CONSEQUENCES OF TOURISM-BASED GROWTH ON RURAL COMMUNITIES’ QUALITY OF LIFE:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LIBERIA AND LA FORTUNA, COSTA RICA

A Dissertation in
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by
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Abstract

Tourism has become a source of income generation for many rural communities seeking ways to improve their livelihoods. This is particularly the case of amenity-rich areas which attract tourists because of their natural endowments. Often tourism-based growth is reflected in economic and infrastructural improvements. Nevertheless, such growth, on many occasions, does not reflect development goals including equity and sustainability. This study examines the necessary elements for tourism as a development tool that improves a community’s quality of life. To reach this objective, a case study methodology was applied in two rural Costa Rican communities. The study first identifies the different ways tourism impacts quality of life. It also identifies biophysical, sociocultural, and socioeconomic and sociodemographic conditions that led to divergent outcomes in each community’s quality of life. Finally, the study documents the processes lying behind improvements or deteriorations of quality of life in each community. Improvements in quality of life are associated with local community ownership and development of tourism-related activities. In addition, interactional elements among stakeholders are essential, particularly among community members. Extra-local tourism development was found to be less beneficial to the local community. This was particularly the case when communities lacked the capabilities of controlling and managing change.
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Abbreviations

ADIFORT - La Fortuna Community Development Association (Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de La Fortuna).
CCC - Costa Rican Construction Chamber (Cámara Costarricense de la Construcción).
CEPAL - Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe).
CIA - Central Intelligence Agency.
CINDE - Costa Rican Investment Promotion Coalition (Coalición Costarricense de Iniciativas de Desarrollo).
ENIG - National Survey of Incomes and Expenses (Encuesta Nacional de Ingresos y Gastos).
HDI - Human Development Index.
ICT - Costa Rican Board of Tourism (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo).
INA - National Learning Institute (Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje).
INEC - National Institute of Statistics and Census (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos).
MINAE - Ministry of Environment and Energy (Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía).
ODD - Observatory for Development (Observatorio para el Desarrollo).
SETENA - Technical National Environmental secretary (Secretaría Técnica Nacional Ambiental).
UNDP - United Nations Development Program.
WEF - World Economic Forum.
WTO - World Tourism Organization.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

In general terms, tourism consists of traveler’s movement to national and/or international destinations for leisure activities (Honey, 1999). It is one of the fastest growing activities in the world involving a diverse range of individuals and industries (World Tourism Organization - WTO, 2006). Because of this, tourism has become an important catalyst of change for many countries.

Given the money-making potential of tourism, its promotion has become a popular economic development strategy for many communities (Ioannides 2003; Krannich and Petzelka, 2003; Slee et al., 1997). Poor rural communities are often drawn to tourism-based development given their comparative advantage in natural amenities, such as mountains, beaches, and forests (see McGranahan, 1999). Such development has profound implications for economic and social life in these communities. This is particularly the case when development is unplanned and parallels declines in traditional sustenance activities including agriculture, mining, and forestry (Allen et al., 1988, 1993; Bourke and Luloff, 1996).

Often growth is promoted with minimal regard for its consequences. This is routinely attributed to the common belief that growth intrinsically improves quality of life. However, several have warned about the consequences inherent to growth (Seers, 1979; Morris, 1980), including the promotion of inequality, poverty, and unemployment (Morris, 1980).

Costa Rica’s strategy for tourism primarily focused on economic incentives (Acuña and Ruiz, 2000; Hill, 1990). These incentives generally promoted infrastructure development. The belief tourism-driven growth is automatically beneficial to the local economy has resulted in extensive changes to the nation. Liberia and La Fortuna, Costa Rica, are natural amenity-rich
rural places that experienced economic and population growth over the last two decades. Both communities experienced tourism-driven change. Despite widespread tourism promotion, few efforts have been directed toward examining how tourism-led growth has affected Liberians’ and Fortunans’ quality of life.

This comparative case study develops an understanding of how development goals are manifested at the local level. It seeks to understand the role growth and development play on local quality of life by identifying the positive, negative, and/or mixed effects of tourism-based change on these rural communities. The study also identifies factors contributing to different outcomes in each community’s quality of life\(^1\) and its related processes.

**Problem Statement**

Past studies of tourism in rural Costa Rica examined the relationship and effects of tourism on living conditions in specific areas. These studies tended to focus on ecotourism’s roles and consequences for local Costa Rican societies (cf., Becker, 1998; Jacobson and Robles, 1992; Minca and Linda, 2000; Stem et al., 2003; Weinberg et al., 2002). Far less attention is given to the study of overall processes associated with tourism development that successfully improve a locality’s quality of life.

To better understand how tourism-based growth affects rural community’s quality of life, it is necessary to examine associated impacts, conditions, and processes. Building upon Beltran et al. (1998) and Miranda (1997), this study examines the consequences of tourism-based growth in rural communities while also examining conditions and processes necessary for successful tourism development. Through its findings, I will identify how community members

\(^1\) An initial assessment (via key informant interviews, email, and telephone conversations with researchers and residents of Liberia and La Fortuna) suggests a perceived overall reduction of Liberia’s quality of life after the recent tourism boom. In contrast, community members of La Fortuna report an overall improvement to their quality of life since the promotion of tourism. See also Estado de la Nación (2007) for a supporting assessment between La Fortuna and the similar Guanacaste coastal community, Tamarindo.
contextualize different outcomes relative to their quality of life. Such an understanding will increase our knowledge of those processes affecting quality of life after the incursion of tourism-based growth.

Three research questions guide this study: (1) What are the impacts of tourism-based growth on the quality of life in Liberia and La Fortuna? (2) What are the factors associated with impacts on Liberia and La Fortuna’s quality of life and (3) What are the processes associated with improvements or declines to resident’s quality of life in Liberia and La Fortuna?

Guided by a growth and development conceptual framework implemented through a multidisciplinary model to understanding resource management (cf., Luloff et al., 2007), I intend to comprehend what role tourism strategies; land characteristics, use, and tenure; and community play in successful tourism development. I intend to empirically document social ramifications and necessary conditions for sustainable and equitable tourism development by bringing together the quality of life, community, and tourism literatures.

Dissertation Organization

This dissertation is organized as follows. A review of the literature on tourism-based communities and its impacts on quality of life is presented in Chapter Two. Chapter Three includes the theoretical framework guiding the study. Chapter Four presents a description of the methodology. Chapter Five provides the results. Chapter Six presents a discussion of the results. Chapter Seven provides the summary, conclusions and implications of this study.

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2 In this study, successful tourism development was defined by efforts which improved a community’s quality of life. Residents of each community defined the characteristics and conditions associated with tourism development which increased their perceived community quality of life.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

Growth and Development

Growth and development are terms often associated with progress. Both concepts are commonly used interchangeably (Bhattacharyya, 2004; Schnaiberg, 1980). Their use evolved from a widely accepted, narrow, western-style discourse of advancement or modernization (see Maser, 1997; Redclift, 1987; and Seers, 1979). Maser (1997:86) elaborated:

We in the United States have chosen to focus on a very narrow facet [of development]: Development as material growth through centralized industrialization, which we glibly equate with social “progress” and economic health.

Commonly, economic growth has been associated with overall betterment (Quiroga, 1994). However, mounting evidence during the 1960s demonstrated economic growth was not leading to overall progress (Seers, 1979; Sen, 1999; Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). Often, countries experiencing economic growth simultaneously experienced a number of social malaises and natural resource degradation (Quiroga, 1994). These outcomes have encouraged researchers to clarify the distinction between economic growth and development.

*Economic growth* is the increase in value of goods and services produced per person, or at an aggregate level, by an economy from one year to another (Firebaugh and Beck, 1994; Quiroga, 1994). Growth is measured by quantifiable and analyzable production and consumption indices including gross domestic product (GDP), personal incomes, levels of industrialization, or levels of technological advances (McMichael, 2004; Sen, 1999; Seers, 1979).

Measures of growth reflect general economic performance within and among countries. They can also measure individual economic performance. For instance, the GDP per capita of an economy is often used as an indicator of individual average standard of living within a country.
Economic growth is therefore seen as indicating an increase in the average standard of living of the population collectivity (Quiroga, 1994).

Nevertheless, such measures fail to indicate how economic output is distributed among individuals (Morris, 1980). Quiroga (1994:23) said:

[Economic growth] does not systematically analyze the effects of production, distribution, and consumption of material goods on individual and collective well-being.

Further, measures like GDP do not account for other economic processes including negative externalities (for example, those associated with environmental damage), activities outside the market place (such as cost-free leisure activities), or the economy’s informal sector (cf., Field, 1995; Samuelson and Nordhaus, 1992).

These limitations have been acknowledged and used to conceptually frame “development” (Morris, 1980; Seers, 1979). Development, as distinguished from economic growth, seeks to reflect improvements in overall living conditions in addition to material standards (Firebaugh and Beck, 1994; Maser, 1997; Seers, 1979). Development strategies often focus on reducing poverty, unemployment, and inequality, while enhancing self-reliance (Seers, 1979). As well, goals sought by development include agency and solidarity (Bhattacharyya, 2004), personal freedom (Goulet, 1968; Sen, 1999), social civility, tolerance, and long-term natural environment sustainability (Maser, 1997). According to Goulet (1992), the concept of development evolved to reflect a continuous and positively evaluated change in the totality of human experience. Such processes should affect five general dimensions in society – economic, social, political, cultural, and full-life paradigm (Goulet, 1992). By improving conditions in all five dimensions, development leads to improved overall quality of life.
These two approaches—economic growth and development-as-quality-of-life—often produce different outcomes in a society and on occasion contradict each other. Wilkinson (1991), for instance, notes that growth alone provides little assurance for community development. Shuman (1998) suggested growth can be disruptive and divisive to local social organizations. Also, economic growth can create barriers to equality and community action (Wilkinson, 1991). Growth, if unplanned, is often accompanied by unexpected economic, social, and environmental changes which contribute to deteriorating living conditions (Seers, 1979). Nevertheless, when proper planning is attained, economic growth can potentially serve as a component leading to development. Development is achieved when multiple social, environmental, and political goals are reached (Seers, 1979; Wilkinson, 1991).

At the community level, researchers have found differences between economic growth and development. Locally, economic growth is often expressed in terms as job creation, increased incomes, more and enhanced services, and better access to other means for meeting local needs (Summers, 1986; Wilkinson, 1991). In contrast, development at the local level is associated with the ability of residents to control their own lives through mutual efforts to resolve shared problems (Maser, 1997; Wilkinson, 1991). Such local efforts are core to community development, which seeks to improve overall community living conditions (Wilkinson, 1991).

**Community Development**

Community warrants special attention because specific characteristics are not present in other spatial levels. The community is the setting outside the family for an individual’s first contact with society (Maser, 1997; Wilkinson, 1991). Additionally, community is where economic production, distribution, and consumption take place (Maser, 1997; Shuman, 1998;

Researchers following an interactional community perspective, including Kaufman (1959) and Wilkinson (1991), suggest community consists of three elements. These include a locality, a local society, and a process of locally oriented collective actions.

The locality refers to the geographic dimension of the local society. The locality is the territory where people live. The boundaries to such geographical territory are dynamic; they are created and modified as community perceptions and interactions change (Cheers and Luloff, 2001).

The local society refers to the network of associations within a locality that meet common needs and express common interests (Wilkinson, 1991). A local society is marked by its distinct relationships among residents. These relationships change in terms of actors, associations, and activities. However, the whole formed by these interrelated elements become an ongoing process of social interaction known as a social field (Wilkinson, 1991:82). Each social field is marked by its own ideals, objectives, and organization.

According to interactional theory, multiple social fields exist within local societies. The most common of these fields is referred to as a special-interest (or locality oriented institutional) field. A locality-oriented field emerges as local residents organize to accomplish specific goals and interests clearly identified with the locality (Luloff and Bridger, 2003; Wilkinson, 1991). The locality-oriented field is commonly identified by its distinct focus on specific goals.

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3 Some researchers have argued the existence of non-localized communities, known as unities, where the organizing factor is not the locale (nor an emotional tie), but a common intellectual or professional bond (e.g., the scientific community; Bernard, 1973). However, this distinction will not be elaborated here.

4 While it has been argued by some that in modern society, individuals work, recreate, and sleep in places miles apart, most of us perform our daily life activities within a general locality (Christenson and Robinson, 1989).
In contradistinction, the community field refers to the process of interrelated actions in which common interests are expressed:

Marked by its generalization across interest lines, the community field encompasses the other social fields, coordinating and harnessing them in the pursuit of the broader, general community interest (Wilkinson, 1991:84).

The community field is a constant process of change characterized by actors, associations, and actions moving into and out of contact with the generalization process (Matarrita-Cascante and Luloff, 2008). The community field provides a mechanism which links interaction to encourage community members to share concerns and needs. It serves to coordinate and unite various local social fields and leads to community-wide efforts. Such interaction reflects a deliberate, focused, and active decision on the part of local residents to take part in purposive community activities (Brennan and Luloff, 2007). These cross-cutting and integrative efforts facilitate community action (Cheers and Luloff, 2001).

Collective action facilitates the search for the common good by local community members. Community participation is how community action materializes. Community participation reflects involvement by local clubs, civic groups, individuals, and projects aimed at addressing specific community problems. According to an interactional approach to community, increments in community participation result in community development improvements (Wilkinson, 1991).

When local actors act upon their shared interests in their quest to solve local community problems, that is engage in locally driven collective actions - successful community development occurs. “Through community development, community is built, strengthened, and supported” (Cheers and Luloff, 2001:130). Further:

Community development focuses on enhancing the quality of life of the whole community – socially, economically, culturally, spiritually and ecologically – by
enhancing agency (i.e., the capacity of residents to work together for the well-being of the entire community; Cheers and Luloff, 2001:134).

Improved interaction and communication leads to agency, one of the most important mechanisms for communities to find a way for improving quality of life.

It is important to emphasize the distinction between development in the community and development of community. According to interactional theory:

Development in community refers primarily to economic growth outcomes such as job development, leadership development, and service development. Such development focuses on the locality as a setting where development produces gains for certain segments of the local population (Theodori, 2000:49).

On the other hand, development of community refers to strengthening the social and economic vitality of the community through interaction (Theodori, 2000:49). According to Wilkinson (1991) such development focuses on building the capacity of residents to work together to address local concerns and problems.

A comprehensive community development strategy must consist of both in and of community development goals. Wilkinson (1991) noted successful community development needs to begin with jobs, but cannot stop there. Development of local social structures through interaction, communication, and action is also critical. As a result, successful community development strategies lead to improved quality of life (Summers, 1986). An appropriate community development strategy should be based on an understanding that both sustenance and community are required for well-being (Wilkinson, 1979). Wilkinson (1979:15) concluded:

Programs which ignore [development of] community in favor of economic efficiency and increased levels of material consumption run the risk of undercutting the essential social structures through which well-being is encouraged. An appropriate … policy would be based upon a concept of economic growth and improved services as a means and the development of community as an end.
Recent efforts to improve living conditions in many natural amenity-rich communities have targeted non-traditional economic activities, including tourism. Often, such efforts are guided by economic-based strategies. Ioannides (2003) and Krannich and Petrzelka (2003) suggested communities embraced tourism because of its perceived promise for economic growth. However, few avid economic development proponents have acknowledged that tourism growth only improves the quality of life for rural communities under particular conditions.

**Tourism-based Growth**

According to the WTO, tourism is one of the world’s fastest growing industries (WTO, 2008). The number of international arrivals has grown from 25 million in 1950 to an estimated 763 million in 2005 (average annual growth of 6.5 percent), to 900 million in 2007 (average annual growth rate of over 6 percent; WTO, 2008). Additionally:

- International tourism is the world’s largest export earner and an important factor in the balance of payments of most nations. Tourism also provides governments with substantial tax revenues. It represents around 35% of the world’s export of services and over 70% in Least Developed Countries. Because of this, tourism has become one of the world's most important sources of employment. It stimulates enormous investment in infrastructure, most of which also helps to improve the living conditions of local people (WTO, 2006, 2008).

The tourism industry is an important economic activity involving a diverse section of the population. Tourism is multisectoral, and as a means of economic and cultural exchange has many facets and forms (Mowforth and Munt, 2003).

Because of its varied forms, tourism researchers have been unable to reach either a conceptual or operational unity over a consensus definition (Mill and Morrison, 2002; Wall and Mathieson, 2006). For example, Smith (1995) indicated how tourism could be seen as a human experience, social behavior, geographic phenomenon, resource, business, and/or industry. Because such wide application, Smith (1995), Mill and Morrison (2002), and Wall and
Mathieson (2006) noted how the discipline studying tourism struggled with establishing a universal definition of tourism.

Common operational definitions of tourism include those using a supply (the supplier of tourism services) and/or demand (the consumer) perspective (Smith, 1995). According to Wall and Mathieson (2006), tourism, defined by the demand side, is now widely accepted. From this perspective, concepts including the frequency of and distance to place visited, length of stay, and whether the individual travelling was remunerated or not within the destination, should be specified so as to properly define tourism. Using this perspective, Cohen (1974:533) defined a tourist as a “voluntary temporary, traveller, travelling in the expectation of pleasure from the novelty and change experienced on a relatively long and non-recurrent trip.” Wall and Mathieson (2006:14) provided a supply-side definition of tourism:

Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, businesses, and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated within the place visited.

The supply side of a tourism definition includes businesses and agencies providing supporting tourism services (Smith, 1995). Such enterprises and organizations facilitate travel to and activity by tourism consumers. Smith (1995) grouped these enterprises into several general categories, including transportation, accommodation, food and beverage services, other tourism commodities (i.e., recreation and entertainment, travel agency services), and other commodities (i.e., groceries, liquor stores). Wall and Mathieson (2006) noted how the supply side of the definition led to a better understanding of tourism as an industry.

A comprehensive definition would include concepts and notions borrowed from both supply and demand-based definitions. Doing this would define tourism as a process encompassing those travelling from their homes elsewhere to another place, the businesses and
people serving or providing goods and services to these travelers, and the complex interactions and consequences occurring throughout the travel experience (Wall and Mathieson, 2006). For the purpose of this study, an operational definition of tourism includes measures of demand and supply concepts associated with tourism. These particularly focus on the number of tourist arrivals (a measure of visitation to the host country), labor activities associated with the tourism industry (a measure of employment generation), the foreign currency created (a measure of wealth generation) and the effects on resident’s living conditions (a measure of impacts on host’s livelihoods).

Because tourism involves travelers, a destination and its residents, and the mechanisms and processes by which tourists and residents are brought together, tourism is conceptually understood as a phenomenon. This approach more accurately contextualizes the consequences of tourism as a result of a set of complex interrelationships and interactions. For the purpose of this study, I follow the conceptual definition provided by Weaver (1998) quoting McIntosh et al. (1995:2):

… the sum of phenomena and relationships arising from the interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments, origin governments and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting these tourists and other visitors.

Tourism, as a phenomenon, results in economic, sociocultural, and environmental changes. In this study, changing conditions in each of these sectors is examined. To better understand the nature of these relationships and their effects on community and its quality of life, an examination of the characteristics of the stakeholders, settings, and forms of tourism is undertaken.

According to Swarbrooke (1999), the public sector, industry, voluntary sector, host community, media, and tourists are the principal tourism stakeholders. Honey (1999)
differentiates between country of departure and host country stakeholders. Departure country stakeholders consist of retailers, wholesalers, airlines, cruise lines, car rental agencies, credit card companies, public relations firms, advertising companies, tourism bureaus, and the media. Host country stakeholders include inbound tour operators, ground transporters, guides, accommodation facilities, national tourism bureaus, national and private parks and other recreational sites, cultural and craft centers, and special concessions such as providers of specific tours. Each stakeholders’ function can positively or negatively impact society and the local environment. Several researchers noted linkages between these different stakeholders defined tourism’s outcomes in society (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998; Telfer and Wall, 1996, 2000). Relationships promoting linkages rather than leakages are more beneficial for a locality. Leakages result in extra-local and/or extra-national expenditures (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998).

Beyond actors, attention has focused on the different geographical settings where tourism occurs (e.g., rural versus urban communities, industrial versus developing countries; Swarbrooke, 1999). Swarbrooke differentiated the natural from the built environment (e.g., buildings, structures, roads, and airports). Swarbrooke (1999) includes the environment (e.g., mountains, rivers, lakes), wildlife (flora and fauna) and natural resources (e.g., water and climate) as components of the natural environment. Recently, a growing interest has developed in visitations to such natural settings (McGranahan, 1999). Mowforth and Munt (2003) noted travel to protected areas and pristine wilderness was one of the most rapidly growing trends in the tourism industry.

How tourist agents interact in various settings reflect the kinds of tourism practiced. According to Weaver (1998), tourism can be described by a continuum of activities ranging from
Mass tourism to alternative tourism.\(^5\) Mass tourism, according to Weaver, is associated with highly commercialized, large-scale, non-locally owned, privately-held, and regulated efforts where free market forces operate to maximize profits.

Alternative forms of tourism emerged during the 1970s in response to the pattern of negative economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts associated with tourism’s rapid and largely unplanned development (Weaver, 1998). Alternative tourism efforts are characterized by their small scale and moderate levels of commercialization. Further, alternative forms of tourism tend to be characterized by small businesses, locally owned and regulated, associated with significant public involvement, and which emphasize community stability and well-being.

According to Estado de la Nación (EN, 2007:204), “it is expected that the different types of tourism development practiced has different impacts over communities.” Emphasis has been paid to alternative forms of tourism as evidence suggests it is less harmful to the local society and environment than mass tourism (Ceballos-Luscarain, 1996; Cohen, 1979; Murphy, 1985).

Through an understanding of the relationship between stakeholders, tourism forms, and the geographical setting, tourism’s effects on local community can be better assessed. This calls for a multidisciplinary examination of the factors associated with tourism development. Stakeholders have different interests and forms of association depending on the place and the type of tourism practiced. Location also plays a role in defining the ways and forms of tourism developed. Such relationships have implications for the effects of tourism development. Yet, no particular combination of stakeholders, geographical location, and form of tourism developed is desired over others and the effect of tourism varies by location.

Sharpley and Telfer (2002) noted assessment of tourism has been traditionally quantified (e.g., tourism receipts, contribution to exports, contribution to GDP, employment levels).

\(^5\) Slee et al. (1997) categorizes such forms of tourism as soft and hard tourism.
However, they suggested such measures were indicators of the *economic* contributions of tourism, not indicators of its *developmental* contributions (p. 20). Less attention has been paid to the relationship between tourism and community development.

**Tourism and Development**

Global tourism understood and treated merely from an economic perspective, such as an economic activity, can be promoted as an economic growth strategy. Particularly this case represents developing nations, seeking forms of sustenance based heavily on the use of tourism as a panacea solution (Butler et al., 1998). In contrast, tourism understood and treated as a complex interaction of tourists, business suppliers, host governments, origin governments, and host communities in the process of attracting and hosting visitors can serve as a development tool (McIntosh et al., 1995).

Such distinct approaches can lead to different outcomes for host countries. Promoted as an economic tool tourism seeks to generate foreign exchange, increase employment, attract foreign capital, and promote economic independence (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). At the local level, economic growth fosters job creation and increased incomes, services, and access to other means for meeting local needs (Summers, 1986; Wilkinson, 1991). As an economic growth tool, tourism has been associated with the modernization paradigm with characteristics such as increased rates of construction (e.g., infrastructure), top down planning strategies with limited local involvement, and high infrastructure levels and capital inputs (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). Additionally, other characteristics associated with economic growth-based tourism promotion include foreign ownership of capital, external industry control, enclave accommodation type, concentrated spatial distribution, packaged-tour marketing targets, and mass tourism (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). Under this paradigm, the expected economic distribution occurs in a trickle
down fashion. Yet, such approaches often lack proper planning to promote equity, employment, self-reliance, and poverty reduction (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). Despite widespread economic promotion, tourism conducted in this manner fails to direct efforts toward providing host communities with the social, political, and environmental conditions necessary for improving general quality of life.

In contrast, global tourism can contribute to both economic growth and development. This is the case where, according to Muller (1994), tourism development seeks economic health, optimum satisfaction of guest requirements, healthy culture, unspoiled nature/protection of resources, and perceived well-being. When promoted as a development tool, tourism has been associated with an alternative development paradigm with characteristics that include incremental rates of development, a bottom up planning strategy with high local involvement, and low infrastructure levels and capital inputs (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). Additionally, other characteristics associated with development-based tourism promotion include local ownership of capital, internal industry control, mixed accommodation type, disbursed spatial distribution, independent marketing targets, and special interest tourists (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). Under this paradigm, economic distribution is mainly controlled by local owners. These conditions provide tools, at the local level, facilitating residents’ control of their own lives through mutual efforts to resolve shared problems including income distribution, poverty, unemployment, and extra-local dependence (Maser, 1997). As a result, development-based tourism contributes to both the economic viability of community and their quality of life (Allen et al., 1988, 1993; Lankford, 1994).

For tourism to become a development source it is necessary to first understand tourism’s contribution to economic growth and social life. Tourism, as a complex interaction of
individuals, institutions, and processes, results in social, environmental, and economic changes (EN, 2007; WTO, 2006). Proper planning is required when designing tourism strategies accounting for the effects of the activity in host countries and their communities. Furthermore, a clear understanding of local conditions (i.e., stakeholder knowledge, population cultural characteristics, as well as economic and environmental characteristics) is required to better plan for changes resulting from tourism. Through increased understanding and appropriate planning tourism can be a development tool (EN, 2007).

This research uses case studies in Liberia and La Fortuna to understand how tourism has manifested at the local level. It seeks to document the consequences of tourism-based growth on quality of life and to better understand the causal factors and processes behind such consequences. Although many studies have pointed to the positive, negative, and/or mixed impacts wrought by economic growth, empirically-grounded case studies are needed to illuminate these relationships. The following subsection summarizes past studies of tourism-based impacts.

The Impacts of Tourism

Tourism’s impacts differ by community (Kreag, 2001). According to Kreag (2001), there are different types of tourism impacts including economic, environmental, socio-cultural, service-related, taxes, congestion, and community responses. Each impact can have positive and/or negative effects depending on community context (Kreag, 2001).

Positive Impacts

According to Galston and Baehler (1995) tourism is one of the few areas where both macro- and micro-analysis points to good news for rural areas in need of economic growth in the United States. As such, it was hailed for nearly 30 years as a panacea for rural redevelopment
(Butler et al., 1998). Referring to its economic benefits, Krannich and Petrzelka (2003) noted an increase in per capita income levels. Tourism also provided governments with substantial tax revenues (WTO, 2006). At the national level, tourism contributed to the balance of payments and provided employment and investments (Krannich and Petrzelka, 2003). At regional and local levels, tourism offered opportunities for direct, indirect, and induced employment and income spurring regional and local economic development (Coccossis, 2004; Cohen, 1984). This is particularly the case when tourism promoted linkages within the locality instead of extra-local leakages (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998; Telfer and Wall 1996, 2000). Mathieson and Walls (1982) added that tourism improved economic structures and encouraged entrepreneurial activity. Additionally, tourism development very often led to the creation or improvement of infrastructure including transportation, housing, and access to basic living services (Dumont et. al., 2005).

Tourism has been associated with increased awareness of other’s cultures, practices, behaviors, values, and heritages. It facilitates host communities and visiting tourists gaining a better understanding of each other’s languages through interaction. It promotes the host community’s interest in expanding their education and “how to” knowledge while seeking to provide better tourist services (Nyaupane et al., 2006). Furthermore, interaction between local residents and visitors brings in new ideas, values, and lifestyles, as well as motivations for both economic and social progress (Liu, 2003).

Tourism also benefited the natural environment by providing motivation for its environmental conservation (Swarbrooke, 1999). Tourism extends an appreciation for the natural world (Mathieson and Wall, 1982) and heightens environmental knowledge for both the host communities and visiting tourists. Additionally, Macleod (2004) suggested tourism offers
alternatives to extractive industry, which could be beneficial, or at least less damaging, to the environment.

Negative Impacts

Tourism’s impacts depend, in large part, on the different settings and forms under which it is practiced. Of particular interest for this study is nature-based tourism, often practiced in rural areas. The latter areas often lack economic diversity and adequate infrastructure, rely on a limited number of industries, and contain a less educated population. Each of these characteristics limits the ability of rural people to secure jobs and/or promote investments necessary to secure quality jobs (Jensen, 2006). Because of these characteristics, tourism’s impacts can be severe.

Bourke and Luloff (1996), Frederick (1992), Krannich and Petrzelka (2003), and Pineda and Brebbia (2004) warned about the negative impacts of tourism on rural communities, especially without implementing proper planning, management, and monitoring were not implemented. The WTO (2006) added:

Tourism can have negative cultural, environmental, and social consequences if it is not responsibly planned, managed, and monitored.

Among such negative impacts, Frederick (1992), Krannich and Petrzelka (2003), and Mathieson and Wall (1982) warned about the quality of jobs created by activities like tourism. Such jobs tended to be seasonal, part-time, paid low wages, offered few if any benefits, and had little chance for individual advancement. When compared with other industries, tourism requires employees with relatively low levels of job specialization, which translates into low wages (Mathieson and Wall, 1982).

Frederick (1992) added growth resulting from tourism led to inflated land and housing prices often beyond what most local residents can afford. Inflated house prices can become an
extra burden for rural communities that often lack sufficient and appropriate housing (Bokemeir and Garkovich, 1991; Fitchen, 1991). Furthermore, in some instances, rising housing costs will eventually displace families and individuals from their community (Graber, 1974).

Additionally, Frederick (1992), Krannich and Petzelka (2003), Mowforth and Munt (2003), and Mathieson and Wall (1982) noted the unequal distribution of opportunities and benefits resulting from tourism. Studies of tourism in developing countries indicated the industry tended to be controlled by international companies (Dixon et al., 2001). Similarly, Nyaupane et al. (2006) indicated mass tourism destinations in developing regions tended to be dominated by outside tourism groups providing accommodations, food, and entertainment. This often resulted in further marginalization of rural economies and residents as dividends and benefits leaked to other individuals and/or corporations not tied to the host community (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998; Swarbrooke, 1999; Telfer and Wall, 2000).

Additionally, negative social consequences of tourism have been associated with the effects of population growth. McGranahan (1999) indicated how non-metropolitan US counties with high-amenity scores grew 125% from 1970 to 1996 (see also Beale and Johnson, 1998). Rapidly growing seasonal, temporal, and/or permanent populations altered established local institutions and social structures (Brown et al., 1989; Matarrita, 2005; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2001; Smith and Krannich, 2000; Wilkinson, 1982).

Other impacts included negative effects on language, religion, traditional arts and lifestyles, and host community values and behaviors (Swarbrooke, 1999). Often, communities reported how particularly younger generations engaged in activities not representative of their local culture. For instance, Cohen (1982) and Harrison (1994) noted the existing relationship between tourism and increased levels of prostitution. Smith (1989) noted how increased
prostitution, drug abuse, and alcoholism were associated with the presence of many outsiders. Macleod (2004) added the effects of tourism on culture were highly associated with changes in personal and social identity.

Tourism has direct negative effects on the natural environment due to its excessive stresses on carrying capacity (Coccossis, 2004) and indirect effects through built environment development (Pineda and Brebbia, 2004). Population growth caused by temporal, seasonal or permanent immigration can create strain on an existing infrastructure. This leads to efforts to expand the existing infrastructure. Howe et al. (1997) reported on large-scale tourism, requiring considerable investment in services and infrastructure (i.e., parking lots, law enforcement offices, medical facilities, and sewage plants) affecting the natural environment.

Dixon et al. (2001) noted the fragility of environmental resources critical to tourism activities. Some of the most cited consequences of tourism on the natural environment included changes in local floral and faunal composition, pollution, erosion, depletion of natural resources, and visual impacts (Kreag, 2001; Swarbrooke, 1999). Typically, the local population bears the costs of degraded natural environments resulting from tourism activities (Mbaiwa, 2005).

As previously noted, the consequences of tourism vary depending on context (see Budowski, 1976). For some communities, tourism has become a solution to the ongoing search for economic growth. For others, tourism is a combination of positive and negative outcomes. And, in others, tourism has generated a myriad of negative externalities for which many communities were not prepared. Such changing conditions have implications for community quality of life. This is particularly the case when tourism is conducted in an unplanned and unmanaged way. The following section summarizes the literature on quality of life with a focus on resource dependent communities.
**Quality of Life**

Quality of life is a concept that defines a state of human life situation. Because this state can be reflected by many factors and conditions, an array of different terms exist in the literature. Commonly, quality of life is interchangeably referred to as well-being, welfare, utility, life satisfaction, prosperity, needs fulfillment, empowerment, capability expansion, poverty, human poverty, land, happiness, living standards, and development (McGillivray, 2007; McGillivray and Clarke, 2006).

Researchers have warned about the careless use of concepts intended to define quality of life (Neumayer, 2007). For instance, Neumayer (2007) noted how sustainability is a concept commonly used as quality of life. However, quality of life refers to a “current use of the available capital stock in terms of preference satisfaction” (p.208). Sustainability, on the other hand, refers to “sustaining the value of the capital stock for the future” (p.208). The author added:

> The inclusion of sustainability in a measure of current well-being can be justified if one assumes that the current generation’s welfare fully takes the welfare of future generations into account. However, no similar justification exists for a measure of sustainability, which should be free of items that affect only current well-being as future generations cannot care for current welfare (p. 208).

Similarly, operational pluralism is common when measuring quality of life. While close association might exist among particular concepts and quality of life, misuses can and often have led to conceptual and operational confusion.

Despite conceptual and operational pluralism, quality of life is arguably a multidimensional concept (McGillivray, 2007). Measurements of quality of life include income-based, social, political, inequality, poverty, gender-related, composite, and participatory
dimensions (McGillivray, 2006, 2007). Further, each dimension includes different indicators to measure quality of life.

Overall, the indicators used to measure quality of life can be categorized into two major groups. Andrews and Whitey (1976) referred to these groups as objective and subjective quality of life indicators. According to Blyth (1972), objectivity refers to something not affected by personal feelings or prejudice. When considering and representing facts, objectivity is concerned with avoiding the influence of personal stances or opinions. Objective dimensions of quality of life include economic well-being, consumer well-being, social well-being, and health well-being (Sirgy et al., 2004). Objective indicators for such dimensions include measures of employment and working conditions, finances, income, GDP per capita, average annual inflation rate, external public debt, literacy, education, crime rate, divorce rate, life expectancy at birth, access to healthcare, infant mortality, and pollution.

Subjectivity, on the other hand, is associated with concepts or criteria relying on personal feelings or opinions (Blyth, 1972). Subjective well-being, according to Eid and Diener (2004:245):

Refers to people’s multidimensional evaluations of their lives, including cognitive judgments of life satisfaction as well as affective evaluations of moods and emotions.

Subjective indicators of quality of life include self-ratings of intelligence, self-reported satisfaction, happiness, life enjoyment, perceived safety, emotional well-being, and meaningfulness of life (Bramston et al., 2002; Sirgy et al., 2001; Veenhoven, 2007).

The lack of a universal definition and measure of quality of life rests on the inability to reach consensus on relevant indicators of the core concept. The selection of either objective or subjective indicators of quality of life lies in epistemological and
ontological differences associated with different research paradigms (e.g., qualitative vs. quantitative). Resolving this failure is not the purpose of my study. Rather, I incorporate both objective and subjective indicators of quality of life. Objective indicators include secondary data. Subjectively, the study includes perceived community-defined indicators of quality of life. Through triangulation, conclusions will be reached about the ways quality of life has changed in the study communities since tourism promotion began in Costa Rica during the late 1980s.

Quality of Life in a Resource-dependent Context

The settings, actors, types of tourism, and their interrelationships play a large role in determining the nature of impacts in a particular area. Such impacts have implications for quality of life. However, the tourism literature lacks sufficient research addressing how it impacts quality of life at the community level. This is particularly the case for natural resource amenity-rich areas. Of special interest here are natural-based tourism activities commonly found in rural areas in the developing world. Resource-dependent communities are very susceptible to change because of their local and extra-local dependency (Flint and Luloff, 2005).

Disruption and/or change have been negatively associated with well-being, often referred to as quality of life (Krannich and Greider, 1984; Ohman, 1999; Salamon, 2003; Smith et al., 2001). Although there is no consensus on how to appropriately define and measure quality of life (Canter et al., 1985), few scholars question its importance in models of social change and development. To narrow this review of literature, I pay particular attention to quality of life literature associated with resource dependent communities.

This research has differentiated between objective and subjective indicators. For instance, Parkins et al. (2001) quoting Diener and Suh (1997) noted the existence of three major ways of
measuring quality of life including a normative (objective - associated with societal imposed ideas of what is consider an ideal life); an economic-based (objective - associated with individuals capacity to obtain desired things); and a experience-based one (subjective - whether individuals experience or not elements of a good life including joy, contentment, and satisfaction).

As well different levels of analysis and measurement have been used while examining quality of life (Cortese and Jones, 1977; Freudenburg, 1986; Stedman et al., 2004). Quality of life has been measured at individual, community, and national levels (Bramston et al., 2002; Sirgy et al., 2004; Phillips, 2006). For example Wilkinson (1991) differentiated between individual, social, and ecological well-being, yet indicated their close interrelationship. Theodori (2001:621) defined individual well-being as:

A broad array of conditions including access to material resources for meeting daily needs, freedom from threats and oppression, and physical and mental health.

Krannich and Greider (1984) examined personal well-being in rapidly growing communities. Their measures consisted of three socio-cultural and socio-psychological indicators of well-being – perceived integration, perceived stress, and psychological distress. Canter et al. (1985:235) described studies which defined quality of life using individual value bases. According to them, quality of life was measured multi-dimensionally, focusing on an individual’s perceived state of being, aspirations, desires, and needs. Similarly, Theodori (2001) measured individual well-being with a multiple-item index composed of nine items addressing health, depression, and anxiety.

Greider et al. (1991) studied social well-being from both a socio-cultural and socio-psychological dimension. In their study, they examined aspects of social well-being including sense of local identity, solidarity, and trust. Other researchers have used composite indicators of
social well-being. For example, Marans et al. (1980) included economic and social indicators while analyzing well-being. Such indicators included community and public service quality, housing, work life, social life and leisure, family life, financial well-being, health, education, and overall life satisfaction. Sirgy and Cornwell (2001) measured well-being using a composite score of resident satisfaction with community-based services including government, business, and non-profit sectors. Canter et al. (1985:247) referred to a quality of life index developed by Fitzimmons et al. (1975). Its two main dimensions included psychological well-being and situational descriptors. The former included concepts like love, self-respect, peace of mind, and stimulation to change. The latter included several economic, social, leisure, and political sub-dimensions. Stedman et al. (2004) measured well-being using family poverty, individual unemployment and educational attainment, median family income, and five-year immigration rate indicators.

Well-being also reflects human association with the natural environment. Wilkinson (1991:68) stressed the positive relationship between social well-being and ecological well-being (defined as the well-being of the natural conditions supporting and sustaining human life). According to him, social well-being encouraged actions that protected ecological well-being because without proper ecological conditions, humans could not improve their livelihood (1991:72). The mechanisms to reach desired ecological conditions, according to Wilkinson, needed to be defined and established by each particular community.

Reflecting the need to account for the role of the physical environment in quality of life, Canter et al. (1985) included an amenity-needs category based on recreation, environmental quality, and cultural opportunities. Brehm et al. (2004) included an environmental attachment variable in their community attachment model while examining well-being.
Similarly, Collados and Duane (1999) noted how natural capital contributed to the quality of life of a region by directly providing environmental services that could not be imported, and by supplying natural resources valuable to humans (through a human controlled production process). Among the most valuable natural resources defining a human’s quality of life is land. Houghton (1994) noted how land-use change reflected the history and future of humankind. May et al. (2002) showed how land reform in South Africa positively impacted several quality of life indicators. Kontogeorgopoulos (1998) indicated how land ownership minimized leakages to extra-local settings, generating improved conditions within a specific locality.

Few studies have used such measures in a community context. Further, studies exploring community-defined indicators of quality of life in resource dependent communities are reduced (see Parkins et al., 2001). Given the need to document how tourism-based growth affects rural communities in the developing world, this study considers various perceived quality of life indicators and their relationship to tourism development in Liberia and La Fortuna, Costa Rica. It applies a multidisciplinary approach in order to understand factors associated with a rural community’s quality of life. It is designed to understand how biophysical factors (i.e., climatic conditions, land fertility, tenure, and management strategies), sociocultural characteristics (i.e., patterns of use, traditions, beliefs, value systems, perceptions, community identity and agency), and sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics (i.e., migration patterns, community capacity associated with public and private institutions, institutional capacity to respond to change, prevalent economic activities) play a critical role in determining a community’s resilience to the impacts of tourism and its subsequent effects on quality of life as measures through secondary social, economic, and environmental data and primary community-defined indicators.
Summary and Implications

Growth, often promoted as a way to improve quality of life, has proven to be divisive and disruptive when proper planning is not attained. When properly planned, growth is an essential element necessary for development. As noted in this section, researchers have found a close relationship between attained development goals and improved quality of life (Firebaugh and Beck, 1994; Maser, 1997; Summer, 1986; Wilkinson, 1991). Commenting on this, McGillivray (2006:207) added:

The Human Development Index (HDI) is with no doubt the best known and most widely reported multidimensional national well-being measure.

As a source of change, tourism can lead to growth and/or development. Tourism, as a phenomenon, results from the complex interrelationship of different stakeholders in different locations engaging in different activities. Because of this, tourism activities can have good, bad or mixed impacts on rural communities. When proper development conditions are attained, tourism serves as a source of economic, social, and environmental changing characteristics leading to improve quality of life. In Costa Rican rural communities, few studies have assessed the relationship between tourism-driven growth and development and local quality of life. This study focuses on this relationship to better understand how tourism-based growth and development contributes to changes in the economic, environmental, and social lives of rural residents of Liberia and La Fortuna. Further, this study will help identify those factors impacting local quality of life, and the processes leading to more desired tourism development strategies.

This study will add to the extant literature on the impacts of rural tourism. The merger of three broad research areas – rural tourism, community, and quality of life – will contribute to empirical knowledge on the social ramifications of tourism.
Chapter 3
Theoretical Framework

Sociological theory is concerned with understanding the origins, persistence, alteration, or destruction of particular patterns of social relations (Field and Burch, 1988). Such an understanding requires an examination of multiple social, economic, and environmental conditions surrounding social groups. From the perspective of natural resource sociology, changing social patterns are associated with the relationship between biophysical and social systems or more specifically the reciprocal influences between natural ecosystems and social systems. Attention is placed on understanding how natural resource endowments condition social organization and how social well-being is linked to and affected by resource conditions and use patterns (Field et al., 2002). This study examines the processes linking natural resource utilization through natural amenities-based tourism growth – with alterations to local social systems as reflected in community quality of life. It also provides insights into how social alterations affect natural resource management and utilization.

The interaction between the biophysical environment and society is evident in how a community uses its natural resource endowments as the supply depot which provides their sustenance.\(^6\) This is particularly the case for natural resource dependent communities, commonly found in rural areas (Krannich and Luloff, 1991). Sustenance of such communities is closely related to the local natural resource base of the area, where natural resources are localized and

\(^6\) Dunlap and Catton (2002) suggested there were three fundamental ways in which human societies related to the natural environment. First, the environment was the supply depot providing humans with the necessary resources for life. Second, consumption of resources yielded large and varied outputs. The environment served human populations as a waste repository. All materials resulting from human production and consumption were placed in the environment as well. Third, the environment provided the living space for human populations. It was within the land (biophysical element) that human populations established themselves.
raw. Because of this, natural resource dependent communities are directly engaged with the biophysical environment. Direct association with the biophysical environment results in a community highly involved in processes associated with resource management and utilization. The biophysical conditions of an area directly determine the social conditions for a social group. Further, the way in which natural resources are managed is reflected in local living conditions (Field et al., 2002). Thus, the changing characteristics of the natural resource base have implications for the life of resource dependent communities. Such interdependence results in communities highly vulnerable to local and extra-local conditions (Flint and Luloff, 2005).

In their quest for sustenance, natural resource dependent communities engage in two broad activities including extraction and *in situ* appreciation. Traditionally, natural resource management and use were more commonly associated with extractive activities (Greider et al., 1991; Hunter, et al., 2002; Landis, 1997; Smith et al., 2001). Four main traditional extraction industries include agriculture, forestry, and energy-related and non-energy mining (Weber, 1995). Galston and Baehler (1995) refer to fishing as a fifth resource extraction activity.

Early extractive activities were often associated with boomtowns. Boomtowns were characterized by their extreme variety of rapid growth tied to a boom-bust cycle. A boom was usually followed by a declining bust stage as resource availability declined (Olien, 1992). Natural resource availability determined the location and longevity of the boom period. The boom period was characterized by a high number of persons moving into the location where the resource was being extracted. According to Hunter et al. (2002:72):

> As a consequence of expanding employment demand and widespread in-migration, many communities grew extremely rapid. Boomtowns experienced dramatic changes.
Conversely, in situ appreciation of natural resources is associated with natural amenity activities. Natural amenity-rich places attract individuals because of their intrinsic beauty. Mild climate, varied topography, and proximity to surface water have been identified as appealing natural characteristics (McGranahan, 1999). Other characteristics included the beauty of the natural landscapes and sceneries; and the cleanliness and pristine environment common to rural areas standing in stark contrast to the perception of highly polluted urban centers (Sofranko and Williams, 1980) and the desired non-presence of health risk factors (Rupasingha and Goetz, 2004).

Natural amenity-rich locations are characterized by two amenity-related development activities—retirement and recreation/tourism. In such communities retirement is often associated with seasonal or permanent settlement. Tourism and recreation commonly contribute to temporal population immigration. Yet, in some instances, as tourism demands grow, permanent immigration occurs in response to an increased need for labor. This kind of population redistribution has considerable effects on rural communities (Krannich and Petrzelka, 2003).

Researchers have noted how boomtowns and amenity-rich areas experienced dramatic economic and demographic growth associated with the exploitation of local natural resources (Dixon, 1978; Freudenburg et al., 1982; Greider et al., 1991; Hunter et al., 2002; Kohrs, 1974; Landis, 1997; Smith and Krannich, 2000; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2006; Stedman, 2006b). For the former communities, varying patterns of economic and demographic change following the boom period have been associated with societal disruptions (Smith et al., 2001). Dixon (1978), Freudenburg et al., (1982), Kohrs (1974), and Landis (1997) found increased crime and divorce rates, depression, alcoholism, mental disorders, disruption in social relationships, increased school dropout rates, prostitution, and mental health issues in boomtowns. Socio-psychological
effects included decreased local identity and solidarity, shifts in local interaction patterns and community members attitudes, and decreased community satisfaction and social integration (Berry et al., 1990; Brown et al., 1989; Greider et al., 1991; Hunter et al., 2002). Such consequences were seen as indications of reduced social well-being (Brown et al., 1989; Freudenburg, 1986; Greider and Krannich, 1985; Smith et al., 2001).

Among amenity-rich communities, changing social conditions associated with sociodemographic, attitudinal, and behavioral differences between permanent residents and seasonal residents have been studied (Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2006; Stedman, 2006a, b). Such shifting conditions were explained using the concept of culture clash (Graber, 1974). Culture clash is often associated with the creation of barriers to communication and action, necessary elements for successful community development strategies (Smith and Krannich, 2000; Wilkinson, 1991).

As the fastest growing activity in the world (WTO, 2006), and because of its implications on the living conditions typical of many rural communities, tourism’s role on the quality of life of rural communities demands careful study. Tourism, when viewed in the context of its capacity to provide economic potential for rural natural amenity-rich communities (and other places as well), is one of the most important forms of amenity-based development. Large numbers of such communities survive because of the direct and indirect gains from tourism activity. It is important to better understand how communities are affected by the changing conditions resulting from the adoption of tourism development strategies.

According to Mowforth and Munt (2003), tourism studies have focused on structure, impacts, models of tourism development models, tourist typologies, and motivational

7 Tourism in the number one economic activity in the world, providing 200 million jobs (WTO, 2002).
characteristics (see Boorstin, 1964; Cohen, 1979; MacCannell, 1973,1999; Urry, 2002). This study adds to the impacts of tourism literature by drawing from the general, natural resource, and community sociology literatures to explain alterations to local life resulting from tourism-based growth. Through this I seek to increase our understanding of the processes leading to different outcomes in community life as a consequence of tourism activity.

**Framework for Analysis**

Growth, commonly measured in economic terms, does not necessarily lead to overall improvements in quality of life. Further, without proper conditions, growth can have negative consequences on local populations. Under particular conditions, however, growth is an essential element for development. Development, expressed in reduced inequality, poverty, and unemployment, social civility, tolerance, and natural environment sustainability leads to improved quality of life (Maser, 1997; Sen, 1999). I intend to use a growth and development framework to examine necessary elements to reach development, and by extension, an increased quality of life in a tourism context.

Tourism-based growth has implications for rural amenity-rich communities. In such communities, necessary conditions to reach development include multiple fields. This is particularly the case when tourism is viewed as a multisectoral phenomenon. To better understand conditions leading to successful tourism development (defined in this study as development improving the quality of life of a community’s residents), this study follows a multidisciplinary methodological approach. Such an approach identifies the multiple impacts, factors, and processes associated with resource management and their implications for society.

Luloff et al. (2007) noted how natural resource dependent communities experienced change in their living conditions resulting from local and extra local factors. Economic growth
and population redistribution, both resulting from tourism promotion, have profound effects on such communities. These changing conditions reflect a community’s biophysical characteristics, sociocultural characteristics, and sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics.

**Biophysical Characteristics**

Natural resource dependent communities are highly vulnerable to the inherent characteristics and conditions, management, and use of their biophysical environment (Ruben and Pender, 2004; Flint and Luloff, 2005). Biophysical characteristics such as climatic conditions, soil fertility, slope, and aesthetic beauty provide communities with opportunities or threats allowing for development of different income-generation activities. Desirable conditions include land with high agricultural potential due to sufficient access to water (e.g., adequate rainfall or existence, access, and proximity to irrigation sources), rich soils, and accessible slope conditions. Such conditions provide communities with the means to attain basic elements of life including shelter, sanitation, health care, education, and food security. Proper conditions for the promotion of resource-based activities (i.e., agriculture, livestock production, real estate, land leasing, and tourism-development strategies) allow appropriate biophysical characteristics and conditions for successful engagement of resource-development activities (Krannich and Petrzelka, 2003; Ruben and Pender, 2004). Ruben and Pender (2004: 304) added:

Scarce and marginal resource conditions and high vulnerability may result in spatial poverty traps where households face extremely low returns to production factors and the progressive erosion of their asset base.

Particularly for communities using tourism for economic development, aesthetic conditions promoting visitation is necessary (Krannich and Petrzelka, 2003). This is particularly important for nature-based tourism which required amenity-rich locations.

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8 Some biophysical factors can be controlled by human populations including nutrient supply, seed variety choice, and weed control. In contrast, other biophysical factors, including temperature and rainfall, cannot be controlled by local community members (Ruben and Pender, 2004).
In addition, access, distribution, and proper use and management of natural resources are necessary for community members to process and commercialize them in different ways. For instance, land ownership is a necessary condition to access land for management activities (Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998). Land ownership minimizes leakages to extra-local settings, generates improved conditions within a specific locality, and results in increased possibilities for betterment (see May et al., 2002; Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998). In communities where few individuals owned land, sustenance tends to be concentrated. Earnings are routinely higher for those who owned land. This is particularly the case for owners of large properties (Edelman, 1998).

Tourism development reflects conditions and management strategies associated with the biophysical characteristics of a locale. Such characteristics provide the capacity for local people to engage in different income generation activities. In certain instances, communities support their basic subsistence needs through engagement in natural resource extraction-related activities. In other instances, such sustenance provides an economic base potentially useful for non-traditional activities such as tourism. Additionally, the ways in which biophysical resources are distributed and managed results in different outcomes related to the adoption of tourism-based development. Tourism development in locations with particular biophysical characteristics and where natural resources were poorly distributed presents different outcomes for growth and development (see Marcouiller et al., 2004).

**Sociocultural Characteristics**

Sociocultural characteristics associate with its value systems, beliefs, and perceptions. Changing living conditions is reflected in different forms and degrees depending upon the sociocultural characteristics of a community. Changes in population distribution contributes to
altered value systems, individual behaviors, family relationships, collective life styles, safety levels, moral conduct, creative expressions, traditional ceremonies, and community organizations (Mathieson and Wall, 1982). As a result, different points of views and actions can lead to confrontation (Graber, 1974; Beyers and Nelson, 2000; Butler et al., 1998).

Studies have shown how extensive immigration of people with different values and perspectives affect aspects of community beyond the local economy and public services. They also had significant social and cultural effects (Smith and Krannich, 2000) as newcomers held and expressed different values than longer-term residents which contributed to social conflict (Graber, 1974; Smith and Krannich, 2000). Population redistribution contributed to the loss of traditions and local identity (Greider et al., 1991). Krannich and Petzelka (2003) indicated loss of local identity is a process associated with a decline in long-established local ways of life and cultural traditions. Newcomers influenced this process by imposing new ideas and ways of doings things.

Lower levels of social interaction resulting from behavioral and attitudinal differences have implications for community development. From an interactional perspective, local interaction and agency are essential to the emergence of community. Any barrier to interaction created gaps between individuals, limiting their communication and association (Matarrita-Cascante and Luloff, 2008; Wilkinson, 1991).

Such barriers emerged in response to differences between tourists and host community members. Sociocultural differences between local residents and tourists have been reported in the literature (Jones et al., 2003; Krannich and Petzelka, 2003; Smith and Krannich, 2000). Further, such differences also occurred between local residents and permanent immigrants. Such immigrants relocated to a tourism-based area in response to the growing demand for labor.
resulting from tourism development. Inmigrants to rural amenity-rich areas generated sociodemographic change in such communities.

**Sociodemographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics**

Shifts in sociodemographic characteristics are experienced when selective migration of particular age groups, ethnic populations, or socioeconomic status occurred (Garkovich, 1989; Longino and Smith, 1998; Ploch, 1978; Smith and Krannich, 2000). Change resulting from population growth to amenity-rich areas has been fueled, in part, by inmigration of retirees. Other areas became destinations for seasonal residents. Additional areas attracted high numbers of white-collar professionals who took advantage of telecommunications and technology advancements allowing them to work outside urban centers. Still other amenity-rich areas have been associated with more temporal visitors in the form of recreationists and tourists. All of these shifts directly impacted the socioeconomic characteristics of the local population.

Sociodemographic and socioeconomic differences between permanent residents and seasonal residents have been reported in the literature (Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2006; Stedman, 2006b). Change, resulting from economic and demographic growth was often found to be disruptive to local social conditions (Garkovich, 1989; Smith and Krannich, 2000). Such conflicting relationships have been explained using the culture clash framework. Conflicting situations have been reflected in environmental preservation and growth differences, schooling regulation differences, and housing code differences (Sokolow, 1977; Hennigh, 1978; Ploch, 1978; Smith and Krannich, 2000).

As well, differences in sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics between longer-term residents and newcomers contributed to alterations in the structure of the locality (Graber, 1974). These shifting conditions impacted local health-related services and
infrastructure which needs to reflect the number, gender, and age structures of the population. Further, people with different backgrounds necessitate changes in community infrastructure (Burdge, 1999; Howe et al., 1997). For local governments to distribute services, including housing subsidies, schooling, food stamps, and health services, a well-known and established population must be known for planning purposes.

Additionally, shifting sociodemographic and socioeconomic conditions results in economic restructuring. Economic restructuring results from the changing direct, indirect, and induced employment generated from changing conditions. Shifts respond to needs and demands of the incoming population. Often newcomers have different socioeconomic status as evidenced by their higher levels of education and income than those of long-term residents (Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2006; Matarrita-Cascante and Luloff, 2008).

Changes in community sociodemographic and socioeconomic composition results in political patterns shifts. These shifts include changes to formal and informal social groups and organizations, roles played by these groups and organizations in community affairs, and patterns of localized social interaction and community integration (Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2006; Wilkinson, 1991). Such changes alter the capacity of rural communities to organize and pursue collective efforts to influence local development projects or policies (Burdge, 1999).

Additionally, changing sociodemographic and socioeconomic community can result in interactional changes including reduced levels in the density of acquaintanceship (Freudenburg, 1986). Berry (2000: 665) noted that “population changes shortened the duration of friendships and the permanency of relationships.” This can lead to declines in social integration and reliance on neighbors as a source of social support (Brown et al., 1989; Greider and Krannich, 1985). Brown et al. (1989: 570) added:
Rapidly growing communities may exhibit higher levels of social isolation and anonymity; reduced social ties with neighbors, friends and kin; and lower levels of social participation.

In addition, socioeconomic characteristics may result in perceptual changes among different resident types. “Different socioeconomic characteristics affect how newcomers perceive the community and how the community perceives the newcomers” (Burdge, 1998: 47). Differing perceptions can interfere with successful communication and social interaction.

Conditions preventing community members from engaging mechanisms which promote interaction, and by extension, participation, have negative implications for community development (Wilkinson, 1991; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2006). Communities with limited ability to interact and reduced agency are impeded from responding to changing conditions. From an interactional perspective, this deters them from engaging in successful development of and in the community.

**Quality of Life**

As communities become involved in developing tourism activities, their pre-existing biophysical, sociocultural, and socioeconomic and sociodemographic conditions shape the direction of change. These factors provide the context in which tourism is defined and managed. As a result, tourism-induced changes impact different aspects of community. In this study, quality of life is defined by multiple economic, social, and environmental conditions experienced in community. Tourism-induced effects modify the quality of life experienced and differ by community. Further, the way quality of life is modified after the adoption of tourism-based changes, has implications for the biophysical, sociocultural, and socioeconomic and sociodemographic conditions in each community (see Figure 1).
Summary

The necessary conditions for attaining development in a tourism context are examined in this study. A more complete and better understanding of these conditions requires an examination of the biophysical, sociodemographic and socioeconomic, and sociocultural conditions of communities developing tourism. Further, the ways in which such factors impact the economic, social, and environmental aspects of community, has implications on quality of life. An understanding of how particular factors results in different impacts is essential for identifying the processes associated with tourism-driven outcomes in community quality of life. Through this, I intend to better understand the existing relationships among the types of tourism-related investment (socioeconomic conditions: extra-local vs. local investment; coastal vs. inland), natural resources characteristics, use, and tenure (biophysical conditions: soil fertility; climatic conditions; access to water; hacienda type land ownership vs. small scale ownership), and community factors (sociocultural conditions: community agency, community cohesion, and community identity) and successful tourism development (see Figure 1). Such development seeks to improve a community quality of life.
Figure 1. Multidisciplinary model to understanding tourism-based development’s role in natural amenity-rich community’s quality of life.
Chapter 4
Methodology

Site Selection

Costa Rica is a well-known tourism destination in Central America, leading this region with a 35% market share in 2005 (WTO, 2006). The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report ranks Costa Rica as the 44th country in the world and second in the region in terms of tourism competitiveness (World Economic Forum -WEF, 2008). This, in part, reflects Costa Rica’s national policies, which have promoted tourism as an economic development tool. Beginning in the late 1980s, the Costa Rican Investment Promotion Coalition (Coalición Costarricense de Iniciativas de Desarrollo -CINDE) and Costa Rica’s Bureau of Tourism (Instituto Costarricense de Turismo - ICT) actively promoted tourism-based growth. Both entities signed an agreement for an incentive program designed to attract foreign investors to help grow tourism in Costa Rica (EN, 2007; Hill, 1990). Their efforts resulted in expanded infrastructure including hotels, resorts, commercial centers, roads, electrification, and a second international airport in the country (Acuña and Ruiz, 2000).

Tourism in Costa Rica has traditionally been fuelled by the attractiveness of its natural resources, commonly found in rural areas (EN, 2007). For instance, in 2005, the majority of tourists who visited Costa Rica (78.2%) indicated sun and beach activities as being the major factor in their visits to the nation (ICT, 2006). Moreover, 62.3% of the tourists reported exploring the country’s flora and fauna (ICT, 2006).

As a regional leader promoting natural resource-based tourism, Costa Rica provides an excellent opportunity to better understand tourism’s impacts on its economic, social, and natural environments. From this study’s findings, other countries promoting tourism can better
understand tourism impacts quality of life. Further, through this study’s findings, the necessary conditions and processes associated with successful tourism development can be better understood and implemented in other localities.

Liberia and La Fortuna (see Map 1), with economies at least partially dependent on tourism, were selected because of certain commonalities. Prior to the tourism boom, both communities’ economies were based largely around livestock and crop production. Coupled to the nation’s declining agricultural sector and its state-sponsored promotion of tourism, both communities increasingly turned to tourism-related activities for sustenance. Additionally, both communities were selected because they experienced rapid economic and population growth after transitioning to tourism. This transition resulted in the attraction of large numbers of tourists to these transitional communities, and dramatic changes in their livelihoods.

The Northern Pacific province of Guanacaste, Costa Rica, which contains the district of Liberia, is known to be the driest in the country (see Map 2). This traditionally has resulted in a highly susceptible and seasonal agricultural sector. The area’s rainy season extends from May through October. Average annual precipitation reaches 2,006 mm with an average temperature of 28° C (Food and Agriculture Organization -FAO, 2008). While mountains, volcanoes, and several national parks are located nearby, tourism in this area is mainly associated with coastal development. As a consequence, the area has undergone dramatic changes over the last 20 years. Change was particularly fueled in Liberia thirteen years ago following the construction of an international airport placing tourists within 30 minutes of the coast. Airport operations began in October 28th 1995 (Martínez, 2003). Change is reflected in the numbers of visitors arriving through this facility, growing by 360% from 2002 to 2005 (EN, 2007).
Liberia’s tourism development is associated with mega projects along the coastline, mostly financed by large international firms (EN, 2007). However, the district of Liberia does not have a coastline. Liberia is a gateway community to the coastal tourism located nearby. Additionally, Liberia is located next to the Interamerican Highway crossing Costa Rica and connecting to Nicaragua in the north and Panama in the southeast.

The central nucleus of Liberia is located east of the highway. Nicaragua is 77 km (47.8mi) to the north. Liberia is the largest locality before reaching Nicaragua. To the southwest of the highway, a major road connects Liberia with the recently constructed international airport.
and the most recent industrial, commercial, and tourism development tied to the coast.

The latter includes a major tourism development project named Polo Turístico Golfo de Papagayo (see [http://www.peninsulapapagayo.com/](http://www.peninsulapapagayo.com/) for more info). This area includes 2,000 hectares of property owned by the Costa Rican government which was designated for tourism development. It includes large hotel chains such as Four Seasons, Hilton, and Allegro hotels.

Ecodesarrollo Papagayo is the initial and larger development project of the Polo Turístico Golfo de Papagayo consisting of 840 hectares (from the 2,000 total available). This project is widely known because of its high scale projects including hotels, a marina, golf and tennis courses, an equine club, and high-end residential development. According to a public relations brochure of
Ecodesarrollo Papagayo, 43% of the project’s capital is from Costa Rican Nationals. Additionally, 33% of the investment is mixed capital (national and foreign capital), and 24% from foreign capital.\footnote{No detailed information was available showing Liberian’s contribution in the National and mixed investment category. However, due to the large scale of the projects in the area, it is doubtful many Liberian’s were financially involved.}

Liberia’s location coupled with its role as the provincial capital, has encouraged the development of a more diverse economic base beyond tourism that includes government, financial, and commercial institutions. Liberia also has multiple private and public universities, public and private primary and high schools, a hospital, an African wildlife zoo, a mall, and soccer stadium.

Although Liberia is considered a small town from the perspective of a developed country, it is the largest city in the province of Guanacaste. The city’s central features, like many Costa Rican towns, are a park and church surrounded by shops and restaurants (see Figure 2). In addition, historical colonial homes and churches are found there. The town is divided into a series of neighborhoods surrounding the central part of town. Neighborhoods located close to the center are commonly prosperous, while those further removed tend to be poorer and marginalized. Some of these latter neighborhoods have become drug havens, restricting and elevating danger. A major slum known as Martina Abustos lies approximately 6km (3.75mi) from the central part of Liberia. This is a well-know slum whose residents lack access to water and public transportation. As well, this area of Liberia experiences increased pollution, as residents illegally dump their waste there.
The Northern section of Costa Rica, where La Fortuna is located, has also pursued natural amenity-based tourism for economic development (see Map 3). The region’s annual precipitation averages 3,527mm. The rainy season extends from May to February with an average annual temperature of 25.5° C (FAO, 2008). La Fortuna’s tourism is tied to the attractiveness of the Arenal Volcano, an active volcano dominating the local landscape.\(^\text{10}\) Additionally, the area has a lake, hot water springs, waterfalls, mountainous terrain, and forests which attract tourists. This

\(^{10}\) A study conducted by the marketing department of Costa Rica’s Board of Tourism (ICT) indicated that 85% of the area’s tourists visit the Arenal Volcano.
Map 3. District of La Fortuna
region is commonly known for its ecotourism activities (EN, 2007). In contrast to Liberia, tourism development in La Fortuna is associated with smaller scale projects and local ownership (EN, 2007). Damazio et al. (2007) indicated 85% of the enterprises located between La Fortuna and Ciudad Quesada (Canton’s capital located at 40km – 25mi) are micro and small scaled, 90% of which are family enterprises.\footnote{The authors defined micro and small scaled enterprises those which had 1 to 4 and 5 to 20 employees respectively.} Additionally, 92% of these enterprises are nationally owned and 84% of the capital invested is Costa Rican.

La Fortuna is a smaller town than Liberia. Its center is characterized by the main plaza (traditionally a soccer field) and the Catholic Church (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Arenal Volcano, La Fortuna’s central park, road to San José, and Arenal Lake.
La Fortuna’s central area can be easily covered by foot and has multiple commercial and financial institutions in addition to residences. La Fortuna is home to a clinic, several supermarkets, hotels, restaurants, bus station, and five major banks. In addition, La Fortuna has a primary school and high school. The closest university is located approximately 32km (20mi) away.

Tourism-related enterprises and attractions are located in all directions from the center of La Fortuna. Ciudad Quesada is located southeast of La Fortuna. A road leading south from town connects La Fortuna with San José through San Ramón (150km – 93.4mi). The Arenal Volcano and Lake are located approximately 16km (10mi) west of La Fortuna. This section of La Fortuna experienced major construction in recent years because of its closer proximity to the Volcano and Lake.

**Methods**

To identify the impacts of tourism on each community’s quality of life, its associated factors and processes, this study used a multiple-method research design (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998) implemented in several phases.

The first phase of the study examined the relationship between tourism-based growth and quality of life by answering the following question: What are the impacts of tourism-based changes on the quality of life in Liberia and La Fortuna? This question sought to gain a better understanding of the levels of growth and/or development achieved by each community.\(^{12}\) To answer this question, objective and subjective indicators were collected via secondary and primary data respectively. For both, primary and secondary data, assessment of multiple economic, social, and environmental provided insights on the way quality of life was affected.

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\(^{12}\) As previously indicated, development is associated with improved quality of life. In a tourism context, successful tourism development is defined as that which impacts leads to an improved quality of life.
Secondary economic indicators (including household income, per capita income, unemployment, and family poverty), environmental indicators (including acreage for conservation purposes, area of protected forestland, area dedicated to construction, and land use data), and social indicators (including equity, education, and public services quality over time) were examined using available data from years prior to and after the implementation of the national tourism promotion strategies. Primary data collected via Key Informant interviews (KIs; Tremblay, 1957; Krannich and Humphrey, 1986; Kumar, 1989; Marshall, 1996) and facilitated group discussions were simultaneously examined in this phase to address local residents’ perceptions about the first research question.

Both primary and secondary data were descriptively presented in this phase (see Wolcott, 1994). Primary and secondary data were triangulated by the author seeking commonalities or conflicts within the data to reach more comprehensive inferences regarding the impacts of tourism-based growth in Liberia and La Fortuna (see Krannich and Humphrey, 1986; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). Through triangulation, I sought to address problems encountered with multilevel and multiple source data (Denzin, 1970; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). Through triangulation, commonalities and conflicting data are better identified. Common data supported the existence of particular trends in the study communities. Conflicting or inconclusive data was acknowledged and dealt with in a more thorough examination as part of the second phase of the study.

In the second phase of the study, I addressed the following questions: What factors are associated with improving (or declining) quality of life in Liberia and La Fortuna; and what processes contribute to improvements to (or declines in) residents’ quality of life? In this stage, primary data collected via KIs and facilitated groups discussions was analyzed and interpreted
following a qualitative content analysis methodology (described below; Babbie, 2007; Rubin and Babbie, 1989; Wolcott, 1994). Once analyzed, this information helped to frame an understanding of the processes affecting changing living conditions in each community after the adoption of tourism-based growth. This phase of the study was guided by the findings from La Fortuna, in contrast to Liberia, as a case representing perceived improved overall quality of life. These contrasting findings served to provide a better understanding of factors contributing to different quality of life outcomes experienced by the two study communities. Based upon the narratives (from KI interviews and facilitated group discussions) from local residents and other stakeholders (i.e., tourism developers, researchers), I noted various types of relationships (i.e., between residents and the tourism sector, between residents and other residents/migrants, and between residents/corporations and the biophysical environment) and processes contributing to the different outcomes in Liberia’s and La Fortuna’s quality of life.

The third phase of this study included discussions with the general public, community leaders, and Costa Rica’s university academics (many of whom have became involved in this study by sharing their perspectives and ideas, as well as leading me to important sources of information) about potential community development strategies within both communities. The objective of this phase was to inform and share ideas with different stakeholders and not to obtain further information concerning the initial research questions. For this, the applied research aspect of the study resulted in a series of presentations and group discussions where I shared the study’s findings. This helped inform local citizens, organizations, academia, and government institutions about the role they could play in designing and implementing effective tourism related growth and development strategies.
Data Collection Instruments

The study integrated analysis of secondary national, regional, and district-level data with analysis of two forms of primary data. Secondary data in Costa Rica had obvious gaps and, to some extent, inconsistencies. Few efforts have been made by the government to develop reliable and conclusive data on tourism. Despite this, an attempt was made to obtain as much relevant data as possible from multiple sources including scholarly publications, newspapers, Internet sites, government reports, and private research institutes.

To a large extent, secondary economic, sociodemographic, and biophysical data were obtained from the State of the Nation Project (Proyecto Estado de la Nación – economic, social, and environmental data), the Observatory for Development (Observatorio del Desarrollo - economic, social, and environmental data), the Ministry of Environment and Energy (Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía – environmental data), the National Institute of Statistics and Census (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censo – social and economic data), and Ministry of National Planning and Economic Policy (Ministerio de Planificación Nacional y Política Económica - economic and social data).

Additionally, perceptional, attitudinal, and behavioral data was collected from two primary data sources – key informant interviews and facilitated group discussions. In addition, informal interviews were conducted with academics, NGO officials, and other individuals knowledgeable of the two communities. The information obtained from these informants was used to validate the data obtained from the KI interviews and facilitated group discussions via triangulation.13

13 The information provided by these informants, while used as a validation mechanism, is not reported in the finding’s section.
Key Informants (KIs) were well known individuals in the local community, generally acknowledged by other residents as community leaders or respected individuals who held both formal and informal leadership positions across a range of local activities (e.g., elected leaders, priests, school principals, bankers, newspaper editors, businessmen; Tremblay, 1957; Marshall, 1996). Such informants were chosen based on their knowledge of the study topic and the community (Tremblay, 1957). Additionally, when possible, KIs were selected based on the position they held in the community. I attempted to interview informants in both communities who held similar positions to account for their particular areas of knowledge.

To identify and select KIs, I approached residents of each community. These initial contacts were known personally by me or referred to me by other individuals I knew in the area (i.e., University professors and researchers, Costa Rica’s Board of Tourism’s and NGO’s consultants). These initial contacts provided name and contact information for potential KI contacts. KIs were described to these initial contacts as community leaders or well-known individuals who could provide valuable information to the study. Once selected and interviewed, the initial set of key informants was asked to identify other locals who could provide important insights and were well known in the community. That is, I made use of a modified snowball method to expand the number of KIs I spoke with (Kumar, 1989). The KI process ended when recurring information was received (Kumar, 1989) or when interviews failed to provide new information.

The interviews focused on the effects of growth on local quality of life and an assessment of the most pressing problems faced by community residents of Liberia and La Fortuna (see Appendix for interview guide). The instrument used in the interviews included open ended questions (each one a topic) about the past and present characterization of the community (which
included subsections on the condition of the local economy and the physical environment), community satisfaction, concerns about the community, quality of life, future expectations, tourism development (including the role of tourism in the economy, the role of the government in tourism development, and the role of the community in tourism development), and the impacts of tourism. While these topics guided the interview, respondents were encouraged to be expansive in their answers.

The information provided in the interview topics, was analyzed and interpreted to learn about the impacts, factors, and processes associated with each community’s qualify of life (see Wolcott, 1994). Information provided by respondents and other individuals whom were informally interviewed (i.e., local historians, researchers) aided in the analysis and interpretation of the interview topics.

The KI analysis then guided facilitated group discussions with local residents. These discussions were framed around reporting out the findings from the KI process to secure local residents’ reactions to them. Holding these discussions enabled me to validate results and to have a broader community perspective. Participants included interested community members who were invited to attend and participate in a local discussion of tourism-related issues. These sessions ensured a wider understanding of tourism-related problems in the study areas. In addition, the facilitated group discussions were used to triangulate the data obtained in the key informant interviews, while increasing the trustworthiness of the findings.

Recruitment to these discussions occurred one week prior to the session. To increase attendance, residents from each community were approached using different methods. In Liberia, residents were invited using flyers placed in key community locations including the main public bank, local businesses, and the major public universities. Additionally, some participants were
invited to attend through personal invitation from the researcher and involved residents. In Liberia, residents were invited to participate in the facilitated group discussions during two interviews conducted to me by the local radio (Radio Pampa, 1240 AM) and television (Television Guanacaste, channel 36) stations. In La Fortuna, residents were invited to the facilitated group discussions through a similar interview conducted by the local radio station in San Carlos (Radio San Carlos, 1430 AM). Additionally, the researcher personally invited residents at their residences/place of work and during a meeting with local entrepreneurs along with the National Board of Tourism delegates. Finally, assisting the researcher, community leaders and the Community Development Association (ADIFORT) invited residents of La Fortuna to attend the meeting.

Fieldwork for this study began in the summer of 2007. During this visit, KI interviews were conducted in Liberia. I spent one month in Liberia identifying and interviewing KIs and observing every day activities in town. On occasion, local academics and extension agents actively participated in the data collection process by joining me at KI locations. However, they were not present when interviewing a KI to prevent affected outcomes. Their involvement allowed them to gain a better understanding of the processes and changes experienced in the area. Additionally, participant observation and informal interviews with several Costa Rican academics, the Costa Rican Board of Tourism, NGO consultants, local historians, and the general public (including Liberia’s KIs) provided information about the history and present characteristics and living conditions in La Fortuna. Based on the information gathered during the first visit, the study’s research objectives and methods were identified. The second visit occurred during winter 2007. I used the same procedure for identifying La Fortunian KIs as I used in
Liberia. During this visit, I spent one month in La Fortuna identifying and conducting the KIs and observing the different activities common to everyday life in La Fortuna.

Facilitated group discussions were conducted in Liberia and La Fortuna during spring 2008. I spent one week in each community recruiting for the facilitated groups discussions held. During this process, I also engaged in observations of the daily activities in each town. Data analysis was conducted during spring and summer 2008. The project’s third phase – sharing of findings with communities and related institutions, occurred during winter 2008.

Data Analysis

Data collected in this study was analyzed and interpreted using a theory-driven approach to qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Neuman, 2003; Yin, 1984; see Glenna et al., 2007). Such an approach allows the analysis and interpretation of data based on recurrent codes and themes associated with a chosen social theory. In contrast, a grounded theory or case description approach starts by coding and analyzing data seeking for context-driven patterns (Neuman, 2003).

Guided by growth and development theory, social, economic and environmental data was examined and integrated to better understand conditions, processes, and consequences of tourism-related development in the study communities. Secondary data was used to identify the different social, economic, and natural environment’s characteristics for both communities over time (phase one). This facilitated the identification of changing living conditions at the national, regional, and district levels prior to and after the implementation of tourism promotion strategies in Costa Rica. This analysis was designed to examine changing quality of life in each of the different categories proposed in the study’s multidisciplinary model (see Chapter 3; sociocultural, socioeconomic and sociodemographic, and biophysical). As tourism-promotion
strategies occurred in the late 1980s, particular attention was paid to changes that happened after the decade of the 1990s, reflecting the period following tourism promotion in Costa Rica. Simultaneously, in order to respond to the first research question, primary data collected via KI interviews and facilitated group discussions was used to report on the perceived impacts of tourism. Primary and secondary data was triangulated to provide a measure of internal consistency and reliability (Tremblay, 1957). Triangulation looked for commonalities and contradictions emerging within and among different data sources. Once the results of the first phase were established, further analysis of primary data was conducted to gain a better understanding of the role of tourism-based growth in modifying the social processes and actions within each community (phase two; Krannich and Humphrey, 1986).

KI data analysis followed a content analysis methodology (see Rubin and Babbie, 1987; Babbie, 2007). This procedure enabled me to examine textual information and systematically identify its properties (Babbie, 2007). Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts. Such words and concepts were then quantified and analyzed allowing the derivation of inferences about the messages within the texts (Babbie, 2007). For this purpose, data categories and subcategories were developed for the creation of descriptive codes (Kumar, 1989). Coded data permitted easy systematization and retrieval of data (Kumar, 1989; Rubin and Babbie, 1989) as it allowed for the labeling of data organized around relevant ideas, concepts, questions or themes (Kumar, 1989: 25).

In this study, codes were created for each different theme examined (i.e., past characterization, present characterization, satisfaction, concerns, role of tourism in the economy, role of the government in developing tourism, the role of the community in developing tourism, quality of life, and future expectations). For instance, when discussing tourism’s economic
benefits, jobs were assigned one code, income was assigned a different code, prices another code, and so on. For each topic, reported findings included those codes most frequently mentioned by respondents. Those themes rarely mentioned were not included in the results section. Additionally, when the impacts of tourism were examined codes were categorized as economic, social, and/or environmental. Finally, codes were categorized following the theoretical framework developed for the study (see Chapter 3) for factors associated with successful tourism development. Coding efforts focused sociodemographic and socioeconomic, sociocultural, and biophysical categories as factors associated with changing quality of life in the studied communities.

**Summary**

The communities of Liberia and La Fortuna were studied because of their relatively recent adoption of tourism-based growth. Prior to this transition, both of these rural communities shared a dependency on crop and livestock production. National policies promoting tourism and the increased international travel it spurred resulted in population and economic growth. This growth resulted in dramatic changes in the living conditions for both communities.

A multi-method and phased research design was used to examine the ways in which tourism-based growth affected community’s quality of life. The first stage of the study focused on understanding whether Liberia and La Fortuna experienced growth and/or development following the implementation of tourism. This was reflected by the distinct social, environmental, and economic indicators obtained from primary and secondary data sources. Such data was triangulated to provide a more complete assessment of the impact of tourism in Liberia and La Fortuna. The data in this stage was presented in a descriptive manner.
The second stage of the study, sought to explain the conditions and processes associated with successful tourism development. This was achieved by analyzing and interpreting primary data collected via key informant interviews and facilitated group discussions. Primary data was analyzed and interpreted using theory-driven approach and a content analysis methodology. The major topics discussed were coded analyzed and interpreted in order to gain a better understanding of the perceived changes in each community’s quality of life.
Chapter Five

Results

Phase One: Impacts of Tourism

The way in which quality of life was affected after tourism-promotion in Costa Rica was assessed in this phase. The impacts of tourism were viewed here as sources of positive or negative change on quality of life. Indicators suggesting development attainment were considered as those improving quality of life. Secondary and primary impact indicators follow. It is important to note the majority of the secondary data used here is not directly tourism-based, but can be used to illustrate changes associated with tourism.

Secondary Data

This section examines secondary data at different levels of analysis. Initially, a national overview of Costa Rica is presented. Second, the two regions where Liberia and La Fortuna are located - Chorotega Region and Northern Huetar Region respectively - are discussed. Finally, district level data for Liberia and La Fortuna is examined. This data includes economic, social, and environmental indicators for different periods of time that, in part, reflect the changes associated with tourism development in the country. 14 By exploring this data, we gain a better understanding of how growth and/or development were experienced in Costa Rica at the national, regional, and district level.

Costa Rica’s administrative territorial divisions consist of seven provinces including San José, Alajuela, Heredia, Puntarenas, Limón, Cartago, and Guanacaste. Each province is subdivided into cantones (cants) which house local governments known as municipalities.

14 Due to limited information, the years for which the data were available differ. In Costa Rica, agencies responsible for collecting data have expended much energy on efforts to improve the quality of their data collection processes. This has resulted in better and more consistent indicators. However, there are still gaps in data coverage and completeness. An effort was attempted by the author to gather consistent information, particularly after the 1990’s. Despite this effort, data availability at more micro levels of analysis are more restricted.
Each cantón is subdivided into districts (see Table 1). The district of Liberia is located in the cantón of Liberia within the province of Guanacaste. The district of La Fortuna is found in the cantón of San Carlos within the province of Alajuela.

**Table 1.** Costa Rica’s provinces and total number of cantons and districts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Number of cantons</th>
<th>Number of districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>San José</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alajuela</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartago</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heredia</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanacaste</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puntarenas</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limón</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INEC, 2008.

Overall, Costa Rica experienced a population growth rate of 26.0% from 1995 to 2005 (see Table 2). During that period, Guanacaste experienced lower rates of population growth than the rest of the country (10.7%).

**Table 2.** Costa Rica’s population growth from 1995 to 2005 by different administrative divisions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
<td>3,367,455</td>
<td>3,958,931</td>
<td>4,244,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Province</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guanacaste</td>
<td>266,198</td>
<td>274,611</td>
<td>294,667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alajuela</td>
<td>601,674</td>
<td>744,589</td>
<td>799,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cantón</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>41,009</td>
<td>48,626</td>
<td>53,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Carlos</td>
<td>112,229</td>
<td>132,475</td>
<td>144,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>33,327</td>
<td>40,861</td>
<td>44,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Fortuna</td>
<td>6,766</td>
<td>10,181</td>
<td>11,528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INEC, 2008.
In contrast, the province of Alajuela grew by 32.9%. At the cantón level, the rate of population growth was similar for Liberia and San Carlos (29.8% and 29.0% respectively). The biggest difference in population growth was expressed at the district level. While Liberia’s population grew by 34.7% between 1995 and 2005, La Fortuna experienced a 70.4% increment. According to residents of each community, such population growth has been associated with the economic growth resulting from tourism development.

The growing population of Costa Rica is reflected in increased population density. Overall, from 1995 to 2005 the country’s population density per square kilometer increased by 25% (67.9 in 1995 to 84.6 in 2005; EN, 2006).

Population growth has implications for the economic, social, and environmental characteristics of any nation (Burdge, 1999; Garkovich, 1989; Smith and Krannich, 2000). As indicated in Chapters 2 and 3, growth is often accompanied by structural and interactional changes reflected in the living conditions of a population. Such changing conditions have effects on resident’s quality of life. Particular attention will be focused on the effects of tourism-induced growth. The following sections provide a review of national, regional, and district level indicators that, in part, reflect such changing conditions.

**National Level Data**

National level data provides insight into the macro conditions of a country. In this section, I present indicators reflecting the economic, social, and environmental conditions of Costa Rica at different points in time. This will allow an initial overview of the country’s context and its evolution through time with particular emphasis on the period following the implementation of Costa Rica’s tourism-based strategies during the late 1980s.
Economic Indicators

Tourism’s contribution to a country’s economy is a key element associated with its quality of life. In Costa Rica, tourism has grown exponentially. This is expressed, in part, by the numbers of international arrivals to the country. From 1994 to 2003 the number of international arrivals grew from 761,448 to 1,238,692 (ICT, 2003) and 1,716,277 in 2006 (Ministerio de Planificación Nacional y Política Económica - MIDEPLAN, 2008). This growth was also reflected in tourism-generated foreign currency, growing from $625.7 million in 1994 to $1,199.4 billion in 2003 (ICT, 2003) and $1,620.8 billion in 2006 (MIDEPLAN, 2008). As a result of such growth, tourism is now considered the largest employer in the country (Hills, 1990).

One of tourism’s main economic contributions has been expressed in its capacity to improve a nation’s economy (Galston and Baehler, 1995; Krannich and Petzelka, 2003; Lepp, 2007; WTO, 2006). Economic growth has generally been measured by quantifiable and analyzable production and consumption indices. Such indicators measure the value of goods and services produced by an economy (Firebaugh and Beck, 1994), reflecting the overall performance of a country. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measures the total value of the goods and services produced within a country in a specific period of time (EN, 2006). After the implementation of tourism-promotion policies in the late 1980s, Costa Rica’s nominal GDP consistently increased from $11,722.40 million in 1995 to $15,946.30 million in 2000 and to $20,016.80 by 2005 (Observatorio del Desarrollo - ODD, 2008). Such growth reflected a 70.7% increase in the ten-year period 1995 to 2005. Similarly, per capita GDP increased from $3,378 in 1995 to $4,062 in 2000, and to $4,628 in 2005 (EN, 2006). Such growth reflected a

---

15 All amounts expressed in U.S. dollars.
37% increase in the ten–year period between 1995 and 2005. The yearly growth rates increased from 4.3% in 2004 to 5.9% in 2005, and 8.2% in 2006 (EN, 2007).

In part, this growth reflected the contribution of tourism-generated money. EN (2007:194) noted how tourism became the second source of foreign currency in the country, currently surpassed only by the exportation of goods. In 1995, tourism’s contribution to the economy was $660 million (see Table 3). By 2000, this amount increased to $1,229 million and $1,621 million by 2006, or 146% growth between 1995 and 2006. The economic contribution of tourism is particularly important, as it potentially provides the economic means for host country’s residents to improve their living conditions.

**Table 3.** Tourism’s contribution to Costa Rica’s foreign currency (U.S. million dollars).

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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Currency</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>883</td>
<td>1,036</td>
<td>1,229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>1,078</td>
<td>1,199</td>
<td>1,357</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>1,621</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In addition to its capacity to generate foreign currency, tourism’s importance revolves on its capacity to generate jobs (Krannich and Petrzelka, 2003; Murphy, 1985). After the adoption of tourism policy in the late 1980s, employment in Costa Rica has increased (see Table 4). The highest occupations rate in the last 17 years, with a value of 54.4% (not show in table; INEC, 2007) was in 2007. Unemployment, on the contrary, has increased since 1990 rising from 4.6% to a high value of 6.7% in 2003. Nevertheless, by 2007 unemployment had fallen to 4.6% its lowest since 1990 (not shown in table; INEC, 2007).

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16 Occupation rate is the percentage of working force in relation to the population 12 years and older.
Table 4. Costa Rica’s occupation rate and unemployment rate.

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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>52.4</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>53.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Tourism’s expansion in Costa Rica has been reflected in the creation of jobs needed to meet the demands of increased travelers and the services they required. In 2007, 5.3% of Costa Rica’s working force was directly employed in the tourism sector. Additionally, 7.3% of the nations’ families had at least one member employed in this sector (Comisión Económica para Américal Latina y el Caribe - CEPAL, 2007). This growth resulted in increased jobs shifting from other activities to tourism-related activities (see Table 5).

Table 5. Working force by major categories.

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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture and livestock*</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing industry</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, gas, and water</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce and reparations**</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotels and restaurants</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation, storing, and communications</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial intermediation***</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real estate and entrepreneurial activities</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and social work****</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community and personal services</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households domestic service</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra-territorial organizations</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-defined activities</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Includes agriculture, livestock and fishing categories in 1984 and 1990.
** Includes commerce and reparations and hotels and restaurants categories in 1984 and 1990.
*** Includes financial intermediation and real estate and entrepreneurial activities categories in 1984 and 1990.
**** Includes health and social work and community and personal service categories in 1984 and 1990.

Such a shift is associated with tourism’s better paying jobs, and often better working conditions. This is particularly the case when comparing tourism-related jobs to traditional
extractive activities which are commonly associated with harsh and physically demanding working conditions. The shift in the work force is particularly reflected in the decline of employment in traditional extractive industries including crop and livestock production. As shown in Table 5, tourism related growth is seen in the increases in construction, hotel and restaurants, transportation, entrepreneurial activities, and commerce. Increased employment in tourism-related activities generates income and could potentially serve as a source of poverty reduction (Coccossis, 2004; Cohen, 1984). In Costa Rica, in 2000, monthly household income averaged $626. By 2003, this value was $650, reflecting a 3.8% increase (INEC, 2003). Between 2005 and 2006 the average household net income in Costa Rica increased by 2.4% (EN, 2007). For the year 2007, the monthly average household income was $871.

Increased incomes in Costa Rica contributed to reduced poverty and improved household conditions. The poverty gap index in Costa Rica reflected high and fluctuating values - 7.5% in 1995 to 8.4% in 1996 and 6.8% in 1998 (EN, 2006, 2007). However, in general terms, this indicator tended to decline. By 2006, it was 7.1% and 5.4% by 2007 (INEC, 2007). The poverty gap index indicated rural households were worse off than urban households. In 1990, urban households experienced a poverty gap index value of 8.2 in contrast to rural households (12.8). Nevertheless, this gap also decreased. By 2006 these values were 6.2 and 8.5; and 5.0 and 6.1 in 2007 for urban and rural households respectively (INEC, 2007).

Costa Rica’s total number of households living in poverty (those which cannot satisfy basic needs and those in extreme poverty) increased from 127,926 in 1995 to

---

17 Tourism’s contribution to the country’s income and associated poverty reduction was not directly measured in the following indicators. However, as indicated by the previous statistics, tourism played a large factor in shaping Costa Rica’s current economy.
18 Amounts calculated by author based on each year’s average dollar exchange rate.
19 The poverty gap index measures if the income of poor households has moved away from the poverty line. Higher values indicate households moving away from the poverty line and reflects a worsened situation.
165,709 in 2000 and 215,084 in 2006 (EN, 2006, 2007). When adjusting for the total number of households in the country, the percentage living in poverty tended to decrease since the late 1980s. The highest rate was 32% in 1991 (see Table 6). By 1995 the percentage declined to 20. In 2007, this value was less than 17% (EN, 2007).

**Table 6.** Household poverty rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Non poor</th>
<th>No basic needs satisfied</th>
<th>Extreme poverty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>68.1</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>79.6</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>79.3</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>2003</td>
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<td>2004</td>
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<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Additionally, in general terms, during the last decade Costa Rican households increased their access to public services including electricity, sewage, septic tank, and residential and mobile telephones (EN, 2006). The population with access to an aqueduct increased from 3,262,053 in 1995 to 3,965,322 in 2000 (reflecting 94.0% and 98.9% of the population respectively). By 2005, 4,371,733 individuals (98.9% of the population) had access to this service (EN, 2006).

**Table 7.** Household conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>1984</th>
<th>2000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad condition</td>
<td>28.44</td>
<td>18.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular condition</td>
<td>20.65</td>
<td>11.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good condition</td>
<td>50.91</td>
<td>70.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: INEC, 1984, 2000a
Increased income and access to services has resulted in improved household conditions in Costa Rica. The percentage of the country’s households in good conditions has increased from roughly 51% to 70% between 1984 and 2000 (see Table 7).

Economic growth, resulting from tourism’s contribution, is reflected in the country’s capacity to invest in infrastructure. The amount of investment in public infrastructure has consistently increased since 1995. This is consistent with the increased demand for infrastructure necessary to respond to tourism-based growth as Dumont et al. (2005) noted. The overall amount of money invested by Costa Rica in roads, airports, ports, trains, and pipelines increased 55% between 1995 and 2005 (EN, 2006).²⁰

Despite increasing average income, in recent times a growing income gap between the qualified and non-qualified workers emerged (EN, 2007):

During the 16 years between the Survey of Incomes and Expenses (ENIG) the increment in the income gap between wealthy and poor is expressed in the deterioration experienced by the poor. Their average income annual rate experienced a decrease of almost 1% annually, while the wealthy increased theirs by 4% (EN, 2006:53).

The Gini coefficient measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country (CIA, 2008), has fluctuated between 1995 and 2005 in Costa Rica (EN, 2006). A low Gini coefficient indicates more equal income or wealth distribution, while a high Gini coefficient indicates more unequal distribution. Its trend indicated Costa Rica had higher levels of unequal distribution during this period (.38 in 1995 and .41 in 2005). By 2006, Costa Rica’s Gini Coefficient was .42 (EN, 2007).

An overview of the macro economic indicators in Costa Rica generally indicates a sense of improvement which parallels the incorporation of tourism. Its production, income, employment, investment in infrastructure, poverty reduction, and improved household and public

²⁰ Calculated with yearly average US dollars.
services reflect an improvement of Costa Rica’s economy during the time periods examined. To a large extent, this is reflected in the shift of employment to better paying jobs than those in associated with traditional extractive activities. This growth was reflected in improved national level incomes and living conditions. Costa Rica’s annual report of Estado de la Nación (EN - State of the Nation) summarizes:

Costa Rica’s growth rate for 2006 of 8.2% is the highest since 1998. This couples with the increased number of jobs produced. As a result, the country has experienced an increase of the national available income (EN, 2007:57).

Social Indicators

Tourism’s advocates have suggested it improves the living conditions of nations implementing it as a mechanism for social progress (Liu, 2003; Nyaupane et al., 2006). Often, the Human Development Index (HDI) is used as a measure of the average achievements in a country. This measure is the most widely reported measure of quality of life (McGillivray, 2006). This index measures three basic dimensions of social human development - a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living (UNDP, 2008; see Table 8). Despite the increased economic growth experienced in the country, Costa Rica’s HDI tended to decrease during the 1995-2005 period. Costa Rica’s ranking has changed, situating the country from position 28 in 1995 to 48 in 2000, and 47 in 2005 on a list of 177 countries. Currently, Costa Rica is ranked 48 according to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 2008). Costa Rica has been categorized as a country with high human development under the UNDP classification (UNDP, 2008).

Table 8. Costa Rica’s Human Development Index (HDI) and its position in the world ranking.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HDI</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDI rank</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some researchers indicated tourism promoted interest in expanding formal and informal education and knowledge among ideal citizens (see Lepp, 2007; Liu, 2003; Nyaupane et al., 2006). Since the implementation of tourism-based strategies in the late 1980s, Costa Rica’s illiteracy has decreased from 6.9% in 1984 to 4.8% in 2000 (INEC, 1984, 2000a).

Additionally, the percentage of children enrolled in primary school after having been enrolled in pre-school the previous year consistently increased since 1995 (see Table 9). In Costa Rica from 1995 to 2005, female children consistently enjoyed higher rates of enrollment than male children.

**Table 9.** Children’s enrollment rate in primary school after having been enrolled in pre-school the previous year.

<table>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment rate primary school</td>
<td>64.4</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>74.4</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>81.5</td>
<td>82.7</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>87.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>74.0</td>
<td>77.3</td>
<td>80.9</td>
<td>82.3</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>88.6</td>
<td>86.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>82.2</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>85.5</td>
<td>86.4</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>87.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As well, the percentage of the population with high school or higher education increased from 28.4% in 1984 to 46.0% in 2000 (INEC, 1984, 2000a). The number of degrees in higher education increased during the ten-year period between 1996 and 2006 (see Table 10). The number of diplomas granted by high education institutions increased by 95.1%. This increase reflected the large proliferation of private universities in the country that occurred over the last decade.

**Table 10.** Number of diplomas per high education institution in Costa Rica.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher education diplomas</td>
<td>14,753</td>
<td>21,179</td>
<td>26,469</td>
<td>26,051</td>
<td>26,472</td>
<td>28,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Costa Rica</td>
<td>3,779</td>
<td>4,161</td>
<td>3,955</td>
<td>4,118</td>
<td>4,112</td>
<td>4,258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National University</td>
<td>2,319</td>
<td>2,253</td>
<td>2,586</td>
<td>2,830</td>
<td>3,152</td>
<td>2,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological Institute of Costa Rica</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>1,084</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>1,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State at Distance University</td>
<td>1,410</td>
<td>2,067</td>
<td>2,173</td>
<td>2,214</td>
<td>2,114</td>
<td>2,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Universities</td>
<td>6,669</td>
<td>11,866</td>
<td>16,879</td>
<td>15,805</td>
<td>16,098</td>
<td>17,933</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the number of technical degrees conferred by the National Learning Institute (INA) generally increased (except the period between 1996 and 1997 and 1998 and 1999), between 1995 and 2005. Over this time period there was an 185% increase and this change was largely driven by females which were twice as likely to graduate compared to males (262.0% and 129.1% respectively; EN, 2006).

Tourism has also been associated with effects on cultural practices such as religious participation and social malaises including crime (Smith, 1989). Religious participation has declined in Costa Rica. A study conducted by the School of Mathematics at the University of Costa Rica, reported that around 3.5% of the population admitted not belonging to any religious denomination in 1988. By 2006, this value has grown to 9.2% (La Nación, 2007). Furthermore, 27.3% of the Catholic population of the country\(^{21}\) admitted not being actively engaged in the church during 2006 in contrast to 13% in 1988. As well, 52.3% of Catholics admitted being actively engaged in the church by 1988 but only 47.2% said the same in 2006 (La Nación, 2007).

Crime has consistently risen in Costa Rica. From 1995 to 2005 the number of crimes against life (including aggression per 100,000 habitants) increased by 130.5% (EN, 2006). The number of victims by homicide by gun increased from 89 in 1995 to 131 in 2000 and 196 in 2005 (EN, 2006), or 120% increment. The homicide rate (per 100,000 habitants) in 1995 was 5.3 while in 2000 it was 6.4 and 6.9 in 2005. Sex crimes (per 100,000 habitants) also consistently increased going from 58.3 in 1995 to 94.1 in 2000 and 119.7 in 2005.

An overview of the social indicators in Costa Rica evidences the mixed results experienced by the country. Its situation in terms of equity, crime, religious participation, and

\(^{21}\) Catholicism is the largest religious group in Costa Rica, accounting for around 74% of the population with religious beliefs (La Nacion, 2007).
overall human development has declined during the last 10 years. There was, however, an increase in literacy and education.

Environmental Indicators

As previously indicated, quality of life consists of multiple dimensions including the state of the natural environment. This reflects the close association between the biophysical environment and human livelihood (Field et al., 2002; Wilkinson, 1991). The ways tourism associates with the natural environment have been studied. According to Swarbrooke (1999) and Mathieson and Wall (1982), tourism extends appreciation for the environment, while promoting pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors. In Costa Rica, the popular and political environmentalist discourse increased during the last decades (EN, 2007). As a result, the country experienced accelerated development of institutions and laws associated with the protection of the environment since the 1990s (EN, 2007:231). Before 1990, Costa Rica had signed ten international agreements, had passed nine laws and one regulation, and had created eight institutions, associated with management and protection of the environment. Between 1990 and 2006, such norms and institutions increased by eleven international agreements, thirteen laws and seven regulations, and seventeen institutions (EN, 2007). Tourism advocates suggested these efforts resulted from interaction with the natural environment. Camino et al. (2000:23) noted: “Between 1990 and 1997, 38% of tourists visited Costa Rica’s national parks, indicating the importance of forests for ecotourism.”

As well, after tourism’s incorporation in Costa Rica, there have been improvements in conservation efforts across the country. For example, the total number of hectares in protected areas has increased in Costa Rica. The first two protected areas were created in 1955 and totaled

---

22 According to multiple sources including the yearly reports published by the Project Estado de la Nación and MIDEPLAN (2007), Costa Rica faces limitations in terms of environmental data. This has resulted in serious challenges to understanding the state of the environment in Costa Rica (EN, 2006:231).
about 2,500 hectares (Camino et al., 2000). By the late 1980s, about 8% of the country was protected (Camino et al., 2000). The number of hectares increased from 990,374 in 1990, or about around 17% of the country (Camino et al., 2000) to 1,333,250 in 2006, or about around 26% of the total territory of the nation (see Table 11). This growth particularly reflected the number of hectares included in National Wildlife Shelters and, to a lesser extent, National Parks.

According to Camino et al. (2000:11):

Costa Rica’s protected areas system has been an important factor in reversing deforestation and it is a practical approach to protecting biodiversity.

### Table 11. Area of Costa Rica in protected areas (Hectares).  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protected Areas</td>
<td>990,374</td>
<td>1,094,414</td>
<td>1,094,414</td>
<td>1,094,414</td>
<td>1,591,809</td>
<td>1,602,420</td>
<td>1,266,395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Parks</td>
<td>567,852</td>
<td>624,098</td>
<td>623,773</td>
<td>625,634</td>
<td>621,267</td>
<td>617,186</td>
<td>625,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biologic Reserves</td>
<td>21,432</td>
<td>21,674</td>
<td>21,675</td>
<td>21,675</td>
<td>21,663</td>
<td>22,032</td>
<td>22,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Wildlife Shelters</td>
<td>175,524</td>
<td>178,189</td>
<td>180,034</td>
<td>180,642</td>
<td>182,473</td>
<td>184,983</td>
<td>243,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forested Reserves Protecting Zones</td>
<td>284,133</td>
<td>227,834</td>
<td>227,834</td>
<td>227,834</td>
<td>227,545</td>
<td>228,630</td>
<td>221,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wetlands Natural Absolute Reserve</td>
<td>163,714</td>
<td>155,829</td>
<td>155,816</td>
<td>153,955</td>
<td>166,404</td>
<td>153,516</td>
<td>153,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Absolute Reserve</td>
<td>88,289</td>
<td>66,359</td>
<td>77,871</td>
<td>77,871</td>
<td>65,122</td>
<td>71,992</td>
<td>66,388</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additionally, forest recovery has been occurring in Costa Rica since the 1990s (Chomitz et al., 1999; Kull et al., 2007). Forests covered more than half of Costa Rica in 1950 (Chomitz et al., 1999). The following decades were characterized by a rapid deforestation process (nearly 4% annually) resulting in rapid road expansion, promotion of cattle exports, and land titling laws.

---

23 No detailed information was available from the period 1990-1997 or for 1994 and 1998.
(Kull et al., 2007; Zbinden and Lee, 2005). By 1986, Costa Rica was one of the most deforested
countries in Latin America with an estimated remaining forest cover of 29% (Chomitz et al.,
1999). Pasturelands reached their maximum acreage in 1989, and consisted of nearly half (48%)
of the national territory (Arroyo et al., 2005). By 1990 (when tourism-based strategies had been
implemented in the country), the rate of deforestation was 7.6% (Camino et al., 2000). This trend
was reversed during the 1990s (Zbinden and Lee, 2005). By 1997, Costa Rica’s forest cover was
estimated to have recovered to approximately 40% (Calvo et al., 1999). Forest cover reached a
high value of 48% in 2006 (EN, 2007). Furthermore, responsible management of these forests
increased. The number of hectares affected by forest fires has declined since 1998 (See Table
12). Particularly after 2004, the percentage of forest fires declined by almost 60% (56.9%).

Table 12. Area affected by forest fires in hectares.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64,893</td>
<td>11,191</td>
<td>36,896</td>
<td>57,511</td>
<td>50,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>32,783</td>
<td>35,228</td>
<td>14,822</td>
<td>15,192</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Additionally, reflecting efforts to protect the environment, the number of beaches earning
the Blue Ecological Flag consistently increased in Costa Rica. In 1996, 10 beaches had

Despite these efforts, the demand for infrastructure, associated with population and
economic growth, resulted in increased numbers of registered construction permits between 1995
and 2005 in Costa Rica (see Table 13). Increased construction has direct implications for the
natural environment.

---

24 This is an annual incentive program. Its objectives are to promote natural resource conservation, the improvement
of hygienic-sanitary conditions, and the protection of public health.
Table 13. Number of registered construction permits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Buildings and houses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>22,055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>21,609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>25,526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>24,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>22,866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>27,190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>30,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>27,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>30,404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>31,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>33,061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>34,150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The area of construction consistently increased with 1,550,081 m² in 1995 to 2,157,333 m² in 2000 and 3,053,300 m² in 2005 (EN, 2006). By 2007, the country had 7,160,549 m² of construction area (CCC, 2008). After San José, Guanacaste had the second largest amount of construction area (1,505,439 m² in 2007; CCC, 2008). This increased area is mainly associated with housing construction followed by commercial and industrial growth.

The lack of comparable data on environmental matters makes it difficult to provide an assessment of Costa Rica’s environmental situation. The State has recognized this and is making numerous efforts to increase its capacity to create and record more accurate environmental indicators (EN, 2007; MIDEPLAN, 2007). Nevertheless, an overall assessment of macro environmental indicators with available data indicated positive achievements in Costa Rica. These efforts are reflected in increased protected, increased forest regeneration, and increased recognitions for conservation efforts. However, the effect of increased pressure on the natural environment resulting from increased construction is problematic.

Regional Level Data

Costa Rica is divided by regions based on administrative criteria (MIDEPLAN, 2007). There are seven regions in Costa Rica including the Central Region (containing 272 districts), the Chorotega Region (containing 59 districts), the Central Pacific Region (containing 37 districts), the Brunca Region (containing 38 districts), the Northern Huetar Region (containing
35 districts), and the Atlantic Huetar Region (containing 28 districts). Liberia is located in the Chorotega Region while La Fortuna in the Northern Huetar Region.

Economic Indicators

As previously indicated, tourism’s main economic contribution rests on its capacity to generate jobs and incomes. The occupation rate for the Chorotega and the Northern Huetar regions has been inconsistent since 1999 (see Table 14). Both regions had their lower occupation rates in 2000 and their highest value in 2005. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Northern Huetar Region has consistently experienced higher levels of occupation than the Chorotega region. The Chorotega region’s highest occupation rate (49.6% in 2005) has not matched the lowest occupation rate for the Northern Huetar region (50.1% in 2000).

Table 14. Occupation rate per region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chorotega Region</th>
<th>Northern Huetar Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>50.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>52.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>53.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Unemployment has been inconsistent since 2000 for both regions (see Table 15). Nevertheless, in recent years both regions enjoyed lower levels of unemployment. Except for 2005, the Northern Huetar region had lower levels of unemployment in comparison to the Chorotega region. Furthermore, Northern Huetar’s levels of unemployment were considerably smaller than the latter’s.

---

25 Coco’s Island was not part of any region as it is considered uninhabited (MIDEPLAN, 2008).
Table 15. Rate of unemployment for the Chorotega and Northern Huetar regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chorotega Region</th>
<th>Northern Huetar Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ODD, 2008.

Tourism’s contribution to the local economy is reflected in its capacity to generate incomes. The average monthly household income in the Chorotega and Northern Huetar regions consistently increased (see Table 16).

Table 16. Average monthly household income per region in U.S. Dollars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chorotega Region</th>
<th>Northern Huetar Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>448.4</td>
<td>455.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>474.0</td>
<td>463.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>638.4</td>
<td>649.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


With the exception of 2003, the Northern Huetar region had higher monthly household incomes when compared with the Chorotega Region. Despite income generation, households unable to satisfy their basic needs in the Chorotega and the Northern Huetar regions have remained relatively constant since 1995 (see Table 17). In the Chorotega region, the percentage of households living in extreme poverty was at its lowest value in 1998 (10%) and its highest in 2002 (13.7%). In the case of the Northern Huetar region, the year 1997 had the lowest percentage of households unable to meet basic needs (16.1%). The highest percentage of households unable to meet basic needs was in 2001 (19%). However, the latter region consistently had lower percentages of households unable to satisfy basic needs. This was also the case for households living in extreme poverty. In 2007 (not shown in table), the Chorotega region had a record low of 6.3% households in extreme poverty. Additionally, the Northern
Huetar region also experienced a record low of 2.1%, three times lower than Chorotega (INEC, 2007).

**Table 17.** Household poverty rates per region 1995-2005.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chorotega Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non poor</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>65.9</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No basic needs satisfied</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Poverty</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Huetar Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non poor</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>69.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No basic needs satisfied</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Poverty</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chorotega Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non poor</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>69.4</td>
<td>66.9</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No basic needs satisfied</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Poverty</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Huetar Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non poor</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>77.2</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>75.3</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No basic needs satisfied</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme Poverty</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Similarly, the poverty gap has been consistently higher in the Chorotega region in comparison to the Northern Huetar region (see Table 18). For the year 2007, in average, the Chorotega region’s households would have to increase their income by 8.9% to stop being poor. In contrast, the Northern Huetar’s households would have to increase their income by 5.6% to
surpass the poverty line. Despite this, both districts have experienced a reduction of their poverty gap since the decade of the 1990s.

For the year 2007, in average, the Chorotega region’s households would have to increase their income by 8.9% to stop being poor. In contrast, the Northern Huetar’s households would have to increase their income by 5.6% to surpass the poverty line. Despite this, both districts have experienced a reduction of their poverty gap since the decade of the 1990s.

Table 18. Poverty gap by region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chorotega Region</th>
<th>Northern Huetar Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As previously indicated, there is concern about how wealth resulting from tourism activities is distributed among the population. Although inconsistent for both regions, the Northern Huetar region indicated recent improvements in the Gini index (see Table 19).

Table 19. Gini index for the Chorotega and Northern Huetar regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chorotega Region</th>
<th>Northern Huetar Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ODD, 2008.
The Gini index for the Chorotega region, with few exceptions, has been higher than in Northern Huetar region. This reflects higher levels of unequal distribution of income in the Chorotega region.

Social Indicators

The Social Development Index calculated by MIDEPLAN (2007)\textsuperscript{26} showed the Northern Huetar region had large percentage of its districts in the first and second quintiles in 2006 (districts with lower values in the Social Development Index). In contrast, Chorotega districts were more evenly distributed. Overall, the Chorotega region’s districts, according to MIDEPLAN (2007), had better social development than those in Northern Huetar.

Table 20. Social Development Index for the Chorotega and Northern Huetar regions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>5\textsuperscript{th} Quintile</th>
<th>4\textsuperscript{th} Quintile</th>
<th>3\textsuperscript{rd} Quintile</th>
<th>2\textsuperscript{nd} Quintile</th>
<th>1\textsuperscript{st} Quintile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chorotega</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Huetar</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>34.3</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Tourist advocates suggested the industry had the capacity to promote higher levels of education. The number of students (5 years or older) completing high school or higher degrees increased from 16.5% to 17.9% between 2003 and 2007 in Chorotega. For the Northern Huetar region, these values increased from 10.3% to 11.4% over the same period (INEC, 2003, 2007). For both years, the Chorotega region had higher percentages of students completing high school or higher degrees.

Environmental Indicators

In the Chorotega region, during the late 1960s to early 1970s, the deforestation rate reached more than 50,000 hectares per year primary associated with the creation of pastureland.

\textsuperscript{26} The Social Development Index as measured by MIDEPLAN (2007) accounts for economic, participatory, health, and education indicators for its calculation. No previous index can be compared as MIDEPLAN changed its methodology for the calculation of the index in 2007.
(Arroyo et al., 2005). Between 1960 and 1979 the annual deforestation rate was 2.76% (Arroyo et al., 2005). Between 1979 and 1986, forest regenerated in Chorotega at a 1.63% rate and 4.91% between 1986 and 2000 (Arroyo et al., 2005). Coupled with this, two new conservation areas were established in the area between 1979 and 1986 including Santa Rosa National Park and Palo Verde National Park.

A study conducted by the National Meteorological Institute, the Ministry of Environment and Energy, and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in 1996 at the canton level, determined that in Liberia, between 1979 and 1992, natural forests lost 31,852 hectares (see Table 21; Camino et al., 2000). There was a marked increase in pastureland in Liberia. During the same period there was a decrease of secondary forests.

**Table 21.** Land use change by region (canton level).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Liberia</th>
<th>San Carlos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural forests to pasture</td>
<td>31,572</td>
<td>85,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary forests to pastures</td>
<td>88,140</td>
<td>65,151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary forests to seasonal crops</td>
<td>2,756</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary forests to permanent crops</td>
<td>5712</td>
<td>1,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent crops to pastures</td>
<td>3,225</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent crops to secondary forests</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal crops to pastures</td>
<td>3,640</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastures to permanent crops</td>
<td>1,222</td>
<td>1,748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastures to seasonal crops</td>
<td>1,939</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastures to secondary forests</td>
<td>20,913</td>
<td>7,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal crops to secondary forests</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
<td>368,488</td>
<td>446,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>528,025</td>
<td>608,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of change</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Camino et al. (2000).

Between 1985 and 1992, the Northern Huetar region experienced an annual deforestation rate of 3.1%, which translated into an equivalent of 15,399 hectares per year (Rodriguez et al., 2005). At the canton level, between 1979 and 1992 San Carlos lost 85,861 hectares of natural forests.
The area of construction for both regions consistently increased since 2003 (see Table 22). The area has been considerably larger for Chorotega.

**Table 22.** Construction area by region in square meters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chorotega Region</td>
<td>171,305</td>
<td>306,654</td>
<td>569,791</td>
<td>1,179,975</td>
<td>1,505,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Huetar Region</td>
<td>70,889</td>
<td>97,222</td>
<td>136,328</td>
<td>213,172</td>
<td>255,041</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**District Data**

**Economic indicators**

The occupation rate in Liberia increased since 1984, moving from 39.8% to 40.6% in 2000. At the same time, unemployment has decreased in Liberia, moving from 11.8% in 1984 and 9.0 in 2000. In La Fortuna, the occupation rate decreased from 48.2% in 1984 to 47.6 % in 2000. Unemployment in La Fortuna increased from 2.6% in 1984 to 4.1% in 2000 (INEC, 1984/2000a). When comparing these two localities, La Fortuna traditionally had higher levels of occupation and lower levels of unemployment.

Reflected in better incomes (as indicated by interviewed residents and based on national level income data) household conditions have improved for both communities (see Table 23). Before tourism’s promotion in the late 1980s, around half of Liberia’s households were in good condition. In contrast, a little over one third of La Fortuna’s households were in good condition. La Fortuna’s households were categorized as regular and fewer categorized as having bad conditions. By 2000, both districts had experienced clear improvements in their residents’ households conditions. With the exception of households in regular conditions, Liberia’s households are in better condition than Fortuna’s.
Table 23. Household conditions by district

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bad condition</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular condition</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good condition</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Similarly, both districts’ households experienced improvements in their acquisition of appliances and vehicles (see Table 24). Both districts had increased the number of households owning a color television, telephone, and household car. The percentage of households with such appliances was always higher for Liberia. However, in La Fortuna, the percentages of households with non-work related vehicles was higher than Liberia.

Table 24. Household appliances and vehicles by district

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Color T.V.</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>76.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car (non-work)</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Social Indicators

Liberia’s population density increased from 34.9 inhabitants per square kilometer in 2000 to 81.6 in 2006 (INEC, 2000a; MIDEPLAN, 2007). La Fortuna’s population density also increased, from 21.7 inhabitants per square kilometer in 2000 to 52.4 in 2006 (INEC, 2000a; MIDEPLAN, 2007). In every year, Liberia’s population density was higher than La Fortuna’s.

For 1999, MIDEPLAN’s Social Development Indicator showed Liberia had a higher social development score than La Fortuna (57.9 vs. 52.5; MIDEPLAN, 1999). By 2007, the calculation of the index changed but still showed Liberia with a higher social development index than La Fortuna (55.1 vs. 45.3).
Illiteracy in Liberia decreased from 6.8% in 1984 to 4.5% in 2000. La Fortuna’s illiteracy decreased from 10.6% in 1984 to 4.5% in 2000. Liberia’s population consistently had higher literacy levels than la Fortunas.

The percentage of the population with higher than high school education in Liberia increased from 34.2% in 1984 to 52.5% in 2000. Similarly, in La Fortuna this indicator showed an increasing trend (from 15.3% in 1984 to 27.6% in 2000). When comparing these two localities, Liberia’s educational rate has been much higher than La Fortuna’s.

Environmental Indicators

As previously indicated, the area destined for conservation and protection has declined because of land destined for construction. Construction area lands have consistently increased in both districts (see Table 25), particularly in Liberia. While the area in square meters has increased for La Fortuna, in 2007 a smaller area was dedicated to construction than in 2006.

Table 25. Construction area in square meters by district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>48,092</td>
<td>64,653</td>
<td>82,938</td>
<td>162,876</td>
<td>262,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Fortuna</td>
<td>28,112</td>
<td>49,639</td>
<td>36,822</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Summary

Secondary data was examined in this section to present an economic, social, and environmental context of Costa Rica prior to and after tourism promotion. As well, regional and district level data were examined. Particular attention was given to the years after the late 1980s when tourism was promoted in the country.

An examination of available data suggested after tourism’s implementation, Costa Rica experienced economic growth, which has become more evident in recent years. This economic growth was reflected in increased employment and incomes, reduced household poverty, and
access to public services and infrastructure. Social and environmental data indicated mixed findings. Improved conditions included increased educational and literacy levels, and protection and regeneration of the natural environment. Nevertheless, problems were also evidenced in terms of overall human development, inequality, crime, and increasingly rapid rates of construction throughout the country.

Regional level data presented signs of growth expressed in increased income, reduced unemployment rates, education, and construction rates. This was consistent with national level data. However, inconsistencies with national level data were found, especially in the context of occupation rates, household poverty, inequality, and poverty gaps. When comparing regions, the Northern Huetar region had better economic indicators than the Chorotega region. However, the Chorotega region enjoyed better social indicators.

At the district level, the data provided some evidence of growth resulting in improved household conditions, education, and construction rates. For Liberia, the occupation rate and unemployment rates evidenced growth. This data was consistent with the national level data. However, inconsistencies were found in both occupation and unemployment rates for La Fortuna and national level data. When comparing both districts, Liberia consistently presented better economic and social indicators than La Fortuna. Despite this, data at this level was scarce making it difficult to fully compare these two sites.

Overall, the secondary data support the idea that the implementation of tourism-promotion strategies contributed to national economic growth. This data also suggested the country fell short in attaining development goals. The failure to reach development limited the country’s capacity to experience an improved quality of life. However, the different levels of
measurement, differences in years when the data was collected and available, and data scarcity make these conclusions tentative.

To better understand the changes associated with tourism-based growth on the two communities in study, an examination of primary data was conducted. This is particularly relevant considering secondary data’s scarcity and inconsistencies particularly at micro levels of analysis. Further, primary data allows for the understanding of the internal social processes relevant to community. In a similar study in resource-dependent communities Beckley et al. (2002:627-628) noted:

The respondents’ subjective perspectives on these trends helped to triangulate their data, but they also confirmed their suspicion that quantitative indicators, taken alone, do not tell much of a story about the social dimensions of forest dependence, or forest-dependent places.

Through this, the limitations associated with secondary data (i.e., data designed for other purposes, dealing with different levels of analysis, and limited understanding of local social processes) can be reduced. Additionally, complementing different data sources provides deeper insights into the conditions experienced in each community.

**Primary Data**

To respond to the first study question and to determine if tourism has become a source of growth and/or development in the study, primary data was collected – via Key Informant interviews and facilitated group discussions. Primary data sources included key informants interviews and facilitated group discussions. Sixty-seven KI interviews were conducted – 33 in Liberia and 34 in La Fortuna. As well, a facilitated group discussion was conducted in each community. Key informants were selected for their knowledge of and involvement in the community, commonly reflecting their length of residence (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2006). Key informants representing similar fields were sought in each
Table 26. Positions by field and number of key informants interview by community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Liberia</th>
<th>La Fortuna</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipality representative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University professor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National learning institute representative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physician</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social security representative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private businesses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptionist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel owner</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public relations representative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer/Stockbreeder</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agrarian development institute agent</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension agent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law reinforcement official</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribunals of justice representative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community cooperative/development organization</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales clerk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporter</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff assistant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Key Informants</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
community to comparatively account for their specific knowledge, capacities, and viewpoints. A broad scope of positions and fields were included to obtain a representative sample of each community’s population. Table 26 presents a list of positions by community.

In addition, primary data was collected through facilitated group discussions. Residents of Liberia and La Fortuna were invited to participate in the discussions through flyers, radio and television, and through direct communication with the main researcher. During the discussions, preliminary findings from the KI interviews were presented to attendees. Following the presentation, attendees were asked to comment on their agreement or disagreement with the findings and encouraged to share their personal perceptions and ideas. As well, they were asked to extend on those topics which they felt were more relevant. Two facilitated group discussion were conducted in Liberia with 17 attendees and one group was held in La Fortuna with 4 attendees.

Key Informants Interviews: Liberia

Past Characterization

Ten to twenty years ago Liberia was, according to respondents, a town or small city characterized by its calm, rural atmosphere. In Liberia people were family oriented and everyone knew and trusted each other. People felt safer and there was little evidence of social malaise, including things like public alcoholism, vandalism, crime, prostitution, and/or drug addiction/trafficking. Additionally, Liberians were identified with their cultural patrimony (the Sabanero culture) and less worried about consumerism and extra-local customs. An informant indicated they were less “worried about unnecessary things” which made life easier and more mellow. Common means of transportation included bicycles, horses, and walking. As a result, there were no traffic jams or the pollution associated with high rates of vehicular activity and
increased construction. At that time, Liberia’s rivers were not contaminated and the town looked cleaner. An interviewed staff assistant indicated:

[Liberia was] totally different to what we have today. There was less construction, we still could, well not so much ten years ago, but still we could say “you belong to family ‘x’”, “yes the ones that live in ‘y’ place. People knew each other more. Ten years ago it was a whole different thing. It was a town. Now days this is not a town, this is a city.

Liberia used to be a very mellow city. Mellow in the sense of walking calmly on the streets secure from cars and also in the sense of…well, I used to see it so beautiful. I always used to set Liberia as an example everywhere I went. Liberia was very clean; you did not see trash, plastic bags on the ground, alcoholics lying around. Now days you see people lying around everywhere. I used to brag that in Liberia you could not see a drunk. Go there today. They are everywhere. You used to walk very calmly in town. You used to do your errands walking. These days people only mobilize by car, you barely see anyone walking. Like I said, I used to take my kids to the park to skate or teach them how to ride a bike. Now you can’t do that anymore. (Health care provider)

Respondents also indicated that in the past, Liberia’s economy was mainly based on agriculture, cattle production, and a few services including health, banking, and education. The economy provided fewer job opportunities compared to now and some Liberians referred to it as being repressed, with little commercial activity. There were initial signs of tourism development and change as population growth and infrastructure additions/improvements were more apparent. Nevertheless, respondents indicated they did not expect nor were they prepared for the rapid change that followed. A hotel owner commented on his perception of the initial change lived in Liberia:

[Liberia was] an area in which the agriculture and cattle production sectors were important, although it started evidencing its tourism potential. As I said, it was a calmer population, more rural, but there were signs of tourism development showing.

---

27 Guanacaste’s production until 1950 was characterized mainly by several large haciendas dedicated to cattle production with an extensive use of the land. After 1950, other agricultural activities took place in the region, yet land was still highly concentrated in the hands of few landowners (Edelman, 1998).
Present Characterization

Respondents characterize Liberia as a city that experienced rapid change. This was most often characterized by population growth. Informants typically mentioned the arrival of immigrants, vehicular growth, and economic expansion as being indicative of this growth. At the same time, Liberian’s are conscious of the newly created commercial opportunities and services associated with a more modern and cosmopolitan city. Here they referred to improved access to education, better roads, and enhanced transportation services. A university professor commented on the different ways growth has been evidenced in Liberia:

[I see Liberia] as a city with a lot of growth from a commercial standpoint with services that traditionally were not found here. Also growth from a population standpoint, at least that is what one perceives when going to the central area. Also from a vehicular point of view, you can notice a lot of car movement. It is a city experiencing growth.

Liberia is a district that in a period of 10 years or even more, stopped being just a simple district. Now days it is not that anymore, even with all the rurality outside, the city is a very active district with lots of people. I mean, it has grown extensively. There is a lot of commerce, commerce has developed a lot. And it has a lot of flow of people from many parts of the country and also other nationalities. Today you find here Nicaraguans, Colombians, well mainly Nicaraguans and Colombians. (Staff assistant)

A high school teacher acknowledged the positive facets of growth:

Yes, things that we did not have before. Today life is easier for people in Liberia, it is not as necessary for people to go to San José to have access to a bunch of things that we now have here. As big as having an airport here where you can fly out is a great advantage. Also the transportation… you have more flexibility in their schedules. So you have more options by bus and also the option to travel by air.

Nevertheless, Liberian’s are also aware they were not prepared for such growth. Liberians are concerned the rapid pace of change did not allow them to plan accordingly nor prepare/educate themselves for it. A health care provider indicated her frustration:

Liberia should be a nice city because it has a lot of groups, institutions, and NGO’s of all kinds. So structurally speaking Liberia is very complete, but in terms of its functionality it is not working, I don’t see it evolving.
As a result many problems accompanying unplanned growth emerged. These problems include lack of capacity of traditional systems to respond and fulfill bigger and more demanding needs (i.e., roads with traffic congestions, electric power failures and shortages, insufficient sewage capacity), heightened pollution, increased prices (particularly in land), loss of traditional local customs and values, inequality, crime, robberies, drugs, and alcoholism. A community development organization representative indicated his discontent over the negative impacts of growth:

[Liberia] has been expanding more than anything else in the commercial area, San José style, with everything including its bad habits. For instance, drugs, prostitution, and alcoholism. The different tourism developments have taken over our youths, drug addiction and alcoholism. These days, the youth are drinking at very early ages.

A local extension agent who lives outside the central area of Liberia commented on her negative perception:

Thinking of Liberia, I would not live here for anything in the world, not even if offered money to do it, because there is too much population, for my taste at least. There is chaos in the roads, there are so many vehicles that you cannot come to Liberia for a quick errand, it takes too long, and it is congested. That happens during the day, and in the nighttime, a lot of crime.

Present Characterization: Local Economy

Respondents were asked about the current economic situation in Liberia. Liberians indicated theirs was a growing economy, providing employment opportunities that did not exist in the past. The most frequently mentioned causes for the economic growth experienced were the direct and indirect activities resulting from the tourism boom which was highly associated with the opening of the international airport.

Respondents identified agricultural, commercial, and services sectors as important economic drivers in the region. While there has been a loss in importance of the agricultural sector, respondents recognized it still played a leading role in the local economy. Additionally,
Liberians stressed the growth experienced by the commercial sector, as the creation of new businesses was very evident there. Service sectors, according to the respondents, were the largest economic activities in Liberia consisting mainly of tourism-related jobs followed by government and construction jobs. An Agrarian Development Institute representative commented on his perception of Liberia’s economic transition:

It’s an economy that is experiencing an accelerated transition from the agriculture/cattle production sector to the services sector, and it is growing rapidly. The agriculture/cattle sector is less important while the service sector is gaining a lot of strength.

While a hotel owner observed:

There is sufficient work. There are well-defined labor sectors, for example those who work with government including professors, ICE workers [Costa Rican Electric Institute], AYA workers [water and sewage], and bankers. The other sector is tourism that is hiring a lot of persons in the area so it is making people live here, sleep here, and then commute to the different places to work. And then, the agriculture/cattle sector in which we have the sugar cane, cantaloupe harvest, and stockbreeding.

Nevertheless, respondents indicated concerns about these economic activities; they were seen as being owned and managed by extra-local individuals or corporations with economic capacity to start businesses. Liberians perceived themselves incapable of competing with big, extra-local corporations reflecting their lack of education, poor credit access, and the historical concentration of land in few hands. An extension agent and educator spoke about extra-local individuals developing enterprises and its consequences on Liberia:

Foreigners and people from other places have come here to start up businesses, law firms, construction companies, electric companies, big hardware stores.

The economy is like foam, because it looks like everything is growing – commerce, infrastructure, but it does not belong to the people from town. You cannot compete with foreign investment, it is too strong.

Respondents recognized the creation of jobs and increased commerce and services also contributed to socio-economic polarization, poverty, concentration of wealth, and increased
prices in Liberia. As a result, some respondents were uncertain if the economy had truly improved in Liberia. A community development organization representative commented on the repercussions of extra-local investment:

It has improved [the economy] and at the same time it has created poverty. Like everything, it makes some richer and make others poor.

Similarly, other informants added:

[The economy is] centered in few people. There are people in Liberia with a lot of money, but they are few. (Tribunals of Justice representative)

But basically… the thing is that Liberia has a characteristic, it divides its population in two sectors, definitely. Way divided, too much. The ones with possibilities and the ones without possibilities. Perhaps I do not have money, but I do have a possibility to access them with a credit card for instance. Whichever way, I do have the possibility. Others do not have such possibilities. (Health care provider)

It is more or less the same story [of Liberia’s history] because there are families that traditionally have possessions, land, cattle, and generally they do not have major problems. Nevertheless, there are others that live day by day. I feel it is an economy that has a lot of differences; some are doing ok, some not. (Hotel public relations representative)

Present Characterization: Physical Environment

Around 90% of the respondents agreed the physical environment in the center of Liberia had deteriorated in recent years. Their major concerns revolved around the highly polluted environment resulting from poor disposal of solid waste. Additionally, particularly in the center of the city, respondents were concerned about the impact of vehicles on the environment including sound and air pollution. A local extension agent commented on the limitations experienced in environmental matters:

There has been lots of policy in the area to promote the environmental sector. That is not the case for solid disposal. There is a step back in the use and management of solid disposals. There is a lack of education in the area of recycling. People throw the garbage everywhere, and that is a problem.
Lately it is very dirty. The streets look dirty. People... I feel that some time ago the city looked a lot cleaner. And now, instead of being cleaner because there are tourists and all those sorts of things that demand more cleanliness, the streets look dirtier. (Extension agent)

Respondents believed such deterioration was the result of the local municipality’s poor waste management practices, the absence of a local landfill, and poor cultural practices associated with trash disposal by the local population. A reporter blamed environmental degradation on resident’s behavior and the local government:

[Liberia is] polluted, full of trash, has no landfill, people who do not cooperate with neatness; they throw the trash in the streets. You see polluted creeks and rivers. There is a group of young men that pick up trash on Saturday mornings. The municipal trash collection system is extremely deficient.

A local extension agent blamed cultural traits on the current condition of the environment:

But people do not help in that either. It has to do with culture…for instance if there is a tree there, why chop it down? But they do.

Respondents were also concerned about river pollution, underground water pollution, and the improper disposal of wastewater (i.e., from toilets, sinks, washing machines). Overall, poor water management was consistently associated with the deteriorated or, in some cases, non-existent sewage system. A National Learning Institute representative added:

We also have a very serious problem with “black water.” Here more or less like 23% of the population have access to sewage. The rest lacks sewage. This becomes worsen with the large amount of people who visit the area. And I am only speaking of Liberia. There are some cantons where they do not have sewage at all. There are no water treatment plants.

Additionally, respondents were concerned about the role construction played in relation to the environment. Often residents indicated their natural endowments were being destroyed to provide room for development projects. This resulted in higher levels of deforestation. Several residents blamed increased construction, commonly associated with the tourism industry, as the source of environmental depletion and degradation:
The natural environment is not being protected. It is actually being destroyed to give room to construction. (Extension agent)

[The environment is] very polluted. There has been too much deforestation to give room to residential development and hotels, and they have forgotten what it is to plant trees. What they have done is to cut trees without control, which has added to the air pollution. The center of Liberia is a polluted area; you cannot breathe fresh air in there unless you are talking about the neighbor towns. (Community Development Association leader)

Tourism Development

Role of Tourism in the Economy

Overall, informants acknowledged tourism’s contribution to the local economy. They saw tourism as the main source of development in the last several years in Liberia and the entire country. The main contribution of tourism for Liberians was the creation of jobs and income. Nevertheless, respondents warned about the nature of such jobs and incomes. They viewed tourism as an activity developing around the coast more than in the center of Liberia. Additionally they saw development as controlled by foreigners and international corporations. In the case of locals, only those with economic and educational capacities were able to participate in tourism. Liberians saw themselves as passive participants in tourism development reflecting their lack of educational, economic, and organizational opportunities. Therefore, the money generated from tourism by Liberians generally reflects low-end jobs as employees of extra-local/national corporations. Furthermore, respondents felt the money generated routinely leaked to other countries and was not reinvested in the community. This was also the case for taxes generated by tourism. Respondents believed the lack of planning and incapacity of the local municipality to deal with the tourism boom were behind the failure of taxes not being reinvestment in the community. This is evidenced in the poor conditions of roads, deterioration of local city parks and sidewalks, and overall conditions of the district. Because of this, Liberians
interviewed believed while tourism helped activate the economy, it did this at very high social and environmental costs.

Role of the Government in Tourism Development

Liberians acknowledged the role of the government in tourism development as being fundamental. They believed the government should promote tourism while providing policies necessary to plan for and control it. Additionally, informants believed the government should provide infrastructure and resources to related institutions to make efficient services available for the changing and growing demands resulting from tourism. Most Liberian respondents believed the Costa Rican government had failed to achieve these goals.

Few respondents thought the government had fulfilled its mission to improve infrastructure for tourism. This is mainly reflected in the poor condition of the roads and an inefficient trash collection system. The majority of respondents also agreed tourism had been developed in the region by private entities while the government had failed to plan and coordinate it. Other concerns associated with the failure of the government to achieve its goals included failure to promote locally-developed tourism in contrast to high levels of preference (to the point of overlooking irregularities in their operations) for extra-local foreign investors; failure to provide institutions with the necessary resources to match the growing demands resulting from tourism; corruption; complicated and confusing development laws and policies; and overall absence of a regulating entity for tourism development (other than charging taxes and approving permits). An Agrarian Development Institute representative commented on the lack of planning and preparation from the government:

Very small [role of the government in tourism development]. Here we have a non-planned tourism. Here we have an unplanned tourism so the institutions try to satisfy the needs – electricity, telecommunications, etc., but not in a planned way. We have placed the ox cart in front of the ox.
Some respondents believed the role of the Board of Tourism in promoting Costa Rica as a tourism destination location was acceptable. They indicated the Board of Tourism’s tasks should extend to more than just the promotion of tourism. Informants suggested the Board of Tourism’s tasks should include coordinating and planning of development with other government entities. For this, Liberians believed the Board of Tourism should at least have an office in Guanacaste, since it is one of the most tourism-dependent regions in the country.

Role of the Community in Tourism Development

Respondents believed most Liberians played a very passive role in tourism development. Respondents indicated a community member’s main role in tourism was to provide labor, often resulting in low-end jobs. They saw others as benefiting from it but did not engage in active efforts individually nor organizing with others to benefit from tourism. To a large extent, many respondents believed their only opportunity to benefit from tourism to sell their land:

[Liberian’s role in tourism is to be] service providers. When a producer tells me, “someone came to offer me to buy my land, they give me X amount of money.” To which I responded: “Look Don José, please don’t sell, don’t sell your land, what are your kids going to be in the future? Employees of the gringos, employees of the Cubans, or employees of the Colombians or Venezuelans that have money?” If you sell your patrimony, your sons are going to be employees and strangers in their land. But not everyone can miss what they think it is an opportunity. They think it is an opportunity…very few engage in efforts. And when they do, it is all for them (gives some name of local entrepreneurs). They are very few Liberian families in relation to the quantity of farms that existed. Instead of selling they should have inserted themselves in the tourism sector and offered services, in contrast to just having money in the hand, avoiding growing it other way. Yes, we are passive, more than passive. (Extension agent)

To a large extent, respondents believed such attitudes were the result of the economic, educational, and cultural characteristics of the Liberian. For many, such factors resulted in a Liberian that was non-entrepreneurial nor who believed in the value of community-wide development efforts. This, coupled with the fast rate of development, caught Liberians off guard.
Many of them understood the cost of their lack of participation in tourism development. A hotel public relations representative who migrated into the area explained some of the reasons for Liberians lack of participation in tourism development:

I think they have not even realized the development of tourism. The community is totally absent of any development or any activity in the area. Few are the ones who are conscious of what is happening and what is going to happen. There are others who have realized, but they are not from the community, they are from the Central Valley, foreigners, and so you can see that the real estate business is managed by foreigners, the production, the channels of distribution to the hotels – meat, wines, inputs, towels, linens, all that comes from the Central Valley. This is because they have realized or have the economic power to be able to develop this type of activities. It is a fact that the persons from this area are very passive, very passive. You can offer a business to a person of the area, and they do not realize it. But I also think it all depends on the educational level of the individuals. They have not been trained in their minds and thoughts to see the opportunities, in contrast to others who have a university education, which are more critical, more analytical of the situations and so they have been able to grow. It is also a fact that the economic part has been a limitation.

An Agrarian Development Institute representative commented on Liberians lack of participation in community-wide efforts:

There is no participation. Precisely what I am telling you is that we are not prepared for this boom. We are very passive. We are not like “La Fortuna.” La Fortuna is another world. People became organized there, they have their cabins, their restaurants. Hence the population as a whole participates in the wealth because they organize themselves. Here, that is not happening. We were not organized nor prepared for that. The participation of the population is minimal.

Informants acknowledged tourism’s role in shaping the way of life in Liberia. Reduced community involvement, coupled with reduced local institutions’ capacity to cope with tourism-based growth, resulted in perceived negative changes to aspects of life in Liberia. In addition, these conditions resulted in extra-local tourism development in Liberia. As a result, tourism impacted Liberia in particular ways.
Impacts of Tourism

Respondents were asked to provide their perceptions on how tourism affected their quality of life. While the previous subsections provided insights about this, I paid particular attention to the responses provided to this question. This way, the direct association between tourism and its impacts is underlined. Impacts identified in other sections can be associated with other sources of change not all necessarily linked to tourism.

The large majority of the interviewed residents of Liberia acknowledged tourism’s mixed effects on their quality of life. Only a small percentage of the respondents reported tourism as totally beneficial or totally damaging. In general terms, tourism in Liberia was perceived as positively affecting their quality of life when focusing on its effects on the economy. In contrast, when accounting for tourism’s impacts on Liberian’s environment and social dimensions, residents perceived it as negatively affecting their quality of life. Nevertheless, residents of Liberia also acknowledged that in each of those areas, tourism could have positive and negative contributions. The following subsection provides detail on these perceptions.

Economic Impacts

A large proportion of the respondents indicated tourism contributed positively to economic growth. The main effect of tourism on Liberia’s economy was the creation of jobs and its related impact on local household income. To a lesser extent residents of Liberia indicated tourism’s positive contribution to the economy allowed for the improvement of local services and its capacity to generate foreign currency. A National Learning Institute representative and extension agent commented on the positive economic impacts:

[Tourism affects] positively under my criteria, as a job source, educational opportunities, it creates a more dynamic economy, meaning there are more different types of companies. I mean that we do not only depend anymore to go to San José to do all our stuff, institutions, etc. It creates more job opportunities.
[Tourism] has greatly improved the livelihood of households. It provides opportunities to earn a better income.

A small percentage of respondents referred to the negative economic impacts of tourism. These included increased prices for land and goods, the generation of low-end jobs, and the leakage of money produced by tourism to other places. A tourism university professor commented:

To the economy, it generates a lot of resources but they do not stay here. We get thousands of tourists that on average stay three days and on average spend $100 per day. If we think that we get half a million tourists come to Guanacaste that is a lot of money, which very few stays here. It is not all bad, because from an economic standpoint it generates jobs. But it is not the desired impact, from an economic standpoint.

Social Impacts

The large majority of respondents acknowledged tourism’s negative effects on the social dimensions of Liberia. The most cited social impact was the increased level of prostitution since tourism began. According to the respondents, local girls and boys have responded to the high demands in this market, particularly around the coastal areas. During the night, prostitutes, both male and female, travel to the coast to meet tourist demands. When the demand is higher, prostitutes are brought from San José or other areas of the country to fulfill the tourist’s needs.

Additionally, on many occasions, the increased consumption and trafficking of narcotics and its associated impact on crime were the other negative social effects of tourism mentioned. Increments in crime, drug addiction and trafficking, and prostitution were usually seen as closely interrelated topics. Liberians related the loss of values and morals coupled with increased materialism and consumerism as reasons why young generations engaged such illicit activities.

Several respondents commented on the negative impacts of tourism on their society:

Similarly, there are negative phenomena such as searching for easy ways to make money from the foreigner via stealing, cheating, or prostitution. (National Learning Institute representative)
The influence of tourists has come to pervert our society, our youth, money laundering, prostitution, drug trafficking, and alcoholism. (Reporter)

Negatively tourism has brought a lot of crime, drugs, and prostitution. Crime in what way? They’ve [the criminals] noticed the large amount of foreigners in Liberia and see how easy it is to steal their belongings. (High school teacher)

Another important topic associated with social impacts of tourism is the loss of cultural practices. Residents were discouraged by Liberian’s adoption of other more liberal practices less in accordance with its typical traditions. A staff assistant added:

What I am saying is that tourism impacts us very positively economically, but also it impacts us negatively. Why? Because a series of things are lost, like the cultural aspects. Why? Because we are like monkeys. What others do, we repeat. For instance me, my cultural/artistic “to do”, I sang in a cultural group, and all that culture has been lost.

Among the positive social impacts of tourism, a very small percentage of respondents include the creation of learning and educational opportunities and cultural exchange.

Environmental Impacts

As in the case of the social impacts, the environmental impacts in Liberia were seen as negatively affecting quality of life. Respondents were particularly concerned with the destruction of natural resources and ecological habitats including mangroves and mountains. Respondents believed this environmental deterioration occurred in response to large pressure from tourism-related industries and the lack of control and/or corruption of local governments. Pollution was the second largest environmental impact according to Liberians respondents. On very few occasions did Liberians expressed positive impacts of tourism on its environment. These included the motivation for participation in the Blue Flag program and tourism’s encouragement to protect and care for the environment. A health care provider and tourism university professor commented on the negative impacts of tourism:

The environment is impacted negatively because of the increase on everything that we call pollution. The hotels, as they are more, they create more solid waste, more trash,
more pollution in the rivers because there is not water treatment. There is no strict regulation on behalf the institutions and the hotel owners to prevent the damage of the environment. There is no interest from the hotels to comply with the standardized regulations and the institutions do not have the resources to follow up the compliance of all those normative. Because there are tons of regulation, and they are beautiful, but on paper. So they give permits, but after that they cannot follow up two years after that. (Health care provider)

In the environment, coastal tourism is extremely negative from every point of view. Since the beginning with the construction, they remove mountaintops, deforesting, they throw waste into the sea, high water consumption, marinas that pollute water, and all their waste which we don’t know if they properly treat. In general, coastal tourism has had a very negative environmental impact. (University professor)

While Liberians reported their assessment of the impacts of tourism as mixed, the topics more commonly mentioned were socially related. Such social impacts have a negative connotation, as tourism was blamed for the social deterioration of Liberia’s quality of life according to respondents. Followed by these, the economic impacts, which had an overall positive connotation, were among the most referred topics by Liberians interviewed. Finally, the negative impacts of tourism on the environment were on respondents minds. Overall, it can be concluded interviewed Liberian’s perception of tourism was negative. This is the case when we note that two of the three major topics discussed had overall negative appraisals. Furthermore, such negative perception holds if we account for the number of negative impacts mentioned in comparison to the positive ones. Such impacts reflected in the ways Liberians interviewed were concerned about their community.

Concerns about the Community

Liberian’s interviewed main concerns were diverse. However, two main subjects commonly mentioned in the interviews included social decomposition and environmental degradation. These concerns are consistent with the previous section on impacts of tourism, in
which respondents indicated the overall negative contribution of tourism on Liberia’s social and
natural environments.

Social decomposition was mainly associated with prostitution, drug addiction,
alcoholism, and crime. Several KIs commented on their concerns:

I worry about the increased levels of alcoholism, drugs, and prostitution. Another thing is
insecurity. I heard yesterday how in a close by neighborhood, they anesthetized the
residents of a house and took everything they had. You did not see that in Liberia in the
past, such type of insecurity. And especially after certain hours… at least I am terrified of
walking at night in the park after 8:00 p.m., when in the past at 10:00 p.m. one walked
calmly. (Staff assistant)

My second concern is prostitution. Although not as present in Liberia, the young girls are
aware of the demand in the coast. Therefore there is supply. If we do not do something
about it, there will be a fourth sector in Liberia: government, agriculture/cattle, tourism,
and prostitution. And watch out if it is not going to displace the agriculture/cattle sector.
And the other thing, like every city, the crime rates started increasing. (Hotel owner)

I have three well defined main concerns. First, drug addiction, which affects 100% of the
young people, their families, and the rest of society. Because it brings first of all an
addiction and then is followed by for instance stealing so they can buy to consume.
Second, prostitution. I see it in the high school girls kidding around with that, but they
know all about it. That is worrisome; they are only 16 or 17 years old. And the third one,
pollution. (High school teacher)

Environmental degradation in Liberia was expressed in terms of pollution of rivers,
contamination from garbage, deforestation, and waste treatment – solid and liquid. Respondents
recognized the relationship among growth, its consequences on the environment, and how such
impacts reflected on their lives (i.e., in the quality and quantity of water):

Yes, environmental. The problems caused by so much commercialization in Liberia have
deply affected the environment while trees are cut, the excess of trash on the streets,
which you did not see some years ago. These days is too much the amount of trash on the
streets, trash that would take thousands of years to disappear. (Community development
association representative)

Pollution focused on what we said before, economic growth, lack of reforestation
policies, and trash management. (Social worker)
I ask myself, what is going to happen with the water supply? What is going to happen to services like trash collection? Some people are even building very close to the riverbeds. (University professor)

[I worry about] environmental degradation for its large effects on water pollution and especially for its effects on water shortage. We are going to get to a point that we are going to have to regulate so much the water that we are going to fight for water. This is because Liberia is a dry district, very dry, and lately the long summers have reduced the quantity of potable water. (Extension agent)

Additionally, other concerns mentioned in several interviews included the growing polarization between classes and how it particularly affected lower classes’ quality of life; corruption and incapacity of the local government to manage the rapid growth experienced in Liberia; increased prices, particularly in land, associated with rapid growth; and access to education and proper knowledge that could make Liberians more active participants (i.e., owners and employers rather than employees in low-end jobs) in the tourism boom they are presently experiencing.

The ways in which tourism was developed in Liberia was the result of unplanned growth. To a large extent, this was, according to respondents the result of the incapacity to understand and prepare for the changes brought by tourism. This was the case of both community and government members. As a result the impacts of tourism in Liberia reflected mainly negative appraisals according to respondents. Such negative impacts reflected in Liberia’s quality of life as noted below.

Quality of Life

When asked to describe the quality of life in their community, a small group of respondents believed Liberia’s quality of life was good. For these respondents, sufficient employment and the availability of more services were reasons to believe growth had resulted in a good quality of life. Similarly, a small number of respondents recognized economic growth had improved their quality of life as they had access to more services (i.e., health centers, improved
transportation, and gyms) and jobs. However, the latter group of respondents recognized this growth was not paralleled by social development. As a result, there was actually more insecurity, poverty, consumerism, and loss of values and customs. A university professor distinguishing between growth and development commented:

Tourism…we’ve received a lot of investment in the economic realm, enormous economic development. But matched to it, there has not been social development. As a matter of fact, poverty in the region increased by 1% last year, regardless of the enormous economic development. Hence economic growth does not translate into, or has not translated still into social development. They are not paired: social and economic development. That is another problem, with the complication that the tourism boom has created, an increment in the price of land makes it even harder for families with economic difficulties to have access to land for housing, and therefore cannot access the housing bonds [given to poor families by the government].

Similarly, a health care provider noted the difference between better services and overall improved quality of life:

Economic growth has not been manifested in population well-being. For instance health services have improved, more and bigger hospitals, more access to rural health, improvements in the types of specialized doctors available here, all that has changed. But on average I do not perceive that the quality of life has improved.

A larger number of respondents believed quality of life in Liberia was not good. In fact, they conveyed that their quality of life had decreased in recent years as reflected in increased poverty and crime, imposition of extra-local customs, and pollution. A community development association leader focusing on loss of cultural values noted:

I would say that the quality of life in Liberia is not good because everything that used to be the customs of the Guanacastean has been lost. People have been copying customs of San José like junk food, traditions have been lost, everything in general. At a social level it is not a good quality of life, we like to live off appearances.

A member of the clergy reflecting on poverty exemplified the case of a well-know slum:

For example in Martina Abustos [slum], the people living in the higher areas have to walk 500 meters or 1 Km. to get their water because they do not have potable water in their houses. It seems like now they have electricity, but they do not have the normal public services that everyone else has.
The large majority of the respondents agreed quality of life in Liberia depended on socioeconomic status. For those closer to the city, quality of life was good as they had better access to educational and job opportunities, services, and overall resources. For those living in the periphery, quality of life was bad and was reflected in poverty, lack of access to education or jobs, and reduced access to services. Respondents identified such marginalized groups as the big majority of Liberia’s residents. A health care provider and a National Learning Institute representative talked about the different classes in Liberia:

For me there is the existence of two sectors. One sector has the possibility to access private sectors and other conditions that allow you to improve your life like a gym, good alimentation; in that part there is development. We now have gyms, access to private health care, access to many private services that improves your quality of life. But there is also the other side of the population, the ones who do not have access to those possibilities. From my health-based perspective, their quality of life has decreased. We go to their households and can see the big difference. It is very different to visit a household in the center of Liberia to a visit in marginal neighborhoods. It is completely a different world.

Under my criteria there is everything. Some people are economically doing very good, people that have inherited farms, houses in great shape, because in here you find excellent level housing. But I also feel there are the other extreme, people living in extreme poverty. There are some neighborhoods that are barely 5 Km. from the Liberia center, where taxi drivers refuse to go, either because of the state of the road or for security reasons.

Furthermore, Liberians believed their economic situation was associated with the lack of capacity to be part of the tourism development experienced in the area. This resulted from a lack of understanding and preparation with regard to the rapid tourism-induced changes. A retired teacher commented on this:

One thinks we should be doing great, but unfortunately it is not like that. It is not as it should be based on the urban and technological development of today’s Costa Rica. Now, what are the reasons behind that? Simply that the Liberian did not wanted to give off his customs and his ways of life. For the Liberian of 6 years ago there was no motivation to prepare him/herself to work someday. Even though the high school already existed there were few who did want to prepare themselves. So what was the result? That all that
technological advancements, all that industry and all those things that have come from one day to another, caught us off guard. Instead of being employers, we are employees. That is the truth. It is not till now that the community and the organizations or bureaus in charge to promote culture, education, and all that are realizing the problem – so we see the INA, universities, several high schools, so we have a large number of people who are preparing to face that development brought by tourism which is precisely the source of advancement and wealth of this place. I wish we did not neglect such wealth and advancement, so that there is more for the Creole and not for people from other places who actually bring weird customs.

In summary, with the exception of a small group of respondents who indicated the quality of life in Liberia was good, the balance highlighted negative aspects associated with Liberian’s quality of life. While positive outcomes were expressed to an extent in economic gains, the major themes mentioned during this question were crime and poverty. Other themes discussed to lesser degrees were imposition and/or loss of values, customs, and morals, food insecurity, pollution, and the lack of capacity to be an active participant in tourism development. Such responses support the experience of economic growth for a section of the population, but no signs of development to the large majority of Liberians interviewed. This was reflected in Liberian’s interviewed reported satisfaction.

Levels of Satisfaction

When asked how satisfied Liberians were with their current life, respondents answered in various ways. A very small number of informants responded being satisfied with their current situation. Others indicated having mixed feelings about their situation. A feeling of satisfaction resulted from opportunities and jobs that recently emerged and which generated more income. On the other hand, these same people were also dissatisfied largely because of the myriad social disruptions experienced in Liberia. These included increased prostitution, drug addiction, lost cultural values and morals, polarization of classes, and culture clash with foreigners resulting in
competition over jobs and opportunities. A hotel owner emphasized the economic benefits of tourism:

I think like every town in some ways they are satisfied because there is more money coming in and there are some new jobs available that did not exist in the past. To give you an example, these days there are people who sell motorcycles. You didn’t see that in the past. It was, like, since a year ago that you started seeing that. And if they are selling motorcycles it is because now we have a need for them, and people are taking advantage of the niche to sell. The only problem is that all this brings, development brings certain consequences like the social diseases that show up.

Another group of respondents indicated not being satisfied at all with their current situation. They blamed their situation on increased and unregulated vehicular activity, increased crime, lack of understanding, control, and participation of and with the current population boom situation, disorganization resulting from the rapid pace of change, and loss of jobs to foreigners. This was consistent with the information provided in the impacts of tourism question and its implications on quality of life. A dissatisfied community development association representative noted:

Well, satisfied under my concepts, I do not think so. Because for instance in Liberia you cannot drive anymore, nor walk either. If you do not pay attention you will get in an accident because there is way too much traffic. Also thieves have achieved that one does not feel safe. It has not been very beneficial.

The largest group of respondents thought satisfaction depended upon someone’s position in a series of divergent groups within Liberia. For instance, the majority of these respondents noted satisfaction’s association with access to economic and educational opportunities. Not having access to these resources resulted in being a dissatisfied individual. Others believed satisfaction was associated with living in an urban (satisfied because of access to services) in contrast to a rural environment (dissatisfied because of lack of access to services). Other differentiations included being young (satisfied because of higher access opportunities) versus being old (dissatisfied because they were reluctant to change); and active or involved (satisfied because
they were participants in development) in contrast to passive or conformist individuals
dissatisfied because they perceived themselves displaced from development. A clergy member
and a high school teacher respectively, commented on the different situations present in Liberia:

Those with a more or less good economic situation, those who have access to commerce,
those who own big properties, those who own their big businesses, they are ok. The
middle class is half way satisfied and the lower class is not. They have a lot of needs. I
would say there is a big percentage that is not satisfied.

You could say yes and no. There are people in this society that are 35 or 40 years old that
are open to the changes brought by tourism, the good and the bad. The older persons see
everything as very negative because they say: “they come and build those big hotels and
one cannot even go to the beach anymore.” So they are not open to change, they have
roots that they do not want to change. But youth, clearly they are satisfied, because they
have more opportunities.

Future Expectations

Respondents were asked about their future expectations. Among the most cited
expectations were interests in a cleaner, greener Liberia. This reflects the respondent’s growing
concern expressed about the deterred natural environment in Liberia. Informants wanted a place
where waste and pollution were managed properly and where rivers were rescued from their
current polluted situation. Additionally, respondents indicated their desire for recreation areas
where Liberians could enjoy time with other community members, exercise, and relax. A
university professor commented on his desired expectations focusing on physical and mental
health:

[I would like to see more] social well-being, more green areas, more recreation places,
places for the community to meet. In Liberia you do not have open spaces. The people
that run, they do it in one block. They run over a sidewalk. No space to exercise. We
want more space for the kids, for instance, to skate. The soccer fields are closed. A lot of
the recreation parks are being used for drug consumption. There is no space for the
population to relax, to be at ease, there are no urban parks.

Additionally, Liberians interviewed would like to see a better-educated population. This will
allow them to take over more specialized jobs. A more educated population will enable
Liberians to become more active participants in tourism-based development. They sought a Liberia more actively involved in tourism development occurring along the coast. As a result, informants believed a more equal distribution of money would occur.

Another important topic discussed by Liberians interviewed was their desire to see reduced levels of crime, prostitution, and alcoholism. Often they expressed their desire to have a calmer city. Coupled with this, they desired a Liberia where local residents changed their attitudes and values. Informants wanted a population with restored values, one which promoted good values, and local culture, traditions, and identity.

Some Liberians interviewed also desired to see a Liberia with more sentiments of solidarity and community. They believed this contribute to a better Liberia, with the development of more organized small businesses.

Additionally, some respondents indicated a desire to live in a Liberia where economic development was coupled to social development. Respondents desired a Liberia where the “human side was more valued than the material side.” An Agrarian Development Institute representative commented on his desire for Liberia to reach development in addition to economic growth:

[I would like to see] a community in which economic development goes parallel to social development. I mean equity. A development with equity and sustainability. Sustainable from an economic and social standpoint.

Facilitated Group Discussions: Liberia

Two facilitated group discussions were held in Liberia. The first was held at the Universidad Nacional (UNA – National University) with tourism students. A total of thirteen students attended the meeting. The second meeting, held at the Casa de la Cultura (House of
Culture) located next to Liberia’s main plaza, was held two days later. Four participants attended the second meeting.

Overall, attendees both meetings agreed with the findings drawn from the KI interviews. In general terms, attendees acknowledged how rapid growth, lack of planning, lack of tourism-based education/knowledge, and cultural traits were among the major reasons for Liberia’s outcomes. The topics developed by the attendees are discussed below.

Tourism and the local economy

Attendees acknowledged tourism’s economic contribution were mainly tied to more available income and better services. However, they also noted that most of the income went to large-scale investors, commonly foreign entrepreneurs. Additionally, jobs created by tourism required bilingual and highly qualified personnel. Because many Liberians lacked these skills, these jobs were commonly given to extra-local individuals. Attendees noted how few Guanacasteans held management positions. As a result, there was general belief Liberians experienced relatively little economic gain as a result of tourism growth.

Further, as class polarization has become more marked in Liberia, those in the lower socioeconomic classes have been more affected by the rapid changes. Respondents indicated how for some Liberians, salaries had risen, but for others they had not. At the same time, prices in Liberia have risen especially since it is now considered a tourism area which generally has higher prices than the rest of the country. This resulted in larger poverty pockets in Liberia. An agronomist attending the second meeting commented on the harsh economic conditions present in Liberia:

Everything is so expensive, there is no chance to save money, and therefore people cannot be prosperous.

Similarly a tourism student indicated on tourism-inflated prices:
In Liberia, there are more than just *gringos*, but everything is priced at *gringo* prices. (Tourism student).

**Summary and Data Triangulation**

Interviewed Liberians expressed their concerns about the changes associated with tourism particularly on their social and physical environments. While economic benefits were recognized, frustration was expressed about leakages and low labor wages resulting from extra-locally imposed tourism development. Overall, they indicated quality of life had diminished in Liberia after tourism. Because Liberia’s population was polarized, the negative effects of tourism were particularly perceived as being more detrimental for residents with lower socioeconomic status.

Overall, these respondents suggested Liberia had experienced, to some extent, economic growth resulting from more jobs and better incomes associated with tourism. This is particularly the case as jobs shifted away from traditional extractive activities. This is consistent with the secondary data indicating increased incomes and jobs, particularly those associated with construction, hotel and restaurants, transportation, entrepreneurial activities, and commerce. Respondents also noted economic growth was reflected in increased infrastructure, commercial and service activities, and the creation of more institutions in Liberia. This was also consistent with secondary national level data.

However, the interviewed respondents indicated the lack of appropriate conditions in Liberia to reach development. Economic leakages and low-end jobs associated with tourism have resulted in increased socioeconomic gaps, inequality, and poverty. Primary data was consistent with secondary data suggesting increased levels of class polarization and inequality. However, primary data was not consistent with national level data suggesting a reduction of poverty in
According to the KIs, Liberians have experienced increased levels of poverty which affected a larger number of people in their community.

Environmental primary data is inconsistent with national and regional level data indicating improvements in forest regeneration and increased land destined for protection. From the respondent’s perspective, the natural environment in Liberia was experiencing dramatic destruction and pollution. Informants indicated their concerns for the depletion of natural resources as a result of construction pressures. According to the Liberian KIs, construction pressure (consistent with data presented at the national, regional, and district level) had rapidly increased in Liberia.

Some of the differences found between primary and secondary data is the result of the different levels of analysis from which data was collected. National and regional level data presents aggregate values which can differ from locality to locality. While communities like Liberia might be experiencing particular changes, other localities at the national and regional level might be presenting opposite and more marked changing conditions. As a result, aggregate level data fails to be consistent with primary data. As well, the different points in time in which the data was collected results in inconsistencies between primary and secondary data. This is particularly evident in the case of district level data in Costa Rica which is eight years old. Many conditions in Liberia today are different, particularly when one considers the rapid pace of change.

Key Informants Interviews: La Fortuna

Past Characterization

Respondent’s past characterization of La Fortuna consisted of a calmer, rural, and less developed town. The town consisted of a few households, one police delegation, a school, a
church, a main plaza, and few businesses. According to La Fortunans, the town had a very limited infrastructure, few roads, and traffic and parking were never an issue. The main economic activities revolved around agriculture and cattle production. Informants believed the town was repressed with few job opportunities outside traditional agricultural and livestock production activities. An interviewed hotel owner added:

Ten years ago Fortuna was completely an agricultural and livestock oriented town. Ten years or more we are talking about here. The main activities were not tourism related, and we had not so many sources of jobs.

Many La Fortunans KIs described their old town as a familial place, where every one knew everyone else, and engaged in multiple community-oriented formal and informal activities (i.e., community organizations, local festivities, attending mass, playing soccer in the local plaza, going to the river). Respondents saw themselves as simple, humble, hard working people who shared, and who always expressed a desire to develop as a community. They described the town as a place with an authentic environment, a pure culture, where you received personal treatment in the bank, and people said hi on the streets.

While there were some initial tourism-based activities, it was not until the early 1990s when more efforts were engaged on its development. KIs knew the area’s natural beauty provided great potential for attracting tourists, but admitted lacking the necessary knowledge to develop tourism. According to the informants, this was mainly caused by the lack of communication channels (i.e., roads, internet) promoting an exchange of information with other areas already involved in tourism. Once the channels of communications were open and tourism started in La Fortuna, respondents saw their late entrance into tourism as a blessing as they learned from other’s mistakes. Through their well-established formal and informal linkages (see Granovetter, 1973), Fortunan’s disseminated the necessary information to avoid repeating what
they considered other’s mistakes (i.e., selling their land to foreigners, allowing extra-local
corporations to develop tourism).

Present Characterization

When referring to today’s La Fortuna, the great majority of respondents spoke about the
changing town conditions resulting from the increased tourism activity. Informants believed
these changes had become prevalent during the last five years. Additionally, they acknowledged
their high level of dependence on tourism activity. Respondents noted benefits from tourism
included more jobs, increased educational opportunities, and an overall sense of household
financial improvement.

Fortunan KIs emphasized the role of either local residents or Costa Rican’s nationals in
tourism development. They saw themselves as entrepreneurs not afraid to take risks necessary to
invest in tourism. They learned to develop tourism so it contributed to sustainable economic,
social, and environmental practices.

Nevertheless, some informants recognized the lack of sufficient planning associated with
tourism development. This resulted in undesired infrastructural changes (i.e, undesired
constructions, traffic problems) and recent community-life changes (i.e., loss of family-oriented
practices, familiarity with other residents, sense of community, religiosity, and decreased levels
of participation in community efforts. A hotel owner and active member of community
organizations commented on the recent loss of family and community values:

… it experiences a moral deterioration, a family deterioration, yet it is not a very strong
deterioration, but you can feel it from the old Fortuna to the now days Fortuna. Because
obviously, the obligations that comes with tourism, have made people to lose that family
interaction, those family moments. In the moments that people should be together with
their family, they are taking care of the tourist, like December and those important
festivities. In that sense I do feel there is deterioration. It is not very felt, it is not very
visible and it might be that this is compensated in a way by the other part; that families
are economically better.
To a lesser extent, informants also referred to other social malaises including drugs, prostitution, and alcoholism, although indicated there were relatively few cases of these problems.

Present Characterization: Local Economy

La Fortunans interviewed classified their local economy as being very good or excellent, mainly reflecting the benefits brought by tourism activity. While respondents acknowledged the role agriculture, dairy, and cattle production historically played in La Fortuna, they saw its role having diminished in recent years. Some residents diversified from these traditional forms of sustenance with tourism, while others completely switched their activities to tourism-based. An ADIFORT representative commented on the distinct opportunities existing in all levels of La Fortuna’s economy:

Good in the sense that in every segment we have different situations. For instance if you own a hotel or if you work in that hotel or if you are a farmer, each one has its own space and their opportunities to grow and be better. Why? Because the infrastructural conditions that we have, allows it. We have here export companies of roots and tubercles, hotels, development association, aqueduct, so all these provides sustainability.

Fortunan KIs indicated the benefits of their buoyant economy had reached the vast majority of the local community who became owners/employers and employees. Many times, respondents provided examples of migrants coming to the area who improved their quality of life because of the numerous jobs and opportunities in La Fortuna. Respondents believed one of the major reasons why the economy was so beneficial to them was because locals and nationals, as opposed to foreigners, made the largest contribution to local investment. Conditions including easy access to credit and a strong entrepreneurial mentality, allowed La Fortunans to take the lead in local development. Additionally, La Fortunans believed the historical prosperity of the area, reflected in very productive agricultural and cattle production, allowed them to have the economic means to transition to tourism-based development.
Present Characterization: Physical Environment

La Fortuna’s informants felt blessed by their natural endowments. They understood their area was defined by high quality forests, sufficient and good water, a wonderful climate, and a beautiful landscape. Overall, they believed the quality of their natural environment was good. Informants also realized tourism was mainly attracted to the quality of this natural environment.

The natural environment was seen as the reason why tourists visited the area and this promoted an environmental consciousness. This was reflected in stronger efforts to recycle, maintaining the town’s cleanliness, planning for a water treatment plant, and the awarding of numerous environmental oriented prizes by the EU and UNESCO to La Fortuna. Further, as tourism displaced cattle production, La Fortunans saw how deforested areas were being reforested.

Nevertheless, some respondents indicated such environmental concern was more an economic convenience than a creation of a true environmentalist response. These respondents believed Fortunans were environmentalists, as long as it did not interfere with their economic development strategies. A local entrepreneur and park ranger commenting on this “false environmentalism” added:

We protect the environment today because it is the source of our incomes. But such care is not a matter of environmental consciousness. It’s a matter of convenience. It is true. Fortunans will leave a tree uncut because it is more valuable now standing than cut and sold for lumber as it attracts tourists. But this is only true when the tree does not interfere with their development plans. If the tree is in the middle of a field that is going to be destined for the construction of cabins, be sure they will not hesitate to cut it (Park ranger).

Regardless of motivation for protecting the environment, there is consensus among the majority of informants that the environment has been increasingly protected as tourism began in the area. La Fortunans realized the need to engage in stronger efforts to protect their environment. While
they saw tourism as a means for promoting environmental consciousness, they also understood population growth and it’s associated increased construction rates had environmental implications. Additionally, respondents also differentiated environmental attitudes and behaviors among locals and migrants. La Fortuna KIs believed migrants, especially those with lower socioeconomic characteristics, were less educated about environmental aspects and commonly polluted more.

Tourism Development

Role of Tourism in the Economy

To the question of what is the role of tourism in the local economy, all respondents agreed tourism is the main engine of the economy. Traditional activities including cattle/dairy production and agriculture lost importance in the area while tourism provided more economic gains in a shorter amount of time. Respondents believed tourism provided around 85%-100% of the incomes in La Fortuna either by direct or indirect association with tourism-based activities. A hotel owner added:

[Tourism plays] a very important role. It is the engine of all the development happening here. All the families here, except a few, their economy revolves directly and indirectly around tourism. We have businesses that offer services to the businesses that directly provide tourism services. So indirectly, those businesses are growing around the tourism industry. This area revolves around tourism 100%. For instance, our branch of the Banco Nacional is the number one branch in the whole country in terms of the amount of money that it moves. That means that the economic movement experienced in this region is enormous. So tourism’s role is to move the whole economy of the area.

Economic growth, according to the respondents, resulted in more and better services, roads, improved education, and increased levels of construction. Nevertheless, Fortunan KIs noted the high levels of dependency on the tourism sector. This is particularly evident in low season, when residents perceived a local recession. In contrast, during tourism’s high season, resident payment and purchasing capacity increased noticeably. Some respondents believed if tourism disappeared
or strongly declined, La Fortuna would sink in poverty and chaos. This is particularly the case when accounting for the large levels of debt incurred by locals to develop tourism. A farmer added:

There is great dependency on tourism. In the low season you can tell there is a recession of the economy. In high season you can see more money on the streets. Tourism is the engine of the economy.

Role of the Government in Tourism Development

Respondents had a mixed opinion about the role of the Board of Tourism (ICT). Some La Fortunans thought the ICT’s role had been very good in promoting Costa Rica in other countries, while others indicated the opposite. Despite this, La Fortunans believed the role of the institute should not be limited to promoting Costa Rica as a tourism destination. They suggested the role of the ICT should be coordinating with other government institutions and communities to improve the capacity of the country to respond to the changing conditions brought by tourism.

Similarly, the role of the Technical National Environmental secretary (Secretaría Técnica Nacional Ambiental - SETENA) in protecting the environment was considered mixed among La Fortunans informants. While they appreciated the role of SETENA in preserving the environment, respondents believed, in many instances, they deterred development. This was especially the case, according to some respondents, when radical environmental positions were adopted ahead of long-term efforts designed around human resource use.

In general terms, La Fortunans saw the work of two government institutions in the promotion of tourism development as good. They believed the contribution of the National Banking System in terms of providing credit for developing tourism-based activities had been fundamental. Additionally, the National Learning Institute’s (INA) role in training individuals for jobs associated directly and indirectly with tourism has been good. Few respondents believed
more modern courses and training should be implemented to keep up with this modernizing sector.

The majority of respondents believed the role of the local government in tourism development was deficient. They noted much of the work the municipality of San Carlos has done focused on Ciudad Quesada and not La Fortuna. Respondents resented this, as La Fortuna, according to them, was one of the districts providing the most funds to the municipality. In exchange, respondents believed the municipality fell short in giving back to the community. Coupled with this, respondents often noted how slow and bureaucratic procedures in the municipality were:

The local government actually takes away from us. Because 11% of the tax produced here feeds 30% of the municipality’s income. And we only get a .005% back. There might be other ways [they are helping], but I will say they are minimal. For instance when it comes to construction and to approving development projects, they make it hard and cause a lot of complications in the development process. (Entrepreneur and cattle rancher)

In response to the limited capacity of the municipality and government to respond to changing conditions, informants believed the local community development association (ADIFORT) has taken over such tasks. Often informants indicated ADIFORT had initiated efforts to improve roads, provided an efficient trash collection system, and security with collaboration of the municipality. A hotel owner noted how the government’s efforts are usually established by ADIFORT’s initiative:

They [the government] have fulfilled their duties but through the interaction with us to make it happen. There is an association for a strategic development of the Arenal watershed, which coordinates with all the public and private entities to make the big projects happen. It consists of tourism entrepreneurs, the Municipality of San Carlos, the Tilarán Municipality, Ministry of health, etc.

A frustrated resident expressed his discontent with the local government and commented on ADIFORT’s capacity to respond to changing and growing demand:
The municipality chokes us with taxes… a lot of money goes from here to the government, but it is really hard to get something done, like sewage for instance. The bridge to enter Fortuna is one way only. It is 60 to 70 years old. They have not been able to change it. Why? That is the best example of that. Something that important and the bridge does not have two lanes. If two cars collide there, there is no other exit. There is a new project in process to create another exit, but it is not from the municipality only. It consists of an effort between ADIFORT, some neighbors, and the municipality. I had to pay to get my sewage installed in front of my house, same with my neighbors. ADIFORT paid for a large part of that. It is not like the municipality does the work, a lot has to be done by ADIFORT.

Because of this, a large number of respondents saw ADIFORT as the local government.

When prompted to talk about the role of the local government, La Fortunan KIs often referred to projects and contributions achieved by ADIFORT:

What you see here in La Fortuna as infrastructure and constructions to provide a good business environment exists because the Asociación de Desarrollo –ADIFORT (Community Development Association) has done it. And it does it because tourism generates 300 million a year, which are reinvested in improving the community to have a good place with good infrastructure. But things get done because we do it internally, otherwise nothing would be done. La Fortuna is a very well organized community in that sense. This is a visionary community that is not present in other parts of the country. The first thing La Fortuna did was to take those earnings from tourism and created a tourism business – the waterfall, and then reinvested in the community. From the waterfall earnings is where the Association feeds itself. (Hotel owner and involved community leader)

Role of the Community in Tourism Development

Respondents saw ADIFORT as the main entity representing the interests of the community. They indicated the role of ADIFORT as key in the development of La Fortuna as it invested capital in the community. Projects developed by the ADIFORT included those associated with infrastructure (roads, parks, and commercial centers), social interest, and education. Respondents often noted the role of ADIFORT which “covered the batches left by the government.” In addition to ADIFORT, informants reported numerous organizations in La Fortuna that sought to improve their living conditions. An active community leader commented on the different local organizations:
We have the Development Association (ADIFORT), the Association of Micro Entrepreneurs (AMITURFOR), the Association for the Protection of the Arenal River (ADECLA), the Association for the Protection of the Quality of Water that we consume (fed by the ADIFORT), and other businesses that are leading the role in the protection of the environment.

Additionally, respondents indicated the community had a key role in tourism development as it provided a good environment for tourists. Informants were aware they were the ones who took an active role in developing tourism through the creation of hotels and businesses to attract tourists. Exploiting their entrepreneurial capacity, KIs from La Fortuna believed they had taken what they considered a huge risk, while switching to an activity they knew little about. An ADIFORT representative described the community’s role in tourism development:

It [the community] is the central nucleus for tourism. From the community we have the owners with the entrepreneurial capacity to offer possibilities to tourism while creating expensive projects in the different areas – adventure tourism, ecotourism, and all sorts of them. They are very expensive investments from which the community has to be the medulla for generation of such tourism. There needs to be workers and the adequate persons to handle that tourism. If the community did not provide that, tourism could not be developed.

Community members saw themselves as welcoming hosts who always worried about making the tourist feel at home. For La Fortunans this is a particularly important task, as they valued the role of feeling at home and being welcomed. Hence their jobs as hosts did not end in providing the attractions and infrastructure, but also an appropriate environment for the tourist.

Informants also noted decreasing levels of involvement in community-wide efforts resulting from the lack of time to invest, particularly if they owned a tourism-based businesses. They’d rather have other residents or associations making decisions about the development of the community. This phenomenon, as expressed by respondents, was recent. A hotel owner commented on this problem:

The only problem that we can see a bit, is the human one, the human time that people can provide to help because everyone is very busy in their businesses. Nevertheless, the
activities are achieved easily. The problem is mainly in the organizational part, people do not want to provide their time to organize these projects. They rather give money and let someone else do it.

Informants acknowledged tourism’s essential role in shaping La Fortuna. High community involvement resulted in locally driven tourism development in La Fortuna. Such form of development impacted La Fortuna in particular ways to be described below.

Impacts of Tourism

As in Liberia, respondents were asked to comment on their perceptions of how tourism affected their quality of life. The three main areas discussed by La Fortuna KIs included economic, social, and environmental impacts. In general terms, in La Fortuna, tourism was seen as positively affecting quality of life when focusing on the effects on the economy and the environment. In contrast, when accounting for tourism’s impact on La Fortunan’s social dimensions, residents perceived it as being negative. The following sections provide details on these themes.

Economic Impacts

The majority of informants agreed the economic contribution of tourism to La Fortuna was positive. Before tourism, the local economy was concentrated in agriculture, dairy, and cattle production which provided few opportunities and required hard working hours with low pay. Currently, tourism’s contribution to the economy was reflected in the creation of jobs which resulted in more sources of income for the population. Fortunans believed the jobs created provided better remuneration than what they would normally get from working in agriculture or livestock production. Further, because tourism was developed in La Fortuna by locals, respondents noted its benefits staying within the community.
Additionally, respondents saw the community’s development (i.e., buildings, roads, services) tied to its growing economy. As a result, respondents noted improvements in their infrastructure as a consequence of economic growth. Informants believed the economic benefits of tourism had trickled to everyone in the community.

Social Impacts

Respondents believed La Fortuna’s social environment had been negatively affected by tourism. This was reflected in increased cases of prostitution, crime, and non-traditional behaviors including homosexuality and public nudity. However, La Fortunans agreed each was an expected consequence of development and believed they were isolated cases.

Additionally, residents expressed concern for losses in familial interaction, religiosity, and a sense of community recently. Residents believed most of the people have become involved in tourism-related activities, and they, therefore, no longer had the time to bond with others in the community as they had before. Further, the increasing population of extra-locals deterred them from engaging in such activities, as it became harder to know each other. A frustrated hotel owner commented on her concern over the loss of interaction and participation in community-oriented activities:

I was born here. You can sense the difference from the time previous to the big changes. It is harder today to organize people to do things. If there are no economic incentives then it becomes harder to organize people and get them to interact. The interaction with our neighbors has been damaged. We used to hang out with our neighbors all the time and now months go by without seeing them. Yes, there is some coldness; there is no more unity that we used to have. As I said earlier, tourism will always bring damage regardless of how full our pockets are. Yet we are trying to stop that deterioration going as fast as it is because we have vision of it as we learned from other examples.

Respondents also indicated some positive social impacts of tourism including improved quality of education and learning a second language.
Environmental Impacts

Respondents noted an increased level of consciousness with respect to environmental aspects since tourism’s arrival in La Fortuna. This was reflected in each individual’s commitment to the environment, as he/she tried to implement pro-environmental attitudes and practices within their businesses. Today they became interested in learning and developing mechanisms favoring the protection of the natural environmental. Several entrepreneurs implemented zero carbon emission programs, recycling, and sustainable projects in their hotels. ADIFORT is developing a project to build a water treatment plant for the community. Additionally, there were strong efforts aimed at reducing the amount of trash in the main town plaza.

As a result, they believed the natural conditions of La Fortuna had improved since the arrival of tourism. These efforts materialized in several national and international environmental awards given to the community and the region (Northern Huetar).

Additionally, respondents noted stronger efforts by government institutions including MIRENEM and SETENA to protect the environment. Finally, La Fortunans noted that as more individuals moved out of agriculture and cattle production, land was being reforested.

To a lesser extent, some La Fortunans disagreed with this assessment and indicated their environment had been polluted as tourism increased in the region. This is the reflection of more population, traffic, and construction in the area. They did indicate these negative impacts were minimal.

Concerns about the Community

Consistent with the social aspects of La Fortuna, which respondents believed to be deteriorating, the most mentioned concerns among respondents were increased levels of drug
traffic and consumption, crime – mainly associated with robberies, and to some extent prostitution. Respondents indicated these problems were under control, but they worried about how they would be handled in the future. Some La Fortunans interviewed saw increased crime, drugs, and prostitution were normal in areas experiencing growth in wealth, and attracting individuals seeking “easy money.” Others believed such problems were the result of the adoption of extra-local practices brought by tourists and immigrants.

Fortunans interviewed perceived these problems were growing as they saw a strong loss of their traditional conservative values. Among such lost core values respondents identified religiosity, community cohesion, cultural identity, and family integration. As a result, they were concerned about the environment in which their younger generations were going to be raised. A banker expressed his concern about the state of La Fortunans family values:

The main concern that is always in this world is family disintegration. This results from the life that is generated to the La Fortunans product of the good incomes that people have. The access to a series of distractions leads to a more liberal life, to put it in a way. That is what is affecting our kids today.

The large amount of time dedicated to family enterprises aggravated these problems. Respondents were concerned about whom and how their children were being raised, especially in instances when this care came from those who were not part of their family. Additionally, informants believed their time spent at work resulted in greed, materialism, and loss of entrepreneurial cohesion. According to many La Fortunans interviewed, residents stopped caring about others, particularly when it came to other entrepreneurs. This was reflected in a strong decrease in levels of participation in community-wide efforts.

Among other concerns discussed to a lesser extent, interviewed La Fortunans indicated their preoccupation with low quality of formal and informal education in the area. According to them, education in La Fortuna was deficient, and efforts were needed to better educate and train
their young generations and work force. Similarly, the low quality of health care facilities in
town was of concern. They believed the government was not meeting the growing demand for
more and better services.

Finally, informants were concerned about the effects of decreased numbers of tourists
visiting the area. They believed this could be the result of extra-local factors including the role of
the Board of Tourism in promoting La Fortuna as a destination, and the financial situation of the
tourists (i.e., recession in other countries). Additionally, informants also worried about locally
induced factors including increased prices, lack of attention to national tourists, and incapacity
for providing good conditions for tourists resulting from the lack of planning. This was
particularly worrisome for some La Fortunans as they acknowledged the large amount of debt
which many families had incurred to develop their tourism-oriented businesses. A local
entrepreneur frustrated with La Fortunans greed and associated risks commented:

I am worried for those working in tourism, hotels and restaurants, because they only care
for the foreigner, and in the value of the dollar. They do not think about the La Fortunans
or the Costa Rican tourist, therefore raising their prices. I think that is very worrying
because for instance, tourism can develop in Nicaragua and tourists will just go there.
Here we have not considered that risk. I consider that they should meet and provide a
cheaper fare for the local tourist. For instance, a person has a small restaurant. His price
for an arroz con pollo is lets say 800 colones. But if someone else sells the same dish for
1500, instead of leaving it at 800, he/she will think: “why should I loose money like
this?” resulting in an increment of the price of the dish to 1500. That is my concern, my
biggest fear because we know that we entirely depend on tourism. If tourism goes, what
do we do in Fortuna? I don’t know why they can’t think of that.

To a large extent, respondents saw the impacts of tourism in La Fortuna as positive. To the
exception of the social malaises emerging, respondents believed their life has been greatly
improved by tourism. They saw the benefits of tourism as staying within the community and
equally distributed among its residents.
Quality of Life

Overall, the majority of the La Fortunans interviewed considered their quality of life to be between good and very good. Further, respondents believed their quality of life was always good because of the area’s general prosperity. Currently, tourism was seen as the major source for the local quality of life they currently enjoyed, reflected in the creation of more jobs and higher and more competitive salaries. Respondents stressed how these improvements reached everyone in the community. Employers and employees both benefited and wealth was well distributed. Such improvements were reflected in the quality of their homes, access to vehicles, and even in the quality of their clothing. Additionally, respondents enjoyed improved health services, education, and transportation. A hotel owner and active community member leader commented on the levels of growth in La Fortuna:

It has improved, it is good, it is good because many families shifted from being employees to being owners of their own businesses. And within their debt, there is money being generated to have a better quality of life. The development experienced in La Fortuna in the last 14 years has been abysmal. If you compare what we had here 14 or 16 years ago to today, today the level of development is incredible. Further, the development experienced here is abnormal, goes beyond the one experienced in any part of the country.

An ADIFORT representative and a local entrepreneur and active community member commented on various improvements in La Fortuna:

I would say good because we have job opportunities, health services, good telecommunication, an interest in fighting diseases like dengue, which have caused a lot of harm to our communities. These are the things that could harm us in terms of tourism and also in the labor aspect and basically in all the economic sectors. That’s why we have educational campaigns to preserve the environment in good conditions.

Previously we did not have a lot of job sources here; currently we have a lot since tourism has grown rapidly in 10 to 12 years. The labor is local, so you can see marginalized neighbors today with nicer looking houses, the way they have been improved and painted. One can see it in the commercial activities. One can see it in the persons, their way of dressing. Families which were economically suppressed, today have
motorcycles, vehicles, so it is pretty evident that there is an improvement in their quality of life.

While respondents acknowledged the role of economic growth on quality of life, they also understood how such growth translated into development. A cattle rancher commented on this:

[Quality of life in La Fortuna] in a scale from 1 to 10, I would say 9. Why? Because everyone here lives off tourism. What does that score have to do with tourism? Because tourism generates a lot of money. It is the main source of income in the country. In here almost about everyone has some kind of relationship with tourism. Definitely, we can’t stop it. You can have a small farm and divide it in lots, and everyone is going to buy you lots for hotels. Or if you have a large farm, can sell livestock and every one is going to buy the meat from him. So now you can sell more while benefiting more people who had nothing to do with tourism. Land prices had risen dramatically, so that has resulted in farmers having to be more efficient because land is worth a lot more…but in addition the communities are supported. Schools have been provided with equipment, information, computers, and software.

Informants were also aware of negative aspects associated with tourism. Such impacts affected their quality of life, and included losses of religiosity, increased stress, a less familial town, increased crime, drugs, traffic, and greed, all contributed to a loss of calmness in town. Yet, La Fortunans believed these problems affected their quality of life to a much smaller extent when compared with the benefits brought by tourism. A photographer commented on this:

No, it hasn’t been higher [negative impacts in contrast to positive ones], but development comes with some negative things, things that are not from here. You know that happens worldwide, wherever tourism incurs, it brings a lot of money and things are different. It is not like before, where we had a dozen families and on Christmas everyone shared their tamales and everything.

Such perceived improved quality of life reflected in the community’s satisfaction.

Levels of Satisfaction

The large majority of respondents agreed they were satisfied with their life in La Fortuna and believed progress was the reason for their satisfaction. This was reflected in more jobs,
greater economic diversification, more available services, increased desires to improve and learn, and an overall improved quality of life. A local entrepreneur and active community member commented on La Fortunans satisfaction, mainly associated with the economic benefits of tourism:

Currently yes, the residents of La Fortuna are satisfied because tourism has brought more blessings than evils. For instance a cattle rancher that has a small farm, during the 1980s and 1990s his land was worth 150 Colones the square meter, now days it’s worth 100,000 or 150,000 the square meter. At that level, in the past when commenting with farmers they used to say: “I do not care about tourism because that is not my activity” When tourism began, they did not realize that tourism development also brought benefits. Currently, even those who said that they were not part of tourism are happy because tourism has brought value to its land. So that is one reason why people are happy with tourism and the other one is job opportunities, labor. Young boys who graduate from technical high schools in hotel management, the demand is so high, that those who want to work, work; those who want to work and study, can make it too; but at least they have a secure job. Or those who want their own company, can do it. Currently there are incredible opportunities for own companies in technology and commerce.

Progress, according to informants, was well distributed among different individuals in the area, and both owners and employees were benefiting from it. Respondents believed their work was very gratifying, and complemented their enjoyment of the environmental and social characteristics of La Fortuna.

Nevertheless, respondents indicated some aspects of their life, to a lesser extent, negatively affected their levels of satisfaction. These aspects included seeing for the first time cases of drug addiction and trafficking in town, loss of what they called rural moral values, increased prices, and difficulty owning a house due to higher prices, crime, and greed. Yet, La Fortunans were very clear these problems were controllable and less relevant in contrast to the positive aspects affecting their satisfaction.
Future expectations

A final question assessed La Fortunan’s future expectations. Two topics were mainly discussed. The first referred to the desire of the informants to have a more united town. As previously indicated the cost of owning and managing their own businesses, was reflected in recent decreased levels of participation, cohesion, and overall interest in community-wide efforts. Respondents indicated their concern about this, while also expressing their desire to have a organized, familial town as they used to before tourism development.

Secondly, respondents indicated their desire to have a structurally better organized town. Informants would like to see more regulations, planning, and control that would shape the way the town’s infrastructure and roads are managed.

Topics also mentioned to a lesser extent included the improvement of educational services and opportunities, a healthier town, wealth being better distributed, and protection of local natural resources.

Facilitated Group Discussions: La Fortuna

Four residents attended the facilitated group discussion in La Fortuna. These people were all strong environmentalists employed in jobs associated with the protection of the natural environment. The majority of their concerns were strongly guided by their areas of interest.

All attendants agreed on the findings reported from the KI interviews. While they did not disagree with any of the reported findings, they indicated the need to extend particular points. This was particularly important for them, as they believed deeper insight was needed. These discussions revolved around the recent reduced levels of participation of the community in tourism development and natural environment.
Reduced Levels of Community Participation

Participants in the facilitated group discussions noted a lower level of participation in community-wide efforts resulting from time spent managing their own tourism enterprises. They attributed this to La Fortunans ownership and management of local businesses. This forced them to work closer to their businesses and spend more time in them. Because of this, discussants believed La Fortunans, particularly recently, had left aside social, cultural, and religious activities.

Despite lower levels of participation, attendees agreed La Fortunans were committed to social interest programs. They perceived La Fortunans as individuals concerned about social issues. According to them, this was particularly the case for small-scale entrepreneurs. From their perspective, larger and more lucrative business owners were not as interested in investing time in social activities. Despite this, attendees believed La Fortunans addressed their lack of time (reflected in reduced participation) by delegating social programs and community-oriented efforts to organizations. Consistent with the information provided in the KI interviews, participants noted La Fortunans never hesitated to donate money to community and social-interest organizations.

The Natural Environment

Attendees agreed that La Fortunans were interested in preserving the natural environment. According to them, attitudes and behaviors seeking to protect the environment had become more evident in La Fortuna since tourism development had begun. Nevertheless, attendees believed such pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors were the result of economic interest rather than inherent changes in the ways La Fortunans perceived the environment. As expressed by the participants, La Fortunans acknowledged tourists were attracted to the area
because of its natural endowments. After tourism’s implementation, a standing tree had more value than in the sawmill for La Fortunans as they experienced increased environmental awareness. Nevertheless, according to participants, La Fortunans care for the environment was guided by economic interests and not an environmental conscience. A park ranger at the facilitated group discussion added:

La Fortunans prefers a standing tree than seeing it at the sawmill as long as the tree does not interfere with his/her economic goals. The entrepreneur is concerned about money. They worry about the foreign tourist. They sell the volcano to the tourist, but that is the last thing they do, take the tourist to the volcano.

Coupled with this, attendees believed the government’s role in the protection of the environment was deficient. Similarly, discussants believed the government institutions in charge of protecting the environment were guided by economic interests. They did not feel these organizations were engaging in sufficient and efficient efforts to protect the natural environment. As well, other programs designed to help the environment should cease operating since they failed to do an efficient job or made the overall process worse.

Clearly the attendees were concerned that the natural environment was not placed before economic interests. This, according to participants, could have catastrophic results in the future. For them, a true environmental protection plan should always place the environment before economic-guided activities.

Summary and Data Triangulation

Respondents interviewed in La Fortuna acknowledged tourism’s positive contribution to their economy and environment. While they indicated tourism had negative consequences to their social life, they also commented on the social problems encountered in their community were recent and still controllable. Overall, La Fortunans perceived improvement in their quality of life since tourism was developed in the area. This was the reflection of local ownership and
development of tourism enterprises. To a large extent, La Fortunans believed the benefits from tourism stayed in the community and were well distributed among residents.

Primary data suggested La Fortuna has experienced both economic growth and development. The former was expressed in terms of more and better paying job, improved household conditions, ownership of vehicles, better clothing, and more and improved infrastructure. The latter was expressed in the forms of reduced poverty, equity, self-reliance, tolerance, social civility, and sustainable relationships with the natural environment.

Nevertheless, La Fortunans were aware of recent growing social issues including loss of familiar practices, crime, religiosity, and participation. Again, they believed these were in early stages, controllable, and plans were being developed to correct them.

Primary data collected in La Fortuna suggesting economic growth resulted in improved and more jobs was consistent with national level data on occupation and unemployment rates. Yet, this information was inconsistent with district level data suggesting reduced occupation rate and increased unemployment in La Fortuna. Such inconsistency might be the result when district level data was collected. In Costa Rica, few efforts have been engaged collecting district level data which was mainly a product of the National Census. The secondary data provided here was part of the 2000 Census. Perspectives provided by the informants was collected in 2008. The eight-year gap between primary and secondary data might explain such inconsistencies. This is particularly the case when acknowledging respondent’s comments on how growth has been experienced in La Fortuna principally in the last five years.

Additionally, other inconsistencies were found between national and regional level data on inequality and poverty gaps. These two indicators showed an upward trend at the national level, whereas a declining trend at the regional level. As well, to some extent, inconsistencies
between national level data on these indicators and primary data were found. In La Fortuna, informants reported increased equality and reduced poverty. As previously indicated, the measurement levels at which the data was collected can explain these inconsistencies.

Growth, also reflected in access to infrastructure and improved housing conditions, according to La Fortunans interviewed, was consistent with national and district level data. Educational attainment, increased crime, access to services, increased construction rates, and improvements in forest recovery, according to Fortunans interviewed, was also consistent with national data.

In general terms, the different data collected presented some inconsistencies among primary and secondary data, and among different levels of secondary data. Such inconsistencies were the result of scarce data, the different levels of data measurement, and the different periods of time they were collected. Particularly when comparing secondary with primary data, problems were more acute as district level data in Costa Rica is extremely scarce and dated.

Nevertheless, in general terms, triangulated data suggested Liberia and La Fortuna experienced economic growth. This was reflected in the creation of more and better paying jobs in a tourism-based economy which shifted jobs from agricultural and cattle production to hotel, restaurant, transportation and construction. Additionally, this was reflected in increased and improved infrastructure. The data also indicated that only La Fortuna experienced development. This was reflected in equity, poverty reduction, tolerance, and environmental sustainability.

Despite this general agreement in the data, there is a need to better understand and explain certain discrepancies, calls for further examination of the primary data which may unveil stronger and more conclusive inferences about the causal relationships in each community. This is addressed in the second stage of this study.
Phase Two: Factors and Processes Associated with Successful Tourism Development

In this section of the study, data is analyzed and interpreted to reach a better understanding of the conditions leading to different outcomes in Liberia and La Fortuna. This will provide a clearer understanding of the divergent factors and processes associated with each community’s tourism development.

Factors Associated with Successful Tourism Development: Liberia

Biophysical Factors

Access and management of natural resources provides residents with the subsistence and economic means to secure good quality of life standards. In Liberia, access to such resources has been limited because of reduced fertility and seasonality. Land in Guanacaste is suitable for producing particular agricultural products and livestock because of its soil physical and nutritional conditions. Additionally, Guanacaste is a very dry and arid region. Water scarcity has affected the region throughout its history (Edelman, 1998). Such adverse biophysical conditions deterred the year round production of agricultural and livestock production in Liberia. Such barriers constrained residents from an economic base that could have been used to diversify their traditional activities to non-traditional ones including tourism.

Additionally, Liberian land has historically been owned by landowners known as latifundistas or hacendados (Edelman, 1998). Hacendados owned large properties, concentrating wealth in few hands. As a result, when tourism began in the area, few residents had the economic means to diversify their traditional activity or access to capital to invest in tourism-related efforts.

The soil and climatic conditions in Liberia, coupled with land concentration, kept the majority of Liberians from having the necessary resources to successfully switch to tourism.
related activities. As tourism emerged in the area, many Liberians lacked the economic base and land to invest in tourism-based infrastructure and/or activities.

**Sociocultural Factors**

**Entrepreneurial Capacity**

The literature on tourism refers to active involvement in tourism-based activities as one of the main factors associated with community betterment (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). Wunder (2000:477) referred to “entrepreneurial spirit” as the willingness to invest in productive inputs, take risks, and accept income fluctuations.

In Liberia, residents often mentioned their lack of entrepreneurial capacity as the main reason for not being active participants in the current tourism boom and associated this with a cultural factor. The culture of the Liberian, according to many, was to be passive and conformist. Láscaris (1989:80), referring to the Guanacastean added:

> I cannot understand if it is for lack of education or because its innate ways of being, but they are a bit lazy and it is extremely hard to move them towards progress…I have observed that they have a lot more resources than the ones who lives in the city. They could take advantage of such resources with a minimal effort; nevertheless they do not know how to exploit them.

Popular account and informants associated this attitude with their historical ties to the *haciendas*, where land ownership was highly concentrated. In there, the majority of Liberians only took orders and never developed entrepreneurial skills. Generally, decisions were made by the landowners or a few other highly ranked individuals (Edelman, 1998). An interviewed immigrant commenting on Liberian’s cultural traits said:

> They have always been pawns, so is a lot of lack of education that makes them feel not good enough for planning or training for what they want. They don’t feel they have the right.
Other Liberian’s think this cultural trait is associated with having been given everything within the hacienda way of living where they worked and lived. Respondents believed the Liberian lived in a very kind environment, one in which required little effort to obtain the necessary goods for subsistence. This resulted in a passive and conformist individual. Edelman (1998) indicated in his study of the Latifundio in the Chorotega Region, peasants and other individuals were allowed to use the land and resources within the haciendas until the 1930s. As a result, respondents believed that the Liberian of today is an individual who is used to being an employee whether for a large landowner or transnational corporation. He/she does not aspire to be an owner nor employer.28

Other individuals believed Liberian’s lack of entrepreneurial capacity, which would have placed them in a more active role within tourism, reflected their individualistic nature. Again, related to their Latifundio past, some Liberians believed the “tough” mentality of being a Sabanero, the Guanacastean version of the American cowboy, meant a focus on individualism. As such, the typical long-term Liberian does not see value in working in groups in the search of creating opportunities for everyone. This contributed to the lack of organized community-oriented efforts which would have placed Liberians in a more active role in tourism development.

Community Agency

Community agency is one of the most important factors associated with promoting well-being. According to Wilkinson (1991), well-being is achieved, to a large extent, through community development. As individuals work together exchanging ideas and seeking common

28 Some Liberians believed this passive role reflected the current educational system. Although Liberia has many schools and universities, respondents believed these institutions prepared students to be passive takers of information, not individuals capable of developing critical, analytical, and entrepreneurial skills.
solutions to local problems, development is achieved. Yet, in Liberia, such practice was practically unknown. When prompted to respond to the role of the community in tourism development, most respondents acknowledged Liberian’s incapacity to function as a community. Liberian’s saw their main role in tourism development summarized as either being land sellers or providers of low-waged labor. Respondents were aware of their lack of capacity to work in groups - which could work to improve the larger community. Informants expressed their frustration when trying to organize community-wide efforts. A health care provider commented:

My main concern as a neighbor in Liberia is the lack of community organization. That results in no community development in Liberia. That limits things. I think that we do not organize ourselves. I live in a small residential development and we have not been able to organize ourselves with only 52 families. We call a meeting and no one goes, either Friday or Monday. There is a lot of indifference to organizations. And that happens in all the neighborhoods. Friday we had a meeting with the development association of the Corazón de Jesús neighborhood. We sent out the invitations, the day before they confirmed with us, set the place, and everything. The day came; we went there after working hours and no one showed up, not even the president of the development association. Not even him that the day before talked to my boss and confirmed. We went to look for him at his home and he was not there. We called to his phone and he did not answer. And that is just one of the experiences one sees they don’t care.

Lack of such community-oriented efforts has led Liberians to miss the exchange of ideas that could potentially lead to their involvement in tourism-based strategies. Additionally, the lack of such interaction prevented Liberians from empowering themselves, an essential element in the decision-making process within tourism development.

Furthermore, the large number of migrants who moved to Liberia, also deterred agency. This is particularly the case when there is a strong culture clash with migrants. According to Edelman (1998), throughout its history, Liberia always experienced large waves of immigration. Respondents indicated Nicaraguans were the largest group of migrants, and they were commonly seen as “poor and undesired.” Liberians do not associate with Nicaraguans or other groups, as they are considered lower class with problematic and underdeveloped ways of life. In many
interviews, Liberians suggested their resentment with migrants including those from San José and other countries. They were seen as being responsible for displacing Liberians from the tourism labor market. A resentful hotel owner added:

If you pay attention, the people taking over the jobs created by tourism are foreigners. They can be from the Central Valley in San José, Colombians, and many others. But the Liberian, per se, is not the one fulfilling the high demand for jobs created since the coming of tourism. Such people take over the jobs we should be doing.

To a large extent, lack of cultural traits and community-oriented efforts, resulted in lack of planning and management of tourism initiatives by Liberians. This factor was recognized by many as one of the main reason for the overall negative outcomes perceived in Liberia.

Planning

Often respondents indicated the lack of planning as a result of the rapid pace of change in Liberia. This was particularly more evident after the construction of the international airport. Respondents believed the fast pace of change did not allow for Liberians to properly prepare and educate themselves. For some, this was the result of the government’s lack of appropriate guidance to community members. For others, this was the result of Liberian’s lack of motivation and interest in bettering themselves. A Tribunals of Justice representative interviewed noted:

Liberia was not expected to be what it is today. Liberians were not ready for the development occurring today.

It’s a city that was reached by development that has been surpassed by it because it is not prepared to face what comes with development like services and all that. Liberia has been falling short because development has occurred so fast. In the past, when development was slower, there was time to create services, now everything has happened so quickly that things fall short in fulfilling such a dynamic - the great demand for services. Still demand is being fulfilled, but in an unplanned way, so patches are created and they create problems due to lack of planned accordingly with a strategic plan. (Extension agent)

Unplanned growth resulted, to a large extent, from lack of efficient communication within and between government institutions and community organizations and residents. Liberians often
agreed the fast pace of change affected their capacity to respond to it. Respondents believed they were not prepared at the individual level (in terms of formal and informal education needed to respond to the changing conditions), at the community level (as groups of organizations), or at the governmental level (to be capable of responding to such rapid change). Coupled with these sociocultural characteristics, the socioeconomic characteristics of Liberia played a role in the way tourism was developed in Liberia.

**Socioeconomic and Sociodemographic Factors**

**Institutional Capacity to Respond to Change**

One of the most cited problems associated with tourism and the changes coming with it, was the incapacity of institutions to adapt and respond to change. Liberian respondents indicated municipal jobs were often given in response to political affiliation and/or kinship ties. In very few instances, did these individuals have the educational or technical know-how to successfully achieve their duties. This resulted in inefficient municipalities. Respondents repeatedly expressed concerns about the way local infrastructure and services provided by the government failed to keep up with growth associated with tourism.

As the population grew and diversified, they demanded more and better services. Local governments were not prepared to deal with these demands, particularly when change arrived rapidly. This resulted in a community which lacked sufficient and adequate roads, health care facilities, recreation areas, financial institutions, and services including water and electricity:

Liberia used to be a town with a small population, few cars, few businesses, and one streetlight. Today, Liberia is a city, with an exponentially increased population, vehicles, and businesses, yet still only has one streetlight.
Additionally, informants often complained about the lack of capacity of government institutions to provide adequate protection from increasing levels of crime, vandalism, prostitution, and irregularities committed by foreign companies.

**Economic Capacity to Invest in Tourism Development**

As previously indicated, Liberia’s current situation is highly dependent on the biophysical and management characteristics of its natural resources. The arid and seasonal characteristics of the area coupled with land ownership concentrated in few hands, prevented the majority of Liberian’s from developing a solid economic base. This is particularly important in a province and nation which traditionally relied on agriculture and livestock production as a main economic source.

As tourism emerged in the area, very few Liberian’s were able to invest in businesses or activities that would have made them active participants in tourism development. This problem was heightened by their lack of land to use in establishing their own tourism-base businesses. As a result, many Liberian’s believed their role in such development consisted of providing cheap labor for the big foreign corporations or in the case of a few, the sale of their lands.

**Type of Tourism: Coastal Tourism - Sand, Sun, and Sea**

Often, Liberians (and La Fortunans) warned about the impacts resulting from the type of tourism developed. For many respondents, coastal tourism was associated with a more liberal, party-oriented mentality. According to Liberians interviewed such an environment promoted hedonistic types of recreation associated with sex, drugs, and alcohol. In some instances, respondents believed coastal tourism was associated with younger crowds, usually single individuals. In contrast, respondents believed the tourist who sought a mountain/forest type of tourism intrinsically seeks a mellower and more relaxed environment. An activity associated
with ecotourism, according to the respondents, was more commonly practiced by married couples, families, and retired individuals. Hence, according to the informants, the nature-seeker was more likely to behave and recreate in a quiet and respectful manner with the environment and local communities (see Ceballos-Lüscher, 1996). In such cases, the type of tourism practiced was less harmful to the environment and clashed less with community values and interests.

Extra-local Investment-based Tourism

Researchers have indicated the importance of developing tourism activities with locally driven investment (Sharpley and Telfer, 2002). Through it, locals have more control over the decision-making process while additionally leaving larger economic benefits within the community (Allen et al., 1998). Additionally, respondents believed foreign investors had no attachments to and did not care about the natural and social environment. This resulted in decisions that failed to account for the needs of the local population.

Many respondents doubted there were any real contributions from tourism because the large majority of the investment in tourism was foreign in nature. This resulted in economic benefits leaking to other areas or countries (see Mathieson and Wall, 1982; Kontogeorgopoulos, 1998; Telfer and Wall, 2000). Respondents believed large-scale foreign corporations made important decisions without regard to the opinion of the local population. This is reflected in Liberian’s lack of negotiation capacity. They are not stakeholders in tourism in the region reflecting their essentially non-existent financial role.
Facilitated Group Discussions: Liberia

As previously indicated, participants agreed with the findings from the KI interviews. However, they expressed interest in extending in certain topics. The topics relevant to phase two of the study are presented below.

Factors associated with successful tourism development

Group participants were interested in discussing the reasons why tourism has negatively affected their quality of life. They agreed the most important factors were lack of planning and preparation to manage and control tourism. Attendees noted how, before tourism, its advocates based their discourse on tourism’s benefits. However, tourism’s negative repercussions were never discussed. Because of this, measures were never taken to mitigate unwanted impacts. Unplanned change, according to the attendees, was blamed on the government’s incapacity to implement tourism-based educational campaigns to the population. According to attendees, this resulted in a community that did not understand tourism, its effects, and the ways to develop activities associated with successful development. Discussants noted how Liberians were not prepared and educated to understand how particular natural resources represented potential tourism value. For instance, as a traditionally rooted agriculture community, Liberians never gave valued to their land along the coast. Yet, tourism advocates never informed the about the importance of holding these lands, as it was highly valuable in a tourism context. Attendees discussed how different tourism chambers and the big hotel corporations never included Liberians in their planning. Commonly their decisions were made without public input.²⁹

²⁹ It is important to note how respondents indicated their awareness of some corporations engaged in strong social responsibility programs. This is particularly felt in recent years, as the outcomes of programs aimed at benefiting different communities in Guanacaste, are more evident.
As well, attendees believed the lack of governmental capacity to regulate tourism development resulted in detrimental outcomes in Liberia. A retired academic commenting on the reasons behind this incapacity added:

Where is the problem? The problem is that power is centralized in San José. All the resources are in San José. There are no organized efforts to provide valuable data that would allow for planning and organization in Liberia. What kind of community is Liberia? Is Liberia a place where people live, or is it a gateway community? Does people live here, or only sleeps here and works in other close-by areas? Has commerce and universities helped reach development? I don’t think so. What is happening here is a development that starts in the epicenter first [San José] and then to the outside. The commercial development that we are experiencing here is just an overflow from San José.

For instance, respondents often mentioned how Guanacaste is among the largest tourism regions in Costa Rica, yet the ICT (Board of Tourism) is located in San José. No ICT office exists in the province. Additionally, discussants blamed local governments for the unregulated and messy growth experienced in Liberia precipitated by a lack of regulated planning. Attendees indicated local governmental positions are filled by political preferences rather than by an individuals with knowledge and capacities.

Finally, attendees believed cultural traits were important factors associated with the negative outcomes experienced in Liberia. Often, attendees discussed the role of fear in investing in tourism by Liberians. This, according to attendants was associated with the effects of the hacienda culture. A discussant indicated such culture “castrated” the mentality of the Liberian because within the hacienda everything was given and Liberians did not accept the need to better themselves. They indicated Liberians do not wanted to move from a situation that lead to a conformist individual. Further, a discussant noted how a lack of care and love for the town had resulted in individualism. This is reflected in lack of community-wide efforts nor government commitment with the community. As a result, extra-local individuals and entities took advantage of the recent opportunities arising from tourism development.
Factors Associated with Successful Tourism Development: La Fortuna

Biophysical Factors

Access and management of natural resources provided La Fortunans with the subsistence and economic means for obtaining a secure desired quality of life. La Fortuna is located in an area known to have optimal climatic conditions for the development of subsistence agriculture. As indicated by respondents, La Fortuna has always been a very prosperous area. Mild climate, access to abundant water, and soil fertility (associated with minerals and nutrients expelled by the volcano) resulted in high agriculture and livestock yields, placing the Northern region of the country among the most productive areas of Costa Rica. Such biophysical conditions helped its residents establish an economic base that allowed the diversification of traditional activities to tourism. A farmer commented on the relationship between having access to land, farming, and being prosperous in La Fortuna and how this relationship is now linked to tourism:

The one who had farms in the past, had money. The one who lives off tourism is the one that has money now.

Coupled with this, in La Fortuna, land has traditionally been more equally distributed than in other parts of the country like Guanacaste. Land access to a larger number of residents deterred concentration of economic benefits in the hands of few. A hotel owner who has lived in La Fortuna all his life expressed how land concentration differed in the area in contrast to Guanacaste:

For a reason that I can’t explain, in La Fortuna we never had big extensions of land owned by few individuals. What we had here from the beginning was a good distribution of land in hands of everyone - small farms with large families. The first settlers did not keep large extensions of land, perhaps because it was virgin forests and mountain and was very hard to work. Families had a lot of sons. That is how land was divided. Also the first peasant settlement in the country happened here. Here is where land started being divided into small parcels so there was no chance of having big extensions of land in few hands. Even those large farms, which still were not as large as in Guanacaste, were divided as they were inherited. The other condition that happened here is that people who
owned the land here lived here, they were born here, they lived here, and died here. In contrast, in Guanacaste, the owners of the land were not from there, they lived in San José or somewhere else and just owned those large extensions of land. Here people owned the land and they worked it themselves with their sons, they did not have a lot of employees because they lived inside the property and they worked it themselves.

Sociocultural Factors

Entrepreneurial Capacity

According to respondents, La Fortunans were entrepreneurial in nature. This, according to them, reflected their culture. When the first colonizers arrived in La Fortuna, they battled nature to set up a town. Several La Fortunans, especially the sons of the first colonizers, noted that in La Fortuna nothing was given. Their fathers had to clear the mountain to be able to develop agriculture they needed for subsistence. From its onset, they had to find ways to create desirable living conditions. Such characteristics generated in La Fortunans a mentality of hard work. Furthermore, informants noted how the adverse conditions promoted a capacity for dealing with uncertainty and building the best from it. This resulted in what Fortunan KIs believed was their entrepreneurial capacity.

This capacity allowed La Fortunans to utilize the resources at hand (i.e., land, aesthetic beauty of the area, and economic resources resulting from successful agricultural and cattle activities) to transition to tourism. Such transition was slow and planned through the information provided by direct communication with other community members who valued the importance of community-wide interaction.

Community Agency

Since its beginnings, Fortunans have stressed the importance of building a community in contrast to just a locality. The first settlers of La Fortunans donated land for the creation of the community. Those first families donated the land to create the school, church, and central plaza
of town. Residents understood the value of having common areas for the development of community-wide projects. Today La Fortuna, according to respondents, was characterized by numerous groups of community organizations sharing the interest of the whole community. Such values, according to respondents, have been part of the guiding ideas of Fortunans, reflected in strong community agency.

Respondents were aware of their strong capacity to respond to change as a community. Fortunans believed, at least during the initial stages of tourism development, the capacity to interact and communicate among community members was strong. Such strong agency resulted in community-wide efforts that allowed La Fortunan’s to make decisions reflecting their needs and goals. An ADIFORT representative commented on the importance of community:

Goals are highly associated with the level of participation of single persons and companies with the community. If individuals lock themselves in their own world and forget that there are community associations to which they have to belong and collaborate, that would deter the process. On the other hand, as individuals become engaged to at least one community organization, things would work nicely.

Oh yes. If you actively participate…you can see it here, we wouldn’t have a gym, we wouldn’t have a soccer field, a running track, a cemetery, a park…that requires community participation. As long as I do not want to participate, the town goes backward. But if we all participate in all the projects we are developing. If we stay enclosed in our houses and see development pass by the street and no one will hear what are your needs and what is your intellectual contribution. That is one’s duty as a professional. If you have gone to a university, especially a public one, your duty is to return something to the town.

Such attitudes and behaviors materialized in the creation of La Fortuna’s Community Development Association (ADIFORT). This organization is considered among the strongest in Costa Rica. ADIFORT obtained its funds from entrance fees to a local waterfall. This waterfall was purchased by ADIFORT prior to the tourism boom. Recently ADIFORT obtained land which was developed to obtain funds from monthly rents. ADIFORT’s main objective is to
improve the living conditions for La Fortunans and neighboring communities (see institutional capacity to respond to change below).

Furthermore, in La Fortuna there were other key elements strengthening community agency, including good communication. Residents often referred to important key decisions made at the community level which were approved and adopted by the large majority. Barriers to interaction were reduced in La Fortuna as informants reported no culture clash with immigrants. Several informants commented on La Fortunans tolerance and acceptance of others:

There is no culture clash in Fortuna, everyone is accepted as long as they know how to adjust. The Fortunan is not a person who displaces others. (Lawyer)

Around 40-50% of the employees are Nicaraguan. They are treated as equals. They are hard workers. (Hotel owner)

They are welcomed because we, from La Fortuna, are very open people, very generous, there is a lot of solidarity, and the people who come from other places do not know those values. (Sales clerk)

Planning

La Fortunan KIs believed their late adoption of tourism allowed them an opportunity to better plan for it (at least for the problems faced in the early stages of tourism development). This way they could learn from the mistakes and failures made by other localities which had developed tourism. Further, access to information, according to respondents, led them to plan better for the desired development conditions. A local hotel owner and active member of La Fortuna’s Community Development Association (ADIFORT) noted:

Ten years ago we were immersed in the tourism boom. The hotel construction phenomenon was still insipient but you could see it coming. We learned as we go. We had the great advantage that we entered the tourism activity two years after the rest of the country did. So when the big investors came to buy land we had already learned from the experience of other areas that sold their land at very low prices. This was the case of coastal areas that sold their land to foreigners at a very low price. So when they came here, we told them: “yes, we sell but at this price” (very high price) so they did not buy.
They waited for us to sink and we didn’t, we developed our project ourselves. Currently, around 95% of the investment in La Fortuna is local.

Currently, respondents questioned whether proper planning has been conducted. This was particularly thought after the recognition of recent impacts on participation and family values in La Fortuna. New efforts are being designed in La Fortuna to cope with these new emerging issues.

**Socioeconomic and Sociodemographic Factors**

**Institutional Capacity to Respond to Change**

As the demand for more and better services increased resulting from the changing conditions brought by tourism, ADIFORT provided its residents with the capacity to improve its services. Governments commonly performed such tasks, yet La Fortunan’s understood the limitations characteristic of Costa Rica’s institutions. Therefore, La Fortunan’s took the matter into their own hand by developing ADIFORT. In some instances, collaborating with the local municipality, ADIFORT improved services including roads, trash collection, security, and social responsibility with other communities. Commonly respondents indicated how ADIFORT provided the funds, materials, or labor to improve conditions that stressed services in La Fortuna resulting from its growing population.

**Economic Capacity to Invest in Tourism Development**

The area’s prosperity, associated with its biophysical conditions, allowed La Fortunans to develop successful agriculture, livestock, and dairy activities. Such activities provided many Fortunans with the capacity to live prosperously. Furthermore, for many, such conditions allowed the generation of an economic base that provided the economic means to invest in the initial tourism-based activities. Such activities revolved around the hotel industry. Often, respondents indicated how many dairy producers built one or two small cabins on their land. As
more tourists visited the area, more cabins were built. At that point, the need for larger investment was necessary. Following their entrepreneurial nature, coupled with their understanding of the importance of developing tourism by themselves, La Fortunans quickly applied for credit to enlarge their tourism infrastructure.

Access to Credit

Coupled with the economic capacity that many Fortunans had resulting from successful agricultural and livestock production, they also had available credit to diversify or transfer to tourism-based development. Often La Fortunans referred to the role the National Banking system played in their development. As credit became easy and widely available for investment, tourism-based projects were developed. Of particular importance is the fact that 84% of the investment resulted from national and/or local residents (Damazio et al., 2006).

Type of Tourism: Mountain-based Tourism

According to many of the respondents, the type of tourism practiced in La Fortuna attracts friendlier tourists, more conscious, and more interested in interacting with nature. Fortunans believed the type of tourists visiting them were interested in a quiet and calmer environment where they relaxed, meditated, and connected with nature. Their interests were oriented towards appreciation of the environment and time spent with loves ones. In contrast, they believed coastal tourism was associated with party, drugs, hedonism, and liberal behaviors.

Locally-driven Investment

According to the informants, local ownership was an essential element for successful tourism development. Because of it, individuals showed strong desires to succeed. They had a personal interest in growing and seeing the benefits from their hard work. Additionally, owning the local resources allowed Fortunans to have a stronger voice when deciding the way in which
the town was going to be developed. According to some respondents, this was important because those with the capacity to change the town cared for it, resulting in decisions aimed at bettering their neighbors and themselves. A local entrepreneur commented on the advantages of local investment:

> When investment is local, from individuals that have been born and raised in the community, they have a sense of belonging, which allows an easy coordination with the government actors to control drugs, prostitution…and so those problems do not expand. We also deter any kind of activities that are associated with these types of malaises including night clubs, discos…all that. There is a conscience among all the investors to stop these kind of things from happening here. In contrast we promote a more sustainable tourism, focused on adventure and nature, ecological. That is what we have been working on.

**Facilitated Group Discussions: La Fortuna**

The topics discussed by attendees in the facilitated group discussion in La Fortuna revolved around aspects associated with phase one of this study. Attendees agreed with the findings from the KI interviews, and provided greater insights on their perception of topics related to the impacts of tourism. No particular topics associated with the factors and processes of tourism were brought up in the discussion.

**Processes Associated with Successful Tourism Development**

In addition to understanding the factors associated with successful tourism development, the processes involved need to be examined. The capacity of each community to shape the way their quality of life was affected was the result of the processes experienced in each community. Improved well-being, according to Wilkinson (1991), was a reflection of the capacity to engage in successful community development strategies. This requires development *in* the and *of* community (i.e., sustenance and community) both capable of affecting the quality of life of local populations (Summers, 1986). As a result, processes associated with structural and interactional changes are needed to attain development beyond that associated with economic growth. The
processes leading to divergent impacts affected quality of life in each community included
gaining access to and management of resources, developing a capacity to control and manage
changing conditions, and developing a capacity to respond to changing conditions. These
processes are detailed below.

Gaining Access and Management of Resources

Access to resources, according to Wilkinson (1991), provided the capacity of local
populations to meet their material needs. Shuman (1998) believed sustenance should and could
occur locally through self-reliance.\textsuperscript{30} Self-reliance is of particular importance for community
survival according to Shragge (1997:7) because:

\ldots global economic forces and the internationalization of markets have proven to
have devastating consequences on community life. In many areas the industrial
base has been wiped out and little has replaced it except a growing service sector
that, at best, provides low-wage, unstable employment.

According to Shuman (1998), sustenance should be accomplished by the establishment of
productive, financial, and commercial institutions. This could occur through the promotion of
needs-driven industries (goods and services), community corporations, and community-
development financial institutions (Shuman, 1998; Shragge, 1997). Through locally driven
industries, commerce, and financial institutions, local communities could develop the required
economic base that could potentially lead to sustainable outcomes. Such an approach seeks to
change the structure of a community while building permanent institutions owned and managed
locally (Shragge, 1997). Having control over the mechanisms of production and distribution
would allow for the formation of capital needed for self-reliance.

In resource dependent communities, such as these, access to natural resources is
associated with improved economic conditions. Particularly in a tourism-based context, these

\textsuperscript{30} Self-reliance here does not equate to being completely auto sufficient but means having the economic capacity for
local actors to produce and trade without being limited by extra-local constraints.
resources include land and the economic means to invest in direct and indirect tourism-related businesses (see Figure 4). For tourism to become a development tool for rural communities, resources must be accessed and appropriated. Without access to these resources, rural communities face challenges for successfully improving their quality of life. Wilkinson (1991:94) added: “rural deficits in resources for meeting needs are a powerful barrier to community development and well-being.”

La Fortunans understood, from the onset, that land ownership and management provided them with the capacity to control and manage the economic benefits resulting associated with tourism. This is particularly the case in an amenity-rich area which utilizes its natural resources to create ways of sustenance. In La Fortuna, residents kept the land they owned and used it to develop tourism-based projects. Land tenure allowed them to have the economic means (resulting from successful agriculture and livestock production prior to tourism) and the spatial location to establish tourism-based businesses. Coupled with their entrepreneurial skills, La Fortunans established businesses directly and indirectly associated with tourism. This not only resulted in larger economic benefits for the locals, but also provided the capacity to control, to a large extent, the direction of changing conditions in the community.

In contrast, the majority of Liberians did not own the land or possess the economic resources to develop tourism-based enterprises. The few that owned land, sold it to extra-local investors. Further, lack of entrepreneurial skills and limited or no access to capital deterred them from successfully establishing tourism enterprises. As a result, in Liberia, tourism resources were owned and managed by extra-local corporations. According to Lepp (2007), the major setback associated with dependence on foreign invested tourism development is a significant percentage of tourism revenues flowing out of the locality. This reduced the level of economic benefits for
Liberians. Additionally, since tourism is the main source of change, absenteeism from ownership and management wrested Liberian’s ability to control change in their community.

**Developing a Capacity to Control and Manage Changing Conditions**

Past research evidenced the ways in which tourism impacted communities (Frederick, 1992; Swarbrooke, 1999; Coccossis, 2004). Population and infrastructural changes can affect rural communities in many ways beyond what the local population desires.

For tourism to be a successful community development tool (i.e., improving local quality of life), locals must have the capacity to control and manage changing conditions. Such capacity results, to a large extent, from ownership and management of those elements promoting change. Such ownership indicates an economic capacity to invest in tourism development. Additionally, residents have the capacity to control and manage change through planning and agency. A strongly knit community empowers communities and allows them to direct change. Ownership, management, planning, and agency lead to locally driven tourism development which provides the capacity to control and manage changing conditions (see Figure 4).

As seen in La Fortuna, locally driven decisions were commonly achieved. The importance of owning and managing local resources was evidenced in residents’ planning and promotion of actions preventing extra-locally driven tourism development. Through communication and active involvement with other residents coupled with the leadership role taken by ADIFORT (all components of community agency), La Fortunans were able to promote desired development strategies. La Fortunans were also highly involved, through ADIFORT, in the design and maintenance of their main plaza, streets signaling and organization, the provision of resources to local law enforcement entities to increase security, and cleanliness of town. Currently, ADIFORT was constructing a water treatment plant for La Fortuna. In addition, La
Fortunans consistently mentioned their opposition to the establishment of tourism enterprises dedicated to gaming, gambling, and sex.

Liberians, on the other hand, lacked the capacity to control the changing conditions of their community. This lack of ownership, management, planning, and agency led to extra-locally driven tourism development. The lack of economic and intellectual capacity to plan and develop tourism-based enterprises coupled to reduced participation, culture clash with migrants, a marked polarization of classes, and reduced communion, resulted in a very different tourism outcome. Extra-local tourism development wrested Liberian’s capacity to control changing conditions. According to the respondents, many of these corporations’ headquarters were outside Costa Rica. As a result, most were not interested in addressing local population’s needs and desires according to Liberian’s perceptions.

Liberia experienced the imposition of new infrastructure and regulations which was resented. Often, respondents indicated their frustration towards controlled beach access and towards the construction of mega projects believed to destroy and/or pollute their natural resources. Additionally, Liberians commented on their discontent with the conditions and organization of local streets, which lacked proper signaling and maintenance.

The capacity to control and manage changing controllable conditions is key for residents to shape the way tourism development affects their locality. However, there are other non-controllable conditions associated with tourism development which inevitably produce unexpected and unwanted changes. For tourism to become a successful development strategy, a capacity to respond to such changing conditions is also necessary.
Developing a Capacity to Respond to Change

Extra-local or non-controllable forces impose many changes on a community according to Wilkinson (1991). He added:

Without denying that community development is a process of local action, one must recognize that this process in rural areas often is constrained more by factors at the national, and international levels than by factors at the local level. Expecting the rural community to solve its own problems without changing the larger society blames the victims in its own way (1991:93).

For tourism to successfully serve as a development tool leading to improved quality of life, it must be coupled with the mechanisms to cope with changing conditions. Changing conditions are the result of unexpected or imposed changes. Response to changing conditions should be an effort carried out by public institutions and the community (see Figure 4).

Successful tourism development requires an efficient government role. For this to occur, governments must go beyond simply providing the resources to invest in tourism-based strategies and/or attractions (see Urry, 2002). It also needs to provide the sufficient economic, human, infrastructure, and educational resources to cope with growing and changing conditions associated with tourism-based growth. Further, the government should encourage those elements necessary for the community’s establishment of community-oriented efforts.

It is important to recognize that such effort must be met at various levels. National level institutions and regulations should interact with and acknowledge regional and local needs in order to better plan and respond to tourism-driven changes. This is particularly the case when recognizing that tourism, more than an economic activity, is a social phenomena (Burns, 1999).

Consistently in both communities, respondents indicated their discontent with the role of the government. At the national level, respondents recognized the government’s focus on promoting Costa Rica as a tourism destination. Yet, according to residents of both communities,
few institutions extended their efforts at providing the resources to cope with the growing demand of services. At the local level, residents of Liberia and La Fortuna indicated how the government failed to provide more resources to respond to their changing conditions.

In Liberia, the government failed, according to respondents, to provide the economic, organizational, human resources, and appropriate community-oriented environment to respond to changes brought about by population and economic growth there. This was also the case in La Fortuna. In the latter community, however, many of the public institution’s duties were assumed by ADIFORT. In other instances, ADIFORT acted in collaboration with the local government to engage in projects aimed at fulfilling local needs. As a result, changing and growing demands were met and resulted in infrastructural improvements, organization, and general community cleanliness there.

In addition, for tourism to become an activity which improves the quality of life of rural localities, the community needs to be actively engaged in the planning and execution of its programs. These programs must be aimed at the creation of mechanisms responsible for responding to the changing conditions associated with tourism-driven change. Nyaupane et al. (2006) indicated local involvement was necessary because locals have a historical understanding of how the region adapts to change, are the ones most closely affected by tourism, and are expected to become integral part of the tourism product. An actively involved community aiming at improving well-being, requires well-established communication, participation, tolerance, distributive justice, and communion (Wilkinson, 1991).

All these elements were present in La Fortuna, particularly during the early stages of tourism development. Through communication and participation, La Fortunans were able to design mechanisms aimed at responding to change. Communication, according to La Fortunans,
was strong at early tourism stages, when residents knew each other and to some extent were related to each other. Such linkages provided the mechanisms to establish formal and informal associations. The most prominent formal association in la Fortuna was ADIFORT which quickly became the entity in town focused on developing the community. Membership in ADIFORT was open to any resident of La Fortuna, and at least during tourism’s early stages, there was widespread local participation. ADIFORT provided leadership, a key element in community development (Wilkinson, 1991). ADIFORT also had the economic, human, and intellectual capacity to provide solutions for the problems arising from population and economic growth.

In La Fortuna, communion and tolerance were also present. Residents communicated with other long-term residents as well as newcomers. As indicated by many, foreigners were welcomed as long as they had desires and aspirations for personal and communal improvement. As a result, La Fortunans often noted how long-term residents and newcomers were immersed in tourism, resulting in evenly distributed wealth among different actors. According to those interviewed, only people with no desire to better themselves did not realize benefits from tourism. Distributive justice, as noted by Wilkinson (1991:67):

… facilitates communication and encourage affirmative, accurate, and interpersonal responses.

In contrast, Liberia lacked efficient channels of communication, participation, tolerance, distributive justice, and communion. Little evidence was provided in the interviews of successful groups of Liberians promoting local participation toward the overall betterment of the community. Further, respondents indicated their lack of communication, communion, and tolerance with newcomers, particularly Nicaraguans. Nicaraguans are the largest group of in-migrants in Costa Rica.
limited the ability of residents of a community to engage in successful development efforts (Wilkinson, 1991:97):

Inequality is a barrier to the free flow of authentic interaction among people whose lives are interconnected in a local society, and community development depends upon – indeed, occurs within – and an unrestrained process of social interaction.

The lack of mechanisms promoting communication, interaction, and by extension, participation, limited Liberia’s capacity to organize and find solutions for emerging problems. Respondents could not refer to active efforts providing solutions to the problems of conditioned access to beaches, infrastructural disorganization, and reduced participation in tourism-based efforts. In addition, there was no evidence of plans to coordinate efforts among public institutions. This was reflected in the respondent’s lack of knowledge about the key actors and programs within the municipality. This resulted in a lack of capacity to organize and design strategies to respond to the changing conditions in Liberia.

Overall, the processes leading to different outcomes in each community’s quality of life relied on local abilities associated with economic and organizational capacities. Such resources allow communities to establish mechanisms to control and respond to tourism’s impacts.

Summary Phase Two

To compliment the findings from phase one and to increase our understanding of the different outcomes tourism has had on Liberia and La Fortuna’s quality of life, I examined the factors and processes associated with successful tourism development.

A closer examination of the primary data collected from KI interviews and facilitated group discussions suggested Liberia experienced economic growth yet lacks the necessary conditions for promoting development. On the other hand, La Fortuna experienced growth and
development which was reflected in the forms of more and better jobs, distributive justice, reduced poverty, tolerance, and sustainable relationships with the environment.

Biophysical characteristics and the way land was distributed in each community was reflected in resident’s sociocultural and socioeconomic traits. Coupled with managerial, planning, and community organizational capacities, the economic capacity to invest in tourism was also found to be an essential factor for successful tourism development. In Liberia, this resulted in reduced ownership and management of local resources, incapacity to control and manage change, and a reduced capacity to respond to changing conditions. In La Fortuna, this resulted in ownership and management of local resources, a strong capacity to control and manage change, and capacity to respond to changing conditions.
Figure 4. Factors and processes associated with improved quality of life.
Chapter Six
Discussion

Rural amenity-rich communities in the world have experienced dramatic changes in the usage and management of their natural endowments. Coupled with declining reliance on extractive activities, many of these locations have promoted tourism for economic development.

Past research and popular accounts recognized tourism as changing the economic, social, and environmental, characteristics of a country and its communities. Changing conditions responded to the characteristics of the actors, settings, and types of tourism practiced coupled with conditions of the host locality. As a result, some countries and communities benefit from tourism and others experience negative consequences.

National level secondary data suggested Costa Rica experienced economic growth in its labor market as it shifted from extractive industries to tourism-related jobs. Additionally, growth increased infrastructure and access to services. This was particularly evident after the 1990s when tourism promotion strategies were incorporated by the country. Nevertheless, the country’s social indicators provided a less optimistic scenario. While education and literacy improved, safety, religious participation, equity, and overall human development decreased. On environmental matters, the few existing indicators suggested increased conservation efforts materialized in increased areas dedicated for preservation, forest recovery, responsible forest management, These efforts have resulted in several pro-environmental awards. Development goals including reduction of unemployment, poverty, and inequality reduction were not met.

At the regional level, both Chorotega and the Northern Huetar regions experienced mixed economic, social, and environmental changes with tourism. Consistent with national level data, both regions experienced reduced unemployment, increased incomes, education, and
construction rates. Occupation rates, household poverty, poverty gap, and inequality data were
contradictory with national level data for both regions. Different levels of measurement between
national and regional data explained such inconsistencies. The lack of comparative data at the
regional level contributed to the tentative nature of the conclusions. Despite these limitations,
what data is available consistently characterized the Northern Huetar region as in better
condition than Chorotega region.

District level data presented mixed information when compared with national and
regional level data. While available data suggested improvements in certain aspects of Liberia
and La Fortuna at the district level, there was not enough information to provide a conclusive
assessment. However, the data suggested Liberia consistently had better economic and social
indicators than La Fortuna. This is particularly inconsistent with regional data which placed La
Fortuna’s region (Northern Huetar) in better shape than Liberia’s region (Chorotega). Again, the
different levels of data aggregation help explain this discrepancy. These inconsistencies led to
the need to examine primary data on the consequences of tourism on the study communities.

An examination of the primary data suggested both communities experienced economic
growth resulting from tourism development. In Liberia, this growth was primarily promoted by
extra-local investors. In La Fortuna, economic growth was mainly promoted by locals. For both
communities’ residents, tourism has been a positive source of change when focusing on its
economic impacts (see Table 27). As well, both communities’ respondents expressed concerns
about the negative social impacts of tourism. La Fortunans indicated their social problems were
still at early stages, however, and they were perceived as being controllable (see Table 27).

The environmental impacts of tourism differed between Liberia and La Fortuna. In
Liberia, residents often expressed their concern about the perceived rapid deterioration of their
biophysical environment. In contrast, La Fortunans perceived a growing sense of environmental awareness leading to improvements in pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (see Table 27).

**Table 27.** Impacts of tourism in Liberia and La Fortuna, Costa Rica.

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<tr>
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<th>Liberia</th>
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<th>La Fortuna</th>
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<td><strong>Economic</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Employment</strong></td>
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<td>Creation of jobs</td>
<td>Increased prices*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Poorly paid jobs*</td>
<td>Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign currency*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Well paid jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved services*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Equity</td>
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<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td>Education*</td>
<td>Education*</td>
<td>Prostitution</td>
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<td>Cultural exchange*</td>
<td>Loss of values</td>
<td>Second language*</td>
<td>Crime</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural exchange*</td>
<td>Loss of culture</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-traditional behavior</td>
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<td>Cultural exchange*</td>
<td>Crime*</td>
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<td>Loss family integration</td>
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<td>Cultural exchange*</td>
<td>Loss of culture</td>
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<td>Loss of values</td>
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<td>Depletion of natural resources</td>
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<td>Cultural exchange*</td>
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<td>Cultural exchange*</td>
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<td>Depletion of natural resources</td>
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<td>Cultural exchange*</td>
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<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
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<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Depletion of natural resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blue flag</td>
<td>caused by construction pressure*</td>
<td>conscience</td>
<td>caused by construction pressure*</td>
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<tr>
<td>certifications*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pro-environmental</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pollution</td>
<td></td>
<td>Behaviors</td>
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</table>

* Impacts mentioned on few occasions. Impacts in **bold** reflect those perceived having a stronger effect.

Generally, Liberians perceived tourism as having a negative impact on quality of life there. In contrast, La Fortunans expressed a positive perception of the changes brought by tourism to their quality of life.

Primary and secondary data were triangulated so as to develop stronger conclusions about the consequences of tourism on the study communities. In general terms, the data reflected certain inconsistencies among primary and secondary data, and among different levels of secondary data. Inconsistencies were attributed to insufficient data, different levels of data aggregation, different purposes of the data, and the different periods of time they were collected.
Particularly when comparing secondary with primary data, problems were heightened at district level where data is extremely scarce and dated in Costa Rica.

Nevertheless, triangulation provided sufficient data suggesting Liberia and La Fortuna experienced economic growth. This was reflected in the creation of more and better paid jobs in a tourism-based economy which shifted jobs from crop and cattle production to hotel, restaurant, transportation and construction. Additionally, this was reflected in increased and improved infrastructure. However, the data also indicated Liberia experienced increased polarization which could be the result of economic leakages. The data also indicated La Fortuna experienced development. This was reflected in equity, poverty reduction, and sustainable relationships with the environment.

The conditions leading to such divergent outcomes are discussed here. In Liberia, change occurred at a fast pace. Change brought by tourism, according to the informants, was heightened after the opening of an international airport in Liberia. Rapid change did not allow Liberian’s to understand, plan, and act in response to the changes associated with tourism-based growth.

For the Liberian, tourism and the change brought by it was imposed and whose major contribution was the creation of jobs and income generation. However, since extra-local corporations controlled tourism development, Liberians complained about economic leakages. Extra-local investment resulted in less economic contributions to the local economy, and low-end job opportunities for them. Overall, Liberians believed they did not have the economic, educational, organizational, or political capacity to participate in tourism. These deficiencies resulted from Liberia’s biophysical, sociocultural, and socioeconomic and sociodemographic conditions (see Table 28).
Table 28. Factors associated with successful tourism development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biophysical</th>
<th>Liberia</th>
<th>La Fortuna</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorable aesthetic characteristics</td>
<td></td>
<td>Favorable aesthetic characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adverse agricultural characteristics</td>
<td>Adverse agricultural characteristics</td>
<td>Favorable agricultural characteristics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of access to water</td>
<td>Access to water</td>
<td>Equitable land distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Land concentration</td>
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| Sociocultural                                  |                                               |                                             |
| Lack of entrepreneurial capacity                | Entrepreneurial capacity                      |                                             |
| Lack of community agency                        | Community agency                              |                                             |
| Lack of planning                                | Planning                                      |                                             |

| Socioeconomic                                 |                                               |                                             |
| Sociodemographic                              |                                               |                                             |
| Lack of institutional capacity to respond to change | Institutional capacity to respond to change |                                             |
| Lack of economic capacity to invest in tourism  | Economic capacity to invest in tourism        | Access to credit                             |

| Coastal tourism                                | Mountain-based tourism                        |                                             |
| Extra-local investment                         | Local investment                              |                                             |

In Liberia, the biophysical environmental characteristics and their management did not translate into an established economic base for the majority. The adverse climatic and geographical conditions of the area, coupled with restricted water access, resulted in limited, seasonal job opportunities for Liberians. Additionally, Liberia experienced historical land concentration in the hands of few latifundistas. These conditions resulted in a Liberian with low or no economic means to appropriate resources that could potentially have been directed at developing tourism-oriented efforts.

Further, this land concentrated pours in few hands and this had more than just material and economic repercussions. As suggested by Liberians (and Fortunans and other Costa Ricans), the latifundio played a huge role in defining the sociocultural character of the Liberian.

Such sociocultural characteristics also played a key role in Liberia’s tourism development process. Respondents agreed Liberians were passive, conformist, and lacked entrepreneurial
capacity, community agency, and planning skills. Each of these would have enabled them to take a more active role in local tourism development. Additionally, barriers to communication reflected in a lack of knowledge about their neighbors and in a culture clash with immigrants, deterred community interaction possibilities necessary for the implementation of community-wide efforts (see Wilkinson, 1991). All of these characteristics led to local absenteeism when developing tourism-based enterprises. As a result, extra-local corporations in Liberia drove tourism-based development. This, according to respondents, limited Liberian’s capacity to manage change according to their regulations, needs, and wants.

Informants also discussed the role coastal tourism played in affecting their quality of life. According to Liberians, coastal tourism was often associated with prostitution, drugs, and, to some extent, crime. Such activities resulted in negative effects on their social life. This particularly affected younger generations, according to the respondents. This age group is commonly attracted to what they believe are “newer and exciting things.”

As these activities have worsened, local public institutions did little in response. The government’s and municipality’s lack of response to change and the high demands generated by population growth in Liberia, was reflected in reduced number of law enforcement officials and irregularities in managing and controlling construction projects. Inefficiency to respond to infrastructural change was also the case in Liberia, reflected in the poor conditions of the roads, inefficient trash collection system, and overall limited capacity to provide adequate services.

La Fortuna experienced different outcomes than Liberian after the adoption of tourism. This is, to a large extent, the reflection of the community’s direct involvement in tourism development. According to respondents, tourism-driven change came to La Fortuna in a late and progressive manner in comparison to other localities in Costa Rica. This provided Fortunans with
the opportunity to plan and develop organized tourism efforts locally. Efforts materialized around local ownership and management of tourism-based resources and jobs. This led to larger and better distributed economic benefits and a stronger capacity to decide the direction of changing conditions in the community. Often respondents mentioned how the community as a whole made important decisions, including negotiating the sale of land. This is consistent with research suggesting successful tourism development depends on a community’s management of its own economic activities (Allen et al., 1988, 1993; Lankford, 1994).

In La Fortuna, locally-driven tourism reflected its biophysical, sociocultural, and socioeconomic and sociodemographic characteristics (see Table 28). The rich soils, good climatic conditions, and access to water allowed La Fortunans to develop successful agricultural, livestock, and dairy production practices which provided the means of sustenance. Furthermore, the region’s prosperity allowed La Fortunans to generate a surplus for use in diversifying its economy. Prosperity reached many as land in La Fortuna was well distributed among residents. This resulted in more equitable opportunities for residents to engage in traditional activities and in tourism-based efforts.

Tourism-based efforts were successful in La Fortuna, to a large extent, as a result of its resident’s entrepreneurial and planning capabilities. These skills, according to La Fortunan’s, were developed by the town’s colonizers and ancestors, who to devised mechanisms to provide appropriate living conditions in an underdeveloped and heavily forested region.

La Fortuna, was established under community-oriented principles. From its onset, the first colonizers promoted the creation of community by donating land for the construction of a church, main central plaza (now a park), and school. Its founders clearly understood and promoted community-oriented principles and institutions. Until recently, La Fortunas placed
strong emphasis on participating in community-wide associations. As a result, when tourism development started in La Fortuna, residents participated in numerous efforts promoting desired strategies. These strategies were aimed at incorporating the community and its needs in tourism development. This provided La Fortunans with agency, resulting in resident’s capacity to manage change. According to the informants, this provided the local citizens with a capacity to better plan and overcome any obstacles encountered. A respondent elaborated on this theme when comparing their experience with that of coastal towns:

Compared to the coastal areas, there has been more time to plan. Additionally, people are more united here. First, people communicated and shared about the positives and negatives of tourism. This is the social level found in a cattle/agricultural town that does not exist in a costal town. Second intellectually, the obstacles placed by farming and agriculture forced us to be ingenious, forced us to think in contrast to fishing environment. Hence interaction and education helped.

Fortunans socioeconomic and sociodemographic conditions allowed them to diversify their traditional activities and promote locally driven tourism. The economic capacity to engage tourism was key to its successful development. Having the economic means allowed La Fortunans to establish the enterprises to develop tourism. As travel flows into La Fortuna expanded, larger investment was necessary to fulfill the growing demand for businesses and hotels. Banking institutions then provided the required capital. Credit availability aided the local entrepreneurial development in La Fortuna.

In addition, in La Fortuna, the local development association (ADIFORT) provided the economic (and intellectual) means to respond to changing conditions. As a result, projects were designed and implemented to fulfill the growing demand created by population growth. These included improving local roads, increasing and improving infrastructure, establishing several social responsibility projects (i.e., donations to local and neighboring schools and communities), designing and implementing a water treatment plant, and improving waste management and
recycling strategies. ADIFORT took over, by itself or by working collaboratively with institutions, many functions commonly tied to public institutions (i.e., trash collection, road improvements).

The tourism practiced in La Fortuna also played a role in defining its positive outcomes. Mountain tourism, according to respondents, was associated with less harmful practices for the community. It was associated with a more relaxed, quiet tourist in search of a meaningful interaction with the volcano and its surroundings. According to respondents, such individuals and the activities they pursued were associated with interactions with flora, fauna, and a pristine local population in contrast to the perceived hedonistic environment promoted by coastal tourism.

The processes that led such factors into successful development outcomes were associated with how each community gained access to resources, developed a capacity to manage and control change, and developed a capacity to respond to changing conditions. These mechanisms resulted from the community’s ownership, management, planning, and interactional characteristics. As a result, communities which engaged such processes experienced positive outcomes on their quality of life. Elements including communication, tolerance, distributive justice, communion, and participation are essential for communities to establish the right mechanisms for successful tourism development. The lack of these elements created barriers for successful tourism development in Liberia. In contrast, in La Fortuna the engagement in such processes contributed to the improvement of living conditions in an equitable and sustainable way.

Divergent processes in each community resulted in these opposite outcomes. In La Fortuna, access and management of local resources, a strong capacity to manage and control
changing conditions, and the capacity to respond to changing conditions resulted in a perceived improvement of quality of life. In contrast, Liberians lacked ownership and control of resources, the ability to control change, and the capacity to respond to change. As a result, quality of life in Liberia was perceived as being negatively affected by tourism’s implementation.

Summary

Growth and development were measured in this study by the different ways tourism impacted society. These impacts were measured differently through primary data – via key informants interviews and facilitated group discussions – and secondary data – via national, regional, and district level data. In general, data triangulation suggested La Fortuna had improved its quality of life following the adoption of tourism. In contrast, Liberia had experienced more limited economic growth. To further understand the reasons for such divergent outcomes, a deeper examination of the factors and processes associated with successful tourism development was conducted.

Local conditions and processes resulted in different outcomes for rural communities that gambled on tourism as a form of sustenance. In Liberia, past biophysical conditions and distribution, and current local capacities to manage and respond change resulted in extra-locally driven tourism. This wrested Liberians capacity to manage and control change. In contrast, La Fortuna was characterized by locally driven tourism development. Under such circumstances, not only were the economic benefits of tourism kept within the community, but also the capacity to direct change resided there as well. Furthermore, improved living conditions resulted from community capacity to respond to changing needs. As the demand for more and better infrastructure and services grew, Fortunans were better able to cope. Under such conditions, residents of La Fortuna provided favorable assessments of their perceived quality of life.
Chapter Seven
Summary, Conclusions, and Implications

Changes resulting from tourism were explored in this study using a growth and development framework. While economic growth is an essential element for community betterment, by itself growth can be disruptive and divisive (Wilkinson, 1991). However, under particular conditions, growth can serve as a springboard for development. In this study, development was the capacity to reach desired goals (i.e., reduced unemployment and poverty, equity, self-reliance, social civility, and long-term relationships with the natural environment). At the local level, goals are achieved as community members interact and work in collaboration. These efforts contributed to the ability to govern itself through collective actions, resulting in improved quality of life.

The case studies of Liberia and La Fortuna, Costa Rica, provided a lens through which we came to better understand the ways tourism-driven growth affected local quality of life. Tourism’s impacts and the processes involved in its development resulted in divergent perceptions in each community. My intent was to identify core elements and mechanisms leading to successful tourism development, defined in this study as that which improves community resident’s quality of life.

In Liberia, tourism served as a catalyst for growth and was reflected in increased jobs and income generation. This growth also resulted in improved infrastructure and service provision. Together, these improvements resulted in better means for meeting Liberian’s local material needs. However, economic growth in Liberia had limitations, especially those associated with resident’s inability to take advantage of tourism derived economic benefits. Failure was tied to a lack of active involvement in developing, owning, and managing tourism-based businesses.
Further, economic growth that occurred in Liberia was associated with high social and environmental costs. Growth was accompanied by increased inequality which resulted in increased class polarization. Additionally, a number of social malaises in Liberia were accentuated following tourism development including increased prostitution, drug consumption and trafficking, and crime. Growth also affected the physical environment in Liberia. Increased construction and vehicular activities reshaped the landscape and added to pollution problems affecting rivers, oceans, and water sources, lack of proper waste management strategies, and destruction of natural habitats were associated with tourism-based growth.

These conditions reflected Liberia’s traditional development patterns. This is especially the case for its biophysical characteristics. Of particular importance in Liberia was its historical land tenure pattern. Land concentration in *haciendas* resulted in economic and sociocultural characteristics which limited Liberians opportunities and capacities to engage in tourism-driven efforts.

Post-tourism conditions included lack of control and management, and inefficient response to changes associated with tourism development. Lack of communication between different government institutions, residents, and the tourism sector was evident in Liberia. This led to an inefficient capacity to solve local problems associated with tourism-driven growth. Additionally, Liberia lacked community-oriented organizations which could have promoted agency. Agency is particularly important since it promotes the capacity to manage factors associated with change and increases the ability to respond to changing local conditions.

Lack of government capabilities to control and respond to change coupled without community agency resulted in Liberia’s failure to achieve community-based development. This was evidenced by the large sector of Liberia’s population who lived in poverty, experienced
inequality, and failed to reach self-reliance, tolerance, solidarity, and sustainable relationships with the environment. All of these characteristics are essential elements for development (Seers, 1979; Bhattacharyya, 2004; Maser, 1997).

In La Fortuna, tourism also led to economic growth which was reflected in increased and better paying jobs. La Fortuna also experienced improved infrastructure and service capacity. According to La Fortunans interviewed, these improvements resulted in a better approach for meeting local material needs and was evidenced in better homes, clothing, and access to numerous services. While some social problems were identified by respondents, they also suggested they were controllable. Growth in La Fortuna was associated with increased appreciation for and concern about their natural resources. These attitudes resulted in behaviors aimed at protecting the natural environmental.

Improved quality of life in La Fortuna resulted related to conditions prior to and after tourism development. Prior conditions included favorable biophysical characteristics and equitable land distribution which resulted in an ability to engage in tourism-driven efforts. Post tourism conditions included management, control, and effective responses to tourism development induced changes. Strong communication among its residents and with the local government was evident in La Fortuna. This resulted in a marked capacity to manage and solve local problems associated with tourism-driven growth. Additionally, La Fortunans’s community-oriented organizations promoted agency which nurtured a local capacity to manage change and increase their ability to respond to evolving local conditions.

The capacity to control and respond to change resulting from strong community agency was a key factor in leading La Fortuna to development. This was evidenced in the almost non-existent poor population there as well as a broad overall equity, and high levels of self-reliance,
tolerance, solidarity, and sustainable relationships with the environment. Again, these characteristics are essential elements for development (Seers, 1979; Bhattacharyya, 2004; Maser, 1997).

**Study Contributions**

By merging the tourism, quality of life, and community literatures this study adds to the extant body of knowledge. Its findings allow for a broader understanding of the “what” and the “how.” The former identifies ways tourism affects communities. The use of a multidisciplinary model served to better understand how tourism shapes a community based on different pre and post-tourism conditions. Further, in order to attain development, understanding “how” communities respond to the changes brought by tourism is necessary. By achieving this, we gained a better understanding of approaches for planning and engaging tourism driven efforts which positively shape the livelihood of community members and their surrounding environment.

Of particular importance here is the community’s capacity to interact and establish the desired conditions to control and respond to change. Through community agency, residents of a community can obtain desired outcomes for their lives. This is of particular relevance even when other factors such as resource ownership and capacity to manage change are limited. Community agency empowers people and allows them to negotiate the direction of change even when conditions are imposed by others. Further, the relevance of community agency exists even when ownership and management of local resources are present. By themselves, the latter factors will not lead to improved quality of life. This is the case when residents owning resources impose their own individual goals and desires resulting in outcomes based on individualistic rather than community-wide interests. Claude et al., (2000:43) added:
… in addition to meeting the sustenance needs of residents, community well-being depends on the active involvement of individuals, groups, and organizations in matters that arise in the course of living together in the same place. Not only does such involvement build capacity to meet new challenges, it also creates a more holistic society, one characterized by the broad range of interpersonal contacts that contribute to healthy individuals.

The importance of community engagement has been noted in earlier studies assessing the relationship between large-scale industry and agricultural production and well-being (Goldschmidt, 1946; Mills and Ulmer, 1946; Lyson et al., 2001). In each of these studies, scale operation played a role in well-being. This is consistent with my findings in a tourism development context. Further, these studies stressed the role of community engagement as key in defining well-being. Lyson et al. (2001:323-324) noted:

Our findings illustrate that Goldschmidt’s original observation of negative relationship between farm scale and community well-being are, in a number of ways, still evident. However, it is also apparent that the presence or absence of a civically engaged middle class is a more consistent predictor of rural community-well being that is farm scale…We find that communities in agriculturally dependent counties with a civically engaged populace, in which a high percentage of persons work for themselves and operate small independent businesses, tend to have a higher levels of welfare.

Implications for this will be discussed below.

Equally important is the role of the environment in shaping economic and cultural traits. This study corroborated the existence of a close relationship between favorable climatic, geographic, and fertility conditions with increased productivity and economic benefits. This relationship was illustrated using a case study approach which observed a clear distinction between two communities with contrasting biophysical conditions. Further, this relationship was taken forward as it exemplified how productivity and economic benefits reflect in communities experiencing shifting economic activities. This is the case of communities moving from reliance on traditional extractive activities to natural amenities. Favorable climatic, geographic, and
fertility conditions contributing to production played a key role in determining successful tourism development. This finding provides a better understanding of the processes in which transitional communities, like the ones studied here, engaged in and how they were affected by them.

As well, this study added to our understanding of the relationship between the natural environment and cultural traits. This study captured the relationship between past land characteristics and tenure and the way individuals developed motivational and intellectual capacities. The way land is distributed and appropriated plays an important role in defining the way individuals think and act. As learned in the case of Liberia, the latifundio way of life, in which land was highly concentrated in the hands of the few, determined Liberians attitudes towards work and intellectual development. Coupled with the harsh arid conditions of Liberia, respondents indicated Liberians lacked motivation and entrepreneurial capacity. As a result, respondents saw Liberians as individuals who wished to engage in the least possible effort. According to La Fortunans, this was not their case. Equal distribution of land and productive biophysical conditions promoted among La Fortunans the desire to develop mechanisms to increase their resource usage. This resulted in well-established motivational and intellectual skills by La Fortunans. This relationship certainly needs further attention and research. However, the study findings provide room for the development of future research hypothesis examining the relationship between land and culture in a developing nation setting.

Additionally, this study corroborates past studies noting the relationship between different scales of tourism operations (i.e., mass tourism vs. ecotourism) and quality of life. Past studies noted mass tourism as more damaging to local economic, social, and environmental conditions when contrasted with ecotourism (Cohen, 1979; Murphy, 1985; Sharpley and Telfer,
2002; Weaver, 1998). In this study, the type of tourism associated with Liberia presented many mass tourism characteristics including large scale, non-locally owned, and privately held operations. On the other hand, La Fortuna’s tourism presented many characteristics associated with ecotourism including small scaled locally owned and regulated business with and emphasis on community stability and well-being (Weaver, 1998). Through a case study approach, this study heightened the relationships of scale and quality of life by contrasting two communities, each representing a case of two major and opposite forms of tourism. Further, this study contributed to the literature on the effects of mass vs. ecotourism impacts by comparing two developing world country communities experiencing dramatic changes in their traditional productive activities.

Finally, this study adds to the growth and development literature as it found that individuals have a clear understanding of the differences between economic growth and development and their effects on resident’s quality of life. Often respondents provided evidence of clearly understanding how unplanned growth lead to unexpected and unwanted consequences in their quality of life. A member of the clergy in Liberia commented on this difference:

[Economic] development has become a monster that we cannot control. It has been good, but it has not responded to human development by itself. Liberia has developed a lot in the last 10 years. But perhaps I would say as the Pope once said, economic development has to go parallel with human development, otherwise it will asphyxiate the human being. And I think that is what is happening here. We have incredible economic and material development, more commerce, hotels, and all that, but has the Liberian developed equally? No, perhaps no. Actually in the long run we have more poverty problems than 10 years ago, the social classes have polarized also. This could also be the result of a national trend, but is very evident of the polarization of classes in Liberia. We have gotten to a moment in which whom has, has a lot, and who doesn’t, has nothing.

Such a distinction, while it seems a small matter, determines the difference between improved or decreased quality of life. This was noted by respondents in each study community and was reflected in their overall satisfaction with their communities. In La Fortuna, there was a larger
number of satisfied residents. In Liberia, satisfaction, like in the case of quality of life, depended on socioeconomic status. As Liberia was highly polarized, so was their satisfied population. An Agrarian Development Institute representative commented on the effects of growth and development on their satisfaction:

Satisfied, yes, partially because there are more job opportunities. But on the other hand we have experienced a lot of insecurity, rise of land prices in an exponential way. So we have half way satisfaction also because of the ‘de-culturalization’ - meaning that culture is being lost. New forms of life are being adopted. Today you see kids with long hair, piercing, and with tattoos. These are not the norm. They are absorbed by new cultures.

The importance of the goals attained by development was clearly understood by the interviewed respondents. A hotel owner in La Fortuna commented about the need to invest time and efforts in more than just economic means:

The community has integrated itself. It is not a community that only thinks about making money. We are a community that also thinks about prevention, so that in the future we have a sustainable tourism in time. For instance, ADIFORT is sustained by admission fees to the waterfall. As more tourism comes, more money goes into the Association. In return, ADIFORT gives money to the community, it never asks for money, ever. The other association, the one in charge of the water, gets its money from the fee they charge for the water service, and that is enough for them to have a good capital to work. The ADECLA receives money from other institutions or government help. The other businesses leading the protection of the ecology they do ask for funds, but their members do not hesitate to give the required funds for this. That economic problem does not exist here. Fortunately until today, everything you work on with similar activities like these, there are no economic problems to achieve them.

This information indicated how residents interviewed in both communities differentiated between the benefits resulting from economic growth and development. Economic growth and its consequences were essential and highly important factor for both Liberians and La Fortunans. The social and environmental aspects associated with a better quality of life were also relevant to these respondents. My work captured the sentiments of people in these communities. Residents of Liberia and La Fortuna differentiated between growth and development and how these concepts were tied to quality of life. In the study I found individuals had a clear understanding of
the importance of owning and managing economic resources. They also understood the need to live calmly in a controlled and safe environment. They valued the importance of having a clean and healthy natural environment and the recreational and leisure opportunities associated.

Implications

The study findings have implications for many communities and institutions gambling on tourism as a means for achieving an improved quality of life. Access to biophysical and economic resources, coupled with the capacity to successfully manage them is key for development. Further, the government and community’s capacity to understand, negotiate, and control changing conditions is essential. This can only be achieved through elements promoting interaction including communication, distributive justice, tolerance, communion, and participation.

Natural resource characteristics and their effects on resource-dependent communities reflect, to a large extent, ecological and climatic factors beyond the control of a community. In turn, the way such resources are distributed reflect to socioeconomic and political characteristics. To an extent, resource distribution is also beyond the control of many individuals, particularly less educated and economically repressed rural residents (see Jensen, 2006). What is important to understand is how pre-existing biophysical and land distribution characteristics has implications for residents interested in tourism. For successful tourism development to occur, appropriation and management of resources must be achieved. This will provide the physical and economic means for transitioning to tourism. Further, as suggested here, land ownership and management has implications for the creation of entrepreneurial skills that are key in developing tourism entrepreneurs (see Wunder, 2000).
In addition, successful tourism development requires processes leading to increased capacity to manage change and respond to already changed conditions. The community, to a large extent, can control these processes. Such processes require communication, tolerance, distributive justice, communion, and collective action. Lack of these elements creates barriers to community development, a key element for improved quality of life.

Particularly in rapidly changing communities like those studied here, mechanisms for the promotion of communication and tolerance are necessary. Failure to do this can result in culture clash as suggested in the literature (Graber, 1974; Smith and Krannich, 2000; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2006). Differences between groups with dissimilar values, attitudes, and perceptions can result in damaged social dimensions of well-being and community capacity (Doak and Kusel, 1996). Improved communication and tolerance are also necessary between residents, governments, and the tourist sector. This could lead to common efforts aimed at improving each stakeholder’s objectives.

Through communion and distributive justice, barriers to communication and participation are removed (Wilkinson, 1991). Increased participation is necessary to design and establish the direction of change desired by the community. According to Wilkinson (1991), growth can contribute to community development only through community action.

In addition to helping local residents in managing change, participation also empowers communities. Empowerment of communities is defined as “a mechanism by which people, organizations, and community gain mastery over their affairs” (Rappaport, 1987:122). Local empowerment is a process that seeks to provide control over the basic institutions affecting communities. It is also a mechanism that allows for communities to act responsibly toward the environment and fellow neighbors. The importance of community empowerment rests on its
close and positive association with community development (Hardina, 2006; Laverack, 2001; Laverack, 2005; Simpson et al., 2003). In a community development context, Craig (2002:125-126) defined empowerment as:

The creation of sustainable structures, processes, and mechanisms, over which local communities have an increased degree of control, and from which they have a measurable impact on public and social policies affecting these communities.

Laverack (2005) suggested the domains of community empowerment included improved participation, development of local leadership, increased problem assessment capacities, enhancement of the ability to ask why, building of empowering organizational structures, improvement of resource mobilization, strengthening of links with other individuals and organizations, creation of equitable relationships with outside agents, and increased control over program management. Such characteristics posited local empowerment as a positive and desirable condition for community development. As a result, empowered communities can negotiate with external agents – here, governments and tourism developers. This is particularly important for communities lacking access to resources and control over the direction of change in a tourism context. While key, discovered in these case studies, not all communities have the desired land distribution or economic conditions to lead to successful tourism development. Yet, if empowered, communities can negotiate the directions of change (Williams, 2007).

Knowing this provides information about the importance of investing in policies and programs aimed at improving interactional elements including communion, communication, and participation. Traditional education and policy-oriented efforts, while somewhat effective, often only provide mechanisms for achieving material conditions or improving individual orientations and skills (Wilkinson, 1991). Similarly, policies and programs aimed at increasing a locality’s infrastructural and service needs, while necessary, by themselves falls short in establishing the mechanisms necessary for successful development. This was evidenced in Liberia, which had a
much larger educational and governmental institutions than La Fortuna. Yet, La Fortuna’s organizational levels, communication, and participation which expressed its agency, were essential factors for successful tourism development there. Attention must be focused on activities and programs that seek to foster increased communication and among between community residents. Lyson et al. (2001:324) added:

   Communities must work to enhance civic life and make political processes accessible to everyone. Also organizations (e.g., credit unions, community investment banks) and programs (e.g., micro lending) which foster small-scale self-employment should be nurtured. The key is to promote a healthy number and mix of social and economic balancing institutions.

As learned here, community’s like La Fortuna increased the benefits of tourism and reduced its impacts as a result of its high levels of association and communication. Past research has shown the importance of interacting with other community members to provide solutions for existing problems. For instance, Bellair (1997) noted how getting together once a year or more with neighbors had the most consistent and generally strongest effect on reducing burglary, motor vehicle theft, and robbery.

   Association empowers communities and provides the capacity to interact with other community stakeholders. As indicated by Wilkinson (1991), community development is not a task entirely in charge of the community. Andersson and Janssen (2004:75) added:

   Local success depends on the abilities of the local actors, but the institutional arrangements provide the opportunities or barriers of entrepreneurs to bloom.

Coordination with other stakeholders is necessary to reach development goals which reflect the needs of the community. Community organizations, local institutions, tourism developers, and national scale institutions must work together to provide the required infrastructure and services reflecting the changing demands of growing and diverse populations. Without this, even well organized communities, face serious challenges adapting to change. This is particularly the case
for tourism. Tourism, as a social phenomenon, affects various stakeholders and sectors. Changing conditions have multiple and multifaceted consequences. For successful tourism development to be achieved, coordination among the distinct entities and levels must be met.

Finally, knowing that individuals understand the difference between growth and development is essential for the establishment of mechanisms leading to the latter. Community members clearly recognize economic growth as essential for subsistence. But without a clear understanding of how such growth can result in improved quality of life, the mechanisms necessary to achieve development cannot be met. Therefore, understanding the necessary conditions to turn growth into desired development goals should be the first step in a process seeking a better quality of life. Knowing residents of rural communities in developing nations understand the differences between growth and development is extremely valuable for policy makers and development promoters. Knowing “people get it” provides policy formulators and advocates of development with the capacity to direct their efforts towards goals defined by community members. This suggests rural residents can be approached to define the desired elements aimed at truly improving their quality of life as they understand what is essential for betterment. Doing this necessitates for the use of a participatory approach to defining quality of life goals and undermines straight scientific and/or expert approaches. Referring to participatory approaches, White and Pettit (2007:243) added:

The key promise of participatory methodologies is that they are ‘experience near’ in terms of their participant/respondents: they are able to reflect more closely the knowledge and world view of people themselves than more formal, abstract, or ‘scientific’ approaches. Along with other hermeneutic social science approaches, participatory methods have thus contributed to the much wider recognition of contextual, subjective, and non-material dimensions of human experience, and of the complex dynamics and causalities behind poverty and well-being.
In a nutshell, resource allocation, community-wide efforts, and well-established communication and interaction with extra-local forces is required for tourism to become a successful activity leading to increased quality of life. Efforts should be undertaken to promote elements which lead to community leadership in establishing and managing tourism-based activities. Additionally, efforts should promote interactional elements aimed at increasing widespread local involvement. This involvement should include designing strategies to mitigate undesired and unwanted tourism consequences. Finally, people opinions should be involved in all stages, as they clearly understand what is best for them.

Despite these elements, development, as learned here, comes with costs. The case of La Fortuna serves as an example of how ownership and management of tourism-based entrepreneurs is a necessary condition for attaining development. However, in La Fortuna, as tourism flows and demand increased, residents were forced to invest more time in managing their businesses. As a result, associational, familial, and religious participation decline there. This suggests a balance must be met between involvement in managing tourism-based businesses and time spent in community and family oriented activities. As La Fortunans expressed, if attention is not paid, the elements that led to development can be lost, putting at risk what they have work so hard to achieve. Careful planning must also include the effects of development on the social life of a community’s residents. As a process, development is continuous and changing, therefore evaluation and control, even when desired goals are achieved, are necessary.

This study added to the extant literature on the impacts of tourism by addressing its effects on rural communities. It provided information about the factors which contributed to successful tourism development. It also provided evidence about the processes leading to development. The merger of three broad research areas – rural tourism, community, and quality
of life – contributed to empirical knowledge of the social ramifications of tourism. This study found an existing positive relationships between access to resources and quality of life; locally driven tourism development and quality of life; community agency and quality of life; institutional and community capacity to control, manage, and respond to changing conditions and quality of life; and mountain-based tourism and quality of life.

**Study Limitations**

This study has three main limitations. First, while there are many similarities between the study communities, there also are important differences. Liberia, as a city, relies on different activities in addition to tourism. Its geographic location along the Interamerican Highway makes Liberia a gateway community. Such a strategic position serves many roles as Liberia is used as a port to the Guanacaste region. As a result, Liberia is a much larger locality than La Fortuna. Additionally, the district of Liberia, while highly associated with coastal tourism, is not found on the coast (approximately a 20-30 minute drive from the airport). This has effects on the study results. Belisle and Hoy (1980) found in general, rural residents and those living further from the tourist center were more apathetic toward tourism and tourists. However, the farther from the development, the more negative the attitude towards development.

In contrast, La Fortuna is a tourism-dependent community with a much smaller population than Liberia. The effects of tourism were directly reflected on La Fortuna’s population. This was evidenced through each community’s discourse, as tourism was seen as being a bigger agent in La Fortuna than in Liberia. However, these differences contributed to my ability to more easily recognize those factors and processes associated with successful tourism development. Differences between Liberia and La Fortuna on the scale of tourism development (mass gateway community vs. ecotourism small-scaled community) served to better understand
my findings. This is not uncommon in qualitative research. Further, in many instances, qualitative research highlights distinction as a form of better targeting predictive factors.

Second, the study lacks the opinions of a larger number of individuals living beyond the local central community. This is the result of difficult access to these locations and the danger involved in reaching marginal neighborhoods known for their high levels of criminal activity. This problem was partially addressed by incorporating the perspective from priests and social workers who commonly work with these marginalized populations. However, further attempts to reach the larger underprivileged population are necessary.

The third limitation of the study resulted from the lack of participation in the facilitated group discussions in both communities. Few residents took part in these discussions which were designed to validate information gained during the key informant interviews. While the attendees agreed with the results obtained from the interviews (and provided rich feedback and further information), their reduced number limits the extent of our findings. Additional attempts at triangulation are needed to achieve better validation of this study findings.

Future Research

Guided by the study findings, future studies should be aimed at exploring the relationship between community agency and biophysical factors characteristics with successful tourism development. Studies can be conducted in communities experiencing different levels of community agency to examine the outcomes of tourism development in quality of life. As well, studies can be conducted comparing communities with different biophysical conditions and land tenure characteristics to examine quality of life outcomes. Of particular importance is to examine these relationships in amenity-rich areas. Such areas are characteristics of high levels of dependence and interrelationships between the biophysical environment and local social
conditions. From the study’s findings the following research hypothesis can be tested in future investigations:

1. There is a positive relationship between community agency and successful tourism development.

2. There is a positive relationship between favorable biophysical conditions and successful tourism development.

3. There is a positive relationship between favorable biophysical conditions and improved motivational and entrepreneurial capacities.

4. There is a positive relationship between well-distributed land ownership and improved motivational and entrepreneurial capacities.

To resolve the limitations of this study, I suggest future research to include a larger and cross section of the population in the communities in study. Such task can be achieved by following a quantitative approach. Such approach could be achieved by conducting a general survey assessing the proposed relationships.
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Tourism growth and quality of life  
Key informant interview

ID #: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Time: __________________________

Community: ____________________ (urban ☐ / rural ☐).

1. First, how would you characterize (Liberia/La Fortuna)?

2. How would you describe quality of life in this community?

3. How would you describe the local economy of this area?

4. How would you describe the people in this community? Would you say the residents of this community are satisfied or not? Why?

5. How would you describe the physical environment of this area?

6. How would you characterize this area 10 years ago?

7. As a person knowledgeable about this community, do you have any concerns about the community? Which and why?

8. What would you like to see in the future in this community? Why?

Now, we would like to discuss some tourism related issues with you

9. What is the role of tourism in the area’s economy?

10. Who are the major tourist attractions and what do you know about them?

11. What role has government and organizations taken in local tourism development?

12. What role has the community taken in local tourism development?

13. How does tourism impact this region? (positive/negative impacts to the economy, community, and the environment).

14. What potential do you see for additional tourism development in this region? What would you promote and what would inhibit this type of development?

Thank you for your time.
David Matarrita-Cascante  
Ph.D. in Rural Sociology  
The Pennsylvania State University  
Curriculum Vitae

**Education:**

1998-2003  
Agricultural Economics, University of Costa Rica.

2003-2005  

2005-2008  

**Central Research Focus:**

My interests focus on natural resource sociology, community, and mixed-methods research. My current focus is on the interrelationship between communities and natural resources. To date, this work has revolved around a better understanding of the effects of rapid demographic and structural changes occurring in amenity-rich rural resource dependent communities and their response to such changes.

**Publications:**


**In Review:**


**Awards and Honoraries:**


President of the Student Chapter for Society and Natural Resources. The Pennsylvania State University. 2005-2006.

The Pennsylvania State University’s College of Agricultural Sciences Travel Award. June 2006.

Rural Sociological Society’s Community Interest Group “Best Student Paper Award” August 2006.
