourism employment opportunities: local and state involvement

Given the problems with the current state of both agriculture and tourism and the difficulty of obtaining a sustainable livelihood in San Gerardo, increasing employment and economic opportunities in the village could have positive social and economic effects. There were several organizations in the village, involved with initiatives concerning tourism development and employment, at times with the support of government institutions. Local organizations are aware of the challenges that exist and that addressing these could improve the ways in which local people are able to benefit from tourism. Therefore, these groups are striving to make these changes and enhance employment opportunities, in order to reduce migration and keep youth in the village. Furthermore, they are doing so in a way that reflects local priorities and wishes concerning the future direction of tourism development. These organizations include:

- Chirripó Rural Community Chamber of Tourism (Camara de Turismo Rural Comunitaria Chirripó, CATURCOCHI). The local Chamber of Tourism has seventeen members who are local business-owners from San Gerardo and neighbouring towns.
- The Community Development Association (Asociacion de Desarrollo Integral, CDA). In San Gerardo, the CDA comprised eighteen committees addressing different aspects of community organization, for example health, education and

waste management. The CDA's main involvement concerning tourism was the organization of the annual race up Mt Chirripó and obtaining funding for community infrastructure projects. The CDA receives support from the Costa Rican government.

- Country Women of Chirripó (Mujeres Campesinas de Chirripó, MUCACHI): is a women's group, who make crafts to sell to tourists and have started a screenprinting business. They are also affiliated with the CDA.
- Proyecto San Gerardo is a non-profit local community organization established by a foreigner who resides in the village, but with a local board, who run community development projects, mainly for youth and women.
- The Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks (Asociación de Arrieros, Porteadores, Guías y Cocineros): This association mainly deals with issues surrounding employment within the national park.

The primary government institutions and agencies involved in community and tourism development initiatives in San Gerardo include:

- The Ministry of Energy and Environment (Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía, MINAE): the government department responsible for managing national parks^{xxi}.
- The National Learning Institute (Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje, INA): a government agency that offers vocational training courses.
- The National Community Development Directorate (DINADECO): In 1967, DINADECO was established to promote local participation in identifying community issues, as well as provide opportunities to fund projects, through the establishment of Community Development Associations (DINADECO, 2012). The CDA of San Gerardo therefore can apply to DINADECO for funding.

An important actor in ecotourism development is the local Chamber of Tourism. It is comprised of seventeen local business owners, who are working together to strengthen their ability to attract tourists to stay in the community. They have a five-year strategic plan, within which several solutions to the challenges facing the community are addressed:

There are six objectives [of the strategic plan]. One of the principal ones is training programs, to improve the quality of the different services of our affiliated members. Community tourism is another theme, as is marketing, also protection of resources and beautifying the area. We also are promoting sustainability and have helped some businesses achieve a sustainability certification (Interview #20, 2011, June 27).

The inclusion of these details in the strategic plan show that the Chamber is well aware of the necessary steps to be taken to achieve their vision for tourism in the area. Below, I outline some of the areas requiring attention to enhance local tourism employment and community and government responses to these issues.

Vocational training

Participants identified several areas in which San Gerardo could improve in order for members of the community to benefit more from tourism employment opportunities. Firstly, focusing on ameliorating certain skills, such as in English language and customer service, could give people an advantage in obtaining tourism work. Marciano (2010) identified that a lack of English language skills and adequate training had prevented more community members from pursuing potential income from guiding activities. A second area of concern was in hospitality. Two of the hotels were known to employ women from other villages to cook at their hotels. I asked a woman who worked at one of these hotels why this was the case and she responded: "There are many women from here that maybe don't like to cook. Or they don't have the requirements" (Interview #13, 2011, June 20). Two young women also commented how they felt intimidated by tourism work and inadequately skilled to work in restaurants. Likewise, customer service and gastronomy skills were identified by organization representatives as being necessary to improve the quality of tourism services in the village (Interview #19, 2011, June 22). Three representatives of organizations said they felt that the standard of tourism services in many of the tourism businesses in San Gerardo needed to be raised in order to attract more, as well as wealthier, tourists. Therefore, training in several areas would be necessary.

Governmental and community organizations provide some opportunities for villagers to improve their chances of finding employment in tourism. Notably, the National Learning Institute (INA) offers free courses in the village when there was demand. Ten out of nineteen household interviewees (six of whom were female) had taken at least one tourism-related course. Of the two households not employed in tourism, no members had taken courses. The courses most commonly taken were in food preparation, cooking, English, tourism and computing. One interviewee recognized that the increased availability of courses could have an impact on employment options: "Before there weren't so many courses, so much facility to learn. And now the INA comes so this helps us to have more knowledge and opens more doors to have better economic returns" (Interview #4, 2011, June 7). All women who worked as cooks had taken courses in food preparation, which was obligatory, but also had taken additional courses in areas such as serving, dessert-making and Costa Rican cuisine. Proyecto

San Gerardo also offered free English, computing and first aid classes, as well as instruction in restaurant skills for young women (Metta Media, 2011).

In addition, the local chamber of tourism had been bringing in instructors from INA and other outside NGOs for courses in the areas they saw needed the most attention, such as customer service (Interview #20, 2011, June 27). The Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks required their members to complete courses; porters take a fire-fighting course and guides require up to nine courses to be qualified. The women's group operates on the basis that women give ten percent of the profits from the sale of their crafts to the group and some of these funds are used to send members to craft courses in San Isidro or to bring instructors to San Gerardo. Another policy of the group is that those attending courses are responsible for teaching everyone in the group any new craft learned (Interview #21, 2011, June 28).

All the same, some people felt there was insufficient access to courses, with reasons ranging from the hours courses were offered and a lack of time to participate, to the quality of instruction and variety of courses offered. Others simply did not want to attend courses or were not informed about them (Interview #8, 2011, June 9). A lack of high school education among many adults may have contributed to a lack of willingness to undertake some courses that were viewed as overly challenging. One woman, when I asked whether she would like to learn English replied: "I don't know how to read or write well" (Interview #1, 2011, June 7). Several interviewees commented that they found it too difficult to learn English and some were discouraged from attending further courses in it. They were hopeful that their children would succeed in learning English from a younger age, as it is essential for tourism work (Interview #11, 2011, June 16). Another mentioned that more women attended the courses than men (Interview #2, 2011, June 7). While access to training had increased, people with more spare time, the appropriate background skills and social networks to inform them of relevant opportunities, or money to pay for courses that were not free, were better positioned than others to take advantage of courses.

Meeting the aspirations of youth

Study results indicate that the younger generation has increasingly less land for farming and therefore needs to seek out wage labour jobs, while there are also problems and risks associated with farming. Concurrently, there had been a strong emphasis on education, with parents recognizing that it may offer a more secure future for their children. Although it was not one of my interview questions, some parents discussed their hopes for their children. One woman commented that they did not want their

children to continue with hard agricultural labour, nor the physically demanding work hauling loads up Mt Chirripó, but rather to be educated and become professionals:

Beforehand our parents thought that the boys would work on the farm and the girls would get married and have children (laughs). But not now. Now we want our children to work. To have a profession. Life in the countryside is very tough. Therefore, it's better if our children have a profession, a good job, so that they always have a fixed salary (Interview #5, 2011, June 8).

A woman guide and cook up Chirripó commented that she did not think there were any young female cooks coming up behind them, because the work was tough and their daughters would go to university instead. On the other hand, the representative of an organization thought that as long as there were some boys who did not do well in school, there would be porters (Interview #18, 2011, June 21). I met several young people during my stay who expressed their desire to study at university and four of the households in the questionnaire sample had children attending, or who had attended university. Having dealt with instability themselves, it is understandable that parents would want their children to have a stable income. University is expensive however, and apart from the wealthiest families, most need to obtain scholarships or assistance to attend. Moreover, once people graduated, there were few opportunities for them to work in San Gerardo, as described by a business owner and father of four:

There is a problem here – we are educating our children a lot, almost all go to high school. But when they graduate they go elsewhere because there is no work here (Interview #10, 2011, June 15).

Likewise, the daughter of a woman I was interviewing stated that despite increased education levels, tourism job options were limited: “Even if we knew English we would have to look for work elsewhere. Because [tourism] is something very small for so many people” (Interview #1, 2011, June 7).

Nonetheless, various groups within the village were dedicated to meeting the higher aspirations of youth. One community organization, Proyecto San Gerardo, offered scholarships to children of low-income families to attend high school or university (Metta Media, 2011). There were also specific job creation projects that were being negotiated with youth in mind. A representative of a local organization described a project to expand the community hall into a larger commercial space and how this may help to support youth employment:

They [youth] are the people who are less advantaged here. That's why there is the idea to build this [small] commercial centre where those who study can be the administrators and to create more work here (Interview #21, 2011, June 28).

This project was the result of collaboration between the Community Development Association, the Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks, the Chamber of Tourism and the women's group, involving the National Bank, DINADECO and other government officials. Within this, there was a proposal to create a small library and internet café that young people would benefit from (Interview #10, 2011, June 28). Likewise, one business owner and grandfather spoke about a project with the lodge in the national park (to be discussed later in the chapter) that they hoped would help educated young people to stay in San Gerardo: "The older people, we want alternatives for work for them [youth]" (Interview #10, 2011, June 15). For families in San Gerardo, as in families all around the world, it was difficult to see their children leave due to lack of employment. These were family members for whom they wanted better opportunities.

Expanding employment opportunities for women

As detailed earlier, in San Gerardo, options for women to work in tourism were often poorly paid and required very challenging physical work. Moreover, some participants thought that there were not enough opportunities for women, with the best jobs being concentrated among families who owned businesses. In recognition of these challenges, there were several initiatives supporting women. Proyecto San Gerardo (PSG) had started a community café project, which gave full-time employment to one woman. Other women would volunteer there, learning skills in hospitality and a programme was developed to train young women in baking, cooking, serving, cash handling and other skills that may help them later obtain restaurant work. One of the members of this organization explained that:

Proyecto San Gerardo specifically has tried to get women out of their houses. So, get the women out, recognize their capabilities and go to seek out their own income. It could be in tourism, depending on the skills that one has (Interview #4, 2011, June 7).

PSG provided support to women in ways that assist in breaking down the cultural perceptions around women's work^{xxii}. It also helped in facilitating some of the earlier meetings that led to the expansion and formalization of the women's group Mujeres Campesinas de Chirripó (MUCACHI). According to one woman, despite its more recent formal establishment in 2009, this group had long existed: "Since I can remember, when

I was maybe six years old, my mother was in MUCACHI” (Interview #21, 2011, June 28). Before 2009, the group had been small and sold crafts and flowers, but since 2009 had expanded both its membership and the type and scope of its projects.

Figure 5-1.



Embroidered purses made by a member of the women’s group.

Source: Author’s photograph

The women’s group had a strong entrepreneurial spirit, with a representative making it clear that they were officially registered as a society or small business, not a community association. Their main objective was to earn money for group members, as “...the majority of the women don’t work. So to have a little economic income is good for their families. (...) And if they sell something, even if it is a little bit of money, it is something that they will always have” (Interview #21, 2011, June 28). In June 2011, the group had eighteen members and was mainly focused on handicraft souvenirs, such as small embroidered bags, earrings and keepsakes made from recycled materials, with plans for larger future projects (Interview #21, 2011, June 28). Although they already had a space to sell their crafts in one hotel, it was limited. A project to provide a permanent space in the village for the women’s group to sell their crafts was underway, in collaboration with the Community Development Association, with whom the group was affiliated (Interview #21, 2011, June 28). They also planned to sell their crafts by internet with an online catalogue of products. Furthermore, there was the possibility of opening a souvenir shop in the lodge up Mt Chirripó. While crafts did not bring large amounts of

income to the women involved, these initiatives may increase their opportunities to make sales, rather than just at special events.

Besides providing for women to share knowledge about crafts and come together to sell them, the group was working on several larger-scale projects. They had recently started a screen-printing business, which they hoped would provide more regular income and employment for its members than selling crafts did (Interview #21, 2011, June 28). The screen-printing they did was not solely tourism-related, although some women were using the machines to create prints for their handmade items, such as bags. Instead, they intended to advertise regionally to get contracts to print school and sports uniforms. With an eye to the future, the members of the women's group wanted their younger members to study related topics such as graphic design or management at university and come back to work for them (Interview #21, 2011, June 28). They also hoped to expand the business to sew the clothing, as well as doing the printing, which would mean finding a larger space to work from and purchasing sewing machines.

To fund this project, the group had applied for a government fund that assists women to create small businesses. The Community Development Association (CDA), with whom the women's group is affiliated, had helped with the paperwork for this process. This resulted in the donation of the screen-printing machines to the CDA, who also provided a space in the community hall for them to work. This had greatly facilitated the establishment of the screen-printing business. As a representative of the women's group noted: "Because of it [being part of the CDA] we work there and don't pay anything to have the equipment, only the electricity. So we can work well. [The CDA helps] to get more funding" (Interview #21, 2011, June 28). In addition, the group had fundraised by holding raffles and selling food to pay for other business costs. Despite having some organizational difficulties in getting the screen-printing business started, the women's group had drawn the attention of government officials who had come to see what they were doing "because it is not very common that women are organized in communities, to do something to create work or earn money. So they have come to ask us about it" (Interview #21, 2011, June 28).

Moreover, there were social aspects from being in the group. "We meet up once every three months in a different member's house. Just to get to know each other. Not to work, no, just to share. Talk, have fun, nothing about work" (Interview #5, 2011, June 8). However, not all participants spoke positively of MUCACHI. Two women I spoke to who were not in the group said it was exclusive and that not all the women in the village had been invited to join, while one man pointed out that a couple of their initiatives had failed. While initiatives focusing on cooking and handicrafts may provide some income, they may not be challenging traditional gender roles (Sick, 2008a). Nonetheless, that the

group was intent on running and managing their own businesses and negotiating their own position with the Community Development Association in order to access resources to do so, shows some prospects for evolving gendered norms. That women were very active in defining and directing these projects also points to moving beyond traditional notions of women's roles.

Promotion of attractions within the village

While there is an array of environmental attractions in and around the village, there are several obstacles to achieving the desired level and type of tourism. Some interviewees lamented that there were not enough tourists who stayed long enough in the village. Rather, the majority of tourists came to climb Chirripó and left straight afterwards, many having only spent money in one hotel (Interview #20, 2011, June 27). Several interviewees would prefer for there to be more tourism based around local attractions, but it was recognized that this potential had not yet been fully explored. One man thought that local people had concentrated on the easier options of providing food, accommodation and organizing the Chirripó Race, but had not yet developed enough ecotourism attractions (Interview #10, 2011, June 15). Finally the number of tourists that come to climb Mt Chirripó is controlled and limited by the quantity of people who are authorized to enter the park per day, so any focus on bringing more people to visit would need to be based on seeking other ways to promote the village as a destination in itself.

A crucial aspect of the Chamber of Tourism's strategic plan is marketing and promotion, to make tourists aware of the options that exist in San Gerardo, besides Chirripó. The need to further promote attractions in the village was highlighted by several interviewees. The most common suggestions for doing so were through the Internet, guidebooks and other media (Interview #18, 2011, June 21). The Chamber of Tourism had attended local and national tourism trade fairs to promote San Gerardo as a destination to Costa Ricans, as well as advertizing in regional tourism offices and planning to develop its own website (Interview #10, 2011, June 15). Many of the hotels and businesses in San Gerardo already had their own websites, or advertized on the website of a local organization. The larger hotels had advertisements in regional tourism brochures. The website www.sangerardocostarica.com compiles many of the village attractions onto one website and is available in English, serving as a valuable resource for people to find out what is available in the town (Metta Media, 2012). Interestingly, one man mentioned that the website for one of the reserves in the town comes up frequently in Google searches of Costa Rica, perhaps leading people to the town in this way. The same reserve is also featured in several guidebooks (Interview #18, 2011, June 21).

The Chirripó Race event was also seen as a promotional opportunity, as local and national media come to the town to cover the race. One interviewee also stressed the importance of giving tourists information once they had arrived in the village, which would perhaps lead them to stay longer than they initially anticipated (Interview #18, 2011, June 21). Some of the attractions are not easy to find and may only be advertized in Spanish, so hotel personnel can be helpful in informing tourists' decisions. Better signage may also be useful. An enhancement of the level of services and infrastructure, as previously discussed, may also improve the reputation of San Gerardo in influential online and print guidebooks. A representative of a local non-profit suggested marketing more towards the upper-scale bird-watchers and environmentalists who would be prepared to pay more money to stay in hotels than the current clientele, which often consists of backpackers (Interview #18, 2011, June 21). It is apparent that while many efforts have been made to promote San Gerardo's attractions, it may take some time to change the dominant view of the village as simply a base to climb Chirripó. Yet, while the national park remains the most important draw card for tourism to the village, individuals and groups from the community are striving to make the best of opportunities in the park.

Management of ecotourism activities in Chirripó National Park

This section focuses on the interplay between local peoples, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the Costa Rican state in the management of ecotourism activities in Chirripó National Park. I will describe some of the current and projected changes in the participation of local peoples in the management of the park, the motivations of the government and the role that NGOs are playing. This will be followed by a discussion of how local people negotiate agreements with government entities to optimize the benefits to the community. Increased community participation in management can be viewed as part of neoliberal processes of the devolution of state services and the community has responded in creative ways.

The Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAE) manages national parks and I interviewed a MINAE employee who works at the park office in San Gerardo to discuss some of the current and projected changes that affect ecotourism activities within the park, as well as the motivating factors for forms of community participation. Chirripó National Park is experimenting with forms of community participation in management that have not been implemented elsewhere in Costa Rica. The park employee outlined the government's position:

It is evident that a major benefit that the communities receive from the park is from tourism. So, to facilitate tourist activities, the park has tools or mechanisms that permit the participation of civil society, or of the communities (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

These mechanisms, including cooperation agreements with organizations in San Gerardo and initiatives concerning other communities neighbouring the park, are outlined below, followed by a discussion of the role of NGOs in these processes. MINAE currently has cooperation agreements with the Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks and the Community Development Association of San Gerardo. The agreement with the Community Development Association concerns the annual running race up Mt Chirripó. MINAE permits the community to host 225 athletes to run in the park up to the lodge and back. The community gains from the event by receiving funding from sponsors and all local hotels and businesses profit from the high demands on their services during the race weekend and festival. While the community is in charge of organizing the event, the national park also benefits from promotion, as there is a strong media presence at the event.

The agreement with MINAE allows the Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks to provide tourism services in the park. As described by the MINAE employee: “What the cooperation agreements permit is that the communities work for the conservation of the park, but also that they can undertake economically productive activities within the park” (Interview #19, 2011, June 22). The Association members are exempted from paying the park entrance fee in order to work in the park, except for the cooks who were not part of the Association at the time that the agreement was established^{xxiii}. MINAE also provides training in forest fire-fighting to members of the Association. In return, members of the Association of Porters undertake maintenance of the track, maintenance of the lodge and its infrastructure, surveillance of hunting or other illegal activities and are called upon to volunteer when there are search and rescue operations or forest fires. Although horses are not normally permitted in the park, as part of the agreement the Association is allowed to use one horse per day. This arrangement is on the premise that the horse is used to carry down all garbage generated at the lodge. The Porters also bring up food and equipment for the park rangers. These tasks undertaken by the Association include activities that one might expect would be responsibilities of the national park staff. The rationale for this will be explained in the following section.

The most significant proposed change in management is that MINAE has put out a tender to run the lodge up Mt Chirripó where most hikers stay the night before climbing to the summit. The lodge will be expanded to provide additional services for tourists, such as a restaurant, a souvenir shop and gear hire, providing twenty-two jobs for the

concessioner. The park would also stay open year-round as part of the new agreement, to lessen the economic impacts of closures. While the government has to accept proposals from other organizations and businesses, there was a strong belief that the group from the community of San Gerardo should be the ones to receive it, as long as they meet certain requirements and demonstrate the ability to operate such a business.

The community has formed an Alliance for the Concession (further referred to as the Alliance), comprised of representatives from three community groups: the local chamber of tourism, the Community Development Association and the Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks. At the time of my fieldwork in June 2011, the Alliance members were in the process of improving their business and administration skills to meet the requirements, including receiving classes in Internet use. One member of the Alliance appeared confident that the community would be granted the concession and expressed that this opportunity was greatly anticipated (Interview #10, 2011, June 15). Specifically, the concession was seen to be a way to create jobs for women, with the women's group being given priority for the souvenir shop (Interview #21, 2011, June 28). There was also a hope that there would be jobs created for university-educated young people from the village to fill administration and management positions.

Figure 5-2.



The lodge up Chirripó, currently run by MINAE, but whose management is to be contracted out to a concessioner.

Source: Author's photograph

Although there are several other communities bordering Chirripó National Park, the benefits from tourism-related activities have been concentrated in San Gerardo. There are initiatives to distribute tourism benefits more evenly, as explained by the MINAE employee:

Beforehand, everything was concentrated here in San Gerardo. Our idea is that it shouldn't be like this (...) that everyone should have the same opportunity to participate. Therefore what we are looking for is the fair and equal participation of the communities. This is part of the vision of MINAE (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

To strengthen the participation of other villages, MINAE has been trialing a system of use permits, carrying out environmental initiatives, providing training and establishing a local advisory council. MINAE has authorized an exclusive use permit to Herradura, a community just three kilometres from San Gerardo where relatively few tourists visit. From Herradura, there is an alternative route to climb Mt Chirripó. The permit states that people wishing to take this route can only do so on the condition that they hire a guide from Herradura and use local services, ensuring some income generation for local residents. Due to past successes of Chirripó National Park with community relations, this type of use permit was the first to be granted in Costa Rica:

These activities are not being carried out in any other park in the country, only here. We have advanced a bit more rapidly than other parks and so now we are an example. We are being monitored by the system to see if it works and if it does then they will establish these agreements in other parks (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

While the tourism industry in Herradura is still very small, the use permit pilot project has been viewed as a success by MINAE and the department was working with another community bordering the park to the south to make a similar agreement^{xxiv}.

The Chirripó National Park office had also been involved in establishing environmental projects, sometimes with aims of generating alternative revenue. These initiatives involved multiple communities surrounding the park. In Cedral de Cajón, MINAE arranged for community members to receive training in organic agriculture and to set up a small-scale organic coffee-processing plant. A women's group was selling organic compost made from coffee husks. There were also reforestation and watershed management projects in Cedral.

MINAE's focus is on community management programs, involving aspects of environmental education. One example is their waste management program involving five neighbouring communities, which the MINAE employee believed to be unique at a

national level. Another form of involving local communities is the proposed establishment of a local advisory council to advise and participate in Chirripó National Park management. The council would work with the park administrator and participate in park management decisions. Representation in the council would not be limited to community groups from neighbouring communities; representatives of local or municipal governments, private companies and other institutions would be able to participate (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

MINAE has also been arranging for community groups to acquire funds and training from NGOs. Through its links with NGOs, MINAE benefits from access to resources that promote community development in areas that affect the National Park. For example, through the non-state La Amistad Communal Fund, financial support for seven environmental projects had been given to communities neighbouring the park, with coordination assistance from MINAE. In another example of such partnerships, the Alliance for the Concession members were receiving free training in business administration and computing skills, via an NGO called The Nature Conservancy (TNC) (Interview #19, 2011, June 22). NGOs also provide support in research that the government may not have adequate funding or technical expertise for. MINAE had received research support from Environment for Development Central America (EfD-CA), an environmental economics research centre established by the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, and as well received funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency^{xxv} (Hoffmann, 2012). Both NGOs mentioned have been facilitating the process of granting the Concession of the lodge services on Chirripó to the community of San Gerardo. The activities of NGOs have been one of several factors influencing changing forms of national park management.

There were several reasons discussed by the Ministry of Environment and Energy employee for the increasing involvement of local communities in forms of environmental management or conservation activities. While specific government policies such as the Law of Conservation and the Biodiversity Act required high levels of participation of local people and key stakeholders in national park management, further reasons included budgetary constraints and the use of the community to access additional forms of funding. Tourism was described as being a non-essential activity for conservation; therefore it is not a primary responsibility of the national park staff. There was also the need for neighbouring communities to achieve a certain level of material wealth to avoid unsustainable use of park resources. MINAE further benefits by inserting environmental clauses into agreements with communities, aiding the government to accomplish conservation goals at a lower cost.

The need to seek out additional funding was mentioned by the MINAE employee, suggesting that the national park office faced budgetary constraints. As highlighted by the MINAE employee: “The other important aspect is that as part of our management, protected areas have to search other mechanisms to generate resources, like NGOs, donations, private companies and other forms” (Interview #19, 2011, June 22). One way of accessing more resources was through using the community as an intermediary. As described above, MINAE facilitates the connection between NGOs and communities. On the one hand, community members benefit from training and access to funds for environmental projects. On the other hand, the community also captures resources for MINAE. For example, in 2009, the lodge had been threatened by closure by the Ministry of Health because of an inadequate septic tank system. The Community Development Association obtained a grant from the Banco Nacional in order to build a modern system that used solar energy, then donated the equipment to MINAE because all infrastructure within the national park must belong to them (Interview #17, 2011, June 20). It was implied that without the important step of the community obtaining the funds, the park would have been closed. Perhaps due to this experience, MINAE hopes to expand the Community Development Association’s role in a new agreement:

What we are seeking is that the function of the Community Development Association will be broadened not only to include the Chirripó Race, but so that they can also support us voluntarily to search out resources, or serve as an intermediary to obtain resources from NGOs, from other public institutions and from Institutional or Corporate Social Responsibility funds (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

Similarly, the intention of the proposed advisory council was described as:

Participation, that the communities have a space to establish their criteria, give comments and also have the possibility through local advisory councils to pressure, for example, the State to search out more resources for the Park. And economic development for them. (...) We are talking about shared agendas, or shared responsibilities (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

Community participation is therefore seen as an effective means to acquire additional funding for National Park infrastructure and operations.

As a department facing financial limitations, there is a prioritization of certain core functions of the national park service. Whereas patrols against hunting and scientific research were listed as activities that were essential for conservation purposes, tourism was not. This reasoning was used to explain the rationale for the Concession of tourism services within the park:

What we want through the Concession is that these non-essential activities (accommodation, food, porter services, selling souvenirs), which do not correspond to the park rangers, because they are not their work obligations and which nevertheless they are doing, can be passed on to a concessioner. We do not want the park rangers to be the ones receiving and accommodating tourists (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

The devolution of these activities to the community would allow staff resources to then be allocated to what were viewed as essential functions such as monitoring and environmental education.

Furthermore, ensuring that neighbouring communities were not in situations of hardship was viewed as being helpful for conservation. If communities were facing poverty, they may be more likely to carry out illegal activities in the park, compromising its conservation goals. As stated by the MINAE employee:

We cannot have conservation if the people are dying of hunger, because if they are, they will hunt within the park. But neither can we have over-development that would jeopardize protected areas that provide goods and services such as water and climate regulation. So what we are looking for is an equilibrium between conservation and development, right? And to achieve this, community participation is extremely important (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

This rhetoric reflects the evolving ideology and policies regarding community participation. Throughout the interview, the MINAE employee emphasized the benefits that communities receive from the National Park, both from tourism activity and from ecological goods and services. The literature in tourism studies contends that raising the socio-economic status of local peoples is critical to conservation efforts in parks and protected areas, particularly in examples regarding wildlife tourism in Africa (Bruner, 2005). Chirripó National Park personnel were aware of this situation and were seeking to address it.

There were clear environmental stipulations in all community management initiatives undertaken. Firstly, the use permits have only been granted for specific purposes of ecotourism. In contrast:

There are people who have asked that we grant them permission to have cows within the park to graze, but that is an economic activity that is not permitted so we cannot authorize a use permit of this type (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

Secondly, if the communities are not meeting their obligations, their use permit can be revoked:

The State gives them the possibility to use the track to bring up tourists, but if they do not meet requirements the State also has the power to take away the permit. (...) The community does not have any right over the track (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

Community participation was only granted when it met the needs of MINAE to secure conservation objectives, often with cost-savings due to the use of volunteer labour from the community or additional resources gained via community groups.

In addition to receiving much-needed funds through community and NGO relationships, MINAE also benefits greatly from community participation, as communities are required to carry out conservation work as part of their agreements. MINAE receives low-cost or free labour to repair tracks, monitor hunting, fight fires and remove waste within the Park. An estimated seven tonnes of waste is generated each year (Interview #19, 2011, June 22) and without the help of the porters, it would pose a significant cost to MINAE to manage. Evidence from this case suggests that some devolution of state services towards NGOs, private enterprise and the community is occurring. These changes in management can be viewed as neoliberal approaches to conservation and development. However, the focus of this analysis is on the relationships and interactions that allow these changes to occur and how the community views and responds to these processes.

Local opinions of the state's role in tourism development

Representatives of local organizations involved in agreements with MINAE, as well as household interviewees, shared their perspectives on these arrangements and on the government's contributions to tourism development more generally in the village. The representative of one organization explained the agreement between MINAE and the Association of Porters, Guides and Cooks in the following way:

It's the community who maintains the tracks and responds to all the emergencies through the Association of Porters. Which is interesting (laugh) that we are the ones from the community doing it (Interview #17, 2011, June 20).

When I asked this man whether maintaining the tracks in the National Park was the responsibility of the government, he replied: "Yes, but they don't have money, so they get us to do it" (Interview #17, 2011, June 20). There was a recognition that the porters

carry out work on the government's behalf in order to obtain the benefits associated with tourism, but that they were inadequately compensated for their work. A woman cook stated: "The porters are volunteers who bring down all the organic waste and recyclables for free" (Interview #5, 2011, June 8). A porter saw diminishing public funds as an issue:

There used to be a fund (for repairing the track) but I don't know what happened and the government took it away. (...) I think that they should do it. Two years ago was the last time they had a tender for working on the track, which we won and were paid for doing it (Interview #11, 2011, June 16).

Community members had higher expectations for remuneration from MINAE for the work that they do in maintaining the park infrastructure and services.

Despite the large amount of work involved, some saw the agreements as being advantageous to the community:

The Banco Nacional gives funds to the Community Development Association who then passes them on to MINAE. We work as a team. The participation that the community has with the Banco and MINAE is very important. It is a long story, with a happy ending. And there, the community receives income via tourism (Interview #17, 2011, June 20).

Thus, for some, the use of the community to obtain resources for MINAE is seen more as a cooperative arrangement, according mutual benefits. One woman who was a cook in a hotel also pointed out the importance of the government allowing tourists to enter the park: "I think that the government gives support also, because if the government didn't give support, they wouldn't allow tourism" (Interview #13, 2011, June 20). Another household interviewee spoke positively of government involvement in improvements to the lodge up Mt Chirripó.

Yet, when asked what the government does to support tourism development in the village, many household interviewees responded negatively. The most common complaints were that the government was taking the money from the park entrance fees, that the road up to the village was poorly maintained to the detriment of tourism activities and that it was rather the community, especially the Association of Porters, that were doing the work in the national park. Statements from household interviewees demonstrate these negative associations. Referring to government involvement in general, one man expressed a sentiment that the government had not been meeting its obligations:

Everything, all the resources that are earned from Chirripó are taken by the State. But they haven't paid attention to giving back what they should to the community. For the good of tourism and the community (Interview #10, 2011, June 15).

A local business owner and farmer emphasized the divide between the village and the government, implying that the MINAE employees are outsiders:

MINAE is a government institution, but the only thing they do is get the funds that tourism generates. It's not like MINAE is helping the village. No, they work for the government (Interview #2, 2011, June 7).

There were other community members who recognized that although they did not get money back directly from MINAE, they received forms of assistance via other government departments. As discussed earlier in the chapter, these included receiving free courses through the INA, improvements to village infrastructure and financial support for projects through DINADECO and the Banco Nacional, and access to tourism information through the Costa Rica Tourism Board (ICT) (Interview #10, 2011, June 15).

Yes, the government contributes. For example, the INA is a government institution. And via the Community Development Association, who do all the transactions with the government for what is assistance with infrastructure. So, for example, our large multi-use community hall, beforehand it was small and we couldn't host activities (...) and thanks to the CDA who liaises with groups of the government so that they give donations for infrastructure, they helped out a lot (Interview #4, 2011, June 7).

Overall, the perception of the government held by household members interviewed was mostly negative, while organization representatives had more mixed views.

The changing management regime, at a micro-level, rests upon the relationships and interactions between individuals, organizations and state institutions. Negotiating these can alter the material outcomes for local people and for the state. Several representatives of organizations discussed their association with MINAE. Some had better experiences than others with the national park administration, which is reflected in the varied opinions below. As with any relationships, there are challenges and potential issues of conflict. The director of a local non-profit pointed to the struggle of rebuilding strong connections when there are changes in the park's staff and administration:

We're trying to nurture that relationship with the Park. And it changes every time they change Directors so that's been part of our challenge. You have a really good relationship and the Director moves on you have to start all over again (Interview #18, 2011, June 21).

Another organization representative felt that MINAE focused too much on their arrangement with the Porters and did not place enough importance on their interactions with other groups in the village.

They [MINAE] really need the porters, because the porters bring all the material up the mountain for them, so some of the people within MINAE have maybe not paid enough attention to the relationship with our organization. This is what annoys us a bit, because just as it is important that everything functions within the park, it is also important that it does in the park's surroundings (Interview #20, 2011, June 27).

Despite relationships between local groups and the park involving some tensions, one community organization representative praised the outcomes as having been so successful that the community had served as an example to others:

This village has coordinated very well with MINAE. This has projected a good image and reputation at the national level. Other communities come here to see how we work with tourism, how we maintain and coordinate it (Interview #17, 2011, June 20).

In a similar fashion, the MINAE employee compared San Gerardo to other protected areas, commenting:

Sometimes we visit other protected areas and there we see the differences. Because there are other protected areas in the country where the community is not a friend of the park, or they don't get along well, because the management has not been so good (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

These relationships are therefore important, as they are one factor that has set San Gerardo apart from other cases and contributed to the relative success they have in turning their proximity to the park into significant opportunities.

Negotiating more favourable community development outcomes

The community, at first glance, did not appear to be in a strong bargaining position, as community involvement was portrayed by MINAE as a revocable privilege, rather than a right. Communities had also lost access to resources, such as hunting and grazing land, through the establishment of Chirripó National Park. Yet, community members and groups have managed to negotiate relationships with government officials in order to enhance community benefits from tourism development. In a similar vein, Massicotte (2010: 91) discusses how, despite power imbalances, some small-scale

farmers and landless rural workers in Brazil challenge trade policies and directly engage with political and economic institutions in order to voice their concerns, while managing the impacts that neoliberal agricultural policies have on their daily lives (2010: 91). In San Gerardo, community members have negotiated better outcomes from tourism development by leveraging themselves in certain ways: through expressing personal interests during negotiations, creating marketing opportunities for donors, and accentuating environmental successes and unique aspects of the village in order to retain or seek funding. Community members are aware that they can use their status as a tourist destination to their advantage and San Gerardo was privileged in many ways compared to other nearby villages that did not have the same extent of tourism activity. As one hotel owner stated, perhaps cautiously:

Maybe the community receives political and social benefits. Because it is a touristic zone, the government maybe helps out a little more. There is a different influence (Interview #16, 2011, May 13).

Through negotiations, local people have voiced their concerns. An example of this was during the negotiations for the Concession, where it was proposed that with the new restaurant in the lodge, the cooks would stay up there for two weeks at a time. In response, the women who work as cooks who are also mothers did not agree to being away from their families for this timeframe. They successfully negotiated to instead set it at one week at a time, allowing them to better balance their family responsibilities. This was viewed as better than the prior system of going for three days, two of which involved a lot of walking. Another issue for hotel owners had been that they often could not make reservations for their guests to enter the national park, as tour companies from San José and elsewhere were buying up many of the spaces well in advance. The hotel owners had expressed much frustration over this and the MINAE employee stated that they were aware of the problem and working on an improved reservation system (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

In another example, while I was staying in the village, there was an opportunity for individuals or groups to present projects to the Banco Nacional and apply for funding. Local people commented that bureaucrats from the city did not always understand how the village operates. Because the meeting was held on a Saturday at 8am, farmers would be working and not able to attend. These are some of many instances where people from the community strive to make government officials aware of local circumstances and in doing so can affect the actualization of agreements.

A notable opportunity to apply for financial support comes from the community hosting the annual Chirripó Race. The Race Committee attracts a diverse group of

sponsors, from private enterprises to government departments. In return, the race represents an important marketing opportunity for sponsors: athletes from all corners of Costa Rica (and even abroad) come to compete, accompanied by their families. Several television and radio news stations report on the event. The longer official name of the race, the Carrera Ecológica Cultural Internacional Campo Traviesa al Chirripó, emphasizes cultural and ecological aspects, which may be attractive for sponsors.

Figure 5-3.



Banner for the Chirripó race in the village centre of San Gerardo, showing the logos of numerous sponsors.

Source: Author's photograph

In 2012, the Chirripó Race was officially dedicated to the DINADECO, the government department that had financed the upgrade of the community hall. The race represents an important opportunity to get funding for wider community initiatives, which community groups have actively sought out. One active member of the Race Committee stated:

With the Chirripó Race, we have succeeded in that the municipality and the canton support it and now every year they contribute two million colones (US\$4000). And we are looking for a way in which the Ministry of Youth and Sports will declare it of cultural interest (Interview #10, 2011, June 15).

Representatives from the national and municipal governments were present at the gala dinner for the race and community groups were looking to further explore ways to promote the race through their connections with government officials.

Interactions with politicians were seen by some local people as important opportunities to mobilize resources. On occasion, community members have invited specific politicians to visit. Referring to an upcoming event in Chirripó National Park that the Costa Rican President, Laura Chinchilla, was rumoured to be attending, one man commented:

I think it is maybe good that the President visits because there she will see the reality that it is very important that they are many tourists and all that, right? And maybe we will benefit from her coming here (Interview #14, 2011, June 20).

However, community members have also been disappointed with some past efforts to engage politicians in order to improve the state of the road to the village, as expressed by a local business owner:

We, the community, have taken every measure to bring high-up government civil servants so that they see the importance that Chirripó has for the community and which has made it known internationally. But the government has done very little. We have tried to firstly get them to ensure good access, a good road. And for many years the deputy minister has come here and many people from the government. And as much as we have pressured the road hasn't been paved. For this reason, I would say that up until now, the government has not shown much interest (Interview #10, 2011, June 15).

Despite this, community members continue to engage with municipal and state government officials when the opportunities are presented.

Another important way that the community leverages itself is through emphasizing their multiple successes in environmental initiatives, which are further detailed in the next chapter. This likely contributes to obtaining funding from government departments or from NGOs that include environmental stipulations. The majority of community members were recent arrivals who had heavily modified the environment through agricultural and other practices. In this light, it would be pragmatic for the community to accentuate their environmental achievements to catch the attention of NGOs who may otherwise overlook them. Furthermore, the community can demonstrate strongly the changes they have made, that are often well beyond the achievements of other communities. These have been recognized through sustainability certifications.

One organization representative suggested that these environmental facets would also serve to strengthen the community's bargaining power with MINAE:

I feel that each day MINAE is going to give more concessions because there aren't many neighbouring villages like this one, with sustainable tourism, with natural resources and a strong environmental conscience. Rivers with crystalline water, the nature and the views, the quality of the people also and the security which is important. Sure, there are some things that aren't good, but there are many differences between San Gerardo and other communities (Interview #20, 2011, June 27).

The national park personnel are well aware of the community's environmental credentials and how this contrasts with other tourism sites. The MINAE employee recounted how a woman from the United States who lives in Monteverde, one of Costa Rica's earlier and most prominent ecotourism sites, had come to visit Chirripó National Park to see how San Gerardo had managed to preserve the natural environment while benefitting from tourism development.

So I told her that the people have learned that the biodiversity and the beauty of this region have kept tourists coming. She told me that in Monteverde, a long time ago it was like that, but now it is all cement. There is rampant construction, they have lost the concept of ecological tourism and social problems have arisen. So I told the woman about the vision that the local people have of tourism and how conservation plays an important role in tourism development here (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

The people of San Gerardo have undertaken environmental conservation measures that complement their engagement in tourism.

Conclusion

Despite ongoing challenges and power imbalances, the people of San Gerardo play an active role in shaping and managing tourism development in their village. They do this by stating and negotiating for their preferences for environmental and local forms of tourism, recognizing the obstacles to attracting the number and types of tourists they wish, as well as creating strategies to overcome challenges, prevent negative impacts and promote San Gerardo as a destination in itself rather than just an entry point to Chirripó National Park. All of these actions demonstrate that community members are working towards managing the direction of tourism development. While there was clearly a focus of local organizations on tourism-related projects, some initiatives were also seeking to diversify the local economy. For example, the screen-printing business of the women's group was aimed at getting contracts for printing uniforms for regional schools

and sports teams. Other strategies were aimed at targeting domestic tourists, decreasing the reliance on international visitor markets. However, the lack of larger-scale alternatives to tourism could lead to vulnerability in years to come.

In the second half of this chapter, I described some of the novel forms of community participation that are being trialed in the management of Chirripó National Park. Perspectives from the community were shown, alongside those of the National Park personnel. The relationships between various actors, including the influence of NGOs, were found to be important in maintaining agreements that have been devised to deliver benefits to both parties. By focusing on the interactions between the government, community and non-state actors, it was found that neoliberal practices such as the devolution of state services to the community can be both constraining – in terms of the conditions posed in agreements, and enabling – by allowing more employment options for local people. The people of San Gerardo are not rejecting neoliberal processes of development and ecotourism, but are rather responding in creative ways that allow them to shape how these processes impact the lives of community members. Community groups furthermore, attempts to leverage their bargaining power, by emphasizing their environmental strengths, among other things. The environmental projects initiated in and by the community are the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: ECOTOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Tourism, in general, relies upon the marketing of difference. Ecotourism relies upon possessing unique environmental qualities to attract tourists. San Gerardo is fortunate in this regard, being situated at the base of Mt Chirripó. Within Chirripó National Park are the sole geological features related to prior glaciation in all of Central America, the only mountain tarns in the country, rare animal species, the northernmost limit of Andean mountain flora and areas sacred to Indigenous peoples (Pucci & Montero, 2001). Chirripó National Park is undoubtedly a prime ecotourism site, but the village at its entrance, San Gerardo, could have developed in any number of ways in response to the development of tourism economies. Yet, its people have chosen to actively pursue environmental sustainability as a community development objective. Whether or not ecotourism projects are environmentally sustainable is often the primary interest of scholars (Kruger, 2005). Here, I aim to build on the findings in my preceding chapters to demonstrate how, as West and Carrier argue, these environmental initiatives are the result of many different factors and complex socio-ecological relations (2009).

Seemingly straightforward environmental projects may be the product of various discourses surrounding conservation and development at international, national, institutional and individual levels. Changes in practices are not necessarily from utilitarian to non-utilitarian, as ecotourism is also a way of using the environment. The MINAE employee points to the influence the park has had on community members and their awareness of conservation issues:

Communities like San Gerardo have become conservationist communities. Obviously we cannot think that everyone in the community has a new way of thinking, but they have been reeducated or they have identified the park as an opportunity for development (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

Community-initiated projects and the environmental awareness of individuals cannot be completely disassociated from their importance to tourism and the economic wellbeing of people. This is not to devalue the personal sentiments for the natural environment, which many villagers possess, but rather to show how it is interconnected to wider socio-economic circumstances. Perceptions and uses of the environment have changed in relation to external economic and social conditions evolving over time. In this section, I highlight the ways that the community has striven to make favourable environmental impressions to tourists in ways that have brought about significant changes to their practices. However, the range and extent of environmental practices

employed are also limited by economic realities. While the sign upon entering San Gerardo describes it as a 'conservationist community', it is not a single, static entity, but comprised of range of actions and opinions from individuals and organizations, some of which are positioning the village to encourage the continuation of sustainable forms of tourism.

Socio-ecological change in San Gerardo

Locals described San Gerardo before the rise of tourism as a village where people struggled to make a living from agriculture and hunted for supplementary food. Land was deforested, access to markets was limited and secondary education was not available. Fires ignited for agricultural purposes had destroyed sections of forested areas of the park and, due to lack of economic opportunities, community members were migrating to the United States to pursue employment. Describing how many of these practices have changed through tourism, one woman stated:

Many years ago, people often hunted the animals, burned their properties and cut down the forests. And when tourism came to San Gerardo, it was because the tourists liked nature and the animals and clean water. So the people stopped destroying and started to conserve everything. Now we don't have hunters here and the majority of people are allowing their farmland to reforest, so it has had a very positive impact (Interview #21, 2011, June 28).

The most important benefit of tourism according to interviewees was economic, but it was recognized that these alternative sources of income had facilitated nature conservation. A man who runs a hotel echoed these points:

Fifteen years ago, San Gerardo was a depopulated [because of migration], deforested zone and now almost everything is totally protected because many of the people live off tourism and have realized that it is important. Already there are species or birds and animals that we didn't used to see that are coming back. This shows that people are changing (Interview #20, 2011, June 27).

The sharp contrast in terms of changes to the use of the natural environment has been attributed largely to income from tourism and meeting tourists' preferences.

The agreements between MINAE and local communities, discussed in the previous chapter, were also viewed as being successful in terms of engaging communities in conservation activities. The representative of a local organization in San Gerardo saw the increased role of the community in national park management in a positive light, both environmentally and economically:

Here we don't have deforestation, we don't have hunters, we don't have what we had in the past, right? (...) We now are conscious that we don't need park rangers or any of that kind of thing here. That is, it is the community who conserves and takes charge of that. In exchange, we have an opportunity to work and receive income from the park - it is a very interesting arrangement (Interview #17, 2011, June 20).

From the perspective of the national park office employee, the changes had been culturally as well as economically driven:

I believe that there has been a cultural change. (...) They have adapted to the park, so for example at the moment we have porters who beforehand were hunters. Or people who in the past cut down trees and now work for the good of the park (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

The use permit for Herradura was likewise seen a success, as this village had been experiencing environmental problems, including forest fires. By employing local guides, people from the village thus had a vested interest to protect the environment.

Direct tourism employment and environmental education are factors that have shaped attitudes towards the environment. The representative of a San Gerardo organization raised concerns about the impacts of agriculture on the local environment: "Deforesting and burning - agriculture is what is the most destructive, if you think about it" (Interview #17, 2011, June 20). This is contrasted to attitudes among earlier settlers to San Gerardo that standing forests were a loss of productive farmland (Marciano, 2010). Having an alternative employment option has altered people's perceptions about agriculture and the environment. As noted by a man who now works in a reserve on land where he used to live and clear land for agriculture:

Yes, I used to cut down and burn trees. It wasn't explained to anyone the damage that one was doing. Because at that time nobody said anything so that was just what one did. (...) Through the reserve, I totally changed, yes. Ten years ago I didn't know what looking after the environment was and now I have realized (laughs) (Interview #12, 2011, June 16).

The lifestyle transformations have been dramatic for some: from relying upon slash and burn agriculture techniques to provide a basic level of subsistence to being able to maintain a higher material standard of living through conservation.

When one's economic livelihood is dependent on conserving nature for tourism, rather than modifying the environment for cultivation, one can afford the luxury of looking at nature in a different way. This is not intended to imply that people did not have profound appreciations of nature beforehand, as farmers who lived off the land, many

likely did and farmers often strive to protect the ecological services that they rely upon, such as clean water and healthy soils. Rather, environmental education initiatives associated with tourism and the national park may have led to changing perceptions around these agricultural practices as being less sustainable, while the economic circumstances have offered alternatives to them. This is reflected in a number of recent and emerging environmental practices.

Environmental practices facilitated by ecotourism

The interaction of multiple environmental discourses, at different levels, has influenced individual and collective concerns for the environment. A local restaurant owner and dairy farmer told me “Many tourists come and promote the idea to protect the environment and to tell some of us the problems that other countries have from not having conserved the environment and nature” (Interview #10, 2011, June 15). Several other people mentioned further explicit links between environmental initiatives and tourism. Specific examples regarding waste management, land use practices and environmental certification are discussed with reference to changes that individuals and organizations have made, as well as how these are related to tourism development.

Interviewees were asked about environmental initiatives within their households, workplaces and organizations. The most frequent practices mentioned were concerning waste management and it was recognized that tourism was a prime factor in these changes. Within households, there has been a shift from burning garbage to it being collected by truck once a month. This service had been operating for eleven years and was initiated by two community members who formed a garbage committee on the Community Development Association. Each participating family pays 1 000 colones (US\$2) a month, while hotels pay 3 000 (US\$6) colones in recognition of the greater amount of waste that they produce (Interview #16, 2011, May 13). Since the service started has been a shift in behaviour and a reduction of littering. A man who is part of the garbage committee pointed specifically to the influence of tourists in this process:

The tourists who come here are people who like wilderness and have a different conscience. You wouldn't see them littering and the people of San Gerardo have since been educated a lot on this issue. Because here you hardly see garbage in the street - everyone picks it up (Interview #16, 2011, May 13).

As demonstrated by this quote from a female hotel worker, people are aware that the tourism industry relies upon their image as an environmentally conscious community:

Now we are a community that recycles, whereas many years ago the streets were full of garbage. (...) Tourism has made us realize that if we want people to come to our community, they must leave with a good impression. And if there is garbage in the street, what are they going to say about San Gerardo? (Interview #4, 2011, June 7).

All but one household interviewed claimed to recycle, although with varying commitment levels. Some were very passionate about recycling and made sure to recycle whatever was possible, while three families said it was their children who encouraged them to recycle so they would send recyclables with them to school every now and then. Many of these waste management practices are new for the older generation and some community members lamented that not all households recycled or were part of the garbage removal program. As expected, the degree of engagement varied between community members, but it appeared that the majority of households were involved in some way.

Figure 6-1.



Recycling facilities in a central location outside of the village store.

Source: Author's photograph

Local businesses and organizations also participated in waste management measures, often promoting these ventures to tourists. People who worked at hotels and restaurants listed recycling, composting and greywater management as practices carried out in their workplaces. At the lodge up Chirripó mountain, the cooks separate waste into recycling, garbage and organics and are expected to show tourists how to use the

correct bins (Interview #5, 2011, June 8). The porters then transport this waste down the mountain and it is stored and collected along with the rest of the village's waste. In addition, there is a smaller public recycling facility outside the village store, a prominent location in the village centre where many tourists visit to buy food during their stay. This was the initiative of five families to have this installed and a man involved in the project proudly pointed out he had never seen another facility like it in other villages or even in the city of San Isidro (Interview #2, 2011, June 7).

Members of the women's group make crafts to sell to tourists out of recycled materials such as plastic bags, newspapers, tin cans and glass bottles. One woman pointed out the marketing potential of these items to tourists: "In general when a craft is made out of newspaper or something recycled, we label it 'recycled', so that the tourists can see that it is" (Interview #21, 2011, June 28). Another creative form of recycling was that two businesses were collecting plastic bottles and stuffing them with garbage, with the aim of filling hundreds of bottles that would then be used in construction (Interview #2, 2011, June 7). These examples demonstrate a range of measures undertaken in San Gerardo, many of which are not yet seen in other nearby villages. In San Gerardo, improving waste management has been supported and driven by community members, with an additional clear motivation from tourism to seek resourceful ways of not only engaging in ecological practices, but also making these visible to tourists.

Tourism is one factor impacting the knowledge of ecologically sustainable land use practices, including organic farming and reforestation. Whereas in two other agricultural villages in Pérez Zeledón very few farmers had heard of organic farming (Sick, pers. comm., 2011), all household interviewees were aware of and could describe aspects of organic production methods. A commercial vegetable grower explained organic farming in this way: "It is producing, for example coffee or vegetables, without using chemicals. Using only organic inputs, like fertilizers made with worm compost or with chicken faeces" (Interview #8, 2011, June 9). Four households were making their own organic compost, for example by using worms to convert organic waste and cow, chicken or horse feces into compost. Some households produced organic vegetables for household consumption and local sale. An organic coffee farmer whose wife grows organic vegetables using hydroponic techniques explained why they prefer not to use chemicals: "Because using chemicals is not good for your health or for the soil. What is natural or organic is better" (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). Other reasons for growing organically cited were the improved quality and taste of produce. It is likely that the influence of foreigners in the village also plays a role in changing attitudes towards conventional farming techniques. In conversations with other foreigners, it was evident that several strongly disapproved of the use of agrichemicals by local farmers. During a

First Aid course run by foreign volunteers, the subject of organic farming was raised in terms of the health issues related to exposure to agrichemicals, which I was informed led to an intense debate with several farmers in attendance.

While most local interviewees were, on principle, in favour of organic practices, they also pointed out that in some cases it was not financially viable to do so. A commercial vegetable producer supported organic, but said that on a commercial scale, organic growing of certain crops such as tomatoes and avocados would produce very low yields and there would be problems with pests (Interview #8, 2011, June 9). Two interviewees were producing organic coffee, but admitted it took more time removing weeds by hand and that yields were lower. One man changed to organic because the chemicals he used were harming the coffee plants and turning their leaves yellow (Interview #12, 2011, June 16). Other farmers stated that it was too costly or difficult for them to grow coffee organically even if they wanted to. There was no extra premium paid for organic by the main coffee cooperative in the region, which instead differentiates its coffee by altitude and quality measures. Furthermore, a larger quantity of organic fertilizer was required to have the equivalent impact of conventional fertilizer, which was a logistical issue for one household who would have to carry it a long distance or up steep slopes (Interview #11, 2011, June 16). Those who had organic coffee could afford to do so because they had other significant sources of income.

While it is likely that several factors are influencing the knowledge of organic production, explicit links were made with tourism. The wife of the vegetable grower mentioned above stated:

You hear that all the farms that the tourists go to are organic. Tourists, when they see the word organic, it's really attractive to them. When they go to the market, for them it is more important to buy organic produce than anything else (Interview #8, 2011, June 9).

One woman commented that tourists appreciate that she serves organic vegetables in her restaurant (Interview #6, 2011, June 8). I did not notice any restaurants mentioning the use of organic produce on their menus or in signage. The most prominent advertizing of organic was from a group of small-scale organic coffee producers on the main road between the town of Rivas and San Gerardo. They have signs, in English, advertizing the direct sale of local organic coffee and coffee farm tours, intended to attract tourists on their way to San Gerardo. The group was comprised of five families in a neighbouring village who had a micro-processing plant where they employed agro-ecological techniques including minimizing water use (Interview #15, 2011, May 12).

Figure 6-2.



Sign advertizing the tours and products of an organic coffee producer association in another village on the road to San Gerardo de Rivas.

Source: Author's photograph

Another land use change has been putting land aside for conservation purposes. While much reforestation in the area has been the result of land bought for reserves, four local households or businesses interviewed had set aside parts of their farms for conservation purposes. One farming couple had twenty out of their fifty hectares forested, some of which was previously used for grazing (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). Another farmer who also runs a restaurant business had put aside twenty-one hectares of land and reforested waterways on his farm. When asked his principal motivation for reforestation, which he started thirteen years beforehand, he answered:

Since we have begun to believe in tourism, one now realizes it is necessary. Beforehand, people here used to cut down trees and burn and now we don't do either. Rather, we are reforesting. We maintain some pasture, but what is forest, we keep as forest. (...) What's more, at the moment we are not only protecting the forests but also the animals. Because these days one knows that tourists come to see animals, like in Corcovado. And here we have many animals, but we didn't appreciate them before. Now we do (Interview #10, 2011, June 15).

Due to the reforestation and also the reported significant decrease in hunting by local people (Marciano, 2010), both of these families had noticed that more animals and birds were returning to their land since they had dedicated more of it to conservation.

One of these families had investigated putting some land into the Costa Rican government's payment for environmental services program to receive carbon credits, but decided not to participate as it would have meant getting rid of their cattle and the financial returns would not cover the losses from not having livestock. Similarly, the representative of a non-profit reserve stated that at \$65 per hectare, the price for reforestation was not a big enough incentive for farmers to leave land to reforest, rather than in the program:

"It tends to be the big reserves, at least that I'm aware of, almost all big reserves. A few of the smaller ones, but I think for the governments purpose, well, it's a lot of paperwork for your average tico [Costa Rican] to go through, if you're not going to put a lot of acres into it. So it doesn't really meet the needs of a small farmer. But if you've got, three hundred, four hundred acres you can put in it at a time, and you're going to do it anyway, it's definitely worthwhile (Interview #18, 2011, June 21).

The largest reserve in San Gerardo, privately owned by a foreigner, was participating in the Costa Rican government program. A major barrier to participation was having legal title to land, which could take over ten years to obtain and according to this interviewee, very few farmers in San Gerardo had title to their property (Interview #18, 2011, June 21). Therefore, at this stage, it appears that local people putting land into conservation have been motivated by potential financial returns from tourism rather than from carbon credits.

The realization of the touristic potential of reforestation was most evident with hotel owners who had reforested land. One hotel owner stated that their farm had evolved to complement their participation in tourism (Interview #16, 2011, May 13). At first they had dairy cows, but it became difficult to milk them when they started running the hotel, therefore grazing land was then converted into coffee. Five hectares of coffee were then cut down following extremely low prices in 2001. This area was being reforested and used for tourism purposes, as the hotel advertizes tours of their farm to guests. Another local hotel advertizes tours of their reforestation project on their website (Hotel de Montaña El Pelicano, 2012), indicating that attracting ecotourists may have been a factor in their decision to create a small conservation area adjacent to the hotel. As demonstrated by these examples, ecotourism has played a large role in reforestation projects and may also be influencing changing agricultural practices.

Organizations and businesses in San Gerardo have sought to attain certain standards in sustainable practices and be recognized for these by certifications, which can then be used for marketing purposes. Another reason was to help prepare for and avoid the negative environmental impacts that had occurred in other tourist towns in Costa Rica. The local Chamber of Tourism representative stated that this was a priority:

We want our members to be well prepared for potential environmental impacts, so we are giving a lot of importance to the theme of sustainability in meeting national tourism licensing standards and sustainability certifications, as well as Bandera Azul (Interview #20, 2011, June 27).

There was a range of environmental accreditation programs that community tourism businesses were participating in. A local certification was the Ando Huella program, run by the Chamber of Tourism. At the beginning of the year, all affiliated members were sent a list of the objectives, which were evaluated at the end of the year. Most CATURCOCHI members have attained the first level, earning a wooden placard denoting their achievements in sustainable rural tourism, which I noticed on display in some local hotels.

At the national level, the Costa Rica Tourism Board's Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST) Program offers a more comprehensive set of objectives as well as a rigorous evaluation system, in which one hotel in San Gerardo was participating. Once inscribed in the program, the hotel is evaluated in four main areas: physical-biological parameters, infrastructure and services, external client interactions and the broader socio-economic environment (CST, 2012). The hotel had employed a man from San Jose to help with implementing the program and in 2010 they met the requirements for level three of the program, out of a possible five levels. The front page of their website proudly states that they are the first hotel in Pérez Zeledón to receive the Certification for Sustainable Tourism (Hotel de Montaña El Pelicano, 2012). While staying at the hotel, I noticed that there were signs for guests about reducing consumption of electricity, water and paper. There was also a book with photographs of fauna and flora of the area and a comprehensive folder outlining their sustainability initiatives, which include tourist education, recycling, using biodegradable products, worm composting, growing organic vegetables for their restaurant, soil erosion prevention, reforestation projects, energy conservation, exhibiting local art and supporting community development. These are also visible on the hotel's website. Another local hotel was also pursuing the certification, but had not yet been certified (Hotel Urán, 2012). Clearly, the certification is seen as an advantage in marketing.

Figure 6-3.



A small notice in the bathroom of a CST-certified hotel reminds visitors to conserve water.

Source: Author's photograph

A certification that several groups in the community had been awarded was the Bandera Azul Ecológica. Based on the European Blue Flag program, the Costa Rican version was set up in 1996 by a collaboration of several government departments, including the tourism board and MINAE, to encourage coastal communities to keep their beaches in a pristine condition (ICT, 2012b). San Gerardo was the first non-coastal community to earn the Bandera, through meeting criteria for environmental protection and education (Interview #20, 2011, June 27). The weekend I arrived in the village, there was a ceremony for Bandera Azul, where the "ecological flags" were awarded. San Gerardo had earned five of these, which I was told was a record for a Costa Rican town. Among these were flags for the elementary school, which regularly carries out environmental programs such as tree planting, and the local Community Development Association in recognition of the town's environmental efforts in general. More directly implicated in tourism were a non-profit private nature reserve, the National Park office and a hotel. The nature reserve carries out reforestation programs, produces hydroelectricity, and engages in education with the primary school (Interview #18, 2011, June 21). The National Park office wished to position itself as a model in the use of clean energy. With already ninety percent coming from solar and hydroelectricity, they planned to install an alternative to the diesel generator that is required in the dry season.

Furthermore, they are using recycled plastic instead of wood to renovate all the signage in the Park. Managing tourism numbers in the park, establishing biological corridors and watershed protection were other factors related to accomplishing the Bandera Azul for a protected natural area (Interview #19, 2011, June 22).

At the award ceremony, praise was given to the first private business participating in the program. The hotel involved already had the Costa Rica Tourism Board sustainability certification therefore through those same efforts they were also able to accomplish the Bandera objectives. Despite the CST standards being more difficult to obtain, the owner stated: "It was important to achieve the Bandera for the impact it has on marketing and also to support the community in its Bandera Azul program" (Interview #20, 2011, June 27). Two other hotels were working towards earning the Bandera Azul the following year, possibly showing an emerging trend for local hotels. For those businesses that are members of the Chamber of Tourism, their main objective is to strategically market tourism to attract tourists to stay longer in the village, rather than just using it as a base to climb Mt Chirripó. Using environmental certification is an avenue to do so. Similarly, the waste management and land use practices described also contribute to creating an image of San Gerardo as a favourable ecotourism destination.

Negative environmental impacts of tourism

Despite the multitude of environmental initiatives associated with tourism, some of which are discussed above, there are limits to their extent and ability to solve environmental challenges. Just as the application of organic farming was limited for some only to instances where it was financially viable, other criteria can be subject to economic constraints. Despite all but one interviewee agreeing that ecotourism had so far been good for the environment in San Gerardo, there is evidence of negative impacts. For example, one organization representative voiced concerns that rather than basing their choices on sustainability, some of the hotels used the cheapest available materials for their buildings and had inadequate low-cost septic tank systems (Interview #18, 2011, June 21). As in the village, at the lodge on Mt Chirripó, the processing of sewage has posed a significant challenge (Interview #19, 2011, June 22). The use of quad and dirt bikes in one reserve also has negative environmental consequences, as it is a source of disturbance for wildlife.

While tourism has generated many positive environmental benefits, there is also the risk of some of these being destabilized by a downturn in tourism or other external factors. When I revisited the town in February 2012, the municipality had temporarily suspended the garbage collection, resulting in some people burning their garbage.

Interestingly, no interviewee mentioned that the amount of waste generated by tourists was an issue. Rather, they praised foreigners for not littering as much as Costa Rican tourists (Interview #8, 2011, June 9). Perhaps because the hotels pay more for garbage removal this is seen as a fair arrangement, or possibly, as suggested by Meletis & Campbell the direct financial benefit of receiving tourists can cause people to overlook their negative aspects (2009: 769). They may have also been unwilling to discuss them with me as a foreigner.

When I walked up Chirripó, it was evident that even the minimal allowance of horses entering the park was damaging the track during the rainy season, as the trail was very muddy and eroded. However, on returning in the dry season, the track was in a much-improved state. One interviewee mentioned that garbage being left on the track was an issue, but that the porters clean it up (Interview #9, 2011, June 13). While the national park office indicated that they had insufficient resources for more detailed studies on the environmental consequences of tourism, there are sensitive wildlife species and a fragile alpine environment within the park, which tourism likely impacts. The MINAE employee expressed concern about the lack of land use zoning and planning in and around San Gerardo and discussed ongoing problems that have not been fully solved by tourism, such as hunting particularly near other, poorer villages, and people removing orchids or other plants (Interview #19, 2011, June 22). In March 2012, a major forest fire occurred burning 150 hectares of vegetation in the park. The cause was suspected to be arson from those upset with the national park authorities clamping down on illegal activities such as growing marijuana and hunting within the park (Vargas & Arguedas, 2012). There are probably additional environmental impacts associated with tourism and further research is needed to assess what these are and which are in most need of addressing.

Local people were aware of the potential for larger-scale negative environmental impacts associated with tourism development. An important influence on the Chamber of Tourism's strategic plan has been learning from other towns' experiences with tourism. The group has been seeking opportunities to visit other parts of Costa Rica to witness first-hand some of the negative social and environmental effects of tourism, in order to plan to prevent these eventuating in San Gerardo. A representative of the Chamber of Tourism described the outcomes of tourism in other areas:

Guanacaste has also had an incredible growth in tourism, but for the big businesses, right? The transnational hotel owners are doing well, but everyone else is marginalized. And then what happened in Monteverde was that they had tourism growth but neglected the environment. The main reason to go to Monteverde was the natural environment, but it has

changed a lot and now it's a very commercial zone with overdeveloped infrastructure. With the impact of tourism, it has lost the scenic richness that it once had, as have Manuel Antonio and La Fortuna. This is what we want to avoid here (Interview #20, 2011, June 27).

Some of the Chamber of Tourism members had the opportunity to travel to these destinations (Interview #10, 2011, June 15). These scoping trips served as a motivating factor for achieving ecological objectives in certification programs, as well as shaping the organization's vision: "We want sustainable tourism, green tourism that really protects environmental resources. So we don't want so much quantity, rather quality" (Interview #20, 2011, June 27). Being aware of how uncontrolled tourism development has affected other sites of their country has propelled the Chamber members to actively define their goals and develop a strategy for meeting them. Furthermore, these goals appear congruent with the wider community, who also support the development of tourism in a way that capitalizes upon, yet protects the natural environment.

Community members were insistent on maintaining the village as a destination for ecotourism, rather than other forms of tourism. When asked whether they would prefer new attractions or to focus more on ecotourism in the future, all household and organization representatives voiced a preference for the continuation of nature-based or community-scale rural tourism, as opposed to other types. Many were also aware that their point of difference lies in offering a tranquil and pristine environment, as contrasted to the busier Costa Rican beach towns, where there are more entertainment opportunities. One woman explains:

People come to the mountains because they are looking for a different atmosphere to the beach. They like to come to a calmer place, where you can walk safely in the streets, watch birds and listen to the sound of the river. I don't think we will see much of a change because tourists will always seek out nature. I don't think that tourists would want to find nightclubs here, no because they come here for something different. (...) They want to disconnect themselves from the world, right? (Interview #4, 2011, June 7).

These are the distinctions that set San Gerardo apart as an ecotourist destination and many community members thought that ecotourism was the type of tourism that would cause the least damage to the environment, while also bringing benefits to the community.

Conclusion

This chapter shows the ways in which environmental perspectives and practices have been influenced by tourism, but that forms of environmentalism are practiced and

understood in relation to wider socio-economic and political circumstances. Specific, highly visible environmental practices have been concentrated on: waste management, land use change and sustainability certifications. Yet, there are limits to the extent of environmental practices, as shown by less ecologically sound hotel building methods, which may be less immediately noticeable to tourists than, for example, a public recycling facility. In some areas, the financial bottom line appears to have been a larger driver than environmental factors. Nonetheless, members of the local Chamber of Tourism are well aware of the potential for more damaging impacts from tourism and were seeking to avoid the mistakes made in other Costa Rican communities. Members of the community are also aware that the continuance of visible environmental initiatives could affect the types of tourists they are able to attract and were supportive of measures to support nature-based or rural tourism.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

In the context of increasing difficulties to make a living from agriculture, ecotourism has provided people in San Gerardo de Rivas with alternative or complementary income and encouraged forms of environmental protection. While the benefits of tourism are somewhat concentrated according to gender and socio-economic status, local individuals and organizations are working to generate further employment opportunities that have the potential to distribute benefits more broadly across members of the community. While these issues have been discussed at a localized level, the village is experiencing the effects of global influences, including agrarian change and migration affected by neoliberal economic policies, foreign land ownership and global economic conditions. In Costa Rica, demographic transitions associated with women's greater reproductive autonomy (i.e. smaller families) and workforce participation are also occurring.

I shall provide a summary of my main findings, providing links to regional, national or international factors of pertinence, as well as referring to debates around ecotourism and development as detailed in Chapter Two. I will discuss how Foucault's conceptualization of power as relational and omnipresent was useful for identifying and understanding how relationships and interactions between and amongst individuals, organizations and institutions affect the material outcomes and direction of ecotourism development in the village. I will identify limitations to my research and suggest areas for future study. Finally, I demonstrate how the choice of an actor-oriented approach helped to expose the range of perspectives concerning ecotourism.

The history of Costa Rica, particularly the coffee-growing region of Pérez Zeledón, as outlined in Chapter Three, is important to understanding the economic and social changes affecting participation in agricultural production and therefore the relative importance of opportunities to work in ecotourism. Ecotourism has provided an important employment option to rural people facing the impacts, including migration, stemming from participation in international agricultural markets and neoliberal agricultural policies. While initial numbers of tourists in San Gerardo sustained only a few income-earning opportunities which were developed in a piecemeal fashion, tourism has now come to form a major component of the local economy. With agriculture in decline, due to global markets, national agricultural policies and local circumstances of foreigners purchasing land, many families now primarily depend upon tourism employment to support their households. Yet, as shown in Chapter Four, tourism is more often used by households as a complementary source of income and has not solved rural economic difficulties. For many, tourism income alone is insufficient, so engagement in agriculture and other wage

labour jobs also remain a necessary component of household income strategies. Neither agriculture nor tourism provide stable returns and households are subject to fluctuating income levels. While the high tourist season and the coffee harvest occurring simultaneously offers a period of higher earnings, when seasonal downturns of tourism and input-intensive stages of agricultural production coincide, families can experience temporary economic hardships. That both agriculture and tourism are difficult and insecure jobs has encouraged youth in San Gerardo to seek higher education in order to work in professions. Nonetheless, the people of San Gerardo had managed to attain a higher standard of living relative to neighbouring towns, through their engagement in the tourism industry. Therefore household income strategies are defined by opportunities that are determined and subsequently affected by local, national and global circumstances.

Participation in tourism employment was found to be in some ways influenced by gender and socio-economic status. Costa Rica is a country in which income inequality is increasing and gender inequality remains an issue despite changing demographics and greater participation of women in paid work. How men and women participate in tourism work was largely differentiated by the types of jobs associated with gender roles pertaining to domestic and physical labour. There was evidence of some changes to the contrary of these gendered divisions, particularly by women working as guides and cooks up Mt Chirripó. Changing gender relations in San Gerardo can be viewed as being affected by the availability of tourism employment for women, enhancing their economic opportunities, but may also be attributed in part to national trends and government efforts to promote cultural changes through public awareness campaigns about domestic work. Within households, women are managing power relations around gender and challenging traditional gender roles. Some women in the village have sought paid work in tourism despite their husbands not approving of it. Other men have recognized that women working can help cover core household expenses and possibly for further reasons which I did not explore, are supportive of their spouse's participation.

Socio-economic factors affect the types of employment engaged in by households, with land ownership and size of landholdings being particularly important. That business ownership was concentrated among those with relatively larger landholdings, with little scope for those without land to become significant landowners pointed to some barriers to social mobility and power imbalances in processes of accumulation. All the same, local people, collectively and to some extent individually, were able to negotiate and improve their social and economic welfare from their varying standpoints, for example, through involvement in local organizations and taking advantage of vocational training opportunities. Some lower income families were

seeking inter-generational social mobility through striving to send their children to university. In the face of the most dramatic economic inequalities demonstrated by the material wealth of some of the foreigners living in the village, some local people were demonstrating a level of resistance to foreign land ownership. Being mindful to guard their own cultural and rural identities, some locals disparaged the unethical practices of foreigners. On the other hand, through accepting employment from foreign residents who offered higher pay than local businesses, local people could put pressure on other businesses to raise wages. Therefore, the dynamic of foreign residents posed both threats and opportunities, being viewed and managed by local people accordingly.

Recognizing that power is not simply something that is possessed by authoritative groups and individuals, but rather can be exercised on multiple levels at the same time, I chose to interview people from a range of socio-economic positions rather than solely perceived experts. Also, in analyzing the data I sought to understand how even those with lower socio-economic status, or seemingly disadvantaged groups exercise power in relation to others in order to improve their lives. This was particularly important to addressing my research question of how local people are negotiating the direction of development, the findings of which were discussed in Chapter Five. Further to the efforts of individuals within and between households, community organizations were found to be active in negotiating how tourism should proceed in their village, particularly through the creation of a strategic plan. They were also aware of the potential added benefits from enhancements to services or marketing that could draw more tourists to the village. There was a focus on improving quality of tourism services offered within the village and expanding employment opportunities. Local people were overcoming challenges, not only through participatory management processes facilitated by government and NGOs, but also through their own organizations and individual actions.

Changing institutional and NGO views on community-based development and local participation in protected areas management provided opportunities for local organizations to exert influence over ecotourism management. In Costa Rica, the national parks system was designed with a fortress conservation approach that did not seek to integrate local communities and in some cases even dispossessed them. With this conception from the beginning, the role of the community has long been to provide services that may have otherwise have been the domain of the national park. Now that there is increasing global attention on the importance of fostering positive social dynamics around protected areas, there are opportunities to formalize and expand the provision of services within Chirripó National Park that the community has been involved in since its establishment and thus is well suited to do.

As outlined in Chapter Three, the Costa Rican state has not dedicated sufficient resources to national park infrastructure or operations and the proliferation of NGOs in based in Costa Rica has attempted to find efficient ways to meet this shortfall. In the case of Chirripó National Park, two environmental conservation NGOs, one with particular expertise in environmental economics, have been very influential in the process of creating a concession arrangement for the mountain lodge services and in supporting the community in obtaining it. While this neoliberal process of devolution has been viewed positively by both community members and the state employee interviewed, an unanswered question is of how the process may transfer financial risk to the concessioner in the event of a decline in tourism. While this has been addressed to some extent by provisions recommended by the NGOs involved, how this will be carried out remains to be seen. Overall, community groups have negotiated in effective ways to secure resources from government, NGOs and private businesses, through diverse opportunities ranging from tapping into a government fund for women entrepreneurs to seeking sponsors for the Chirripó race.

Community members are furthermore aware of the advantages they can receive from adhering to certain environmental expectations. Environmental practices are the product of numerous socio-ecological factors as discussed in Chapter Six, one of which is through relationships with NGOs and government who have carried out environmental education initiatives in the community. In particular, these interactions have encouraged certain types of environmental behaviours, especially focused on reducing hunting and deforestation and improving waste management, while linking these efforts to the opportunity for local people to earn income from the park. Regardless of these seemingly structured forms of environmentalism, local people were participating in other environmental practices in individual or collective ways, for a variety of reasons, some of which had links to tourism. The people of San Gerardo possessed a wide range of commitments to environmental practices that could not solely be linked to direct participation in ecotourism employment. Debates over the sustainability of ecotourism were highlighted in Chapter Two and I demonstrated how tourism practices in San Gerardo were sustainable in some areas and not in others. In a relative sense, it would seem that the case of ecotourism in San Gerardo has been an environmental success, particularly given that some villages, such as Monteverde, which in the literature have been described as sustainable, were identified by interviewees as being negatively impacted.

One of the main concerns mentioned by interviewees was a lack of alternatives to tourism, particularly given the state of agriculture and the vulnerability of a dependence on ecotourism income. Future uncertainties regarding the impacts of

climate change on crops, the security situation in Costa Rica, or the fate of global mass tourism due to dwindling global oil supplies mean that it is difficult to predict how either tourism or agriculture will play out in the community in the longer term. For the nearer future if conditions remain similar, the community has several options for improving their ability to profit from tourism and agriculture. The mainstay of tourism in the village will likely continue to be climbing Chirripó, attracting national and foreign package tour groups and backpackers. Yet, there are other types of tourists who may bring more substantial revenue by staying longer in the village; wealthy birdwatchers were mentioned as a potential niche market.

All interviewees stated a preference for future tourism initiatives to be nature, community or adventure-based. Volunteer tourism, scientific tourism, specialty ecotourism, agritourism and rural homestays could all fit within this area and targeting specific markets could further their development. The expansion of agritourism was discussed in detail, although this is just one idea among several for attracting tourists who may not wish to climb Chirripó, or who could be convinced to stay longer in the village before or after the hike. Agritourism appears suitable to combining rural agricultural practices and identities with touristic opportunities. Being able to profit more from agriculture and in different ways may help local people in to retain their land and rural identities. The consequences could be positive both environmentally (if agro-ecological techniques are used or if being able to downsize the scale of agriculture and leave more areas to reforest is facilitated by higher profit margins) and socially, if the creation of income is able to reduce migration. Yet, despite some people who expressed an interest to work in tourism but that they felt excluded or unable to, not everyone wanted to work in tourism. For those who have the land to do so, niche agricultural production for local and/or international markets could provide another way to diversify and enhance agricultural income. In any case, expanding tourism or agricultural options in an equitable way will require further addressing imbalances in the access to information and marketing expertise, including internet access, computer skills and perhaps even literacy. Furthermore, some people, through higher education may opt out of both agriculture and tourism and find work in secure, salaried positions in San Isidro or other cities.

My study was faced with a number of limitations. This was an exploratory study in which a range of issues was explored at a peripheral level. There were limitations to the depth of my data and therefore the conclusions I was able to make. I was not able to interview all the people that I wished to, particularly representatives of two further organizations. Furthermore, I conducted the study in only one village, at a specific point in time, making it more difficult to make comparisons or to suggest regional trends in

ecotourism. Nonetheless, this study does help us to better understand a rural village economy in transition.

There are several issues that were identified in my study that would be worthy of greater academic attention. These include the impacts of foreign land ownership and expat communities on social, cultural and economic facets of community life; changing gender roles and how this affects women's social and economic wellbeing; longer term assessment of changing agreements with MINAE and particularly the concession of services on Chirripó; the role of carbon credits or other economic instruments in land use changes; the potential of agro-ecological niche production; the full range of environmental impacts of ecotourism; the social impacts of ecotourism; and the role of NGOs in community development processes as well as their influence on government policies.

In this research, I used an actor-oriented approach to seek out perspectives of local people's experiences with ecotourism. Paying closer attention to the voices of community members, who are arguably the most affected by tourism development practices, helped to shed light on how they themselves see these processes and the ways in which they negotiate the direction of development in the context of globalization. Importantly, it allowed for an analysis of the ways in which ecotourism is creating more equitable and sustainable livelihoods or instead contributing to further social differentiation and environmental degradation. Having a range of interviewees helped me to avoid presenting 'the community' or groups within it, such as farmers, as homogeneous entities, and to heighten my awareness of the distinct challenges individuals may face despite some commonalities. This study demonstrates that local people are not passive in regards to tourism industry development, but rather that many, from their various positions both within households and in their community, are active in influencing and shaping it. Continuing to define what types of tourism they wish to attract and how to manage it as part of their rural economy will enable the community of San Gerardo to optimize their benefits from tourism and avoid the worst adverse impacts.

REFERENCES

- Arce, S. (2010, February 24). Cifras Oficiales del ICT: Llegada de turistas se redujo 8% en 2009. *La Nación online edition*. Retrieved December 18, 2010 from http://www.nacion.com/ln_ee/2010/febrero/24/economia2278933.html
- Allison, M. (2011, March 5). Climate change takes toll of coffee growers. *The Seattle Times*. Retrieved March 25, 2011 from http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/business/technology/2014412762_climatechange06.html
- Almeyda, A. M., Broadbent, E. N., Wyman, M. S. & Durham, W. H. (2010). Ecotourism impacts in the Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica. *International Journal of Tourism Research* 12(6), 803–819.
- Archibold, R.C. & Cave, D. (2011, March 23). Drug Wars Push Deeper into Central America. *The New York Times*. Retrieved May 12, 2012 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/24/world/americas/24drugs.html?pagewanted=all>
- Arellano, A. (2008). The Inca Heritage Revival: *Indigenismo* in Cuzco, 1905-1945. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change* 6(1), 39-56.
- Arellano, A. (2011). Tourism in Poor Regions and social Inclusion? The Porters of the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu. *World Leisure Journal* 2(53), 104-118.
- Aylward, B., Allen, K., Echeverria, J. & Tosi, J. (1996). Sustainable ecotourism in Costa Rica: The Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve. *Biodiversity and Conservation* 5(3), 315-343.
- Bacon, M. (2010). Who decides what is fair in fair trade? The agri-environmental governance of standards, access, and price'. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37(1), 111-147.
- Báez, A.L. (2002). Sky Walk-Sky Trek: a successful community project in the mountains of Monteverde, Costa Rica. *Mountain research and development*, 2(2), 128-131.
- Bernard, H.R. (2002). Sampling. In *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 3rd ed. (pp. 71-101). Lanham, Md.: AltaMira Press.
- Bruner, E.M. (2005). *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Butchart, A. (1998). *The Anatomy of Power: European Constructions of the African Body*. London: Zed Books.
- Butcher, J. (2006). The United Nations International Year of Ecotourism: a critical analysis of development implications. *Progress in Development Studies* 6(2), 146-156.
- Butler, S. (2011, January 24). Fairtrade coffee producers face challenge of climate

- change. *The Guardian*. Retrieved January 25, 2011 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2011/jan/24/fairtrade-coffee-climate-change>
- Campbell, L. M. (2002). Conservation Narratives in Costa Rica: Conflict and Co-existence. *Development and Change*, 33(1): 29–56.
- Carrier, J.G. & Macleod, D.V.L. (2005). Bursting the bubble: the socio-cultural context of ecotourism. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (New Series)*, 11(2), 315-334.
- Carrier J.G. & West, P. (2009). Introduction: Surroundings, Selves and Others: The Political Economy of Environment and Identity, *Landscape Research*, 34(2), 157-170.
- Certification for Sustainable Tourism (CST). (2012). About CST: What is CST all about? *Certification for Sustainable Tourism*. Retrieved April 12, 2012, from http://www.turismo-sostenible.co.cr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2&Itemid=7&lang=en
- Cheong, S.M. & Miller, M. (2000). Power and tourism: a Foucauldian observation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29(2), 371–90.
- Cloudbridge Nature Reserve (2012). About Us: The Project. *Cloudbridge Nature Reserve*. Retrieved May 4, 2012, from <http://www.cloudbridge.org/the-project/>
- Cooperative Santa Elena (2007). Our Coffee. *Monteverde Coffee & Coffee Tour*. Retrieved December 18, 2010, from http://www.monteverde-coffee.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=4&Itemid=
- Costa Rica National Institute of Statistics and Censuses [Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos; INEC]. (2012) Censo 2011: Resultados. Retrieved April 23, 2012 from <http://www.inec.go.cr/Web/Home/GeneradorPagina.aspx>.
- Costa Rica Tourism Board [Instituto Costarricense de Turismo; ICT]. (2012a). Anuario Estadístico de Turismo 2011. Retrieved April 22, 2012, from http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/backoffice/treeDoc/files/C422_Anuario_de_Turismo_2011.pdf
- Costa Rica Tourism Board [Instituto Costarricense de Turismo; ICT]. (2012b). Blue Flag Ecological Program. Retrieved April 27, 2012, from <http://www.visitcostarica.com/ict/paginas/mapas/areasurf.asp>
- Davis, J. (2001). Commentary: tourism research and social theory – expanding the focus. *Tourism Geographies*, 3(2), 125–34.
- Duffy, R. (2006). Non-Governmental Organisations and Governance States: The Impact of Transnational Environmental Management Networks in Madagascar. *Environmental Politics*, 15(5), 731-749.

- Eakin, H., Tucker, C. & Castellanos, E. (2003). Responding to the coffee crisis: a pilot study of farmers' adaptations in Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras. *Geographical Journal*, 172(2), 156-171.
- Fennell, D.A. (2001). A Content Analysis of Ecotourism Definitions. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 4(5), 403 – 421.
- Flórez-Estrada Pimentel, M. (2011). *De “ama de casa” a mulier economicus: Sexo, género, subjetividad y economía en Costa Rica contemporánea*. San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (1987). The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom. In Bernauer J. & Rasmussen, D. (Eds.), *The Final Foucault*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1-20.
- Fridell, G. (2007a). *Fair Trade Coffee: Prospects and Pitfalls of Market-Driven Social Justice*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Fridell, G. (2007b). Fair-Trade Coffee and Commodity Fetishism: The Limits of Market-Driven Social Justice. *Historical Materialism* 15, 79–104.
- Hannam, K. (2002). Tourism and development I: globalization and power. *Progress in Development Studies* 2(3), 227-234.
- Herforth, A. (2007). Case Study #3-2, Food Security, Nutrition, and Health in Costa Rica's Indigenous Populations. In Pinstrip-Andersen, P. & Cheng, F. (Eds.), *Food Policy for Developing Countries: Case Studies*. Retrieved May 22, 2012, from: <http://cip.cornell.edu/dns.gfs/1200428153>
- Hoffmann, J. (2012). Concessions of services in protected areas of Costa Rica incorporate methodology created by EfD-CA. *Environment for Development Initiative*. Retrieved April 22, 2012, from <http://www.efdinitiative.org/centers/central-america/projects?uid=26d3f2d6bbe8209bc200049da4e36954>
- Honey, M. (2008). *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: who owns paradise?* Washington, DC: Island Press; 2nd edition.
- Horton, L.R. (2009). Buying up nature: Economic and social impacts of Costa Rica's ecotourism boom. *Latin American Perspectives*, 36(3), 93-107.
- Hotel de Montaña El Pelicano. (2012). Hotel Amigable con el Ambiente. *Hotel de Montaña El Pelicano*. Retrieved April 27, 2012, from http://www.hotelpelicano.net/esp/empresa_det.php?id=3
- Hotel Urán. (2012). Historia del hotel. *Hotel Urán*. Retrieved April 22, 2012, from

http://hoteluran.com/esp/hotel_uran.php

- Jackiewicz, E.L. (2005). Tourism without Threat? Excerpts from Rural Costa Rica. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 32(1), 266–268.
- Jackiewicz, E.L. (2006) Community-Centered Modernization under Control in Rural Costa Rica. *Latin American Perspectives* 33(6), 136-146.
- Kizos, T. & Iosifides, T. (2007). The contradictions of agrotourism development in Greece: evidence from three case studies. *South European Society and Politics*, 12, 59–77.
- Kruger, O. (2005). The role of ecotourism in conservation: panacea or Pandora's box? *Biodiversity and Conservation*, 14(3), 579-600.
- Long, N. (2001). *Development Sociology: Actor Perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Lyon, S. (2007). Maya coffee farmers and fair trade: assessing the benefits and limitations of alternative markets. *Culture and agriculture*, 29(2), 100-112.
- Lyon, S. (2008). We want to be equal to them: fair-trade coffee certification and gender equity within organizations. *Human Organization: Journal of the Society for Applied Anthropology*, 67(3), 258-268.
- Marciano, O. (2010). *Evaluación del impacto del ecoturismo sobre las actitudes y creencias relacionadas a la vida silvestre y la conservación de los recursos naturales, en cuatro comunidades costarricenses*. MSc Thesis in Conservación y Manejo de Vida Silvestre. Universidad Nacional, Heredia, Costa Rica.
- Mason, C.W. (2009). The Buffalo Nations/Luxton Museum: Tourism, Regional Forces and Problematizing Cultural Representations of Aboriginal Peoples in Banff, Canada. *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 15(4), 351-369.
- Massicotte, M.J. (2010). La Via Campesina, Brazilian Peasants, and the Agribusiness Model of Agriculture: Towards an Alternative Model of Agrarian Democratic Governance. *Studies in Political Economy* 85, 69-98.
- Matarrita-Cascante, D., Brennan, M.A. & Luloff, A.E. (2010). Community agency and sustainable tourism development: the case of La Fortuna, Costa Rica. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 18(6), 735-756.
- McAlpin, M. (2008). Conservation and community-based development through ecotourism in the temperate rainforest of southern Chile. *Policy Science*, 41, 51–69.
- McKenzie Gentry, K. (2007). Belizean Women and Tourism Work: Opportunity or Impediment? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(2), 477–496.
- McMichael, P. (2008). *Development and Social Change: A Global perspective* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/Pine Forge Press; 4th edition.
- McMichael, P. (2009). A food regime genealogy. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36(1), 139–69.

- Meletis, Z.A. & Campbell, L.M. (2009) Benevolent and Benign? Using Environmental Justice to Investigate Waste-related Impacts of Ecotourism in Destination Communities. *Antipode* 41(4), 741–780.
- Metta Media, (2009). Activities. *San Gerardo de Rivas Costa Rica*. Retrieved December 2, 2010, from <http://www.sangerardocostarica.com/activities/>
- Moreno, P.S. (2005). Ecotourism Along the Meso-American Caribbean Reef: The Impacts of Foreign Investment. *Human Ecology*, 33(2), 217-244.
- Murray, D.L., Raynolds, L.T., and Taylor, P.L. (2006). The Future of Fair Trade Coffee: Dilemmas Facing Latin America's Small-Scale Producers. *Development in Practice*, 16, 179–192.
- Myers, N., Mittermeier, R.A., Mittermeier, C.G., da Fonseca, G.A.B. & Kent, J. (2000). Biodiversity hotspots for conservation priorities. *Nature* 403, 853-858.
- Nepal, S.K. (2002). Mountain ecotourism and sustainable development: ecology, economics, and ethics. *Mountain research and development*, 22(2), 104-109.
- Nicholson, M. (2011, March 10). Coffee market jolted as prices and margins soar. *Reuters*. Retrieved March 12, 2011 from <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/03/10/uk-coffee-margins-rally-idUKLNE72901520110310>
- Phillip, S., Hunter, C. & Blackstock, K. (2010). A typology for defining agritourism *Tourism Management* 31(6), 754–758.
- Place, S.E. (1991). Nature tourism and rural development in Tortuguero. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 18, 186-201.
- Pratt L. & Harner C.M. (1997). *Sustainability analysis of the coffee industry in Costa Rica*. San Salvador, El Salvador: Centro Latinoamericano para la Competitividad y el Desarrollo Sostenible (CLACDS).
- Pucci, J.J. & Montero, C. (2001). *Chirripó: Un viaje a la montaña mágica / A journey to the magical mountain*. San José: Editorial Heliconia, Fundación Neotrópica.
- Schellhorn, M. (2010). Development for whom? Social justice and the business of ecotourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 18(1), 115-135.
- Scheyvens, R. (2000). Promoting Women's Empowerment Through Involvement in Ecotourism: Experiences from the Third World. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 8(3), 232-249.
- Sick, D. (1997). Coping with Crisis: Costa Rican Households and the International Coffee Market. *Ethnology*, 36(3), 255-275.
- Sick, D. (2008a). *Farmers of the Golden Bean: Costa Rican Households, Global Coffee, and Fair Trade*. DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press.
- Sick, D. (2008b) Coffee, Farming Families, and Fair Trade in Costa Rica: New Markets, Same Old Problems? *Latin American Research Review*, 43(3), 193-208.

- Smith, J.K. (2007). The search for sustainable markets: the promise and failures of fair trade. *Culture and agriculture*, 29(2), 89-99.
- Stem, C.J., Lassoie, J.P., Lee, D.R., Deshler, J.D. & Schelhas, J.W. (2003). Community participation in ecotourism benefits: The link to conservation practices and perspectives. *Society and Natural Resources*, 16(5), 387–413.
- Stoll, A. (2006). Sustainable Use of Forest Resources. *Cloudbridge Nature Reserve*. Retrieved April 23, 2012, from <http://www.cloudbridge.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Sustainable-use-forest-resources.pdf>
- Talamanca Reserve. (2005). About Us. *Talamanca Reserve*. Retrieved May 4, 2012, from <http://www.talamancareserve.com/about.php>
- Official U.K. travel website warns about increase in missing tourists in Costa Rica. (2011, May 30). *The Tico Times Online Edition*. Retrieved May 2, 2012, from http://www.ticotimes.net/Current-Edition/News-Briefs/Official-U.K.-travel-website-warns-about-increase-in-missing-tourists-in-Costa-Rica_Monday-May-30-2011
- Timothy, D.J. & White, K. (1999). Community-Based Ecotourism Development on the Periphery of Belize. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 2(2), 226-242.
- Trejos, B. & Chiang, L.N. (2009). Local economic linkages to community-based tourism in rural Costa Rica. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 30, 373–387.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), (2012). Country profile of human development indicators: Costa Rica. *United Nations Development Programme*. Retrieved April 22, 2012, from <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/CRI.html>
- Vandegrift, D. (2008). "This isn't Paradise – I Work Here" : Global Restructuring, the Tourism Industry, and Women Workers in Caribbean Costa Rica. *Gender & Society* 22(6), 778-798.
- Vargas, M. (2011, April 7). Crestones del Chirripó son primer sitio natural en convertirse en símbolo patrio. *La Nación*. Retrieved April 23, 2012 from <http://www.nacion.com/2011-04-07/AldeaGlobal/NotasSecundarias/AldeaGlobal2616372.aspx>
- Vargas, D. & Arguedas, C. (2012, March 1). Guardaparques sospechan que venganza es causa de incendio en Chirripó. *La Nación*. Retrieved May 3, 2012 from <http://www.nacion.com/2012-02-29/Sucesos/Guardaparques-sospechan-que-venganza-es-causa-de-incendio-en-Chirripo.aspx>
- Vivanco, L.A. (2001). Spectacular quetzals, ecotourism, and environmental futures in Monte Verde, Costa Rica. *Ethnology*, 40(2), 79-92.
- Vivanco, L.A. (2006). *Green Encounters: Shaping and Contesting Environmentalism in Rural Costa Rica*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Wearing, S. & McDonald, M. (2002). The Development of Community-Based Tourism:

- Re-thinking the Relationship Between Community Operators and Development Agents as Intermediaries in Rural and Isolated Area Communities. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 10(3), 191-206.
- Weaver, D.B. (1999). Magnitude of ecotourism in Costa Rica and Kenya. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26(4), 792-816,
- West, P. & Carrier, J.G. (2004). Ecotourism and Authenticity: Getting Away from It All? *Current Anthropology*, 45(4), 483-498.
- West, P., Igoe, J. & Brockington, D. (2006). Parks and Peoples: The Social Impact of Protected Areas. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35, 251–77.
- West, P. (2008). Tourism as Science and Science as Tourism: Environment, Society, Self, and Other in Papua New Guinea, *Current Anthropology* 49(4), 597-626.
- Wherry, F. (2007). Trading Impressions: Evidence from Costa Rica. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610: 217-231.
- Williams, A. (2010, November 30). Costa Rican unemployment down, poverty up. *The Tico Times Online Edition*. Retrieved April 2, 2011 from http://www.ticotimes.net/News/News-Briefs/Costa-Rican-unemployment-down-poverty-up_Tuesday-November-30-2010
- Williams, A., (2011, January 28). New Costa Rica tourism campaign promotes 'pura vida' in U.S. *The Tico Times Online Edition*. Retrieved April 2, 2011 from http://www.ticotimes.net/Business-Real-Estate/New-Costa-Rica-tourism-campaign-promotes-pura-vida-in-U.S._Friday-January-28-2011
- World Bank. (2007, 12 February). Report No. 35910-CR: Costa Rica Poverty Assessment Recapturing Momentum for Poverty Reduction. *World Bank Poverty Reduction and Economic Management and Human Development Sector Management Units, Latin America and the Caribbean Region*. Retrieved April 2, 2011 from http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/IB/2007/05/23/000020953_20070523093115/Rendered/PDF/359100CR.pdf
- World Bank. (2012). Data: Costa Rica. *The World Bank*. Retrieved April 23, 2012 from <http://data.worldbank.org/country/costa-rica>

Personal Communications

- Interview #1, (2011, June 7). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #2, (2011, June 7). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #3, (2011, June 7). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #4, (2011, June 7). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #5, (2011, June 8). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #6, (2011, June 8). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #7, (2011, June 9). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #8, (2011, June 9). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #9, (2011, June 13). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #10, (2011, June 15). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #11, (2011, June 16). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #12, (2011, June 16). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #13, (2011, June 20). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #14, (2011, June 20). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #15, (2011, May 12). Interview with author, Pueblo Nuevo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #16, (2011, May 13). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #17, (2011, June 20). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #18, (2011, June 21). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #19, (2011, June 22). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #20, (2011, June 27). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.
- Interview #21, (2011, June 28). Interview with author, San Gerardo de Rivas, Costa Rica.

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ From Foucault's perspective, discourses are ways of knowing that are circulated as "truths" (1972).
- ⁱⁱ During the three weeks preceding my own study, I accompanied Dr. Deborah Sick as an assistant in her research in the region. This was a valuable opportunity to learn about cultural protocol surrounding the interview process and cultural sensitivity in general in the rural Costa Rican context.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Purchasing Power Parity: an adjustment technique used to calculate the relative value of currencies, therefore facilitating international comparisons of income.
- ^{iv} In Costa Rica, much of the decrease in production has been due to old, lower producing trees, yet climate change is also having an impact on yields (Allison, 2011).
- ^v Greenwashing refers to the marketing of environmental credentials in order to present an environmentally responsible public image for a business or operation that, overall, is damaging to the environment.
- ^{vi} The new lodge opened in 1998 and required 3,700 trips on horseback and seventy by helicopter to bring up all the construction materials (Pucci & Montero, 2001).
- ^{vii} I use tourism income to refer to all forms of tourism income, including irregular sources from homestays and crafts.
- ^{viii} I use the word farming for using one's own land to grow crops for sale or to keep livestock for beef or dairy, in contrast to agricultural labour which is used to refer to working on farms owned by others for an hourly wage.
- ^{ix} Costa Rica's currency is the colón (colones in plural).
- ^x The fanega is used to measure the quantity of coffee and is equal to around 256 kilograms of coffee cherries or forty-six kilograms of green coffee.
- ^{xi} This was the local reflection of a global slump in coffee prices, which went as low as \$0.42 per pound in 2002 (Fridell, 2007a: 145).
- ^{xii} This is different from Pérez Zeledón, where the climate and coffee varieties grown means that coffee is harvested during the rainy season.
- ^{xiii} The coffee harvest is also an important source of income for some Indigenous families who come to San Gerardo from the other side of the Talamanca mountain range, to work during this period.
- ^{xiv} Some men who worked as agricultural labourers likely also harvested coffee, but none mentioned it specifically.
- ^{xv} The Costa Rican currency exchanged at around 500 colones to one US dollar at the time of research. I have therefore used this conversion rate within this document.
- ^{xvi} Due to having a small sample, land size categories were created by putting together those households whose stated land area was of a similar size and purpose, rather than using regular size intervals. Those with less than one hectare generally owned just the land around their house; those with one to seven hectares were small agricultural producers, while those with over eight hectares were larger farmers.
- ^{xvii} While my focus was on local perspectives, I came across two households in my survey sample that had at least one head of household who was a foreigner that had been living in San Gerardo for a number of years. These households were not selected for semi-structured interviews, but remained part of my survey analysis.
- ^{xviii} Also, as they worked on a roster, the work was becoming less frequent as more men in the village become porters.
- ^{xix} Among my survey sample, those who owned larger amounts of land grew, on average, a greater variety of foods for household consumption.
- ^{xx} Similarly, in another village in Pérez Zeledón, I met a farmer who saw a future in agro-forestry systems. He believed that each farm could have a cabin built with low environmental impact and that they could grow local food for the family and to sell to tourists. Whether the market for agricultural tourism would be that large is doubtful.

^{xxi} The National System of Areas in Conservation (Sistema Nacional de Areas en Conservacion, SINAC) within MINAE is also involved in certain aspects of national park management. For simplicity, I will refer to the overarching department of MINAE throughout this chapter.

^{xxii} PSG was also involved in establishing exercise classes for women, which were being held three times a week in the community hall.

^{xxiii} Cooks therefore have to pay the entrance fee for each time that they work. Where cooks work under contract with a hotel, the hotel pays for this fee.

^{xxiv} The Parque Internacional La Amistad is now following this model of issuing use permits.

^{xxv} EfD-CA was requested to undertake research to establish the methodology through which MINAE can evaluate the costs for the concession of the lodge services. The TNC has supported and promoted this research and recommendations from the study have been incorporated into the Chirripó National Park pilot project (Hoffmann, 2012).