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Modern Colonialism: The Case of Costa Rica and the United Fruit Company

A thesis submitted to
Regis College
The Honors Program
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For Graduation with Honors

By
Micah X Pérez

April 2024

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Most of all, I want to thank my mother, Terri Pérez. Without her, the magnitude of opportunities I’ve had throughout my life would not be possible. Thank you for your sacrifices and your support.

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ABSTRACT

Name: Micah X Pérez Majors: Environmental Studies, Spanish

Modern Colonialism: The Costa Rica Case

Advisor’s Name: Dr. Gabriela Carrion, Dr. Heider Tun Tun

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This academic paper systematically investigates the intricate historical relationship between the United Fruit Company (UFC) and the socio-economic landscape of Costa Rica during the Liberal period from 1870 to 1940. By examining the direct relationship between the UFC's presence and the simultaneous growth of the tourism industry, coastal land development, and the consequential rise of the sex trade, this research elucidates the adverse impacts of foreign monopolies on the privatization of land. The study underscores the enduring repercussions of this phenomenon in contemporary Costa Rican society. **Through historical analysis, this thesis argues that the UFC's actions in Costa Rica during the Liberal period took on a form of modern-day colonialism, impacting the socio-economic dynamics of the nation.** By examining less-explored historical narratives, the paper seeks to acknowledge and address the often-neglected histories of exploited indigenous communities and Latin American countries under the influence of the United States. This academic endeavor not only illuminates the less visible aspects of the United States' involvement in Costa Rica but also the influence between the Global North’s corporate interests and local communities. Within the context of Central American history, the ethical considerations of the United States' influence on environmental and human health are key historical themes.

INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the relationship between the United Fruit Company's (UFC) presence in Costa Rica, the concurrent expansion of the tourism industry and coastal land development impacts, and the coinciding rise of the sex tourism industry. These issues are relevant today, as their lasting effects originate from the actions and practices of foreign powers (UFC) during Costa Rica's Liberal period (1870-1940). Addressing this form of modern-day colonialism, this paper also highlights oft-forgotten histories of exploited indigenous communities and Latin American countries victims of the adverse dynamic created by the United States. The pervasive influence of the UFC was a catalyst for cultural, political, and economic transformations in Central America, evident in the case of Costa Rica. As one of the primary exporters of bananas and other natural resources monopolized by the UFC, Costa Rica found itself in a redefined socio-political period. This tumultuous period gave way to the concept of the "banana republic," defining peripheral nations dependent on international exports and considered inferior by global powers.

Extensive literature on the subject exposes the negative influence of the American presence in Costa Rica, bringing with it racial ideologies that assigned value to 'whiteness' and perpetuated discriminatory practices from the United States. This racial dimension of the UFC's impact, in turn, marginalized individuals subjected to colorism. The government's reliance on the UFC's economic and social involvement (job sectors provided to local communities, profit increases, access to the global economy) further enabled the prevalence and normalization of these discriminatory ideologies. Another way that this act of monopolization affected local communities was in the way that the UFC became a pillar of Costa Rican society. The UFC's development in the banana industry aligned with the development of United States imperialism in Latin America and the Caribbean. The UFC's use of U.S. military infrastructure plans to increase as a tool for increasing imports/exports in the dense jungle provided the company with a competitive advantage and set a tone for how the UFC infiltrated Costa Rica.

From its beginnings in 1899 as the UFC to its prevalence now under a new name, Chiquita Brands International, the multinational conglomerate has had lasting repercussions on the current landscape of Latin American countries, particularly concerning the cultivation of monoculture crops, and related issues around environmental health and human health. The use of pesticides and non-traditional cultivation methods tailored for mass harvesting of commodities such as bananas has lasting impacts on the land. For example, eutrophication and ecosystem fragmentation are common issues in areas of heavy banana cultivation.[1] This paper will explore why Costa Rica was designated as the ideal location for banana cultivation by the UFC, as well as the social and economic considerations that made Costa Rica a desirable location to develop (lower development, labor, and living costs).

This paper's exploration goes beyond bananas, delving deeper into the influence of other transnational corporations with presences in Costa Rica, such as the Pineapple Development Corporation (PINDECO). This has to do with the expansion of the pineapple industry. PINDECO's role in the elected and accepted use of monoculture agriculture to commercially produce pineapples is highlighted by its significant environmental cost, exemplified by deforestation. Deforestation, coupled with the use of agrochemicals, poses threats to both ecological and human health.[2] The Research Center for Environmental Pollution at the University of Costa Rica identifies bromacil, a chemical used in pineapple cultivation, as a major contributor to pollution and aquifer contamination, with the potential of affecting ecosystems for up to two decades.[3] The shift from subsistence farming with multiple crop cultivations to the mass cultivation of global commodities (bananas, pineapples, coffee) was imposed on local communities by these aforementioned transnational companies. Looking past environmental impacts at the hands of transnational companies, the UFC also negatively affected local communities and human health. Examples of this include the unfair labor practices, low compensation for difficult and dangerous jobs, and limited access to healthcare. From a social justice standpoint, the human and ecological effects due to agrichemical/pesticide usage must be considered. Economic dependency on transnational commerce by local communities and the Costa Rican government was a social issue encouraged by UFC's presence as well. In addition to the environmental impacts stemming from the mass cultivation of bananas, transnational companies like the UFC have produced detrimental effects on local communities and human health. Moreover, deforestation, exacerbated by the UFC's operations, leads to significant biodiversity loss and ecosystem fragmentation.

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[1] Soluri, John. "Empire's Footprint: The Ecological Dimensions of a Consumers' Republic." OAH Magazine of History 25, no. 4 (October 1, 2011): 15–20. https://doi.org/10.1093/oahmag/oar042.

[2] Soluri, John. "Empire's Footprint: The Ecological Dimensions of a Consumers' Republic." OAH Magazine of History 25, no. 4 (October 1, 2011): 15–20. https://doi.org/10.1093/oahmag/oar042.

The prevalence of the UFC in Costa Rica parallels the growth of the tourism industry. The infrastructure funded by the company, including ports, airports, and railways, played a significant role in creating accessible locations for tourists. The Pan-American Highway, existing railway lines, and a comprehensive network of roads by 1983 contributed to tourism expansion. The establishment of international airports, starting with the first, Liberia Airport in the Guanacaste region, allowed for a near-constant flow of foreign visitors into Costa Rica's natural spaces since 1957. While considerable environmental degradation has occurred in the form of ecosystem fragmentation, soil erosion, and a decrease in biodiversity, Costa Rica has made commitments to policies and programs encouraging environmental stewardship and corporate social responsibility. Challenges exist around the coastal development projects funded by tourism companies, hotels, and construction firms, who make a profit from violating these policies. Issues of subsequent water pollution and infrastructure in coastal areas with tourism development projects that have beach access have become clear. Changes in water quality and waste maintenance disrupt marine ecosystems and the health of the public beach water, further affecting coral reefs and other natural resources such as marine life, which many local communities are economically dependent on. Much like the desire to maintain economic ties between foreign investors as was the case with the UFC, Costa Rican government and communities downplay the threats that these developments pose to the natural landscape.

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[3] Rodríguez Echavarría, Tania, & Prunier, Delphine. (2020). Agricultural Extractivism, Border and Migrant Workforce: The Expansion of Pineapple Monoculture in Costa Rica. Frontera norte, 32, e1983. Epub 10 de febrero de 2021. https://doi.org/10.33679/rfn.v1i1.1983

A further connection to the adverse effects presented by the UFC and other foreign powers' influence on Costa Rican government is the emergence of the sex trade industry in Latin America. This also coincides with the development of the tourism industry. The issues of gender dynamics, systemic discrimination, and the influence of cultural, religious, and economic factors contribute to the prevalence of sex work practices and the normalization of the sex tourism industry. These impacts and historical patterns of foreign stakeholders influencing Costa Rican society raise the question: is this pattern necessary for economic growth or detrimental to the socio-economic and ecological health of the country?

In conclusion, this dive into the UFC's role in Costa Rica reveals issues around exploitation of local communities, environmental degradation, and the socio-economic shifts. These issues influenced the way that the contemporary tourism industry was able to develop and how the industry's challenges present themselves today. It is the purpose of this thesis to provoke questions around the ethical and moral details around the United States' involvement in Costa Rica through the monopolization of natural resources and argue that this resembles a modern-day approach to colonialism in Latin American countries

CHAPTER I - MODERN COLONIALISM

The prevalence of the United Fruit Company (UFC) was – and is – a major factor in some of the most significant cultural, political, and economic changes in Central America, geared towards the motivations of transnational export of agriculture during the 20th century. Costa Rica was one of the biggest producers of bananas and other goods monopolized by the UFC. Considering the massive economic reliance on this sudden, new, foreign business, there was political and social turmoil regarding this corporate occupation that led to the Central American "elites… caught between two policies they considered consistent with their ambition for achieving economic development: attracting foreign capital and encouraging white European immigration".[4] The term "banana republic" is used to identify and describe peripheral countries dependent on a specific commerce or export by transnational companies/businesses – in this case, bananas in Costa Rica and the UFC. Countries labelled "banana republics" include Costa Rica, Honduras, and Guatemalan republics, mostly recognized as state economies dependent on the international trade of one export to benefit society's ruling class.

The literature on the subject indicates that the expansion and growth of the American presence in Costa Rica enabled racist practices brought from the United States that placed a value on 'whiteness,' as opposed to the 'racially inferior' societies of Central America. Assigning a social value to the 'whiteness' (as determined by heritage or skin color) of a person led the political and economic elite of Costa Rica to have a contorted sense of self, a sense of 'whiteness' in themselves that they did not see in their fellow countrymen.[5] The racial component of the UFC's impact was drastic and particularly impacted those who were already marginalized by societal standards and racist practices such as colorism. Costa Rica's government's reliance on the UFC and desire to continue the business relationship encouraged the integration of the UFC's agenda in government policies. Anglo-Saxon influence and specific language used the concept of "whiteness" to justify the annexation of Texas from Mexico in the mid 1850s. The linguistic use of "whiteness" resulted in the construction of a social norm within local communities of Costa Rica affected by the sudden influx of workers from the United States, in line with the racial norms that were placed on these communities as well. We must include perspectives on this phenomenon of socio-economic dominance and the subsequent desire or norm to be "white" a modern sort of caste system placed on local communities subject to UFC presence. Introducing these racial hierarchies is yet another aspect of the sociological shifts that Costa Rican communities underwent at the hands of the UFC, as well as representative of the intersection of American imperialism and capitalism that started at the end of the 19th century and continued during the 20th.

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[4] Bucheli, "The Business of Empire: United Fruit, Race, and U.S. Expansion in Central America," 976.

[5] Bucheli, "The Business of Empire: United Fruit, Race, and U.S. Expansion in Central America," 976.

The UFCs efforts to monopolize the banana industry were in direct relationship with the expansion of United States imperialism in Latin America and the Caribbean, evident in the map *Tela, Honduras* created by the Intelligence Section of the U.S. Marine Corps (fig. 1).[6] This map is based on those produced by the UFC as well as aviation charts, accompanied by aerial photos. This is evidence of "the entangled nature of U.S. imperial and business interests" during the time that the U.S. armed forces occupied countries in the Caribbean such as Honduras, Colombia, and Costa Rica (to name a few).. Tela, Honduras served as a base for military expansion, and through flight plans, the intersection of business interests and imperialist actions clearly overlap in the visualized transportation infrastructure plans (Figure 1). The UFC used U.S. military infrastructure plans published and shared by the United States as bases for imports/exports in the dense jungle, which was a leg up on other companies in the region interested in international export. This further monopolized the banana, coffee, and pineapple industries.

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[6] Soluri, "A Fruit Company Town," 216.

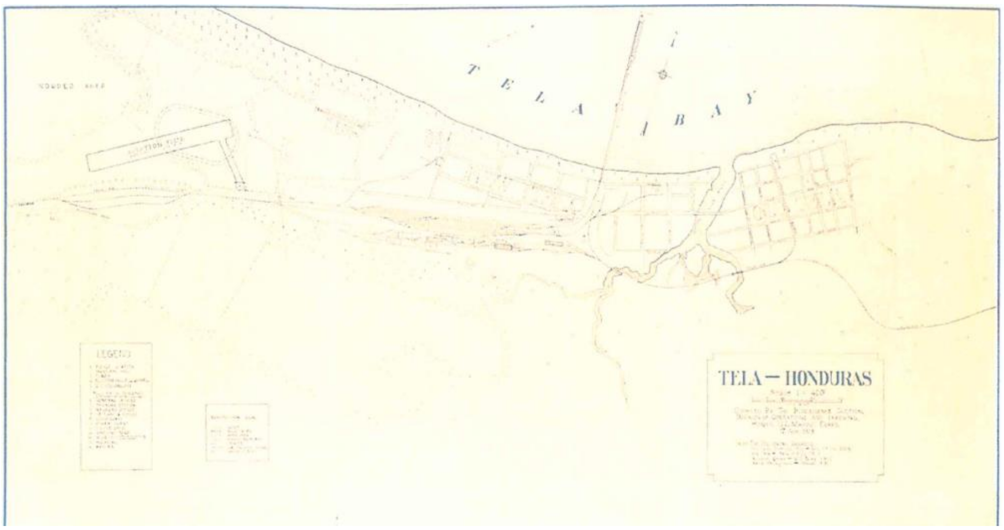
T E L A B A Y
LEGEND
TELA — HONDURAS

Figure 1. U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence Transportation Infrastructure Plans in Tela, Honduras, 1929

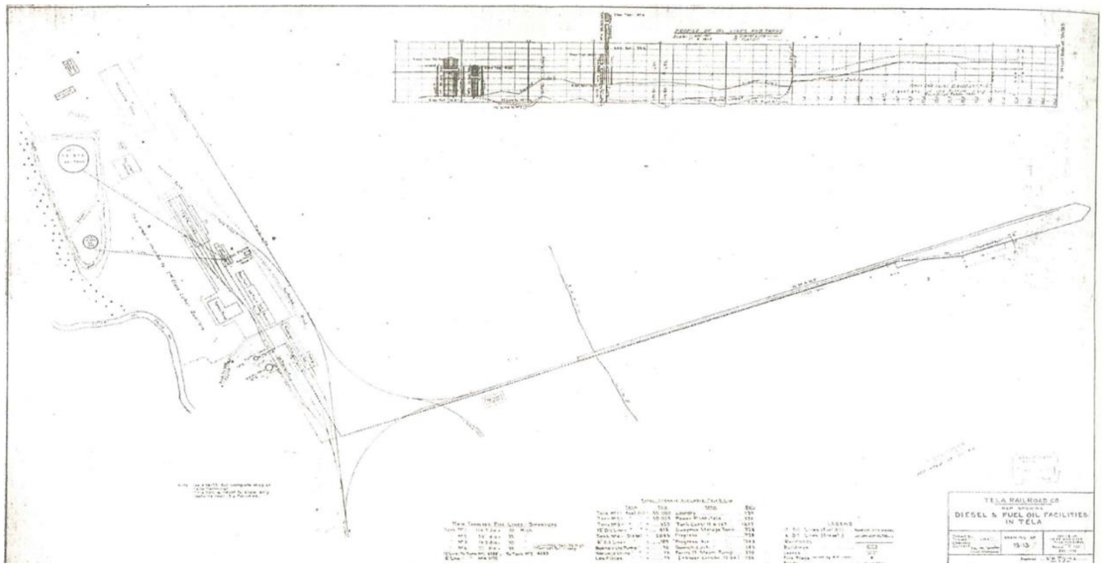
WHARF
LEGEND
TELA RAILROAD CO.
DIESEL & FUEL OIL FACILITIES IN TELA

Figure 2. Diesel and Fuel Oil Facilities in Tela, Honduras, 1934

Source: “A Fruit Company Town”, Soluri

This chapter argued that the UFC's presence and its strategic development left a lasting, negative impact on Central American countries with the creation of a dependent, economic relationship with the UFC. The UFC started in a context in which the United States was politically and economically expanding through peripheral, Spanish-speaking Latin American countries under the guise of agricultural expansion. As a result of economic dependency on international exports of one good, the term ‘banana republic’ has been applied to these same Central American countries, denoting this negative influence and economic/political dependency exacerbated by the imperialist and military strategies employed by the UFC as is seen in the Tela, Honduras maps. This section discussed the ways that race and class played roles in the UFC’s influence on the political and social landscape as a byproduct of its economic prevalence in Costa Rica’s international market. Racist practices such as instituting and spreading ideas of ‘whiteness’ to Latin American, primarily indigenous communities, has led to negative social impacts around identity, colorism, and access to basic resources (fair wages, safe job conditions, healthcare). These racial philosophies of ‘whiteness,’ political and economic influence, and strategic development are only the tip of the iceberg when examining the UFC’s full effects on local Costa Rican communities.

CHAPTER II - MONO-CULTURE PRACTICES & LAND DEVELOPMENT AT THE HANDS OF THE UNITED FRUIT COMPANY

The very beginning of the UFC's presence in Costa Rica's coastal communities is rooted in Minor C. Keith's construction company and railroad development in 1870. They were instructed to build a national railroad from Port Limón to San José and as construction was underway, Keith embarked on a journey of banana commodification and cultivation to make a profit while construction continued. This turned into a lucrative business and by 1899, Keith had merged with the Boston Fruit Company to form the United Fruit Company. The UFC has undergone many versions of re-branding and partnerships with other multinational companies. The UFC is now better known as Chiquita Brands International, as the company's origins are rooted in March 1899 and the consolidation of the Boston Fruit Company in the West Indies and companies led by Minor C. Keith who commodified banana cultivation.[7]

The modern-day implications of the monopolization of the banana industry are evident in land development issues and tourism growth today. Additionally, the social and environmental implications of the UFC's presence and impact of monoculture crops on ecosystems and communities are significant. Of course, through land allocation from the Costa Rican government to further incentivize his mass cultivation of banana monoculture crops and control over railway construction, Keith built railways through lowland areas where it is ideal to grow bananas and transport workers for plantation work. The UFC did not solely take advantage of land rights and usage, but also in political scenarios as well. For example, in 1910, the UFC encouraged Costa Rican voters to support a coup against President Ricardo Jimenez and in doing so, provided a direct political route to more lenient policies and economic regulations for foreign, multinational companies such as the UFC. Pesticides played a huge role on Latin America's ecological landscape, with the UFC's history underscoring their significant impact. Their widespread usage reflects an intersection between imperialism, local/international economies, and environmental degradation. The coup against President Ricardo Jimenez in 1910 marked a pivotal moment in Costa Rican history, orchestrated by the UFC. This political maneuver not only facilitated more favorable economic regulations for foreign multinational companies like the UFC but also exemplified the company's influence in shaping political settings to its advantage. The UFC maneuvered to secure land rights, influence land allocation policies, and control infrastructure development, such as railway construction, to further its agenda of mass banana monoculture cultivation.

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[7] Carlos E. Hernandez, & Scott G. Witter. (1996). Evaluating and Managing the Environmental Impact of Banana Production in Costa Rica: A Systems Approach. Ambio, 25(3), 171–178. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4314449.

The lasting impacts of the UFC on Costa Rica do not lie with mere economic development. The UFC has a prolific history and negative impact on the ecological landscape of Latin American countries, one of the first examples being Lake Yojoa in Honduras where it was labeled as a destination for adventure sport-fishing, when it was rich in bass populations *because of* the UFC. In 1955, a group of North American employees from the UFC deposited over 1.5k bass into Lake Yojoa. Subsequently, these actions depleted the native fish populations in the early 1970s. The human cost of the UFC’s occupation and monopolization of the banana industry was especially significant, as many of the workers were not given fair or equal labor rights, equitable wages, or access to healthcare after being exposed to agrichemicals/pesticides. Already coming from communities disrupted by the UFC’s presence in public and private lands along the coasts, these workers were taken advantage of because of the low price point and lack of regulations in labor forces, not to mention the significant environmental impacts. Monoculture farming of bananas in

Costa Rica has resulted in ecosystem fragmentation, loss of biodiversity, and soil degradation, along with pesticides famously used to combat natural diseases amongst banana plantations.[8]

Additionally, the UFC posed a threat to the Costa Rican economy, as there was a certain dependency on one specific sector of the agricultural industry – this meant that Costa Rica was susceptible to market fluctuations, and the will of the UFC. This is exemplified by the UFC's influence in the political coup to overthrow President Ricardo Jimenez in 1910, done in favor of more lenient tax laws and less strict regulation policies in the interest of the multinational corporation, and not with the interest of the Costa Rican people. This economic dependency has created a fascinating parallel with the examples of political influence and instability, where democratic processes are sacrificed in the pursuit of continued international economic relationships. This political and economic vulnerability turned dependency on foreign investments and encouraged the subsequent tourism boom that we see today on Costa Rica's coasts by transnational corporations, made possible by the UFC development for agricultural monopolization over the country (bananas).

Banana republics are historically defined as countries dependent on the export of a resource, traditionally seen as a derogatory and minimizing term.[9] Here we will examine the case of Costa Rica and its history as a banana republic, specifically how the UFC played a significant role in this. The cultivation, harvesting, and exporting of banana crops served as a main economic source for many looking for work in Costa Rica.

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[8] Carlos E. Hernandez, & Scott G. Witter. (1996). Evaluating and Managing the Environmental Impact of Banana Production in Costa Rica: A Systems Approach. Ambio, 25(3), 171–178. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4314449.

[9] Carlos E. Hernandez, & Scott G. Witter. (1996). Evaluating and Managing the Environmental Impact of Banana Production in Costa Rica: A Systems Approach. Ambio, 25(3), 171–178. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4314449.

The history of agricultural resource commodification lies in Costa Rica's ecosystems and natural spaces specifically, the conditions in which bananas grow best. According to an article by Anthony Goebel and Andrea Montero, titled "Environmental History of Commodities in Central America," bananas require certain environmental conditions to grow, specifically "...located on alluvial soils in the Caribbean basin…planted on land varying from being very near to the sea to 600 meters high…" and specifically in tropical climates around 80°F and with 78–98 inches of precipitation, found in Costa Rica. These are valuable resources that cannot be manufactured or recreated in man-made conditions, especially considering the lower development, labor, and living costs that encouraged the UFC to do business in Costa Rica specifically. The history of banana monopolization began simultaneously with the presence of construction companies developing railroad systems.

The Caribbean Lowlands were seen as optimal spaces for large-scale banana cultivation by the UFC and others, as the lowlands had fertile soil and is situated close to the coast - ideal conditions for banana growing![10] Additionally, the short distance to ports on coasts guaranteed effective exportation of produce/agriculture resources such as bananas. Minor C. Keith, originally part of the construction companies developing railway spaces, found banana cultivation to be lucrative; according to Clarence Jones and Paul Morrison, Keith made the choice to go into the commercial banana business, specifically in the Zent and Matina Valley areas, and the subsequent growth of banana exports in Costa Rica can be seen accordingly in Figure 3 below.

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[10] Jones, C. F., & Morrison, P. C. (1952). Evolution of the Banana Industry of Costa Rica. Economic Geography, 28(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.2307/141616

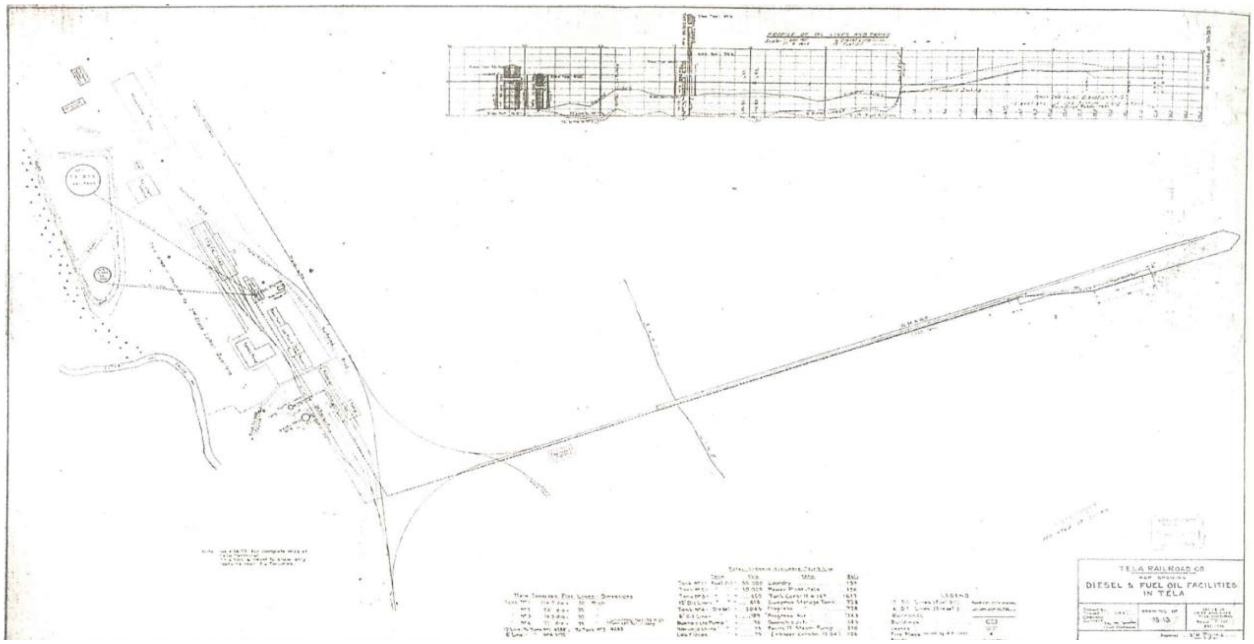

Figure 3. Banana Exports in Millions of Stems by Ports, 1883-1948

Source: Anuario Estadístico, Informe de la Dirección General de Estadística, Imprenta Nacional, San José, Costa Rica

The consequences of mass production in a Costa Rican environment and economic importance of bananas are key in understanding the UFC's expansion practices. The 1996 article "Evaluating and Managing the Environmental Impact of Banana Production in Costa Rica" sheds light on figures and statistics from the 1990s surrounding the export of bananas and the importance of the agricultural sector in Costa Rica because of the significance of foreign currency in the economy. Specifically, the revenue generated from exporting bananas in foreign currency stood at USD 317 million, constituting 21.7% of the nation's overall foreign currency earnings. In 1991, this figure was USD 400 million, accounting for 25.7% of the total. Costa Rica's banana exports in 1991 were divided with 51.8% going to the United States and 49.2% to Europe. By 1993, the total income from banana exports had risen to USD 560 million, with the total export revenue reaching USD 1502 million. These figures help us understand the economic value that the agricultural sector, specifically the banana industry, had in Costa Rica and the sheer volume of banana cultivation/exportation in the past 50 years. Goebel and Montero continue to detail how certain diseases solely attacked monocultures, such as bananas. The article examined how this affected the way that land was used, developed, and how bananas sold in popularity in the aftermath of the airborne and fungal diseases (Panama disease and Sigatoka). In the 1930s, diseases such as Panama disease and Sigatoka were raging in banana plantations, resulting in the UFC moving from the Caribbean to the Pacific under the guise of government “concessions of land to banana companies to encourage cultivation.” In efforts to curb the loss of entire crops to the previously mentioned diseases, agrichemicals, and pesticides, communities explored preventative measures and holistic solutions and helped develop our understanding of the issue of land use in Costa Rica.

The historic use of agrichemicals is significant- pesticides and chemicals were used to encourage greater crop yields and specifically utilized after the spread of Panama disease and Sigatoka amongst banana plantations in the 1930s to combat subsequent decreases in production. We must take this in consideration when discussing the negative impacts that the UFC’s monoculture practices had on ecosystems and human health. Goebel and Montero stated that the specific points of contamination lie in the “...supply of water from cisterns (the case of Costa Rica), while intoxication continues to be recurrent among workers and among those who live near plantations due to aerial fumigation.” The same article stresses the sheer volume of agrichemical use in Costa Rica specifically, as 85 tons were used per hectare on average in Costa Rica between 2006 and 2012, with 18,000 tons of imported pesticides reported as recently as 2017. Pesticides/agrichemicals included in these kinds of imports could include paraquat, metam sodium, terbufos, or ethoprophos. Detailed examples of the impacts of such practices can include contaminating water and soil, fragmented ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, and soil erosion, all of which are negative impacts on our environment that have lasting impacts preventing the use of that land in the future.[11]

An article by Marquardt titled "Pesticides, Parakeets, and Unions in the Costa Rican Banana Industry, 1938-1962," stressed the workers' experience in one report. He cited the nickname workers had for the spray nozzle used for agrichemical work, calling it 'escopeta' or shotgun in Spanish. This ironic use of the nickname and the shared understanding of the health risks surrounding working on a spray work-group, where many banana plantain workers were "...themselves considered a stint on the spray crew as the surest route to the TB ward," highlights the shared experience that labor workers had while working for multinational companies such as the UFC.[12] Adverse human health effects include "...more than 10% higher instances of sterility and damage to kidneys, liver, brain, nervous systems, lungs, heart, eyes, blood, skins, metabolism, and the overall immune system in people associated with banana production as compared to the general population. These side-effects are hard to account for in economic evaluations and are not internalized as a cost of banana production systems," which also shows the ethical implications and lack of responsibility in employee health by transnational companies such as the UFC.[13]

While the UFC was one of the first key players in transnational monopolization of fruits/produce in Costa Rica, the pineapple industry was just as prevalent then (at the height of the UFC's involvement) as it is now and is dominated by a subsidiary of Del Monte, the Pineapple

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[11] Carlos E. Hernandez, & Scott G. Witter. (1996). Evaluating and Managing the Environmental Impact of Banana Production in Costa Rica: A Systems Approach. Ambio, 25(3), 171–178. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4314449.

[12] Marquardt, S. (2002). Pesticides, Parakeets, and Unions in the Costa Rican Banana Industry, 1938-1962. Latin American Research Review, 37(2), 3–36. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2692147.

[13] Carlos E. Hernandez, & Scott G. Witter. (1996). Evaluating and Managing the Environmental Impact of Banana Production in Costa Rica: A Systems Approach. Ambio, 25(3), 171–178. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4314449.

Development Corporation (PINDECO). Agricultural extractivism is parallel with the presence of transnational companies in Costa Rica that contributed to the rise of international exports. The intricacies of international business involvement in society and economics are highlighted by the way that "transnational corporations use different strategies to control all stages of the process, that is, the strategic management of sales contracts, the management of agricultural technologies or seed patents, the possession of land, the mechanization of harvesting methods, labor contracting systems, etc."[14] All of these avenues of monopolization are evident in the ways that these transnational companies practiced monoculturalism in the crops they exported, specifically pineapples, depicted below in Figure 4.

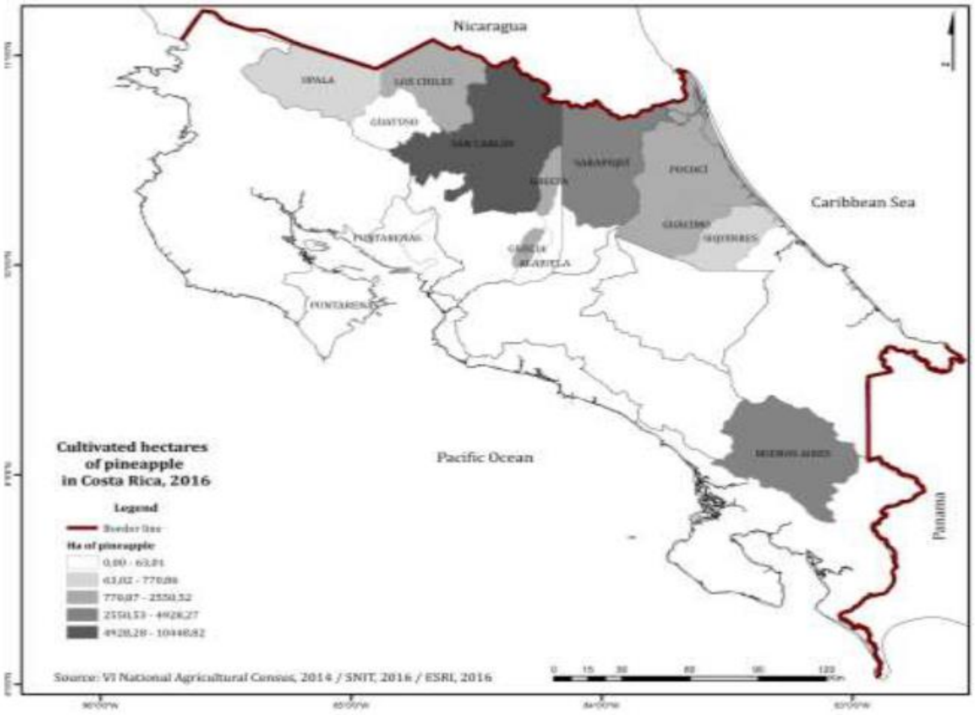
Nicaragua
Caribbean Sea
Pacific Ocean
Panama
Cultivated hectares
of pineapple
in Costa Rica, 2016
Legend
Border line
Ha of pineapple
0,00 - 63,01
63,02 - 770,86
770,87 - 2550,52
2550,53 - 4928,27
4928,28 - 10446,82
Source: VI National Agricultural Census, 2014 / SNIT, 2016 / ESRI, 2016

Figure 4. Pineapple cultivation in Costa Rica as of 2016

Source: Frontera norte, 2020

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[14] Rodríguez Echavarría, Tania, & Prunier, Delphine. (2020). Agricultural Extractivism, Border and Migrant Workforce: The Expansion of Pineapple Monoculture in Costa Rica. Frontera norte, 32, e1983. Epub 10 de febrero de 2021. https://doi.org/10.33679/rfn.v1i1.1983

PINDECO inspired the practice of monoculture agriculture, specifically of exports through pineapple cultivation and the development of a genetically modified pineapple strain, Sweet Golden M-12. In the same article written by Echavarría and Prunier, the economic motivations behind why the pineapple industry grew in popularity are made clear with statistics reported by the Costa Rican Foreign Trade Promotion Agency from 2000 to 2015 that illustrate the massive profits generated from exports at around $865.1 million (compared to the $905.1 million from the banana industry). Forest cover has decreased significantly due to pineapple cultivation and monocultures of export crops, as satellite images and land measurements indicate that from 2000 to 2015, 5, 568.93 Hectares of forest were lost.[15]

Deforestation and land use are not the only threats to ecological health – the use of agrochemicals (pesticides) and poor infrastructure to support waste management play key roles in both land health, specifically aquifers and water retentions, and human health.[16] These agrochemicals include bromacil, diuron, paraquat and fungicides (triadimefon), with around 45kg of those chemicals needed for each hectare of export crops, according to the National University of Costa Rica's Regional Institute for Studies on Toxic Substances (IRET). The Research Center for Environmental Pollution at the University of Costa Rica indicates that bromacil, one of the agrochemicals used to cultivate pineapples for export, is a lead contributor to pollution and contamination of aquifers and land, which could take more than 20 years to regain the original components and health of the soil.[17]

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[15] Rodríguez Echavarría, Tania, & Prunier, Delphine. (2020). Agricultural Extractivism, Border and Migrant Workforce: The Expansion of Pineapple Monoculture in Costa Rica. Frontera norte, 32, e1983. Epub 10 de febrero de 2021. https://doi.org/10.33679/rfn.v1i1.1983

[16] Rodríguez Echavarría, Tania, & Prunier, Delphine. (2020). Agricultural Extractivism, Border and Migrant Workforce: The Expansion of Pineapple Monoculture in Costa Rica. Frontera norte, 32, e1983. Epub 10 de febrero de 2021. https://doi.org/10.33679/rfn.v1i1.1983

As found in researching the case study of Costa Rican tourism development and the adverse environmental impacts that are prevalent in coastal communities, deforestation is a threat to ecosystems and species biodiversity. Historically, Latin America and Costa Rica specifically have suffered a great loss of forest space and natural space (i.e. tropical ecosystems) due to the introduction of cattle ranching and industrial expansion motivated by the introduction of European/colonialist ideals.[18] Schlaht's research in their Honors thesis "A Scientific and Ethical Argument against Deforestation in Latin America: Costa Rica" addressed the dynamic of shifting agriculture, which proved that it was a temporary solution to the national deforestation issue in Costa Rica. Shifting agriculture allowed secondary forests to regenerate and this assisted in maintaining the natural balance of the ecosystem and habitats for native species but was unable to support growing populations in the country.

The presence of transnational monopolies and colonialist motivations held by the UFC drastically shifted the traditional subsistence farming agriculture to international exports of bananas and coffee. The Costa Rican coffee trade was one of the biggest contributors to ecological impacts in Costa Rica's ecosystems. The coffee trade introduced one of the largest industries to Costa Rican society, with around 700,000 hectares (approx. 1,729,737.67 acres) held for coffee crops globally in the late 1980s and early 1990s and now around 300,000 hectares globally

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[17] Rodríguez Echavarría, Tania, & Prunier, Delphine. (2020). Agricultural Extractivism, Border and Migrant Workforce: The Expansion of Pineapple Monoculture in Costa Rica. *Frontera norte*, *32*, e1983. Epub 10 de febrero de 2021.https://doi.org/10.33679/rfn.v1i1.1983

[18] Schlaht, Renate, "A Scientific and Ethical Argument against Deforestation in Latin America: Costa Rica as a Case Study" (2017). Regis University Student Publications (comprehensive collection). 818. https://epublications.regis.edu/theses/818

(approx. 741,316.144 acres) in the past decade. While these numbers have decreased in the past ten years, Costa Rica's land is still occupied by the coffee trade-approximately 1.5% of the country's land, or around 80,000 Hectares (approx. 197,684.31 acres) today. The coffee industry was predominantly drawn to Costa Rica's soil and high elevation, which produced a higher quality coffee bean for international export. The coffee industry was the first domino to fall in the long history of agricultural sovereignty being taken over by international export and business, signified by the introduction of the UFC.[19]

In this section, I addressed the way that the banana industry in Central America is what coined the term "Banana Republic," a name by which Costa Rica was famously known by for the better part of a century. This industry had proven to be lucrative in the eyes of both Costa Rica's society and government, as economic dependence on the industry had been made clear by the UFC's domination of the economy, politics, and workforce. Globally, the banana industry impacted around 400,000 hectares (approx. 988, 421.526 acres) at its peak in 1999 and since the 2000s, has impacted about 40,000 hectares (approx. 98,842.153 acres) or 0.8% of Costa Rica's land.[20] As recently as 2013, pineapple production's global environmental impact was around 300,000 hectares (approx. 741, 316.144 acres), and by 2015 the ecological footprint of pineapple exports globally was around 2,000% more than that of coffee and bananas.[21] The UFC was granted a land concession (due to their prevalence in local economy and government) of almost 9% of the country, or 459, 900 Hectares (approx. 4,599 sq km), which is shown in Figure 4 below.[22]

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[19] Milnes, Mark. "Pineapple Republic: The Growing Footprint of Colonial Agriculture in Costa Rica." Pineapple Republic: The Growing Footprint of Colonial Agriculture in Costa Rica. Ecological Footprint Initiative, York University, 2 Feb. 2021, footprint.info.yorku.ca/data/data-stories/costa-rica-pineapple-republic/.

[20] Milnes, Mark. "Pineapple Republic: The Growing Footprint of Colonial Agriculture in Costa Rica." Pineapple Republic: The Growing Footprint of Colonial Agriculture in Costa Rica. Ecological Footprint Initiative, York University, 2 Feb. 2021, footprint.info.yorku.ca/data/data-stories/costa-rica-pineapple-republic/.

[21] Méndez, E. and Van Patten, D. (2022), Multinationals, Monopsony, and Local Development: Evidence From the United Fruit Company. Econometrica, 90: 2685-2721. https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA19514

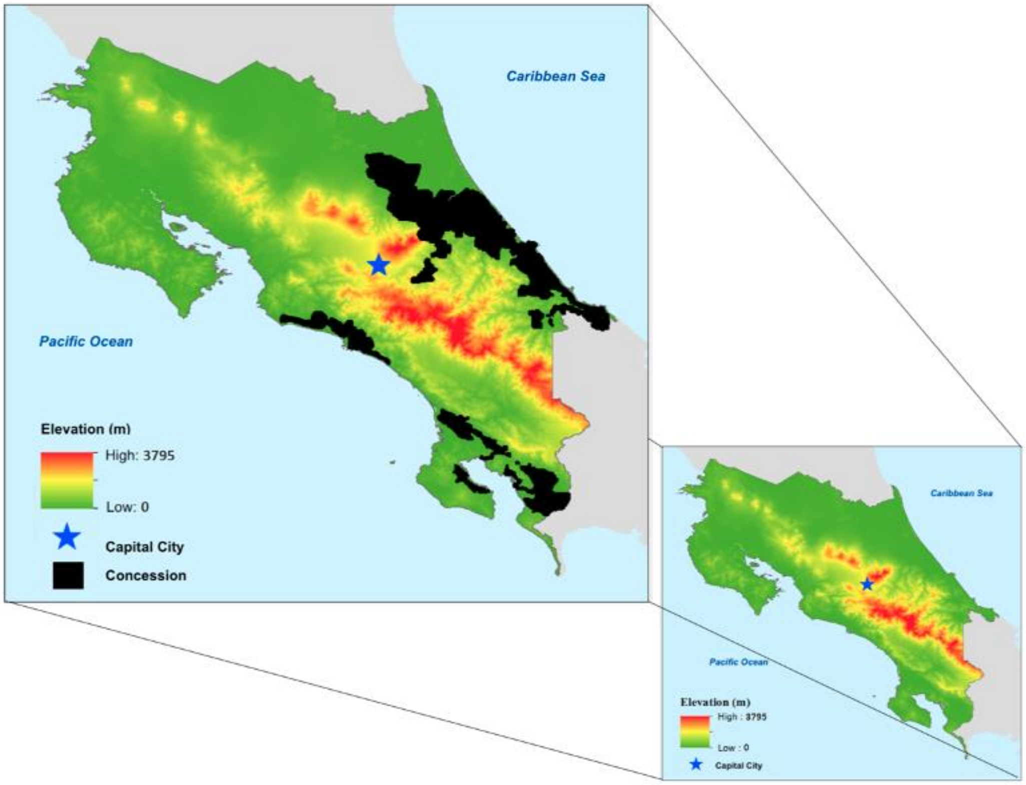

Figure 5. United Fruit Company Pineapple Cultivation & Land Concession

Source: Econometrica, 2022

Costa Rica became the poster child for the quintessential ‘banana republic,’ thanks to the development strategies employed by the UFC when the company first began. This economic and social reliance on international export of singular crops was not a unique situation to Costa Rica, but rather part of a larger problem that plagued other Latin American countries’ crops, such as coffee and pineapples, which this chapter highlighted. Localized to coastal areas, banana plantations not only negatively impacted human health, but also environmental health. This degradation of human and environmental health was done through harmful agricultural practices en masse, contaminating tributaries and releasing pollutants to the landscape of local communities.[23] Justified by the profit margin that bananas brought in to the country's international market, these monoculture practices and agrichemical use continued and was seen as a necessary evil, or a comparable risk to the profit of bananas by the Costa Rican government and another example of the negative impacts that the UFC's modern-day attempt at colonialism via banana monopolization had on Costa Rican ecosystem health.

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[22] Méndez, E. and Van Patten, D. (2022), Multinationals, Monopsony, and Local Development: Evidence From the United Fruit Company. Econometrica, 90: 2685-2721. https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA19514

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[23] Méndez, E. and Van Patten, D. (2022), Multinationals, Monopsony, and Local Development: Evidence From the United Fruit Company. Econometrica, 90: 2685-2721. https://doi.org/10.3982/ECTA19514

CHAPTER III - ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN COASTAL COMMUNITIES

The growth of Costa Rica's tourism industry since 1946 can be attributed to the infrastructure provided previously by the UFC (ports, airports, railways) in addition to the modern developments in infrastructure (Liberia Airport). For example, the Pan-American Highway and existing railway lines influenced the amount of accessibility to locations for many tourists, and by 1983, the country had 30,000 km of roads, facilitating easier travel for tourists.[24] The establishment of international airports, with the opening of the first one in 1957 and the subsequent plans for airports like the one in the Guanacaste region in the 1970s, streamlined foreign visitors into Costa Rica's natural spaces.[25]

The tourism industry involved foreign investment and privatization of land, which raises the question of how we ought to view that international involvement in the Costa Rican tourism industry – essential or detrimental? To put the sheer size of the tourism trade into perspective, "Total tourist arrivals increased from 155,000 in 1970, to 435,000 in 1990, and to 1.1 million in 2000, with revenues generated by tourism growing from US$21 million to $1.15 billion over that period," as reported by Jones and Spadafora in their 2016 article, "Creating Ecotourism in Costa Rica." Not only have the tourist numbers increased every year since 1970, but the revenues gained also increased. This provides a financial incentive to become a part of the tourism industry as small business owners or as third-party foreign investors/developers.

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[24] Jones, C. F., & Morrison, P. C. (1952). Evolution of the Banana Industry of Costa Rica. Economic Geography, 28(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.2307/141616

[25] Jones, C. F., & Morrison, P. C. (1952). Evolution of the Banana Industry of Costa Rica. Economic Geography, 28(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.2307/141616

What has drawn so many people to Costa Rica, and what paints Costa Rica as a vacation destination, is the ecological resources that the country offers. The different types of tourism offered, from sex tourism to eco-tourism, are selling points in the privatization of land for the purpose of developing tourism-focused businesses, hotels, or infrastructure along the coasts. This is problematic considering the use-value of Costa Rican land as "4 percent to 5 percent of the world's biodiversity in 0.035 percent of its territory; about the size of West Virginia in land area, it has more bird species than all of the United States".[26] The rise of sex tourism in Costa Rica is linked to the country's flourishing tourism industry and the nature attraction of its ecological treasures. As transportation infrastructure expanded due to the UFC's efforts and land privatization for tourism development increased, the nation became a hotspot for various forms of tourism, including sex tourism.

To better understand exactly how this industry boom occurred, we must look back to Costa Rica's recent history from 1946 to now. One of the defining factors of the tourism industry growing at the rate that it did was the development of transportation infrastructure in Costa Rica so as to make traveling more accessible for the every-day, run-of-the-mill tourist. For example, the Pan-American Highway and rail lines after 1946 were factors in allowing access to the Pacific coast and by 1983, Costa Rica had constructed a total of 30,000 km of roads.[27] While the first international airport was opened in 1957, there was work beginning on another airport specifically for the Guanacaste (Pacific) region by the mid 1970s.[28] Because there is financial incentive to protect the natural resources that made the tourism industry come to life in Costa Rica, governmental policies and tourism-focused organizations make an effort to try to conserve the land areas that account for the habitats of some of the world's most biodiverse species.

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[26] Jones, Geoffrey, and Andrew Spadafora."Creating Ecotourism in Costa Rica, 1970–2000." Enterprise & Society, vol. 18, no. 1, 2017, pp. 146–183., doi:10.1017/eso.2016.50.

[27] Jones, Geoffrey, and Andrew Spadafora."Creating Ecotourism in Costa Rica, 1970–2000." Enterprise & Society, vol. 18, no. 1, 2017, pp. 146–183., doi:10.1017/eso.2016.50.

[28] Jones, Geoffrey, and Andrew Spadafora."Creating Ecotourism in Costa Rica, 1970–2000." Enterprise & Society, vol. 18, no. 1, 2017, pp. 146–183., doi:10.1017/eso.2016.50.

In my own semester abroad, I had the privilege of visiting coastal communities both on the Pacific and Caribbean coasts of Costa Rica. Over 4 months, I had multiple opportunities to see first-hand the environmental and social impacts that foreign investments have had on local communities on both coasts. Specifically, my experience in Jacó, a small town on the Pacific coast known for surfing, adventure tourism, and sex tourism, was incredibly revealing. Left and right, littered up and down the otherwise pristine coast, were unfinished, abandoned tourism development projects in the small beachfront town of narrow streets. Halfway constructed hotels and resorts dotted the shoreline as I would take a morning walk or come home after a long day of being just another tourist, perpetuating damaging cycles unintentionally. Hearing the local restaurant and shop owners talk about their personal experiences with foreign investors shed light on the reality of this situation, unveiling a narrative I had not yet known about. From shop owners and restaurant owners alike, the consensus was that the presence of these multinational, foreign companies increased competition in smaller towns that traditionally, the local economy was able to keep up with and provide for. Now, with more tourists and higher demands for quality with 4- or 5-star resorts next door, local business owners find rent and living costs rising. Additionally, the social aspect of tourist developments is considerable, with many locals stating that the presence of tourists themselves is disrupting – that many American tourists, in particular, are disrespectful of the land and the culture, as littering and waste are common characteristics of the American tourist. Not only is the social component considerable, but there are issues around these multinational, foreign conglomerates continue appropriating land from local communities and further excluding them in development processes.[29]

Since there is a financial motivation to preserve natural areas and contribute to restoring the environment, some may see these foreign investments as a godsend. The argument around foreign investment and occupation in Costa Rica can be complicated, as “a virtuous circle of investment and new policies played a role in the recovery of Costa Rica’s forests, which, by 2002, had been restored to cover more than 40 percent of the country’s land area,” which complicates the way that we may interpret the negative or positive impact that foreign involvement has had on the Costa Rican people and land.[30] Although, this interest in the environment can be a double-edged sword, as “greenwashing” is on the rise and while efforts are being made, since Costa Rica ”...as a destination had passed from the “exploration” and “involvement” stages, in which the “science tourists” and committed entrepreneurs had shaped the industry, into the “development” stage of large-scale corporate and governmental involvement,” which makes it difficult to say whether or not the country has been worse or better off since the privatization of land for tourism development.[31]

Evidenced by the most important, Post-Liberal policies around the environment and conservation, specifically the ZMT Law 6043 and General Environmental Law 7554, we understand the collective desire to protect the scenic beauty and public access to beaches.

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[29] Pham, TL. “Cultural, Social, and Environmental Effects of Tourism: A Case Study on Coastal Costa Rica.” *Florida State University,* 2016.
[30] Jones, Geoffrey, and Andrew Spadafora.“Creating Ecotourism in Costa Rica, 1970–2000.” Enterprise & Society, vol. 18, no. 1, 2017, pp. 146–183., doi:10.1017/eso.2016.50.
[31] Jones, Geoffrey, and Andrew Spadafora.“Creating Ecotourism in Costa Rica, 1970–2000.” Enterprise & Society, vol. 18, no. 1, 2017, pp. 146–183., doi:10.1017/eso.2016.50.

Unfortunately, as evidenced by many coastal development projects done by tourism companies, hotels, or construction companies, these regulations are violated on a regular basis. While public access to beaches and preservation of scenic beauty are important factors in tourism development in coastal communities, lack of corporate social responsibility practices (community involvement, ethical consumption, etc.). This issue of waste management and infrastructure support perfectly connects with the concept of certification and loss of certifications in Costa Rican beaches, where beaches with access to contaminated ocean water (from the nearby tourism projects) had Blue Flag certificates removed between 2007 and 2009.[32] Blue Flag certifications are internationally recognized, standardized measures of ecological health in tourism areas based on the existing practices of tourism companies, beaches, marinas, and other natural marine areas. The loss of Blue Flag certification from Costa Rican beaches must be understood as a symptom of the tourism practices that have been normalized in the country, specifically in the waste management, population control, and access to protected areas, which have led to losing these Blue Flag certifications.

Coastal development in Costa Rica, while clearly violating environmental regulations, negatively impacts the environment and communities in Costa Rica in more ways than one. For example, construction projects commonly disrupt marine ecosystems, which are a part of the natural, beautiful spaces and public beach access that the country protects. This includes the destruction of coral reefs through water contamination, tourist presence, or lack of infrastructure to support tourist volume in natural spaces.[33] This can lead to the depletion and disruption of natural resources, which local communities rely on for a way of life (participants in the local economy reliant on natural resources or tourism industry) and ecosystems rely on for the promotion of biodiversity.

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[32] Honey, Martha, et al. “Impact of Tourism Related Development on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica.” Center for Responsible Travel, CREST Center for Responsible Travel, Apr. 2010, icsid.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/parties_publications/C3164/Respondent’s%20Factual%20 Exhibits/r-163.pdf.

The pressure on natural resources does not go unnoticed by researchers and local communities either, as water becomes a valuable commodity that seemingly must support thousands of tourists in previously sparsely populated natural areas, following tourism developments of hotels or resorts along coastal areas. In essence, urbanization by way of tourism development along coastal communities in Costa Rica threatens native species and communities but is mitigated by the same desire to continue relationships with foreign investment as the Costa Rican government had when in business with the UFC.[34] The commodification of natural resources is not a new phenomenon in Costa Rica, and the signs are clear. Local peoples often suffer due to the presence of multinational corporations such as the UFC or large resort/tourism development contractors, specifically in the ways that cost of living rises, the environment is negatively impacted, and land rights are challenged.

In an article covering environmental and socio-cultural impacts of coastal tourism development by foreign investors, Pham comments on this act of exchanging the use-value of land for tourist profit/development where land becomes a currency, stating that "This is an exploitive process that creates a crisis of production. These global tourist industries exhaust the land of its resources until the company can no longer garnish money from it and then moves on to the next location that has more resources.[35] Most important is the issue that local communities and foreign investors alike perpetuate this issue further with the promise of profit margins and development projects. This begs questions around the ethical validity of developing in these areas and perpetuating this same process of exploitative development. Pham further explains in their thesis that "Ecotourism, cultural tourism, and recreational tourism revolve around the businesses that result from the tourist gaze and commodification of the land, culture, and activities - of the "commons" (Hardt and Negry 2009: viii), which further emphasizes the societal view of the commodification of natural resources and spaces.

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[33] Honey, Martha, et al. “Impact of Tourism Related Development on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica.” Center for Responsible Travel, CREST Center for Responsible Travel, Apr. 2010, icsid.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/parties_publications/C3164/Respondent’s%20Factual%20Exhibits/r-163.pdf.

[34] Honey, Martha, et al. “Impact of Tourism Related Development on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica.” Center for Responsible Travel, CREST Center for Responsible Travel, Apr. 2010, icsid.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/parties_publications/C3164/Respondent’s%20Factual%20Exhibits/r-163.pdf.

Environmental impacts of tourism development do not end on the local scale, but rather continue to be a challenge on the global scale. Climate change has provided a new framework from which we ought to gauge ecosystem impacts. A notable example of this global impact is the intensification of the Caribbean Trade Winds observed during the summers of the El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO). This climatic phenomenon, coupled with the region's topography, plays a pivotal role in altering precipitation patterns. As outlined by Hernandez and Ramos-Scharron, this results in a simultaneous increase in precipitation along the Caribbean coast and a reduction along the Pacific coast–these environmental changes highlight the connection of local tourism development with broader global climatic patterns.[36] As outlined by Hernandez and

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[35] Pham, TL. "Cultural, Social, and Environmental Effects of Tourism: A Case Study on Coastal Costa Rica." *Florida State University*, 2016.

[36] Hernandez, Edwin & Ramos-Scharron, Carlos & Guerrero-Pérez, Carmen & Laureano, Ricardo & Méndez-Lázaro, Pablo & Melendez-Diaz, Joel. (2012). Long-Term Impacts of

Ramos-Scharron, this results in a simultaneous increase in precipitation along the Caribbean coast and a reduction along the Pacific coast, highlighting the connection of local tourism development with broader global climatic patterns.[37]

The issue of greenwashing is also presented as an emerging issue in the tourism industry, as companies begin to align themselves with the newer green practices and policies in developing countries (sought after due to low development costs and natural areas). The inequitable practices between development companies, local communities, and tourists themselves is highlighted within this issue, as greenwashing inevitably disguises 'mass tourism' as ecotourism, preventing intentional green travel by ecotourists in these same local communities.[38] Braun's article sheds light on the environmental repercussions of "greenwashing" within the context of multinational corporations engaging in ecotourism in the form of development of natural areas. The nature of greenwashing, where developers depict their activities as environmentally conscious while continuing to contribute to adverse effects, significantly impacts natural ecosystems. Their corporate or development practices negatively impact habitats, biodiversity, and ecosystems while increasing tourism demand and depleting natural resources that serve as commodities.

Non- Sustainable Tourism and Urban Development in Small Tropical Islands Coastal Habitats in a Changing Climate: Lessons Learned from Puerto Rico. 10.5772/38140.

[37] Hernandez, Edwin & Ramos-Scharron, Carlos & Guerrero-Pérez, Carmen & Laureano, Ricardo & Méndez-Lázaro, Pablo & Melendez-Diaz, Joel. (2012). Long-Term Impacts of Non-Sustainable Tourism and Urban Development in Small Tropical Islands Coastal Habitats in a Changing Climate: Lessons Learned from Puerto Rico. 10.5772/38140.

[38] Yvonne A. Braun, Michael C. Dreiling, Matthew P. Eddy & David M. Dominguez (2015) Up against the wall: ecotourism, development, and social justice in Costa Rica, Journal of Global Ethics, 11:3, 351-365

A valuable addition to the discussion of coastal development impacts is the literary work of Costa Rican author Ana Cristina Rossi, specifically her piece titled "La loca de Gandoca." This narrative explains the experiences of a woman confronting a multinational company's relentless push for development in her community, particularly within the Manzanillo-Gandoca Wildlife Refuge area. Rossi's text represents the sentiments of an entire generation, spanning from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s, providing a vivid portrayal of societal attitudes towards foreign investors in Costa Rica who were keen on developing natural spaces for tourism or manufacturing. The text powerfully conveys the significant, popular viewpoint held within Costa Rican coastal communities during this era. On the concluding page, Rossi eloquently states, "There is a big difference between the Indian and the white man. Look at the army ants, how they all work together, clean, and take care of their territory. Where the army ants live, everything is neat because they cut all the leaves and make their large nests. That's how the white man is, very hardworking, but he destroys nature. He keeps cleaning, cleaning, cleaning to build his cities, but where he lives, there is nothing. The white man cuts down everything that is a mountain, everything that is green, and where he lives, there are no more trees, no rivers”.[39] This passage serves as a profoundly relevant reflection of the collective sentiment harbored by Costa Rican coastal communities towards multinational conglomerates behind development initiatives. It is also essential to note that discussions around coastal development under tourism pretenses revolve around the environmental and community impacts they present today. The Northern Pacific coast region of Guanacaste in Costa Rica underwent a 589% growth in construction (square meters) from 2003 to 2006, alongside Costa Rica’s Southern Pacific coastal region of Puntarenas which saw a growth of 314% from 2003 to 2006, in comparison to San Jose’s 46% growth as the most densely populated province in the country.[40] This is representative of the disparity in development projects between small, coastal communities and large, urban areas. This widespread adoption of development practices has been detrimental to the socio-economic standing of many coastal communities in Costa Rica, specifically affecting small business owners and local community members. These same practices have economic benefits such as jobs and foreign investment but have necessitated a socio-economic trade-off cause concerns over construction projects, lack of infrastructure needed to approve construction, deforestation, and displacement of local communities.[41] None of these decisions are in the hands of local community.

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[39] Rossi, Anacristina. La Loca de Gandoca. Legado, 2009.

Beginning in the late 1800's, the UFC developed Costa Rica's natural landscape to serve export and import business needs, resulting in railroad construction and airport use. Years later, this coastal development by foreign investors wielded negative impacts on local communities and the natural landscape, including socioeconomic impacts and water/soil degradation. This chapter employs the narrative work by Ana Cristina Rossi, a Costa Rican eco-feminist writer, which highlighted the importance of advocating against that same development that the UFC brought to coastal communities. Shining a light on the voice of the oft-forgotten victims of these development and monoculture processes through Rossi's writing, this chapter delved into the broader environmental impact and the small-scale impacts that occur. This chapter acknowledged the socio-economic implications of tourism development, especially at the hands of transnational investors, which once again resembles the historical patterns around imperialism/colonialism. This served as an example of how Costa Rican land rights are challenged and how a commodity (in this case, land) was monopolized by those in power to continue benefitting those in power.

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[40] Esquivel, Maricarmen. "Coastal Development Decision-Making in Costa Rica : The Need for a New Framework to Balance Socio-Economic and Environmental Impacts." Georgetown University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2011.

[41] Esquivel, Maricarmen. "Coastal Development Decision-Making in Costa Rica : The Need for a New Framework to Balance Socio-Economic and Environmental Impacts." Georgetown University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2011.

CHAPTER IV - COSTA RICA'S SEX TOURISM INDUSTRY & SOCIETAL DYNAMICS AS AN EFFECT OF THE UNITED FRUIT COMPANY'S PRESENCE

To begin, a discussion around the sex trade industry in Mexico is valuable to understanding this topic in Costa Rica. In Mexico City, while sex workers were an active part of the economy and of society, the Department of Public Health established a political campaign to abolish the sex trade and to deregulate the red-light district in the 1920s and 1930s.[42] After an effort in community collaboration among sex workers in Mexico City, this campaign was demonstrated and protested. Appealing to the emotional side of the people, the women "acknowledged that their work was undesirable," but "they insisted that they engaged in sex work because they were honorable daughters and mothers supporting deserving family members".[43] This is proof of the cultural mores that are imposed on sex workers and those of gender identities who have been marginalized by way of gendered poverty, and shows the is institutionalized stigma and discrimination within local government. Sex tourism is integrated into the Costa Rican economy as part of the monetary dynamics established by foreign capital and interests, including those of the UFC. As the tourism industry boomed, driven by ecological allure and infrastructure development, various forms of tourism, including sex tourism, became prominent, raising concerns about the exploitation of the country's natural resources.

Speaking to the injustices that sex workers face due to the gender dynamics within society in Mexico City, it is important to address how intersectional identities of sex workers also threaten the accessibility to education, healthcare, jobs, etc., perpetuating a constant cycle of poverty that is dependent on the international sex tourism trade. Recognizing the differences between Mexico and Costa Rica's histories with United States influence, this same example of sex workers in Mexico City is prolific. There is an example of how "sex workers challenged their marginalization, thus affirming their right to work and their normative social identity while linking the domains of sexuality, social reproduction, nationhood, and economy."[44] These examples of institutional oppression and systemic discrimination further prove the cultural implications that religion, economics, and politics have on how people view sex work and sex workers.

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[42] Cabezas, "Latin American and Caribbean Sex Workers: Gains and Challenges in the Movement," 43.

[43] Cabezas, "Latin American and Caribbean Sex Workers: Gains and Challenges in the Movement," 43.

Addressing the issue of systemic oppression via inaccessible and basic human rights, such as education and/or healthcare, is essential in developing a clear understanding of the social problems that lead to an economic reliance on the sex trade for certain populations of vulnerable women.[45] Another aspect of the sex trade business is the sexual exploitation of women and minors, specifically in Latin America where levels of prostitution continue to increase after sex trafficking efforts subject victims, within their own country or region, to the illegal trade. The unheard and faceless victims of the sex trade, as well as the sex workers, are important pieces to this booming international trade, but according to Ricardo Bucio Müjica, who is head of the National System for the Comprehensive Protection of Girls, Boys, and Adolescents (SIPINNA) in Mexico, "Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Costa Rica are among the destination countries for sex tourism that comes mainly from countries such as the United States, Canada, Italy, Switzerland, and Germany," further proving the fact that there is an economic need and reliance on meeting the demand made by foreign business with the supply of a booming sex trade workforce.[46]

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[44] Motterle, Livia. "From the Streets to the Screen: Sex Work, Stigma, Desire and Covid-19 in Mexico City." Bulletin of Latin American Research, December 7, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1111/blar.13440.

[45] Campos, "The Increase of Prostitution in Latin America."

The act of touring and engaging with the tourism industry as a tourist allows the tourist to disengage from their 'lives at home' - with it being described as the "liminality of the tourism experience" which empowers tourists "to participate in practices in which…they ordinarily would not engage with at home".[47] In the context of Costa Rica's being a "Banana Republic", the issue of sex tourism represents a unique relationship between consumer perception and local socioeconomic states. The term encapsulates a two-way interaction: the impoverished conditions within the country and the perception of the consumer. In this dynamic, tourists may unwittingly or knowingly engage in activities that perpetuate sexual exploitation, thus highlighting the complex ethical dimensions of tourism in a Banana Republic context. This idea of disengaging with the 'self' that the tourist is familiar with while state-side or while they are in their places of origin supports the idea that there is automatically a taboo nature assigned to the sex trade industry and the idea of profit-based sex. It is also not a new idea that has only just now emerged during the 18th and 19th centuries, young aristocrats took "Grand Tours" that often were enhanced by sexual encounters where "adventurous young people often supplemented their cultural experience with that of a sexual nature through liaisons with people they met while traveling".[48] On top of this, there is an over-sexualization of women of color or women of darker complexion, an issue specifically prevalent in Brazilian communities. For example, looking at a Brazilian society's preconceived notions and prevalence of race allows for a lens to form when looking at sex tourism, including concepts of racial democracy, whitening, and *mestiçagem* (racial and cultural mixing).

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[46] Campos, "The Increase of Prostitution in Latin America."
[47] Williams, "Two Racial Hierarchies of Desire and the Specter of Sex Tourism," 44-63.
[48] Barger Hannum, "Sex Tourism in Latin America."

Historically, in Brazil, there have been issues of race and the erotic sexualization of certain racial groups, such as the *mulata* (a woman of mixed black and white ancestry) as Brazil's national erotic icon.[49]

Research conducted on sex tourism in Latin American coastal communities has yielded an overall discovery of sexual trafficking (exploitation of children & women), racial hierarchy, and complex gender issues that significantly contribute to the prevalent sexual stigma held in these same Latin American communities after “travel opportunities opened up to a growing segment of the middle class in the mid-19th century”.[50] Vulnerable groups - women, children, indigenous people, migrants, LGBT-identifying individuals, and certain economic/social/political/educational statuses - also allow for the expansion of this particular industry through exploitation.[51]

There are examples of this inequity across Central and Latin America, where while Brazil recognized sex work as a profession, the Brazilian Ministry of Work and Employment stated that, “the law punishes all those that favor, aid or obtain profits from this activity”.[52] Institutional and systemic oppression for sex workers has “given place to this communicative ambiguity in the system of law,” while the local and national economies are positively impacted by the sex trade business’ prolific history with foreign businesses, tourists, and investors. This socio-political landscape, coupled with stigma from local communities or religion in certain areas, can best be described in the manners of which the existence of sex work is communicated - from social exclusion, prejudices, and persistent inequalities in the socio-economic and political spheres.[53]

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[49] Williams, “Two Racial Hierarchies of Desire and the Specter of Sex Tourism,” 44-63.
[50] Barger Hannum, “Sex Tourism in Latin America.”
[51] Felix de la Luz, “Child Sex Tourism and Exploitation Are on the Rise. Companies Can Help Fight It.”
[52] Stamford da Silva, Artur, and Mariana Farias Silva. “Sex Professionals in Latin America: Observing Stakeholder Participation Through the Form of Legal/Illegal/Non-Legal Differentiation.” Oñati Socio-Legal Series 11, no. 6S (October 22, 2021): S48–S81. https://doi.org/10.35295/osls.iisl/0000-0000-0000-1241.

The issue of child exploitation in the sex trade industry is a darker aspect of the global industry that many organizations in Costa Rica are dedicated to preventing. Since Costa Rica is among some of the top tourism destinations in Latin American countries due to the already well-established tourism presence in developed coastal areas, there are particularly vulnerable populations that are disproportionately taken advantage of in the industry. These populations include women, children, indigenous people, migrants, and LGBT individuals who are experiencing conditions of poverty, discrimination, violence, lack of access to education, lack of access to healthcare, or other social issues that afflict a person's ability to reach economic stability.[54]

There are also peripheral issues surrounding the sex trade industry that affect the lives of sex workers daily - challenges such as the "extent and brutality of violence and abuse, entrenched discrimination, the persistence of high rates of unintended teenage pregnancies, the stigmatization of sex work and, especially, the criminalization of abortion".[55] Considering the social stigma surrounding gender and race that already affects marginalized sex workers, as well as the religious stigma surrounding sex work, there is sufficient evidence to state that there need to be more resources made available to sex workers to ensure access to basic human rights such as education, healthcare, financial stability, food security, and housing. It stands to reason that providing resources for these gaps in access would provide an opportunity for many disadvantaged populations to find alternative ways to make a living and escape the perpetual cycle of poverty that institutionalized oppression operates on.

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[53] Stamford da Silva, Artur, and Mariana Farias Silva. "Sex Professionals in Latin America: Observing Stakeholder Participation Through the Form of Legal/Illegal/Non-Legal Differentiation." Oñati Socio-Legal Series 11, no. 6S (October 22, 2021): S48–S81. https://doi.org/10.35295/osls.iisl/0000-0000-0000-1241.

[54] Vaggione, "Sexuality, Law, and Religion in Latin America: Frameworks in Tension," 14-31.

[55] Corrêa, Pecheny, Careaga, "Sexuality in Latin America: Politics at a Crossroad," 94–117.

The influence of the Catholic Church, particularly in a Latin American country like Costa Rica, is significant when considering the politics around sexual and reproductive rights for women that have created a bridge between legal regulations and catholic morality - creating its own dynamics that play a role in further oppressing marginalized, vulnerable groups.[56] The Catholic doctrine is a strong foundation for many communities in Costa Rica, with many Costa Ricans following the Catholic faith and many holding the political views shared by the Church. Taking this into consideration, the secularization of sexual politics and the influence of religion significantly impact the political and religious frameworks that exist within certain communities.

Identifying secondary and direct roles in the sex trade and sex tourism industry is important since this provides perspective on the enormity of the business. There must be an acknowledgment, aside from the role of sex worker and sex tourist, of the roles played by secondary entities such as taxi drivers, business owners, tour operators, etc. who benefit from the system built around the sex tourism industry.[57] Something is to be said about the ‘white savior complex’ or ‘white knight syndrome,’ where a white man will participate in the sex tourism industry as a client and, acknowledging the power dynamic apparent, sees himself as ‘saving’ the sex worker(s) from the industry - while on the opposite end, there are men who travel solely to fulfill a sort of *machismo* fantasy of asserting dominance over women they deem lower than themselves.[58]

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[56] Vaggione, "Sexuality, Law, and Religion in Latin America: Frameworks in Tension," 14-31.
[57] Rivers-Moore, “Imagining Others: Sex, Race, and Power in Transnational Sex Tourism,” 392–411

This is a compelling discussion that I believe provides another perspective from which to understand the socio-economic impacts of foreign powers in Latin American countries and Costa Rica specifically. In the fall of 2022, I spent 4 months abroad in San José, Costa Rica. In that time, I had a handful of opportunities to travel to the Pacific and Caribbean coasts, specifically the towns of Jacó and Puerto Viejo. Both coastal towns are similar in the way that the sex tourism industry is prevalent in the local community and economy. In my own experience, exploring the streets of Jacó at night was a window into this side of the tourism industry. Not inherently nefarious but assuredly something to be cautious of, we were warned of specific bars and restaurants that host sex work activities and of the rumors around sex work exploitation of young women. It was this advice and new experience that prompted me to look deeper into this phenomenon, as this industry was seemingly normalized in these small, predominantly Catholic communities. Local bar owners and restaurant owners revealed during my trips that it was a commonly accepted industry as it was beneficial for the common good. Other business owners benefited from the business and tourism traffic that the sex tourism industry encouraged in these coastal communities – these tourists indulging in these activities need places to stay, souvenirs to buy, and food to eat and local business owners fulfill these demands.[59]

As part of the coursework during my semester abroad in San José, Costa Rica, I engaged in famous literary works by Costa Rican women writers – of which, eco-theology and ecofeminism were consistent themes in my readings. Of these readings, that of Ana Cristina Rossi's stands out as a particular example of the impacts that tourism and development have on local communities. Rossi published "La loca de gandoca", or "The Mad Woman of Gandoca", which detailled a main character's efforts to advocate for her small community against a developing company. Situated in the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica, the Gandoca Wildlife Refuge and Rossi's analysis of Costa Rican history served as a symbol of the deforestation, fragmentation of ecosystems, and land development that had been devastated the natural ecosystem years prior. The issue of land rights and development of natural areas is key in Rossi's writing, culminating to a commentary on the treatment of those who stand opposed to development –translated, this quote says, "This region no longer belongs to us. First, it ceased to be the land of the indigenous people, then it stopped being the land of the Black community, later it ceased to be the land of Costa Ricans in general. I saw this in the eyes of the police officer in Puerto Viejo when he came to handcuff me and imprison me for opposing the destruction caused by a French woman who has not even lived here for a year. 'Do not obstruct foreign investment, ma'am, move along, move along.'" This quote explains the main character's struggle in demonstrating against development projects in her community, where her own community members (a police officer) detained her for that mere act – as protecting these foreign presences and the immediate benefits that they provide are deemed invaluable as a result of the economic dependency that occurs, while also highlighting the inequalities inherit in situations surrounding tourism development and land occupation.[60]

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[58] Lu, Holmes, Noone, and Flaherty, "Sun, Sea and Sex: A Review of the Sex Tourism Literature."

[59] Lu, Holmes, Noone, and Flaherty, "Sun, Sea and Sex: A Review of the Sex Tourism Literature."

This chapter incorporated case studies of other Latin American countries, specifically Mexico where social justice issues and access issues occurred as a result of the booming sex trade in Mexico City during the 1920s-1930s. I provided this perspective to allow for a deeper dive into the surrounding issues that sex workers in the industry must face. Intersectional identities and socioeconomic and political challenges around these identities were common themes addressed in this chapter, as it is important to recognize these voices. This growth of the sex tourism industry exacerbated these existing issues in Costa Rica, as the tourism industry provided an international market for the sex work industry. The section addressed the sex tourism industry to demonstrate that the UFC's presence had negative impacts on environmental, human, and sociopolitical issues due to the UFC's attempt at modern-day colonialism and the subsequent tourism development that incurred because of these impacts.

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[60] Rossi, Anacristina. *La Loca de Gandoca*. Legado, 2009.

This chapter addressed the issues of sexual trafficking, racial hierarchy, and gender complexities, evidencing economic reliance on the sex trade, especially the impacts of foreign investment and land privatization on local communities, and considered the economic benefits and consequences. This was important to develop a deeper understanding of the lasting impacts that the UFC's presence and colonization efforts had on Costa Rican society and economy – specifically in how Costa Rica has commodified its goods, from land to sex. Due to the foundation provided by the UFC in its developmental stage of colonization and monopolization of bananas in the Liberal Period, which contributed railways and airports to the country's overall infrastructure, the tourism industry was able to develop, and the specialized sex tourism sector grew from that.

CONCLUSION

It is important to acknowledge the significant economic, social, political, and environmental influences due to foreign influences when analyzing the impact of the UFC on Costa Rica. The presence of the UFC gave way to the label of ‘banana republic’ and further encouraged the exploitation of land and people throughout history. Commodified crops, specifically bananas, perpetuated this cycle with monoculture practices, exploitative labor practices, and adverse health effects in local communities. Further use of pesticides and agrichemicals in these monoculture crops led to the development of normalized, harmful land practices.

As discussed in this paper, the UFC paved the way for tourism development and the economic shift to rely on the tourism industry. Railways, airports, and ports, initially constructed as part of the UFC’s infrastructure to encourage imports and exports, allowed for easier access to hard-to-reach locations. This led to further access to tourists and an economic incentive to develop in these areas. As a result, ecosystem fragmentation and other forms of environmental degradation have presented themselves in these natural spaces and local communities. Once again, the negative impacts on environmental health led to adverse health effects on human populations in these local communities. Further societal influence on Costa Rican society at the hands of foreign presences has appeared in the development of the sex tourism industry. This paper’s exploration of the sex tourism industry in coastal communities of Costa Rica has presented issues around worker exploitation, discrimination, and access.

It is important to consider the contemporary implications of multinational corporations in Costa Rica. The legacy of exploitative practices has left a lasting impact on the socio-economic state of the country. Modern transnational corporations still navigate the balance between profit and corporate social responsibility (as well as environmental stewardship). This paper provides a way for audiences to understand how foreign involvement in Costa Rica relates to broader implications of global situations. This also extends to a broader reflection on the dynamics inherent in global economic relationships, specifically the power at play between global superpowers and countries deemed peripheral or third world.

This thesis argued that the United Fruit Company, in its attempt at modern-day colonialism during the Liberal Period in Costa Rica, had unforeseen impacts on land health and socioeconomic health of Costa Rica decades after the monopolization of bananas. Through profit incentive and widespread development across the country, the UFC provided a foundation for both dependency on transnational investments in Costa Rica's economy and further infrastructure development by those same transnational, tourism companies. In the creation of this infrastructure and further involvement in Costa Rica's economy by transnational companies, Costa Rica was deemed a tourism destination and the tourism sector took on a new form of modern-day colonization, made possible by the UFC's early presence.

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