

A women's world or the return of men? The gendered impacts of residential tourism in Costa Rica

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This is an Accepted Manuscript of a book chapter published by Routledge in 2015, Caroline Archambault & Annelies Zoomers (Eds.), *Global Trends in Land Tenure Reforms: Gender Impacts*, available online: <https://www.routledge.com/Global-Trends-in-Land-Tenure-Reform-Gender-Impacts/Archambault-Zoomers/p/book/9781138787940>

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1. Introduction

Land is increasingly commercialized worldwide: in the past decade, land and real estate markets in the global South have shown much dynamism. While the debate on the 'global land grab' has mostly focused on land investments for food supply and biofuels, it has now been widely accepted that the debate should be extended beyond food and fuel investments alone: for instance, large land acquisitions are taking place in the context of climate change mitigation and adaptation, mining concessions, urbanization and speculation, and through the establishment of large scale tourism complexes and residential tourism resorts (Borras Jr, Franco, Gomez, Kay, & Spoor, 2012; Zoomers, 2010; Zoomers & Kaag, 2014).

While peri-urban and urban land deals are often smaller in scale than agricultural land grabs, such processes of rural-urban land conversion and speculation nonetheless contribute greatly to undermining local land rights through land price hikes, displacement and gentrification (Roy, 2011; Janoschka, Sequera, & Salinas, 2013; Phuc, van Westen, & Zoomers, 2014). The progressive integration of rural areas into the urban realm, both in terms of physical land conversion and in their lifestyles and cultures, engenders a large-scale transformation of rural landscapes, land tenure systems and ways of life. The consequences of such processes for different social groups have not been sufficiently studied yet.

Indeed, the gendered implications of land deals still receive only scant attention in academic realms, with some exceptions (Behrman, Meinzen-Dick, & Quisumbing, 2012; Collins, 2014; Verma, 2014; Wisborg, 2013). As Behrman et al. argue: "A gender perspective is critical to truly understanding the impact of large-scale land deals because women and men have different social roles, rights, and opportunities and will be differentially affected by any major change in tenure regimes, especially land transfers to extra-local investors" (2012, p.51). Particularly the gendered consequences of more urban types of land pressures remain largely invisible. This chapter will offer some first approximations to a gendered approach of urban and peri-urban land deals, particularly those related to tourism, real estate and speculation.

It does so by analyzing increasing pressures on land in the northwest coastal region of Costa Rica (Guanacaste province), which has been one of Latin America's main areas of real estate and residential tourism growth in the past decade. On Costa Rica's coasts, as in many tourist destinations

in the world, land is increasingly commercialized and commoditized. New types of tourism and mobility are generating mounting pressures on land. Tourism in many areas in the South is now deeply intertwined with real estate investment and urbanization: people buy property in the tourist destinations and stay there for shorter or longer periods, driven by the search for a better way of life, a lower cost of living, etc. This is known as residential tourism. The residential tourism industry, with its focus on land transactions and urbanization, constitutes an urgent research topic in debates on land and development.

This chapter elaborates on the complex gendered dynamics created by residential tourism in the global South. By analyzing the causes, implications of and responses to residential tourism growth – and related real estate and speculation - from a gendered perspective, a more inclusive and complex picture emerges. It starts with a description of the development and characteristics of residential tourism in Costa Rica, followed by an analysis of the effects of residential tourism in terms of access to land and employment. Furthermore, the gendered responses to such profound transformations – e.g. environmental and water struggles – are highlighted. Finally, the focus is on the changing demographics and related power relations in residential tourism towns.

The empirical material for this chapter was collected through three periods of fieldwork in Guanacaste, Costa Rica between 2008 and 2011, which included several types of data collection: interviews with various population groups, participant observation and analysis of secondary data sources. In total, 17 in-depth qualitative interviews and 42 semi-structured interviews were held with local and labor migrant populations in 2008 and 2009 in Tamarindo, Villareal, Playas del Coco and Ocotal. Analysis of national statistics, a survey among residential tourists and a land price examination provide additional insights.

2. A private piece of paradise: residential tourism in Guanacaste, Costa Rica

Residential tourism and lifestyle migration have recently become more prominent in developing countries: both terms refer to the temporary or permanent mobility of relatively well-to-do citizens from mostly Western countries to a variety of tourist destinations, where they buy (or sometimes rent) property (Benson & O'reilly, 2009; Janoschka & Haas, 2013). Most residential tourists or lifestyle migrants are Europeans or North Americans who migrate to the South in search of a more relaxed lifestyle, a lower cost of living, better weather, etc. Both the number of residential tourists and the size of the related land investments have increased markedly during the past ten years – and are expected to increase further - in various countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. A number of structural factors in North America and Europe are important for explaining the growth in residential tourism from North to South: demographic factors (e.g. ageing), increasing health costs and decreasing retirement pensions; time-space compression through cheap and rapid travel and improved and cheaper long-distance communication possibilities; and sociological factors such as more conscious lifestyle choices and need for social differentiation. Improved infrastructure, health services and the liberalization of land markets in the South have also contributed to this growth. In contrast to short-term tourism, residential tourism focuses much more on real estate development and urbanization, and thus has important different repercussions, socially but also for space, landscape and land use.

Costa Rica has been a well-known relocation destination for North Americans for decades, but these migration flows have recently intensified and extended geographically to new coastal areas, which has made them much more concentrated and visible. Costa Rica’s fame as an ecotourism destination has been complemented by the image of a country ‘for sale’, a real estate frontier and relocation “paradise” for increasing groups of North Americans. The northwest coastal region of Costa Rica (Guanacaste province) has been the country’s main area of real estate and residential tourism growth in the past decade (figure 1). In the 2000s, Guanacaste changed from a small-scale tourism destination to an area of exponential large-scale and residential tourism growth, including real estate investment. Rapid growth from 2002 to 2007 contrasts with steep declines during the worldwide economic crisis, particularly from 2008 to 2012, since when there has been a slow recovery.



Figure 1. Research area: coastal part of Guanacaste, Costa Rica

Estimates of the number of residential tourists in the coastal area of Guanacaste range from about 7% to 14% of the total population, meaning there is a high concentration of residential tourists in a small area. However, permanent migrants are still a small group: the majority of people migrate for shorter periods or use their property as a second home or investment. The flow of residential tourists to Guanacaste has not only intensified, but also diversified considerably in recent times. Many different groups of people are involved: mostly from the U.S.A. and Canada, but also Costa Ricans from the Central Valley, from middle-income to elites and from permanent residents to short-term tourists. Individual house buying has made way for an extensive real estate sector, where most properties are bought within residential projects and urbanizations.

The developers and investment capital mainly come from the U.S.A. and Canada (two-thirds of the projects are partly or completely financed by North American capital), although there is also much domestic investment: 40 per cent of the projects are either completely or partly financed by Costa Rican investors. Collaborations between North American and Costa Rican investors are common. Hence a 'foreignization' of land has clearly taken place, although domestic investors cannot be ignored.

3. Losing access: land use change and gentrification

In Latin America, land deals are not a new phenomenon: land grabs, the dispossession of rural communities, and deepening commercialization in rural areas have existed since colonial times. The northwest coast of Costa Rica has been subject to land grabs ever since colonization and particularly since the late nineteenth century (Edelman, 1998). Ever since, private individual land rights prevail in the area, although some parts are under state or other regimes, such as the narrow coastal strip, protected nature areas, a special tourism concession area and agricultural reform land. We should thus regard current land deals as a continuation of historical processes, albeit with new foci, underlying reasons and a higher speed of change (van Noorloos, 2014).

The implications of land deals in the Guanacaste case center on the changes in *land use* brought about by the investments: the change from agriculture and cattle farming to a service economy based on tourism, construction and real estate, has influenced people's access to land, labor, income and gender relations.

Various researchers have stated that rapid development of residential tourism in developing countries can endanger local populations' access to land (e.g. indigenous and peasant groups) and may lead to direct or indirect displacement, for example in Mexico (Bastos, 2013; Torres & Momsen, 2005), Nicaragua (Bonilla & Mordt, 2011), Panama (Gómez, Kandel, & Morán, 2009), and South Africa (van Laar, Cottyn, Donaldson, Zoomers, & Ferreira, 2013). Indeed, displacement of indigenous populations often takes place under great financial and political pressure from real estate and tourism development, and in the context of inadequate recognition and demarcation of indigenous land rights. The gendered effects of such displacement remain under-researched. Land sale and displacement may have contradictory effects on women: it may cause a loss of livelihoods and access to important resources such as water, shells and trees, while migration and employment may also provide them with new opportunities.

In Guanacaste, displacement, exclusion and gentrification take place in rather indirect, mediated ways: there is no large-scale displacement. Voluntary land sale has driven the tourism and real estate development since the beginning. While land investors and speculators are mostly male, the Guanacastecans who sell their land are both men and women alike, with no important differences observed. Particularly in the beginning of the land investment boom, people often sold their properties for low values and invested the money in consumer goods. While such land sale processes were voluntary, many coastal low-income groups (including labor migrants) face processes of pre-emptive exclusion and economic hardship because of high land and housing prices (Van Noorloos, 2011; Van Noorloos, 2012). Land price inflation pushes new generations out of the region, and displaces alternative development trajectories such as small-scale tourism (Massey, 2005). Hence the spatial consequences of residential tourism in Guanacaste can be most adequately

defined as gentrification (Janoschka et al., 2013): rising land and housing prices push poorer groups out of certain areas. The price of residential plots in Guanacaste increased by 17.7% annually between 2000 and 2009–11, to \$187.50/m² in the latter period; for condominiums and houses, prices increased by 24.3% annually to \$2717.30/m² (Van Noorloos, 2012).¹ After the 2008 economic crisis, property prices in Guanacaste dropped somewhat, but not dramatically. Indeed, a large majority of local and Nicaraguan respondents agreed that housing, at least in the coastal towns, has become largely inaccessible for new buyers.

Rather than gender disparities, class and (indirectly) nationality tend to determine access to land under the current gentrification process; in addition, there are age-based differences. New generations of young men and women growing up along the coast, as well as new immigrant laborers, cannot buy land in the coastal areas. Young people face difficulties in forming their own nuclear families; the price level makes them dependent on their parents for support. The interior rural area of Guanacaste still has affordable land, although this is slowly changing. Further frequent strategies are renting a small apartment, or taking care of absentee owners' property. Other young people depend on relatives to give them a piece of family land. Inheritance patterns seem rather gender-equal these days, with people passing on land to all children, regardless of gender. Indeed, in Latin America in general, inheritance of land has become more egalitarian and women mainly become landowners through inheritance, while men tend to buy land (Deere & León, 2003).

Hence gender disparities in access to land have not been directly affected by residential tourism; they are traditionally highly present in Costa Rica (as in all of Latin America), although in recent decades many improvements in family laws and land rights have been achieved, such as the recognition of dual-headed households and consensual unions, and joint titling practices (Deere & León, 2003; Fuentes López, Medina Bernal, & Coronado Delgado, 2011). Hence women's bargaining power has increased in important ways, leading to a more gender equal land distribution. In addition, many laws and policies promoting gender equality and women's protection have been set up in Costa Rica during the 1990s, including family laws, subsidies and protection against domestic violence (Chant, 2002; Preston-Werner, 2008). These developments have gone hand in hand with economic, technological and sociological changes which have changed gender relations – among others the downsizing of the public sector and the rise of tourism, which increased women's labor opportunities (Mannon, 2006). In Guanacaste in particular, significant changes in family life were observed since the 1980s: a growing incidence of lone motherhood and female-headed households, falling levels of legal marriage, rising numbers of out-of-wedlock births, greater rates of divorce and separation, and mounting involvement of women in the historically male preserve of family breadwinning (Chant, 2002).²

Arguably, all these changes have allowed women to acquire a new autonomy and empowerment, also in land issues. However, as we will see, men still dominate the labor market in Guanacaste, and therefore have more possibilities to buy land on the market. Hence indirectly, increased land sale

¹ While these prices are generally for land and housing directed at the residential tourist market, general housing prices can be assumed to have increased a lot as well (Van Noorloos, 2012)

² Gender relations are traditionally unequal in rural Costa Rica and particularly in Guanacaste: in the north-west of Costa Rica, male out-migration for agricultural labor was common until the 1990s, which reinforced a traditional spatial and sexual division of labor (Chant, 1991).

and commoditization of land may favor men, even in the context of general increasing egalitarianism in inheritance patterns and state programs. At the same time, the demise of the traditional cattle sector and small-scale agriculture reduced the central role of land in the household economy: rather, land has a more residential function and has become an object of speculation and investment.

4. Feminization of employment?

Since the 1990s, tourism growth in Guanacaste has particularly benefited women's employment opportunities: their involvement in the workforce has increased considerably, as visualized in figure 2 for Santa Cruz and Carrillo cantons, the focus area of this research. This development has continued up to 2011, during the boom of residential tourism: women's participation in the workforce continued to grow in absolute terms (from 4943 in 2000 to 10,651 in 2011) and as part of the total female population (see figure 2). Men's employment to population ratio has been declining rapidly since the 1970s, mainly due to the cattle bust (Edelman, 1998) and general economic crisis of the late 1970s and 1980s, a process which was intertwined with important male out-migration patterns (Chant, 1991). However, male employment also recovered between 2000 and 2011: the new employment opportunities provided by construction and related industries have played an important role in that. Indeed, on a national level in Costa Rica tourism provides opportunities for men and women alike, and while women earn less income than men in the sector, it makes up an important part of their livelihoods (CEPAL, 2007).

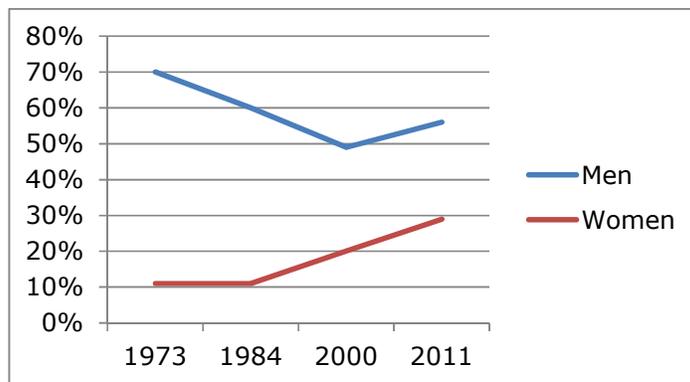


Figure 2. Employment to population ratio for men and women, 12+, Santa Cruz and Carrillo cantons, 1973, 1984, 2000 and 2011. Source: INEC Censo Nacional de Población y de Vivienda

The main difference between residential tourism and short-term tourism is the great relative importance of construction and real estate, whereas the traditional services sector loses in importance. In the 2000s in Guanacaste, however, short-term and residential tourism were still combined in such a way that all these sectors are still largely present. Hence in the 2000s there were large opportunities for employment and business for many groups.

Figure 3 shows that in the research area many different tourism-related sectors experienced growth between 2000 and 2011. The number of people involved in tourism narrowly defined (lodging and food services) increased by 8.8% annually between 2000 and 2011, making it the main economic activity in the area. Both men's and women's participation in tourism (narrowly defined as lodging

and food services) has increased to a great extent; for women, tourism is the primary sector in terms of employment. Furthermore, women’s employment in domestic work as well as commerce and vehicle repair increased rapidly, while men’s employment has particularly increased in commerce and vehicle repair, transport and storage, and construction (growth of the latter sector was particularly high between 2005-2008, hence it is not adequately reflected here).

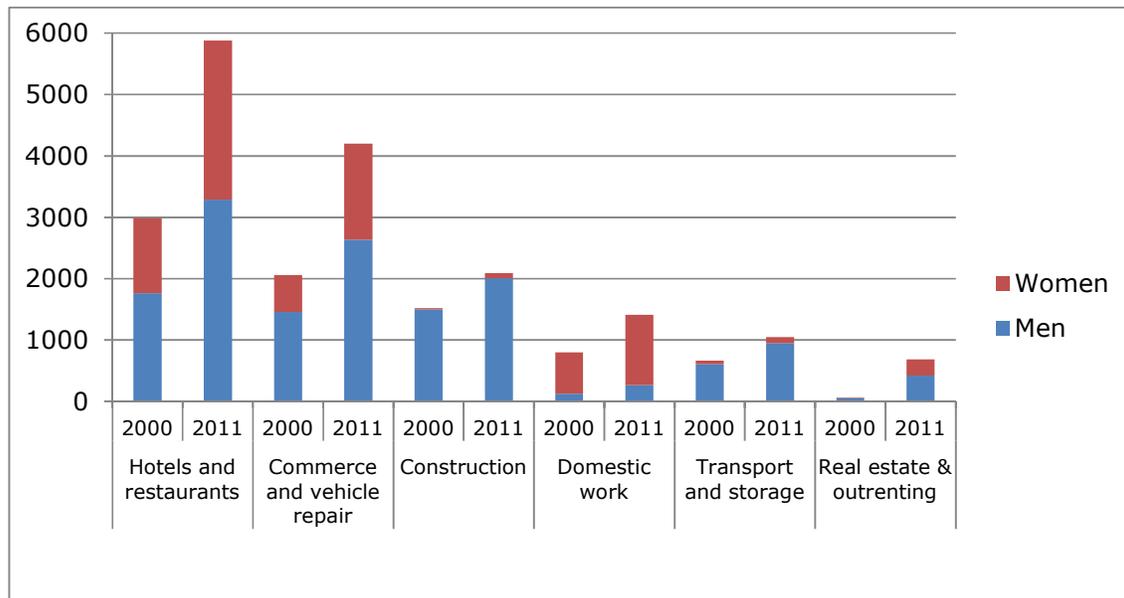


Figure 2. Number of men and women working in selected economic sectors, 2000 and 2011.
Source: INEC Censo Nacional de Población y de Vivienda

The local labor market on Guanacaste’s coast clearly shows how gender differences intersect with ethnic and class differences. The booming tourism, real estate and construction sectors have attracted a large number of migrants, particularly Nicaraguan and domestic migrants. Both Nicaraguan men’s and women’s involvement in Guanacaste’s economy is vulnerable: they work mostly in low-skilled jobs in construction, gardening and private security (men), domestic work (women) and tourism (both). Migrants from the US and from the Costa Rican center are more often occupied in high-skilled jobs such as tourism and real estate management, while local Guanacastecans are in the middle.

While tourism’s employment effects in Guanacaste are generally positive, an analysis of the sector should also pay attention to quality of employment and vulnerability. Prostitution, a thriving sector in many tourism destinations such as Guanacaste, is a clear case in this regard. Also, a shift from short-term tourism to residential tourism probably reduces the quality of employment, with the increased importance of vulnerable and low-quality occupations in construction work and private house occupations such as domestic work and gardening. Construction work and domestic work are known for irregularity, temporariness and vulnerability: occasional work, lack of social security and health issues such as job-related accidents and sexual harassment, are major issues. Lower quality of employment is also reflected in low pay. Traditional tourism labour, while vulnerable, is relatively well paid. In the tourism sector narrowly defined as hotels and restaurants, per capita incomes where the head of household worked in tourism are mostly found in the middle quintiles (for Costa

Rica as a whole) (see Van Noorloos, 2012). On the other hand, construction workers' and domestic workers' households are largely in the lowest three quintiles (ibid.).

Hence both men and women, particularly Nicaraguans and particular groups of Guanacastecans, face vulnerabilities in their work situation. However, in general the level of employment has improved for women in the research area: they have gained weight in high level occupations such as managerial positions (41% of these positions were filled by women in 2011, compared to 31% in 2000)³, and intermediate and technical level positions (22% to 32%) – although these are still to a large extent male domains. Women's participation in non-qualified positions has also increased but to a lesser extent (26% to 32%), implying that they are inserting themselves more in the higher domains of the labor market than in the lowest ones. Again, this might be particularly true for external women, and not so much for Guanacastecan women.

In general, tourism has provided Guanacastecan women with important income generation opportunities, although the recent shift towards residential tourism seems to imply a decreasing quality of employment, both for men and women. The 'feminization of employment' is not only related to the surge of tourism; declining birth rates and enhanced education have also played a role (Chant, 2002). Women's insertion in the labor market has allowed them more economic independence from men (Mannon, 2006), and indeed the feminization of employment seems related to a feminization of household headship (Chant, 2002), which has only continued rising from the 1990s up to the present date with 36.5% in 2013.⁴ Female employment in residential tourism has not necessarily been at the expense of men, who have recovered their employment position (at least in quantity) particularly in the 2000-2011 period leading to a reduced need for out-migration – although certain groups of men have probably suffered to a large extent from the declining success of traditionally male occupations in agriculture, cattle farming and fishery.

5. Gendered water and conservation struggles

While women have benefited economically from the growth of the service sector in Guanacaste, they are also among the main critics of residential tourism in recent years. In Costa Rica, conflict and criticism on residential tourism often comes from an environmental perspective, and Guanacaste's main struggles are no different: besides land, they focus on water governance and nature conservation. Women have played key leading roles in these struggles, which often implicitly or explicitly draw on gendered discourses about development and conservation.

It is interesting to note how perceptions can differ on the 'beneficial infrastructure and social projects' that land deals can offer. Behrman et al (2012) state that land investments which include 'social projects' such as improvements in water provision, can be particularly beneficial for women. However, in Guanacaste many women and men alike perceived such public-private investment in water infrastructure as a typical case of water grabbing and privatization, set up in a non-consultative way.

³ All data in this section adapted from INEC Censo Nacional de Población y de Vivienda 2000 and 2011

⁴ INEC Encuesta Nacional de Hogares, data for Chorotega region

In 2005 a water conflict emerged in Lorena, the 'Nimboyores conflict' (Ramírez Cover, 2008; IPS, 2004), where a female leader played an important role. The conflict focused on the planned extraction of large amounts of water for the golf courses and hotels of the coastal megaproject Reserva Conchal, in a very dry area. The people of Lorena, where water extraction would take place, were not consulted about these plans, which led local people, led by a female school teacher, to protest. Successful community protests and judicial action delayed the water project, and in the end the developer scrapped its plans. Other water conflicts have followed later, particularly around the Sardinal–El Coco–Ocotol water project in 2008, where women and men also played active roles in halting further water extraction for residential tourism development (Van Noorloos, 2012).

Female as well as male leaders in interior towns thus fiercely defended continued access to water from the local aquifers, and often such struggles are framed in terms of 'defending water provision for our kids / the future generations' vs. the 'short-term financial interests of the foreigners [developers]'. Rapid residential tourism development is implicitly framed as a masculine capitalist invasion for quick profit, in contrast to the long-term intergenerational community values that women uphold. Indeed, the main reason for protests – apart from the lack of prior consultation – was the local residents' concern about *future* water access: although many wells were in the process of drying up, there was not yet an immediately endangered water access. Critical visions of residential tourism and water privatization also draw on discourses on the public good vs. private interests, which also has an implicit gendered perspective.

Other struggles around residential tourism in Guanacaste are related to nature conservation and environmental protection. One important example of such conflicts is the case of the Leatherbacks of Guanacaste National Park, in the coastal town of Playa Grande. In this protected coastal area, which is a main nesting site for the critically endangered leatherback sea turtle, residential tourism development with skyrocketing land prices has triggered a typical development-conservation conflict. Women from the local women's association have played a key role in this conflict: the consolidation and protection of the national park against encroachment by investors and politicians is a key objective of the association, and the leader frames it partly as a women's struggle against anti-conservationist husbands (although the 'conservationists' also include many men). The leader of the women's association blends her environmental activism with a particularly gendered discourse:

Sometimes people tell me that I'm a fighter, for the environment and things like that. But I would say that it is because I'm a mother. They can say that there will be water for the next 20 years, but what happens after that with my kids? That's the main thing, I do everything for the boys and girls, I also consider the turtles to be my kids. (...) I would prefer my kids to say that I did everything to protect the turtles, even if they will be extinguished, than saying that I didn't do anything. There needs to be a consciousness about the environment. A short time ago I talked to a man and he almost made me sick: he wants Playa Grande to become like a second Tamarindo (...) When I told him that our kids would drown in alcoholism he said that they are all lost anyway. It's incredible that he would say something like that.

Women are put forward as defenders of nature with reference to their motherhood and concern for the next generations, whereas men are portrayed as irresponsible and focused on short-term gains. Such gendered ideas and stereotypes reflect pre-existing ideas about men and women's roles in

Guanacaste (see Chant, 2002) and convert them into advantages for women, who are increasingly claiming their space in the public domain. Via successful protest movements, but also through other mechanisms such as community development associations, water committees and the like, women play important roles in decision-making on matters related to residential tourism on a local level. Other axes of differentiation such as class and ethnicity clearly play a role, with Nicaraguan women being particularly absent from community organization, while female US residents and domestic migrants are highly active, though often in other types of organizations than Guanacastecan women (Van Noorloos, 2012).

In spite of these active roles, the power of communities and civil society to influence local affairs is still largely insufficient in Guanacaste, so that meaningful prior participation in land deals and related affairs is still a main gap in the residential tourism sector.

6. A New Demographic: Gendered Identities in Flux

The arrival of a large number of residential tourists, and the emergence of a powerful industry in real estate and construction which is also partly dominated by North Americans, has changed the local demographic and identity / power structures in Guanacaste. The gender, household, ethnic and national characteristics of the coastal population have transformed notably, which has had important consequences for social hierarchies and gendered identities.

First, residential tourists have brought with them a particular age and household structure. Guanacaste's residential tourists are mostly older heterosexual couples. In a 2011 survey in Guanacaste (N=61) (see Van Noorloos, 2012), most residential tourists were couples without children (49%), while 23% were families with children (including singles with children). The remainders were singles living alone (18%) or friends or other relatives living together (10%). The mean age was 52. Indeed, residential tourists in Guanacaste have diversified in recent years, and there is a general tendency towards older, more middle-income groups, while the attraction of young, single adventurous people (both male and female) has relatively declined. Guanacaste has become an established, accessible destination with American-style services.

With such characteristics, Guanacaste's current residential tourists arguably form less of a challenge to traditional family structures and gender roles than in other cases (Croucher, 2013; Frohlick, 2007); and the 'gender demonstration effect' might also be lesser in current days compared to the 1970s and 1980s, when the first single adventurous men and women from North America relocated to Guanacaste and had more intensive contact with the local population than is now the case (see Van Noorloos, 2012). While the total number of residential tourists is not enough to contribute to a general ageing of the population, the North American resident and tourist population in Guanacaste has clearly aged. Among the native population, young people are still a large majority.

A second notable change is the 'return of men' in Guanacaste: improved labor opportunities for men emanating from residential tourism have attracted former out-migrants and new migrants alike. The implications of this process for residential and marital dynamics are complex, and will probably only become noticeable in the longer run. We have seen that the increase in female household headship has not been halted; Guanacastecan women's independence seems only reinforced in recent years.

Thus a return of men to marriage as solid economic providers is not observable yet. What is clear is that Guanacaste's population in general has become more temporary, mobile and flexible, leading to decreasing social cohesion (Van Noorloos, 2012). Hence there are larger groups of flexible, single laborers, rather than a return to the traditional family.

Increased diversity in national and ethnic terms is a third demographic change, which has consequences for power structures. It was outlined that Guanacaste's residential tourists are mostly North American, while people from Europe and Costa Rica's urban areas are also present. On the other hand, Nicaraguans are a large labor migrant group in Guanacaste, and so are domestic migrants. Such increased variety of population has clear consequences for local social hierarchies. Even Guanacaste's public space, with its real estate advertisements in English showing white middle class couples buying property, reflects the spatial power and elite status of western residential tourists (see Torkington, 2013). They form a powerful, highly esteemed group in Costa Rica, set apart through their high economic, human, social, and cultural capital. On the other hand, the local population has relatively little economic and human capital, but makes up with social and political connections. Nicaraguan labor migrants are generally lowest on the local hierarchy.

Such power positions and identities intertwine in often contradictory ways with gender relations and identities. Indeed, research on gender and mobility has highlighted the complex intersection of hierarchies and identities during and after women's migration; and such intersections acquire a different meaning when dealing with 'privileged mobilities' such as residential tourism and lifestyle migration. For example, female lifestyle migrants in Mexico frequently experience contradictions between their privileged status as relatively rich and highly estimated North Americans, and their marginalization as often single women in a patriarchal society (Croucher, 2013). Indeed, North American women, but also local and Nicaraguan men, have come to experience complex contradictions in their local social position in Guanacaste. Female residential tourists may experience verbal assaults by men, and certain 'no go' areas for women (e.g. local bars). Poor Guanacastecan and Nicaraguan males see their positions in the local hierarchy further decreasing, which may add to marginalization, family instability and even violence (ibid.). Age is another aspect of power that is important: the younger generation of Guanacastecans – male and female - has gained economic and decision-making power, but young people are also marginalized in terms of access to land.

Furthermore, some changes in gendered identities are noticeable. The real estate and construction industry related to residential tourism has sparked a type of 'wild west capitalism' aimed at making a quick profit, which is stereotypically associated with masculinity, and often with North American culture. Indeed, many of the project developers and investors in the area are male and North American. We have seen how this conceptualization of residential tourism as an implicitly masculine capitalist invasion for quick profit, has inspired local engendered activism against such developments, with various women positioning themselves as defenders of 'life' and the environment. However, this is not a uniquely female position, and men are also involved in such activism. More importantly, large populations – male and female - remain indifferent, acceptant or inactive with regards to new developments.

7. Conclusions

This chapter has shed light on the gendered dynamics of current land deals in the global South. The focus was on smaller-scale peri-urban land deals and rural-urban land conversion, and under-researched topic in the debate on land deals. It has provided some first approximations to a gendered approach of urban and peri-urban land deals, particularly those related to tourism, real estate and speculation, by examining residential tourism growth in northwest Costa Rica. By analyzing the causes, implications of and responses to residential tourism growth in one of the main residential tourism destinations of Latin America from a gendered perspective, a more inclusive and complex picture has emerged. Such a perspective offers additional insights.

A more subtle and differential understanding emerges of the actual and possible long-term implications of residential tourism, e.g. in terms of access to land and employment. The rapid development of residential tourism in developing countries can endanger local populations' access to land and may lead to direct or indirect displacement, with contradictory consequences for women. In Guanacaste, however, rather than direct displacement, processes of land price inflation and gentrification are profoundly reshaping local place. Housing, at least in the coastal towns, has become largely inaccessible for new buyers. This has differential consequences for men and women, but particularly across class and ethnic groups. Women are represented among the people who voluntarily sell their land to investors in a private land market. However, increased land sale and commoditization of land in the area may indirectly favor men because of their ongoing advantages in terms of income and employment, even in the context of general increasing egalitarianism in inheritance patterns and state programs (Deere & León, 2003).

In general, tourism has provided Guanacastecan women with important income generation opportunities, although the recent shift towards residential tourism seems to imply a decreasing quality of employment, both for men and women, and a shift towards migrant labor. Hence both men and women face vulnerabilities in their work situation. However, in general women are inserting themselves more in the higher domains of the labor market than in the lowest ones. Women's insertion in the labor market has allowed them more economic independence from men. These findings are in line with other research on gender and land deals: female paid employment can have a transformative effect on women's autonomy, independence, and bargaining power within the household, especially for younger generation; however, low skilled, temporary and vulnerable work is a mixed blessing for women (Behrman et al., 2012).

Behrman et al. (2012) also indicate that economic change does not lead to automatic improvements in male-female relations. Indeed, the change towards a service sector in Guanacaste may have been empowering for women, but if men experience marginalization household relations and violence could actually worsen. Female household headship is still on the rise. While female employment in residential tourism has not necessarily been at the expense of men, in the context of changing power relations and rapid change, poor Guanacastecan and Nicaraguan males may still see their positions in the local hierarchy decreasing, which may add to marginalization.

The responses to profound social and economic transformations take on particularly gendered forms and discourses. While women have been benefiting economically from the growth of the service

sector in Guanacaste, they are also among the main critics of residential tourism in recent years, and play important roles in decision-making on matters related to residential tourism on a local level. Environmental activism is blended with gendered discourses.

A gendered view of residential tourism finally highlights the changing demographics of the area, which has important implications for power relations. Residential tourism has brought in many older-aged couples; men have found labor opportunities and returned to the area; and the population is increasingly diverse, fragmented and temporary. The variety of ethnic and national groups has changed the local power structure in Guanacaste. Such power positions and identities intertwine in often contradictory ways with gender and generational relations and identities.

The Guanacaste case is obviously a very particular case, with strong state institutions and legal frameworks in place which protect women and prevent rapid investments from causing large-scale societal impacts, and a largely private individualized land market in place. In other contexts, residential tourism and other types of rural-urban land conversion may take on very different meanings and implications for men and women. Nevertheless, this case illustrates that implications of land deals vary widely depending on which group we look at: the intersections of gender, age, ethnicity, nationality and class result in contradictory outcomes. Demographic change is important to take into account. It also shows that short-term evaluations fall short in analyzing the full implications of land deals. Finally, adequate female representation in decision-making and action related to land deals is necessary and can be successful in mediating the impacts of such investments.

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