

Imagining a Sense of Place in the Mist of New and Old: The Role of Timeless Nostalgia in Monte Verde's Changing Landscape

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Gazing

“Well, I think Monte Verde is a little lung of the world. We try to care for the species that we have, and we try to maintain the space that we have as cleanly as we can... we are not perfect, but I believe that we are trying to make our contribution, as humanity, in terms of being able to clean up the planet a little bit.”

—Mario¹

MARIO IS TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD. He has lived in Monte Verde his entire life, though he has only worked at this small reserve for only a couple of years. Since nature gazing has become a prominent pastime for ecotourists in the area, many landowners opened their acres to visitors on the premise of presenting them as biological reserves and charging small entrance fees. The reserve Mario works at is fairly new, and relatively small in its acreage and number of visitors compared to the other reserves in the area. As we sit in the office that welcomes visitors to the reserve, Mario tells me that as a nature guide, his ability to “show people how they can connect to nature” by “telling small stories about the natural world” during tours makes him think more about how he relates to his landscape. In Costa Rica, tour guides must go through extensive training to enter the profession, and Mario tells me that the qualifications he holds, as well as the ways that he interacts with visitors each day at work, both contribute to the relationship he has with the landscape in Monte Verde.

I take note of this, and Mario quickly interjects to acknowledge that, while “walking through the forest is not good for its preservation,” the “great number of projects, research, and learning about the forest” that go on in the area help to mitigate this effect. As I nod, I cannot help but think about the way these words center on the contradiction ecotourism presents: how does visiting a landscape preserve an intact, pristine nature?

For Mario, like the two other residents I interviewed who work in the reserves, the conservation industry imposes a new way of understanding the landscape: one that is rooted in both an ecological understanding of nature as well as a reverence for its economic benefits. The ecological knowledge Mario gained in his nature guide training provides him with a justification for the reasons he should care about the physical wellbeing of the space where he lives. In our interview, Mario states that sharing his understanding of nature, and showing off this “little lung of the world,” is the reason he guides.

But as we continue to talk, Mario describes his family's farm just outside of town. His hands gesture to the window and towards the valley below, and I sense that Mario's experiences and perceptions of place are different at the reserve and at his home, where life on the farm takes on another pace. He describes these two places to me:

¹All names are pseudonyms.

“Well, this place means a lot to me, because my family is here and I was born here, so I care a lot about it. And the reserve specifically? I also care a lot about the reserve, because this is where I began to work, where I began to learn about nature and about all that we have here in this area.”

To Mario, Monte Verde holds multiple meanings. Outside the boundaries of the reserve, Mario sees the landscape in a different light: as a place where he comes from. He tells me how he rides his motorcycle up and down the winding roads, visiting family and friends, and describes to me that his family has farmed in the area for generations.

When Mario arrives at the reserve, his sense of place shifts, centering instead on his ecological understanding of all that the landscape holds. But when he rides his motorcycle, the boundaries of place as it exists at the reserve fade away as he bikes up the winding roads that lead to his family’s farm. By the time that Mario arrives home, place becomes a collection of memories tied intimately to the histories and identities of his own family. Viewing place as a working dimension of economy and ecology within Monte Verde renders it deeply entangled within the meanings that family, history, and community hold. For many of us, connection to place is a fact of the human condition.

While Mario’s perception of place is rooted in a desire to accumulate knowledge about the landscape and the nature that place holds, it is also an important part of his personal identity and lived experience. While it is helpful for Mario to understand nature in order to tell tourists about the biologically important cloud forest ecosystem, Mario’s understanding of place suggests that place is more than a product of the economic powers that create and propagate the ecotourism industry. Instead, Mario’s intimate connection with place motivates his work as a nature guide and also constitutes a fundamental component of his own identity.

Mario tells me that he participates in the ecotourism industry because he sees merit in the encounter of the tourist experience. He loves sharing this place with visitors, pointing out the animals and plants and insects that bring the forest to life. He understands that for those who come to visit, Monte Verde is a “piece of paradise.” Yet his understanding of place is couched differently than the conservation-as-development framework suggests: Mario sees that conservation, as a construct of ecologically and biologically motivated forms of change, constantly evolves, stringing the lived experiences of residents alongside it.

He describes the pasts, presents, and futures of the landscape alongside a deeply rooted desire to continue working to maintain this place as a version of his own.

It may not seem profound, to care for a place where you are from. But, where does the boundary lie between connecting with place because it provides a sense of life, of livelihood, and connecting with place because it is something inexplicably more than all of that? Sentiment, history, identity. In an imagined place apart from conservation-as-development, timeless nostalgia thrives.

Introduction

The windswept, dewy hillsides of Monte Verde² house many communities of people. Within each, there is ample room for pursuits of curiosity: institutes for Spanish study, environmental projects, and nature reserves pepper the road that winds from Santa Elena, up through La Colina and Cerero Plano, and finally, to the small town center in Monteverde. As a world-renowned example

²Throughout my paper, I will use these different spellings to differentiate between Monteverde and Monte Verde. Monte Verde refers to the community more broadly, including the towns and neighborhoods of Santa Elena, La Colina, Cerro Plano, and Monteverde proper, all three of which are closely connected both geographically and conceptually. Monteverde itself is an area that encompasses only the Quaker community consisting of a town center, school, church, and surrounding residential area (Vivanco 2001: 3).

of a successful ecotourism project, the Monte Verde area is well established and thoroughly studied. Various organizations dedicated to conservation and community wellbeing aim to positively impact the area, providing residents and outsiders alike with a wealth of resources and knowledge. In Monte Verde, the ecotourism industry is so intertwined with the landscape that it seems to be a part of it, as if human inquiry, visitation, and life itself cannot be fully disentangled from the green hillsides.

James is the Executive Director of an organization that focuses on building community in Monte Verde through research projects, community meetings and public events. When we sit down for an interview, he is quick to assure me that when he arrived from the United States in the 1980s, Monte Verde used to be quite different. You either “did dairy farming, or you left,” he tells me. Now, however, he describes Monte Verde to me as “the crossroads of the world.” All sorts of people come through here: some are curious visitors hoping to encounter a “paradise in the clouds;” others are famous and come to this prime ecotourism destination to gain social capital. Many more are scientists, who come to study it. According to the assumptions of science, space must be understood to be valued, and valued to be saved from exploitation. After all, the Monte Verde area is home to one of the world’s most iconic rainforest ecosystems.

James tells me that, no matter how you look at it, the market-based conservation strategy of the ecotourism economy has made an astounding impact on the social and economic mobility of the residents who live in the area. Now, these residents envision lives for themselves that would have previously been unimaginable in this rural location.³ By assigning various meanings of nature and culture to the landscape, the ecotourism project in Monte Verde leads the local community to embody and enact versions of place that further economic development in the area.⁴

While conservation in Monte Verde originated with the creation of the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve in the 1970s, today this reserve constitutes a small part of all that is Monte Verde. The roots of ecotourism and conservation have long since extended outwards, weaving their way in and out of the green hillsides and into the lives of residents. They center themselves on the glossy billboards, business signs, and hotels that populate the main street through town, enthralling and enticing the passerby into a world where paradise seems more tangible than ever. Undoubtedly, the ecotourism project in Monte Verde is well constructed to satiate the expectations of the imagined world it creates, in the form of reserves, canopy adventure companies, and horseback riding tours. All intend to show off the land while emphasizing the need to conserve it.⁵

During my long walks and wanderings, I came to wonder whether ecotourism has transformed the landscape in a way that cannot be captured by dollar bills or customer reviews. Is there something about the existence of this landscape and its economy that can be characterized in another, more profound way? From late night soccer games to long talks with residents, I have come to believe there is.

My findings indicate that in Monte Verde, residents engage with a framework of place which I call *timeless nostalgia*, in which place⁶ is imbued with multiple histories, identities, and lived experiences that transcend the past and present. While a political economic framework supposes that place exists as a site for the distribution of power dynamics that facilitate capital accumulation, *timeless nostalgia* reframes how sites of encounter between residents and their landscape are produced, finding that residents have agency over the productions of place and economy that exist apart from

³Paige West, *Conservation is our Government Now: The Politics of Ecology in Papua New Guinea* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 10.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Liba Faier and Lisa Rofel, “Ethnographies of Encounter,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (2014): 363–377; West, *Conservation is Our Government Now*, 10.

⁶Defining *landscape* as a geographical *location*, place exists as its socially constructed counterpart. I define place as a compilation of the meanings that nature, culture, and society bring to a particular space (West 2006: 256).

the conservation-as-development framework. While nostalgia is usually associated with a particular past time, the notion of timelessness names the way that place, and the economy that propels it, is formed by multiple elements of past, present, and future.

Escobar, discussing the ways sense of place is conceived, states that “Reality, in sum, has been colonized by the development discourse, and those who were dissatisfied with this state of affairs had to struggle for bits and pieces of freedom within it, with the hope that in the process a different reality could be constructed.”⁷ It is this different reality, this slim margin of hope that place exists as something apart from the discourse of development in Monte Verde, that a framework of timeless nostalgia will address.

Review of the Literature

Nature as a Construct: The Case of the Quetzal

It was a wet afternoon in the middle of the rainy season. The trees, expanding their leaves to soak up the water, seemed energized by the recent storm. After a morning of trail restoration work, I was not. But when one of the guides from the reserve offered to let me join in on their tour as a thank you for the work I completed, I couldn't help but say yes, despite my tired legs and mist covered raincoat. Together with a student from California and the guide, we started out down the trail and arrived quickly at a wooden post, about the height of the surrounding trees. A relatively small, enclosed box was attached to the side.

The three of us stopped, staring wondrously at the box on the post as mist settled on our jackets and in our hair. Quietly, our guide set up a pair of standing binoculars.

We waited.

Minutes later, the guide pointed. “*Mira!* Do you see the feathers of the Quetzal? They are just beyond that branch.” The three of us squinted. The guide pulled the binoculars to the other side of the trail, focusing them on the location just beyond the pole with a box. And in the mess of green, I saw them. The long feathers of the male Quetzal's tail draped over a branch.

The resplendent quetzal is a tropical bird species whose beauty and rarity are frequently sought by visitors to the Monte Verde area. It is both a living organism, and a site for the commodification of nature. Vivanco, in his work “Spectacular Quetzals, Ecotourism, and Environmental Futures in Monteverde, Costa Rica,” shows that the construction of individual and community identity in Monteverde are tied to the presence of this species. He suggests that the movement to preserve an unobstructed image of nature as wild and untouched is part of an effort to sustain the meanings, histories, and futures of capitalism that an ecotourism approach promotes.⁸ In Monte Verde, the quetzal symbolizes this movement.

As a lifelong resident of a tourist destination in the Colorado Rocky Mountains, I've noticed the ways that nature is commodified by the tourist gaze; I've come to understand that place means to me many things it may not ever mean to the tourists who arrive by car, ski on the nearby mountains, and drive away. Encounters with place are asymmetrical, and I wonder what the guide sees through the binoculars that I do not.

⁷ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Remaking of the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 5.

⁸ Robert Fletcher and Katja Neves, “Contradictions in Tourism: The Promise and Pitfalls of Ecotourism as a Manifold Capitalist Fix,” *Environment and Society: Advances in Research* 3 (2012): 60–77.

Realizing an Imagined Landscape: The Origins of Ecotourism and Environmental Thought in Monte Verde

Most essentially defined, ecotourism intends to make the tourist encounter more beneficial for local communities and the environment, aiming to create practices that benefit both. Ecotourism employs conservation as a substitute for traditional forms of land development, maintaining “space” in Monte Verde as an economy while simultaneously preserving this cloud forest ecosystem.⁹ Honey’s definition of “stakeholder theory” positions ecotourism as an economic proponent of the idea that people are incentivized to protect what they receive value from: in this case, the value derived from nature is a good that is evaluated based on its exchange value.¹⁰ Ecotourism, as a market-based conservation strategy, is designated to facilitate the exchange between people and nature that takes place amongst visitors and locals alike, all of whom see nature as an opportunity to sustain a profitable economy and way of life.

Consequently, both tourists and residents contribute to the creation of an ecotourism mindset in which space becomes entangled with ideas of nature, culture, and society that create an urgency to protect this imagined place.¹¹ Encounters with ecotourism bring nature from the “formal” to the “real,” where lived experiences characterize encounters between people and the neoliberal economy.¹² In Monte Verde, the ways nature is produced and used to advance the ecotourism project constitutes a conservation-as-development approach to the natural world, where nature is employed as a driver of capital accumulation.¹³

The beginning of conservation in Monte Verde aligns with the arrival of Quakers from Fairhope, Alabama in the 1950s, implying that these notions of conservation and preservation were intertwined with the lived experiences and identities that the Quakers packed with them when leaving the United States. American Quakers and conservationists including Wolf Guindon and George and Harriet Powell resonate most prominently with the initiation of conservation efforts in the Monte Verde area, as their lives were filled with valiant efforts to preserve the cloud forest ecosystem. Their vision of preserving and protecting this landscape resonates with the threads of mid-century American environmental thought, wherein the need to protect unspoiled nature occupied the minds of conservationists and inspired a turbulent debate over the value of nature.¹⁴

In this Progressive era of US environmental history, environmentalist arguments for the utility of nature existed in two camps: conservation and preservation. The conservationist discourse, as it was imagined by prominent leaders such as Gifford Pinchot, saw environmental conservation as “a rational plan for organizing the nation’s use of its natural resources” to determine the most efficient uses of the country’s “natural wealth.”¹⁵ Pinchot, evidently, was interested in conserving nature to ensure its utilization as a resource in the most efficient way possible.

⁹Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 5; Martha Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1999); West, *Conservation is Our Development Now*.

¹⁰E. Cohen, “Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 15 (1998): 371–386; Robert Fletcher, “Neoliberal Environmentalism: Towards a Poststructuralist Political Ecology of the Conservation Debate,” *Conservation and Society* 8, no. 3 (2010): 171–181; Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*.

¹¹West, *Conservation is Our Government Now*, 5.

¹²Fletcher, “Neoliberal Environmentalism”; Luis Vivanco, “Spectacular Quetzals, Ecotourism, and Environmental futures in Monteverde, Costa Rica,” *Ethnology* 40, no. 2 (2001): 79–92; Paige West and James C. Carrier, “Ecotourism and Authenticity: Getting Away from it All?” in *Current Anthropology* 45, no. 4 (2004).

¹³Fletcher and Neves, “Contradictions in Tourism”; Martin O’Connor, “On the Misadventures of Capitalist Nature,” in *Is Capitalism Sustainable?* (New York: Guilford, 1994): 125–151; Neil Smith, “Nature as Accumulation Strategy,” *Socialist Register* (January 2007): 1–36; West, *Conservation is Our Government Now*.

¹⁴Kay Chornook, *Walking with Wolf: Reflections on a Life Spent Protecting the Costa Rican Wilderness* (Ontario: Wandering Words Press, 2008), 17; Michael Lewis, “Wilderness and Conservation Science,” in *American Wilderness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5.

¹⁵Ted Steinberg, “The Unforgiving West,” in *Down to Earth: Nature’s Role in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 136.

In opposition to the conservationists were the preservationists, led by prominent figures such as John Muir who saw nature as inherently valuable to the human experience. Muir promoted ideas that reinforced the interconnectedness of humans and nature, based on the idea that we are “all God’s people;” we, “referring not only to human beings...but to all elements of the natural world.”¹⁶ Muir and his followers believed that nature enriched human life, and that the government had a “moral responsibility to preserve nature, not simply to use it wisely in the name of industry.”¹⁷

In the post war era, conservationists such as Aldo Leopold developed land ethics that focused on the wellbeing of both people and the land. This increasingly dominant discourse of ecological science in environmentalism shaped how Americans enacted wilderness preservation in the second half of the twentieth century, contextualizing the historical and cultural meanings of nature within ideas of ecology. While the discourse of ecological science within environmentalism in the 1950s explains the institutionalized approach to preservation that follows, it does not obscure the importance of wilderness as a construct of the American mind.¹⁸

The passage of the Wilderness Act in 1964 formally preserved wilderness in the United States while simultaneously making it available for recreation through the creation of the governmentally managed National Parks system.¹⁹ While debates in US environmental history dissect the conflicting notions of conservation and preservation, both are inherently tied to the idea of propagating and developing the landscape for its productive use, whether it be for the natural resources the land bestows to us, or the opportunity to consume the recreational and cultural values of nature through visiting protected lands.

In 1972, George Powell, a biologist from the United States, finished collecting the land that now comprises the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve from private owners. This act formalized the influence of American environmentalism in the Monte Verde landscape. As an economy intended to glorify and protect landscapes deemed to be sublime, wondrous, and biologically important, ecotourism posits that a market-based conservation strategy will promote the importance of protecting untouched, sublime wilderness from other forms of land use and development.²⁰

As a landscape imbued with these notions of wilderness, the cloud forests of Monte Verde are preserved, yet transformed, by the economic value that conservation-as-development assigns to them.²¹ However, critiques of ecotourism and the market-based conservation approach that it occupies claim that in a neoliberal landscape, excessive development spoils natural areas and disturbs both wildlife and people. Ecotourism, though it attempts to discard capitalist constructions of time, space, and environment in favor of a more interconnected and specific relationship with nature and community, simultaneously fulfills the capitalist, Western constructs it attempts to obscure.²²

¹⁶Ibid., 137.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Lewis, “Wilderness and Conservation Science,” 207.

¹⁹James Morton Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness: American Environmental Politics since 1964* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 34.

²⁰Chornook, *Walking with Wolf; Honey, Ecotourism and Conservation*.

²¹Fletcher and Neves, “Contradictions in Tourism,” 59; Stronza and Durham, *Ecotourism and Conservation*.

²²West and Carrier, “Ecotourism and Authenticity,” 484; Erlet Carter, “Ecotourism as a Western Construct,” *Journal of Ecotourism* 5, no. 1–2 (2006): 23–29; Rosaleen Duffy, “The International Political Economy of Tourism and the Neoliberalization of Nature: Challenges Posed by Selling Close Interactions with Animals,” in *Review of International Political Economy* 20, no. 3 (2012): 617.

Defining a Sense of Place

In anthropological literature, *sense of place* identifies the ways in which lived experiences attribute attachments and connections to people and places.²³ Place, as “not only a thing in our world but also a way of understanding our world,” embodies a complex and constructed set of meanings; to think of somewhere as a place, one must distinguish between a place’s geographically based location in the world and the values and meanings that accompany it.²⁴ Consequently, the anthropological approach to sense of place acknowledges the social, ecological, political, and economic lives of space as well as the concepts of history, agency, capitalism, culture, and the imagination that lie within it. Taken together, these various actors are imperative in creating meaning from space.²⁵

While the structures of place depend on these multiple meanings, they ultimately must intersect to create a set of “lived experiences” that attribute personal meaning to place.²⁶ A sense of place framework works to identify and explain these various meanings, paying attention to the ways in which we attribute experiences, attachments, and connections with people and nature to particular places.²⁷ In Monte Verde, various stakeholders construct and reconstruct space to uphold these notions of place, producing the meanings of place that Mario and James begin to unveil.

The Multiple Dimensions of Development and its Intersections with Ecotourism

In the 1970s, the successive rise of the environmental movement and “Third World Debt” led international institutions to look towards tourism as a development tool.²⁸ As a discursive formation, development “systematically relates forms of knowledge and techniques of power.” Acting as a producer of space, the discourse of development gives power and imagination to neocolonial productions of difference, imposing “First World” social orders and ideals of progress in “underdeveloped” nations.²⁹ Twenty years later, in the 1990s, most “non-industrialized” countries began promoting tourism as a way to meet the demands of this development narrative. As it was used to carve space for improvements and interventions into local lives and economies, tourism presented a new way to meet Western standards of progress and economic viability.³⁰ Ultimately, as a form of neocolonialism, the tourist project was interested in imposing “First World” narratives of economic success and social ideals in “Third World” countries.

However, as interest in the “live performances” of the cross cultural interactions inherent in the tourist encounter continued to grow, rampant critiques of mass market tourism led to the development of *ecotourism*, an alternative form of responsible travel envisioned to benefit both the local community and the surrounding nature.³¹ As a “moral alternative” to mass tourism, ecotourism promises education, economic prosperity, and access to social and cultural capital for the local communities who share its landscape. Ultimately, through providing new opportunities to local populations, ecotourism intends to foster connections between the community and its newly

²³Tim Cresswell, “Introduction: Defining Place,” in *Place: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2015), 1–21; Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a Western Apache Landscape*, (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

²⁴Cresswell, “Introduction: Defining Place,” 18.

²⁵West, *Conservation is Our Government Now*, 6.

²⁶Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places*, 332.

²⁷Cresswell, “Introduction: Defining Place,” 18.

²⁸Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*, 12.

²⁹Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Remaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

³⁰Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*, 18.

³¹Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*, 22; Amanda Stronza, “Anthropology of Tourism: Forging New Ground for Ecotourism and Other Alternatives,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 30 (2006): 264.

developed, reimagined form of being.³²

This new ecotourism project facilitated the transition of new ideas of nature, conservation, and development into the context of the “Third World.” Yet narratives of ecotourism remain entangled with the discourse of development that Arturo Escobar outlines; as a pursuit of “First World” countries to assist “Third World” countries through economic and ideological counseling, the “First World” sees intervention in the lives and personal economies of people in “underdeveloped” places as a way to uphold the frameworks of modernity that a European picture of place suggests.³³ In critiquing this neocolonial approach to development in Latin America, Escobar argues that in the context of Latin America, development has produced its opposite: instead of abundance, the exploitation of what he terms “underdeveloped” societies and their subsequent “exploitation, oppression, and impoverishment” has not assisted these countries, but has in fact *produced* the “Third World” conditions that development claims to subvert.³⁴

Martha Honey shows that ecotourism, as a reinvented development strategy of Western domination over “untouched” landscapes, has removed the agency of local communities and individuals to live freely on their land.³⁵ During the 1980s and 1990s, these intersections of development with place and nature took form in Monte Verde as environmental activists promoted the area as part of the “Save the Rainforest” campaign. International organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund, The Nature Conservancy, and other grassroot rainforest groups advocated for the preservation of the unique cloud forest ecosystem in Monte Verde.³⁶ By substituting preservation for agricultural land use, conservation attempts to imagine a new narrative of development; one that is couched in conserving the landscape as a mode of capital production. Nature, and the local community, are enhanced, improved, and categorized into an ecotourism narrative that replaces local agencies and meets the needs of development.

Such narratives are, according to Escobar, immersed in history, and never innocent.³⁷ While narratives such as ecotourism propose “new ways of thinking and doing” within the capitalist system, they are simultaneously tied to the fraught history of development that they attempt to evade.³⁸ As they intend to alleviate debt by engaging with development in a singular way, these narratives reproduce a picture of the Global South that upholds its inferiority according to Western discourses.³⁹ Despite the peaceful and seemingly harmonious influence of Quakerism and American environmental ideals in Monte Verde, it is a landscape fundamentally imbued with meanings of place, space, and environment that are derived from the intersection of late twentieth century environmental ideas and the discourse of development that Escobar describes.⁴⁰ However, perhaps imagining Monte Verde as a picture painted by development fails to address the multiple meanings that engaging with capital accumulation insinuate.

Creative Forms of Capitalism

Sylvia Yanagisako’s analysis of economies of sentiment explores the shortcomings of viewing capitalism solely as a product of developmental discourse. Here, she names *sentiment* as a new force

³²Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*, 22; Stronza, “Anthropology of Tourism.”

³³Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 59.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 4.

³⁵Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*, 90.

³⁶Vivanco, “Spectacular Quetzals,” xi.

³⁷Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 7.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 20.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 56.

⁴⁰Nicole Blum, *Education, Community Engagement and Sustainable Development: Negotiating Environmental Knowledge in Monteverde, Costa Rica* (Springer, Netherlands: SpringerLink, 2012); Escobar, *Encountering Development*; Honey, *Ecotourism and Development*; Vivanco, “Spectacular Quetzals.”

of capitalist production, prioritizing the processes of culture within the capitalist framework.⁴¹ As an antithesis to the conception of a rational, unilateral force of production, capitalism, as a cultural process, is a project of “multiple value making.”⁴² Stephen Gudeman furthers this idea of economies of sentiment, writing that they engage people in capitalist processes as a form of social activity. Here, these economies are “motivated by social fulfillment, curiosity, and the pleasure of mastery, as well as instrumental purpose, competition, and the accumulation of gains.”⁴³ As such, economies of sentiment acknowledge neither the universality nor the cultural specificity of capitalism, instead recognizing that “diverse capitalist practices coexist in geopolitical spaces and flow across their boundaries.”⁴⁴

Economies of sentiment intersect with the multidirectional form of assemblage capitalism that Anna Tsing suggests, because these economies, too, partake in capitalist production that emerges from unplanned encounters and the “concentration of wealth” in “unplanned patches.”⁴⁵ Economies of sentiment do not solely exist within the unilateral, “bulldozing” form of capitalism and political ecology, but instead within the complex contaminations of history and the multiple constructions of space and time.⁴⁶

Together, Yanagisako and Tsing question the ways we understand and study capitalism, suggesting that people participate in economic endeavors not only to further their monetary profit, but to enact and reenact important cultural practices. Without the “crippling assumption” that capitalism assumes progress, Tsing envisions multidirectional capitalism as giving a new attention to the “precarity of our world,” and to the instability of the idea of inherent progress. To understand how capitalism is imagined apart from the bounds of the inherent progress it suggests, Tsing proposes that capitalism exists as an assemblage, wherein the “concentration of wealth is possible because the value produced in unplanned patches is appropriated for capital.”⁴⁷

For Tsing, these assemblages demonstrate how capitalism is contaminated by encounters that “change world making projects” and create new directions that relinquish the rationalized supply chain that Marxist capitalism promotes in favor of multifaceted, multidirectional approaches to capitalist pursuits.⁴⁸ For Yanagisako, the role of human agency in the economic process is diminished when capitalism is assumed to exist for the sole pursuit of the economy itself.⁴⁹ It is the project of this thesis to understand whether the framework of place which is produced as a product of cultural agencies and multidirectional forms of capitalism can drive new, creative capitalist processes that stand apart from the discourse of development.

Perspectives from the Literature

When conservation efforts entered into the residential community of Monte Verde in the 1970s, ecotourism developments began to profoundly shape the livelihoods of residents in the area. Yet as Amanda Stronza acknowledges, “research in the anthropology of tourism has overlooked the

⁴¹Sylvia Junko Yanagisako, *Producing Culture and Capital: Family Firms in Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 32.

⁴²Heather Paxon, *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 65.

⁴³Stephen Gudeman, *The Anthropology of Economy: Community, Market, and Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 1.

⁴⁴Yanagisako, *Producing Culture and Capital*, 7.

⁴⁵Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 5.

⁴⁶Yanagisako, *Producing Culture and Capital*, 5.

⁴⁷Tsing, *Mushroom at the End of the World*, 5.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 27.

⁴⁹Yanagisako, *Producing Culture and Capital*, 6.

origins and motivations of tourism from the hosts' perspective."⁵⁰ While the ways that ecotourism continues to profoundly shape the livelihoods of residents in the Monte Verde area are well documented in the literature, the voices of residents themselves, and the ways they imagine and uphold a sense of place, have only recently begun to surface.⁵¹ Furthermore, understanding of local ownership and identity within *non-tourist* infrastructure is virtually absent from the scholarly discourse. Consequently, future studies should focus on the development of non-tourist infrastructure within ecotourism economies, adding new voices and perspectives to the ways that ecotourism exists from local perspectives.⁵²

Methodologies for Encountering Place

Ethnographies of Encounter

To further understand the embodiment of new capitalist processes and their application to culture, anthropologists have focused their work on moving beyond notions that deem culture to be a temporarily fixed and spatially bounded entity, towards an understanding of the dynamic process of production and transformation that culture entails.⁵³ Ethnographies of encounter move beyond these notions of culture, focusing instead on the dynamic process of production and transformation that culture entails.⁵⁴ Drawing upon themes of capitalism, space, place, and humanness, ethnographies of encounter bring to light the influence of colonial politics in ethnographic practices and reassert the ways culture can be directly linked to colonial discourse.⁵⁵

As an ethnographic approach rooted in the ideas of "contingency, unexpected outcomes, and articulations of multiple practices that make capitalism an ongoing process of creation," ethnographies of encounter move past singular, deterministic ethnographic structures.⁵⁶ To acknowledge that my interlocutors' encounters with place are multifaceted and multidirectional, my ethnographic method is influenced by these meanings of ethnographies of encounter. In the context of my own ethnographic methods, ethnographies of encounter acknowledge the expected outcomes of ecotourism as well as the "far flung collaborations and interconnections" that encounters with new landscapes invoke.⁵⁷

In order to pay attention to the ways that sense of place overlaps and interconnects amongst people who, according to James, "wear so many different hats in the community" I use mixed ethnographic methods including participant observation, in-depth interviews, and informal survey research to understand the ways my interlocutors' experiences overlap and interconnect to forge new meanings of place.

⁵⁰Stronza, *Ecotourism and Conservation*, 274.

⁵¹Blum, *Education, Community Engagement, and Sustainable Development*; Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development*; Stronza, "Anthropology of Tourism"; Vivanco, "Spectacular Quetzals."

⁵²Faier and Rofel, "Ethnographies of Encounter," 364; Konstantinos Andriotis, "Community Groups' Perceptions Of and Preferences for Tourism Development: Evidence from Crete," *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research* 29, no. 1 (2004): 67; Stronza, *Ecotourism and Conservation*, 276.

⁵³Faier and Rofel, "Ethnographies of Encounter," 364.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Faier and Rofel, "Ethnographies of Encounter," 364; Anna Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁵⁷Tsing, *Friction*, 29; Andriotis, "Community Groups' Perceptions," 67; Carl Cater and Paul Cloke, "Bodies in Action: The Performativity of Adventure Tourism," in *Anthropology Today* 23, no. 6 (2007): 13.

Participant Observation and Informal Surveys

I began my research as a volunteer and participant observer at *El Parque*⁵⁸, a non-governmental organization focused on community access to outdoor recreation. This small park does not exist in the same way as other reserves in the area: while *El Parque* does have a small number of trails that wind around the hillside and down towards a small creek, its mission is to “bring people and nature together,” most commonly on the soccer field and volleyball court that line the hillside or in celebrations that take place for birthdays and other important events.

At *El Parque*, my ethnographic methods included survey sampling and informal interviewing. I constructed a brief survey to address the reasons people visit *El Parque*, as well as what limits their ability to access recreation and outdoor space in Monte Verde. Additionally, the survey asked residential visitors to *El Parque*: how do you view the ecotourism industry, and why? The survey I distributed allowed me to contextualize my research question within *El Parque*, and although I will not explicitly discuss the specific results of my surveys, the twenty-two responses I received helped me document the ways that residents engaged in *El Parque*.

In classic ethnographic tradition, I often spent my days sweeping leaves from the trails, talking with visitors, joining games of pick up soccer and volleyball, and planning events like birthday parties and family reunions. I am grateful that the flexibility during my time as a volunteer in *El Parque* allowed me to experience a variety of ways visitors view and conceive of *El Parque* itself. Here, the experiences I documented were integral in shaping my understanding of how residents accumulate a sense of place. This inductive approach to ethnographic data collection at *El Parque* allowed me to employ new directions and acknowledge the unexpected outcomes of my ethnographic findings.⁵⁹

Framing a Sense of Place: In Depth Interviews

To understand how these narratives of tourism and place at *El Parque* intersect with those from other locations in the community, I interviewed twelve individuals outside of *El Parque* who are residents of Monte Verde. My interviewees work with non-governmental organizations, biological reserves, community-based agriculture initiatives, schools, and the tourism industry. Together, they represent a variety of voices from the Monte Verde community, though by no means do they voice every perspective.

I created a thematically driven interview guide that structured my research into palatable questions I could share with my interviewees in order to learn more about how they understood place in Monte Verde. To address encounters between residents and the conservation-as-development economy, I asked my interviewees a series of questions about how they perceive the community to have changed over time. To address sense of place, I asked a variety of questions that pertained to how the landscape and the community intertwine, and how these connections informed their understanding of place.

Towards the end of each interview, I asked my interviewees: “What does this place mean to you?” a question that was intentionally evocative and broadly framed. Without prompting, many of my interviewees were initially confused and overwhelmed by this question, though their responses quickly moved from general and straightforward to more reflective and elaborative, providing me with a sense of direction for my research and allowing me to reconfigure my inductive approach.⁶⁰

Prior to beginning each interview, I obtained informed consent from my interviewees as per

⁵⁸Throughout my paper, *El Parque*, Spanish for “park,” will refer to the small NGO and park where I completed my participant observation research.

⁵⁹Faier and Rofel, “Ethnographies of Encounter.”

⁶⁰Alan Morris, *An Introduction to In-depth Interviewing* (London, UK: Sage Press, 2015), 122.

Internal Review Board (IRB) requirements. I also asked my interlocutors if I could create a recording of the interview with my iPhone; in each case, they granted this permission. Given that Spanish is the native language for ten out of twelve of my interviewees, I conducted all but two interviews in Spanish. Most of my interviews were conducted in a public space, with minimal background noise level in order to preserve the quality of my recordings. Additionally, sitting in coffee shops with my interviewees often led to run-ins with other people from the community whom they knew; such encounters helped me make new connections with individuals in the community and certainly spiced up my transcripts.

During my interviews, there were times in which my questions were met not by intrigue or surprise, but with a knowing nod of someone who is frequently asked about their own story. It is crucial for me to acknowledge that the interactions I had with my interviewees, and during my participant observation, are influenced by my own positionality as well as the nature of Monte Verde itself. In a location that is often studied by outsiders, my interviews act as an exchange of knowledge, but also a sharing of different life experiences that culminate in different perceptions of reality. My own is framed by growing up in a ski town in Colorado, and that of my interlocutors' by their lives in Monte Verde, yet we can learn from each other in multiple ways. Using an approach couched in the idea of ethnographies of encounter, the multiplicity of lived experiences, and the many directions they imply, allowed me to acknowledge the ways that place is particularized yet universally salient beyond the trajectory that development suggests.

Data Organization and Analysis

To voice the experiences of my interviewees and survey participants, and to contextualize my own ethnographic experiences, I transcribed my interviews in full. This technique allowed me to become more familiar with my data and ensured I was not omitting any perspectives or details from the data I collected.⁶¹ After reading through each section of my data, I coded the responses thematically according to the different ideas that are present in each, and the themes I include in my analysis emerged as the most salient aspects of my data. In comparing the responses and experiences of my interlocutors, these themes transformed my raw data into coherent, intentional analyses of my research questions.⁶² Keeping an open mind while coding my data into themes allowed me to be consistent with my inductive approach to research design, while the transcribing process allowed me to become more intimately acquainted with my data.

Findings: Encountering Notions of Nostalgia

Gazing to Zipping

Linda is originally from the United States, but she has lived in Monte Verde since 1990, where her current project centers most prominently on making transportation systems in the area more sustainable. Since the 1990s, she tells me, visitors have moved increasingly towards pursuits of adventure tourism, including ziplining, an activity which provides a physically intensified experience of the landscape. For Linda, a sentimental yearning for place is present even within the ecotourism economy. "I mean, we used to go into the forest all day! Now, people go in for two hours...It's like they fly in an airplane for longer than they are in the forest!" she tells me, her hands flying up and around her head as we talk in a crowded café in town. This shift that Linda calls "gazing to zipping" continues to redefine the ways that tourists and residents alike participate in the ecotourism sector,

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 128.

creating new sites for the ecotourism encounter that did not exist when the project first began in the 1970s.

Linda's yearning for a past form of ecotourism is shared by Jose, a local entrepreneur. In attempting to re-create "the way things were," where encountering nature meant "contemplating, sharing, and relaxing," Jose promotes a form of connecting to the landscape that incorporates the desires for challenge and extremity that zipping promotes within the nostalgia he feels for the more traditional forms of "being in nature." His newest mountain bike project provides visitors with the opportunity to "get off the beaten path," yet it ensures an added element of uncertainty and adventure.

Even within the ecotourism industry, contradictions between conservation and development are inherently present. Residents like Linda and Jose yearn for the ways that ecotourism used to exist, in the pre-zipping phase of ecotourism. In those days, Monte Verde existed as a collection of nature reserves where a contemplative tourist could encounter a sublime paradise. Yet both Linda and Jose acknowledge that the economic value of development trumps the value of this nostalgia. And so, Jose incorporates a reverence for nature which he views as a relic of the past into the current market of adventure tourism through mountain bike tours. Linda works on projects to simplify and "green" the transportation systems in Monte Verde; as it currently exists, too many private cars pollute the air, causing unnecessary environmental destruction.

For Linda and Jose, the framework of timeless nostalgia characterizes the shift from gazing to zipping; their yearnings for place are fulfilled neither by conservation nor development. Instead, their new entrepreneurial pursuits intertwine notions of past and present landscapes and economies in order to forge viable and creative economic futures.

From Roaming to Recreating: The Transformation of Land from Public to Private

Horseback riding

We arrived at a small entrance on the left side of the road and Adolfo turned in, his Jeep jerking about as we rumbled down the steep embankment and across the river. Juan, wearing light brown pants and a dark blue button-down shirt, came running towards us. I would quickly become accustomed to his bashful smile and easygoing nature, but when we opened our car doors, he greeted us with a quiet sureness, a stark contrast from the buzzing, impossibly green hillsides that surrounded the shallow gully and the three horses that stood grazing just beyond.

As we saddled up, Adolfo and Juan started discussing the business of horseback riding in the area. It's a very popular tourist activity, and it has interesting cultural roots. As a previous interview at *El Parque* with an older man and longtime resident revealed to me, Monteverde used to be accessible mainly by horseback. There weren't tourists, only coffee plantations and dairy farms.

My heartbeat quickened with every calculated yet seemingly clumsy step my horse, Muñeca, took as we started up the hillside on a narrow, winding trail. I listened as Juan talked about his future aspirations for the horse-riding business, and his optimism that he could create an experience that a tourist would want to pay for. Though the trail was small and remote, and far from the more industrialized horseback riding operations the bigger tourism enterprises offer, Juan and his horse were surefooted. As we moved through the canopy, Adolfo and Juan bounced ideas back and forth, about places to stop in the forest that were particularly beautiful or what type of food to bring on the journey and how to market a horseback picnic. I watched Muñeca take her careful steps on the narrow trail, thinking all the while about the residents who used to traverse these hillsides for transportation, rather than to reminisce about how things once were.

Juan turned to me, pausing briefly from his mission to whack down branches for Muñeca and I to pass through the narrow opening of the trail. Talking about all of the people he knows who now

work in the ecotourism industry, he seemed frustrated. “Everyone is doing the same thing,” he said, and went on to discuss how crazy it seems that the entirety of Monte Verde has been transformed from an area for cultivation and farming to an ecotourism destination. People no longer follow the lifestyle they used to, he tells me. Instead, everyone is busy trying to create a life that is centered around the tourists who come to the area.

“Everyone is doing the same thing,” he says again. Shaking his head, Juan seems permanently astonished by this notion.

This theme of economic homogeneity, of everyone working in the same industry, persists throughout many of my interviews. In *El Parque*, two older men separately tell me stories of how they used to travel by small roads lined by lecherías and coffee farms where they picked coffee for a living. They used to cut across their neighbors’ land when they needed to, if it was the shortest way. Now, most of the acres are privately owned, and the owners do not welcome any visitors for fear that tour guides will bring groups onto their private land for a tour of the forest. What used to be shared by neighbors now exists within invisible social boundaries. Lining the bumpy, winding road that leads to the privately-owned reserves, there are both physical and metaphorical *No Trespassing!* signs.

Yet Juan’s story hints that perhaps there is something more than a simple desire to please a consumer that inhabits his heart and his mind as he is on the trail with his horse. While the redefinition of space as either private or public means he can no longer roam freely about the hills on his horse, Juan’s desire to start a horseback riding business combines his sentimental longings for the past with his acceptance that ecotourism shapes the present, tying the two into a framework of timeless nostalgia.

The Plaza

On a sunny afternoon at *El Parque*, I sat with an interviewee about my age, Gabriella. She’s a university student in her final year, and splits her time between home, in Monteverde, and school, which is about fifty miles away down the mountain. We talked about the Plaza, a soccer field just outside the heart of Santa Elena. In recent years, the Plaza has been a focal point of drama within the community. About five years ago, due to increased vandalism and some forms of mismanagement, those in charge of the space fenced in the soccer field and began to charge an entrance fee.

The fee isn’t too large, she tells me, but it isn’t that. Kids used to be able to go there and play any time of day without any restrictions; the stores around town would open earlier in the day and stay open until nightfall. Kids, parents and community members often crowded the field, playing various games of *mehenga*, or pick-up soccer. In its truest form, *mehenga* has few rules: it’s a game thrown together with any participants who might want to be involved, and once the teams are formed, the game begins. Gabriella tells me about her frustration that the Plaza is closed, how she used to play there as a kid. Now you have to reserve it and pay.

Among my survey participants at *El Parque*, it is agreed upon that the Plaza is a site of high tension and at times, exclusion. The stores around town are quieter without the bustling center, and this change has provoked something quite interesting: a lack of people where there used to be many. When the teams line up under luminescent lights late at night, it’s not by chance. It’s organized and restricted: you have to pay a price to access a resource that used to be open.

The Plaza is eerily quiet as I walk past it every day on my way to *El Parque*.

In this way, the Plaza represents a larger ideological shift that has accompanied the development of Monteverde and Santa Elena since tourism began to define the space. Much of the landscape in the zone belongs to private conservation enterprises: there are three main reserves, and numerous others that are smaller and more niche. Other than these places where the landscape is specifically designated for use, the land is private.

Yet, given both Juan and Gabriella's experiences, land is often not entirely public or entirely private. The Plaza is intended for public use, but now, the restrictions to access it parcel the Plaza away from its previously communal condition. how it once existed as a communal location. For Gabriella, the Plaza is simultaneously privatized to protect it from the precarities of a landscape that is almost always packed with visitors.

Evidently, the connections and identities that exist between and within ecotourism endeavors do not wholly belong within the dichotomy of *tourist* or *resident*, private or public, but instead intersect with a shared human experience that chips away at the constructed notions of place. A framework of place that employs timeless nostalgia reveals how the collectively constructed notions of space suspend the new, the old, the public, and the private in a place beyond conservation-as-development. In this liminal place, encounters with sense of place drive new, creative economies.

Not Produced or Consumed, but Sustained: A New Version of Old

El Parque

"In the moment that you come here, you're received with a smile. This place is for you, come on... it creates a consciousness, us sitting on the grass. This objective [of *El Parque*], here in Monteverde? It's the only one. The stress... it doesn't give us the opportunity to enjoy nature. I think that this objective...it's very good here."

—Lucia

When I talked to Lucía, we were watching a game of *mehenga*. It was a sunny afternoon, and *El Parque* was full of visitors kicking the ball around and shouting with purpose. The hillsides seemed impossibly green under the bright sky, and Lucía described to me just how beautiful she finds the nature here to be. She told me she loves living here, seeing the nature around her. That she loves to look out on the hillsides, to "see how green they are and to hear the little animals passing by."

As an employee of a hotel in Santa Elena, Lucía only has one day off — it's Sunday, today, and she usually takes her two kids to *El Parque* to play. She tells me she feels very thankful to have *El Parque*, which is the only green space in Monte Verde that does not charge an entrance fee to anyone. And, although residents receive free admission to any of the Reserves, nearly all of my interlocutors told me they do not usually go. They go on occasion, perhaps, but only if they are walking with their family— and usually only on Sundays.

At first, it seemed unusual to me that Lucía would rarely visit the reserves despite her love of the landscape. As a person from the United States, I assumed the reserves were where nature exists in its most accessible form. While the ecotourism project depicts the reserves as *the location* in the zone where nature is preserved and the fragile ecosystem of the cloud forest thrives, in *El Parque*, these embodiments of nature and conservation take different forms. The director, Adolfo, tells me *El Parque* is a community-centered project that aims to provide a space where people from the community can be outside and enjoy the good company of other residents who feel the same way they do about nature: that it is beautiful and meant to be enjoyed, in every capacity.

And the capacity that matters most to the residents of the area is creating outdoor space for the community. As long as the gates are open, residents young and old can come to *El Parque*, knowing that here they will encounter a friend, or someone they will get to know by playing a game of "mountain tennis," *mehenga*, or volleyball. If not, they know they can walk the trails of *El Parque* and enjoy the old growth forest that still exists just beyond the open, terraced fields near the entrance that tell the story of an agricultural community of the past.

The old road for the *trapiche*, or sugar cane plantation, still runs through *El Parque*, though the tracks are difficult to see with the naked eye. But any of the employees who work at *El Parque* can tell you where they are, and they are always eager to recite the history of *El Parque*. Cristina, the community coordinator, relays the story to me best.

“Well. We try to maintain our forest as intact as possible. Our acres, we maintain them as much as we can. But, over there, we still have part of the old road. The old one that we used to travel before, for example, the people of Las Nubes would come from the *trapiche*. This road is how they came up through the sugarcane, to take out the cane juice. We are preserving it because it is part of the history of this place, of Monteverde.”

Now, the road that formerly led to the *trapiche* in Las Nubes is a *fútbol* field, yet the history of the space remains, a conscious decision Adolfo continues to make. A few sugarcane stalks still stand; when the afternoon starts to draw out and the temperatures cool, Cristina and I use an axe to chop down a sugarcane and suck on the sweet stem.

The remnants of a past community, where the green hillsides were covered not by preserved forests but agricultural fields, sugarcane farms, and coffee plantations, is far from a distant memory for any older residents I spoke to. On a rainy afternoon in *El Parque*, I met a woman who told me that she remembers when there were no roads passable by car, and farms were accessible only by horseback.

Before it was preserved, residents in the zone used the landscape for its productive purposes, farming and clearing land to sustain themselves and feed their agricultural economy. Now, with the presence of ecotourism projects and practices, space is to be used in a new way: as a market-based conservation strategy, ecotourism ensures that space is not to be “used” at all. And while this strict preservation of space is directly tied to notions of conservation, *El Parque* embodies a liminal space in which conservation invigorates a place for community rather than an ecotourism attraction.

A framework of timeless nostalgia describes this space in between, capturing it as it intertwines and reimagines the new and the old of the Monte Verde landscape. The old, the new. Both are evident in the ways the saplings I helped to plant in the *vivero*⁶³ have grown, and the collections of leaves that fall from the trees collect into the small, detritus mountains that line the side of the old road; the one that’s left from when *El Parque* was a *trapiche*. And with each coming day, this changing landscape meets its new visitors. The people who arrive at *El Parque* bring the energy, Adolfo says. They come to play a pick up game of *fútbol* or maybe mountain tennis. They come to relax, and to enjoy themselves. In *El Parque*, where past and present meet, there are *senderos*,⁶⁴ *canchas*,⁶⁵ and opportunities to be a community. Residents come to *El Parque* to enjoy both the preserved forest at the heart of *El Parque* and to play games of *mehenga* on the cleared fields where stocks of sugarcane once grew.

*La Finca*⁶⁶

“...we think that there is always so much to learn from history, for the future. That with all of the modernization of agriculture, there are basic elements that are in the history, those that we should continue to know and enjoy.”

—Santiago

We were sitting in the educational center at *La Finca* when Santiago put our interview on hold to answer a call. The caller wanted to know if *La Finca* had any availability for a private tour later in the day. After some back and forth, Santiago and the caller agreed on a time for this private group to go on a tour of the sustainable coffee plantation at *La Finca*. As an education initiative and fully functioning farm, visitors and residents alike find *La Finca* to be an intriguing way to understand

⁶³Spanish for tree nursery.

⁶⁴Spanish for trails.

⁶⁵Spanish for sports fields.

⁶⁶I will use capital *La Finca* to refer to the farm where I conducted participant observation and interviews.

how traditional forms of land use can fit within the framework of conservation that ecotourism proposes. For over a generation, *La Finca* has been co-owned by a number of families. But recent sustainability initiatives have created new meaning for the space, allowing it to simultaneously fit into the new ideals of land use and conservation while maintaining more “traditional” practices and uses of the land. A tour of *La Finca* teaches visitors that the nutrient rich soil used to plant new coffee plants comes from the compost pile, the energy for the educational center from the carbon dioxide that accumulates in the animal waste, and more. Each initiative is explained, and visitors see everything in action.

Santiago does not take for granted the importance of this authenticity:

“[Monte Verde] is a mix of cultures, of nationalities...the authenticity of our sustainability efforts here is to say to the visitors, *what we do in Monte Verde we do because we believe that we should do it*. And we are going to do it with, or without tourism. Authenticity is, for example, that if you go on a coffee tour or a tour of our sustainable farm, we don’t show you the compost as a show. We show you that we do it because we believe in it. See? This is different, it permits authenticity.”

For Santiago, authenticity ignites meaning, both for the past and the future. What happens when a space is both “authentic” and innovative, lived-in and performative, simultaneously unchanged and deeply transformed by the principles of conservation? Santiago certainly believes in the power of the transformation towards sustainable agriculture, as a walk through *La Finca* by his side will reveal. He enthusiastically describes to me each sustainability initiative and how it came about on *La Finca*, from the compost to the carbon dioxide. And of course, he tells me about the coffee itself, the heart of *La Finca*. He tells me how old each plant is and what type of coffee it produces. Some of the plants have been growing for thirty years or more, since the days when *La Finca* was simply that: a farm, a land meant to be productive and nothing more.

The tour I attend with Santiago is authentic, in the sense he describes it. I can tell he genuinely cares about the conservation initiatives he promotes and believes in the ecotourism project to create a hopefulness that farming, framed as a sustainable, educatory opportunity, will continue as a viable livelihood in this modern world where conservation governs development. I watch as Santiago pinches the thick leaf of a coffee plant and listen as he describes the ways *La Finca* integrates land use practices with sustainability initiatives. He shows me the trees that act as windbreaks between fields in order to increase the land cover and improve the health of the plants.

Like the windbreaks, timeless nostalgia helps the coffee grow. A framework of timeless nostalgia acknowledges the ways that conservation severs agriculture from its traditional meanings but reframes *La Finca* as a place where using the land is an intentional, sustainable process. The wind breaks add both biodiversity and productivity to *La Finca*, maintaining its economy in a changing, conservation-based landscape.

For Flora, however, the use of land to produce crops like coffee, and the culture that is associated with this lifestyle, is fleeting. We are in the kitchen at the educational center, and I am busy helping Flora sort the pinto beans for lunch. Later, she will cook and serve them to a class of high school students from a nearby Spanish Institute.

Everywhere outside of *La Finca* is changing, Flora tells me in Spanish as she brings a large bowl for the beans down from the highest shelf. “It’s all about money. Money, money, money. And development.” She shakes her head, seemingly deflated. As we continue to talk, slowly picking out the cracked beans from the large bowl in front of us, Flora tells me about the way she sees Monteverde disappearing at the hands of rampant tourism and excessive development:

“We are losing our history of agriculture, of the land. It is all going to tourism, and we are going to lose all that was before. It hurts me to think of this, for my kids. It will happen many years from now. Everything will be in English. What are we going to do with the youth, with those who are growing?”

Flora's point represents a common concern in my research. Many of the residents who have lived in Monte Verde the longest reflected a similar sentiment, whether in interviews or in passing, of their frustration with the way tourism has fully encompassed the land.

In many ways, though, this sentiment strengthens their desires to participate in areas that exist apart from the realm of unilinear development that conservation-as-development presents. For Flora, this place is the farm.

“[At *La Finca*] I feel like I am at my house... I am reviving the past years, I love my work here. What I did, I worked in hotels for thirty years. It is something completely different. It is an environment where...everything is a career. Everything is synthetic. Life is another, it does not compare to this one [on *La Finca*].”

Flora's sentiment reflects the concrete existence of a tourism project that is completely interconnected within the discourse of development. *Yes*, she tells me, tourism is a unilateral project that erases the histories of Monte Verde. Yet her employment on *La Finca*, where the new and the old intersect like the faulty and functional beans that we sit sorting, represents something different. A reverence for the past within a project for the future, a place where she feels at home despite being surrounded by visitors. *La Finca*, as a family project that springs from the histories of the hillsides, strikes a harmonious yet distinct chord from the discourse of tourist development. At *La Finca*, timeless nostalgia is at play. Identity and history intersect with new economies that encapsulate past, present, and future ways of living from the land.

Discussion: Timeless Nostalgia and the Multiple Meanings of Place

By contextualizing the multiple meanings of place within the conservation-as-development framework that ecotourism creates, sense of place appears to enter into the discourse of development as a set of histories, cultures, and futures that are subjected to “First World” productions of power over “underdeveloped” nations.⁶⁷ Yet place undeniably holds meaning to each of us, in the ways that we grow into and out of our physical placement on the landscape. In his work *Territories of Difference*, Escobar states that “there is an embodiment and emplacement to human life that cannot be denied.”⁶⁸ I think of my host mom taking my arm, guiding me outside to see the sun setting over the valley where the mix of clouds, mist, and light produce the perfect conditions for a fully formed rainbow between the mountains. Or the sincere conversation I had with Cesar, an educator in the small town of Monteverde itself, in which he tells me that as a lifelong resident of the zone, he watches it as it continues to transform. He notices as his parents, who live on a farm on the outskirts of town, learn what sustainability is. He sees how they interpret what it means to conserve, and how they fit it into their own livelihoods. They, too, love this place they call home, and want it to remain even as it changes.

In the liminal space between conservation and development, a framework of timeless nostalgia ties together multiple versions of place through multiple collaborations and assemblages; new, old, and future. I show that timeless nostalgia gives agency to the multiple, complex meanings of place that exist beyond the bounds of political economy that conservation-as-development promotes. In *El Parque*, this reimagination of place is physical; for people like Mario, Jose, and Flora, it is a conceptual embodiment of the liminality that space presents.

⁶⁷Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 9.

⁶⁸Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes. New Ecologies for the Twenty-First Century* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 7.

Yet these agencies are not trivial; rather, they add a temporal aspect to the reasons people engage with the economy in Monte Verde. As such, timeless nostalgia accounts for the space that lies within the intersection of economies of sentiment and multidirectional capitalism. This framework names the space that is produced by the histories, identities, and lived experiences that inform new economic futures in Monte Verde. Residents engage with timeless nostalgia to participate in the conservation-as-development economy in new, creative ways that transcend the bounds of a unilinear path of development.⁶⁹ Timeless nostalgia names a framework of place in which capitalist processes are temporally bound, intimately produced, and rooted in multiple intersecting meanings of place.

I think of James and the way that his community organization constantly configures and reconfigures the social structure within Monte Verde to ensure everyone's voice is heard, or of Flora's frustration that a pure, uncontaminated version of the past will never exist as it once did. Of Santiago, who described the way that only his oldest family members still pass the afternoons at home, making tea and telling stories, unphased by the fast-paced ecotourism economy just down the road. The chaos and rampant changes that ecotourism brings seem to squeeze the experiences of what place once meant into the discourse of conservation-as-development. The landscape is changing; development is taking hold.

Yet development in Monte Verde does not promote its opposite, as Escobar suggests. A framework of timeless nostalgia acknowledges that capitalist practices are shaped by "diverse meanings, sentiments, and representations" that contaminate and assemble new from old through "historically specific cultural processes."⁷⁰ I document these new possibilities for capitalism using a methodology in which ethnographies of encounter acknowledge the patchy, multidirectional assemblages that characterize the ethnographic process and the way in which it informs new futures and directions for capitalist pursuit.⁷¹ For Tsing, encounters "change who we are as we make way for others. New directions emerge, yet everyone carries a history of contamination; purity is not an option."⁷² For the residents in this project, these contaminations of new and old change world making projects in Monte Verde, showing that no place can fit purely and perfectly into the space that is created for it.

Taken together, the ideas of Yanagisako, Paxon, and Tsing situate the notion of "creative forms" of capitalism within the realm of conservation-as-development. Like the Vermont farmers that Paxon studies, for whom cheesemaking is an engagement with the culture they embody and reproduce, economies of sentiment in Monte Verde intersect with contaminated histories and assemblages.⁷³ My participants' experiences defy the conventional dichotomies between conservation and development and the singular vision of progress on which this dichotomy depends. Instead, they suggest that historically constituted and culturally reproduced meanings of place are constantly shifting, changing, and combining notions of nostalgia and newness.

These multiple, reimagined meanings of the capitalist process and how it is informed by sense of place show that it *is* profound to care for a place. Caring about place is not trivial, like my interview with Mario suggests. And despite development's attempts to shape place into a particular, linear discourse, place still stands apart from the market-based conservation strategy that ecotourism development implies. The residents of Monte Verde find creative ways to bring forth the histories, identities, and lived experiences of place that are only theirs, incorporating these encounters into the ways in which they will continue to engage with economic processes. In essence, timeless nostalgia is a framework of place that lies within the assemblages of history, culture, and encounter in Monte

⁶⁹Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

⁷⁰Yanagisako, *Producing Culture and Capital*, 7.

⁷¹Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 23; Faier and Rofel, "Ethnographies of Encounter," 364.

⁷²Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 27.

⁷³Paxon, *The Life of Cheese*, 60; Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, 27.

Verde, yet it also concretely informs economic futures. It is a place-based form of capitalist pursuit that will remain temporally bound yet timelessly suspended in the mist that peppers the air.

An Encounter and a Question

On my first day in Monte Verde, I walked up a steep dirt road with a number of my classmates in search of a ficus tree. We followed homemade signs painted on pieces of discarded wood that took us up. Up, past a collection of eco-cabins, and around, to a sign with a tree and an arrow on it that pointed into the woods, where a short path took us to our destination. In front of us stood a ficus tree unlike the others. Its trunk was completely hollowed out, consumed by the fig vines that grow downwards from tree's branches and feed on the trunk to sustain themselves.

Yet this ficus tree still stands. To me, it is an ecological phenomenon.

You can even climb into the hollowed-out trunk, and I do. The vines are smooth and strong, thicker than my wrists. I grab them, one by one, pulling myself up and into the trunk of the tree.

For a brief moment, I am a part of the tree. The climb is thrilling, and soon I am nearing the top. I poke my head out of the entanglement of vines and look down, towards my fellow tourists who stand below. In the valley far beneath me, waves of mist collect into shifting shapes of clouds as they float at an incredible speed over the tops of the green canopy.

Weeks later, on a quiet afternoon, a family of tourists pulls into *El Parque*, directionally lost and looking for the road that leads to the tree. At the moment, the tree still evades the glossy pamphlets and billboards; you have to find someone who knows the way or find it yourself. Adolfo gladly gives them directions, telling them they will find the road down, and to the left. Go up it and the tree will be down the path to your right. Have fun, he says. It is a special tree.

I think about the ficus tree, how by becoming hollow, it is also becoming famous.

When I ask Adolfo if the fig vines are bad for the tree, he tells me that they are not killing it, just holding it closely as it ends its life. Holding it where it has always stood, all the while transforming it into something new.

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Appendix A Maps and Images

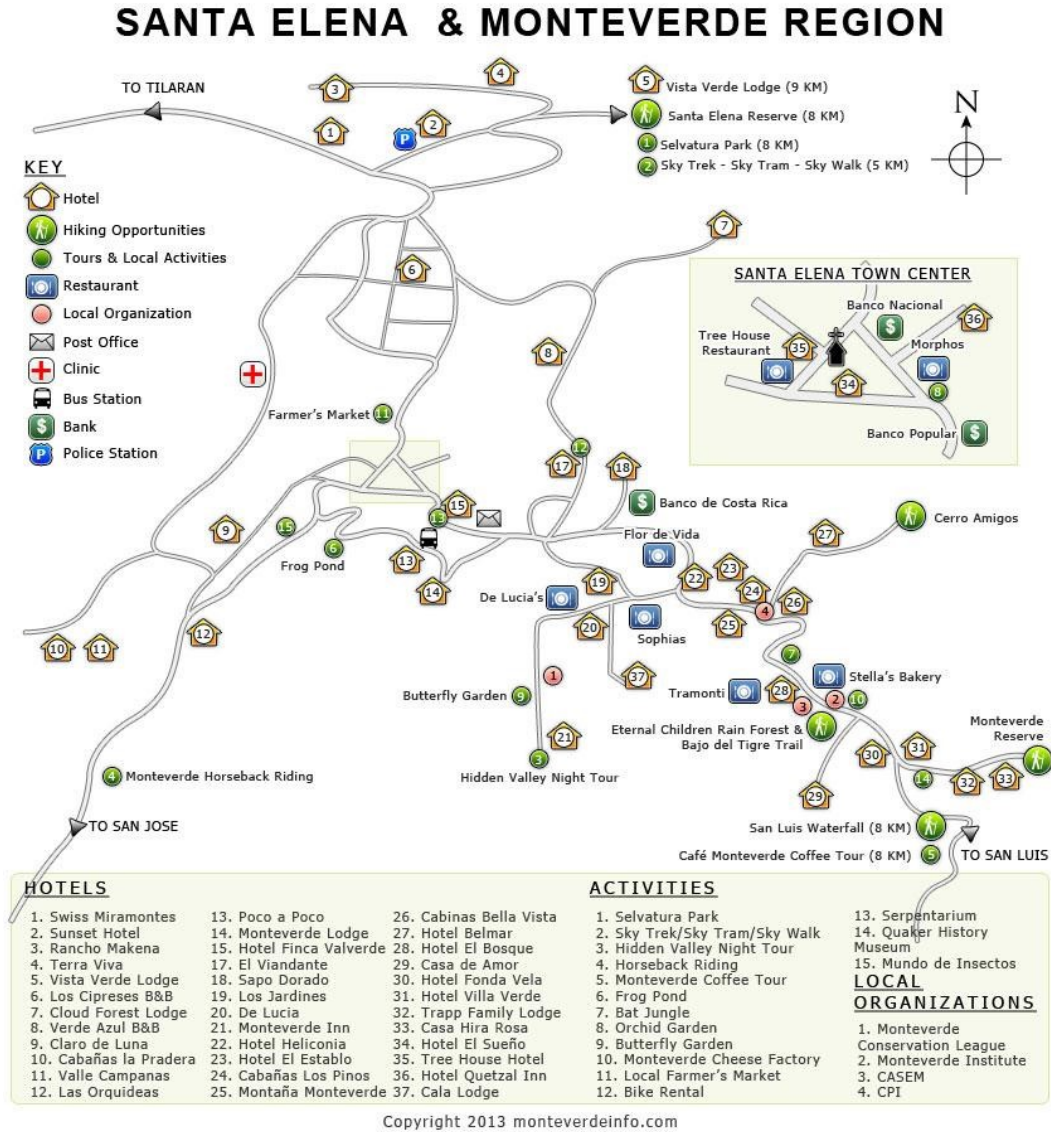


Figure 1: Map of the Monte Verde area, including Santa Elena Monteverde, and the neighborhoods between the two.

Credit: monterveinfo.com



Figure 2: A view from the Monteverde Cloud Forest Biological Reserve, overlooking the valley below.



Figure 3: The hollowed out ficus tree that we climbed.

Appendix B Participants Table

Name*	Participant Title	Years in Monteverde	Role in Community	Method of Participation
James	Director	Since 1981 on and off, in role for last 2 years	Community organization director	In-depth interview
Mario	Nature guide	From the area	Employed by a small reserve	In-depth interview
Lucía	Public Relations Director	From the area	Works at <i>El Parque</i>	In-depth interview
Santiago	Director	From the area	Director of <i>La Finca</i> , has held this role for 11 years and been at <i>La Finca</i> for 30	In-depth interview
Cesar	Coordinador, Educational initiative	Born near MV	External Affairs Assistant	In-depth interview
Linda	Director	Since 1990 plus 2.5 years before then	Transportation sustainability advocate	In-depth interview
Jose	Entrepreneur	About 2 years	Consultant hired to help carry out sustainability projects	In-depth interview
Flora	Cook	From the area	Kitchen staff at <i>La Finca</i>	In-depth interview
Adolfo	Director	From the area	Director of <i>El Parque</i>	Participant observation
Juan	Local resident and tourism entrepreneur	From the area	Prospective horseback riding guide	Participant observation and semi-structured interview
Gabrielle	College student	From the area	Currently attending school outside of Monte Verde	Survey participant
Ana**	Directora, RSE	15 years with same org	Conservation specialist	In-depth interview
Javier**	Nature guide	From the area	Employed by a small reserve	In-depth interview

*All names are pseudonyms.

**These interviewees do not appear in my paper. However, my encounters with them helped to shape the narratives that I wrote.

Appendix C Interview Guide

Interviewee information

Tell me a bit about yourself.

1. Where are you from?
2. How long have you lived in Monteverde?

Organization

1. How would you describe your role at _____?
 - (a) What are the most important things you do in this role?
2. Do you see _____ as directly benefiting the community? How?
3. What do you hope people will learn from _____? What is the message you hope to spread?
4. How is _____ connected to the local history of Monteverde?
5. Who, if anyone, visits your organization?
6. Who benefits from your organization within the community?
7. Who else, outside of the community, benefits from your organization? How does this relate to the benefit that the community receives from your organization?
8. Does your organization relate to the mission of sustainability and conservation in Monte Verde?

Making Meaning from Space

1. How would you describe the people and the community of the Monte Verde area?
2. How would you describe the environment of Monte Verde? What is most important to you about the environment?
3. Has this place changed how you view your relationship to your local surroundings? Do you hope that this will be the same for others, too?
4. What knowledge do you hope that people will gain from your work and programming?
5. How do you see the development of space for conservation and preservation as changing the Monteverde community?
 - (a) What effects of this change have you seen in the community?
6. What values do you see in this place?
 - (a) recreational, therapeutic, spiritual, cultural, identity, existence, artistic, aesthetic, educational, peace, and scientific research and monitoring.
 - (b) Which top three are the most important?
7. What does this place, in general, mean to you and how did that meaning come into being? How do visitors to this area understand these meanings of place?

Conservation and Transformation in Monte Verde

1. How do you perceive the Monte Verde to have changed over time? Do you see these changes as positive or negative?
2. In your opinion, what factors have contributed the most to the changes that Monteverde has experienced?
3. What has not changed since you have lived in Monteverde?
4. What has changed the most?
5. What do you think of the slogan “Authentic and Sustainable?”

Appendix D Survey of Residential Recreation in Monte Verde⁷⁴

Part I: Tourism in the Zone

1. How do you perceive the impacts of tourism in Monte Verde for the development of the area?
 - (a) Negative
 - (b) Positive
 - (c) Neutral
 - (d) Other response or explanation:

2. Are you employed in the tourism industry?
 - (a) Yes, for _____ years
 - (b) No
 - (c) Other response:

3. In your opinion, who participates in outdoor recreation in Monte Verde? Who visits the reserves?
 - (a) Local residents
 - (b) Tourists from other countries
 - (c) Costa Rican tourists
 - (d) Other response:

4. Do you think there are enough resources for the community in Monte Verde to enjoy outdoor space?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
 - (c) Other response:

5. What barriers exist for you to enjoy time outdoors? Mark all of the points that apply, or write other options.
 - (a) I don't have enough time.
 - (b) I don't have enough money.
 - (c) I do not care to spend time outdoors.
 - (d) Other reason:

6. Here, use the scale to determine how you feel about each statement. 1 represents the least and 5 the most in agreement with the question.
 - I feel comfortable with the opportunities to enjoy nature that my life in Monte Verde provides.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5

 - I think that tourism has improved my life.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5

⁷⁴This survey is translated from its original version in Spanish.

- I think that tourism has improved the economy in my town.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5

 - I have a relationship with the environment apart from the economic benefits that it provides to me.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5

 - I think that there are enough opportunities for me to participate in outdoor recreation.
1.....2.....3.....4.....5
-

Part II: El Parque

1. Approximately how many times have you visited the park?
 - (a) 1-5
 - (b) 6-10
 - (c) 11-15
 - (d) 16-20
 - (e) More than 20 times

2. How did you hear of the park? How long have you known about the park?
 - (a) _____

3. What do you understand about the mission of the park?
 - (a) _____

Thank you for participating in this survey! I appreciate your responses.

Appendix E Consent Form

Consent Form

Who am I? My name is Ruthie Boyd. I am a student at Carleton College in Minnesota in the United States.

What is the purpose of my project? I want to understand how tourism contributes to the construction of place as well as the impacts of tourism on environmental conservation and community construction in Monteverde and Santa Elena, Costa Rica.

What will you be asked to do? I will be asking you to participate in an interview where I will ask questions about your connection to Monteverde, your views on the community, tourism, and development in the area. I expect that your participation will take between thirty minutes and one hour. If you are comfortable being recorded and choose to consent, I will make an audio recording of your interview.

Are there any risks or benefits to you? My research is not designed to provide direct risks or benefits to you. The results will be used to understand the way that tourism exists in the community and contributes to a sense of place and for my senior thesis.

Confidentiality: The data I collect will be coded and analyzed for my senior thesis in the department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton College, Minnesota, US. All responses will be anonymous and I will use synonyms when referring to you in my work. Your responses and name will be protected to the extent allowed by the law and will be destroyed when the analysis of data is complete.

Statement of consent and signature: I understand the information presented in this document and that my participation is completely voluntary. I also understand that I can choose to stop my participation at any time without any consequence.

I agree to allow the researcher to create an audio recording of my interview.

Name of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of participant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of investigator: _____ Date: _____

Please contact me with questions, concerns, or comments at boydr2@carleton.edu. Thank you!

Consentimiento Informado

Quien soy: Me llamo Ruthie Boyd. Soy un estudiante en Carleton College en Minnesota, Estados Unidos.

Que es el propósito de la investigación? Quiero entender cómo el turismo contribuye a la construcción de lugar y cómo son los impactos del turismo para la conservación ambiental y comunidad en Monteverde.

¿Qué va a ser invitado a hacer? Contestar unas preguntas en la forma de una entrevista. Las preguntas consisten en temas sobre la comunidad, el turismo y el desarrollo de la zona. Se espera que su participación se dura aproximadamente una hora. Si está cómodo y provee su consentimiento, voy a hacer una grabación audio de la entrevista.

¿Existen beneficios o riesgos para mi participación? Mis investigaciones no intentan de crear ninguno beneficios ni riesgos para usted. Usarán los resultados para entender más sobre el turismo en este lugar y cómo los impactos en la comunidad local contribuyen al sentimiento de lugar y para mi tesis de universidad.

Confidencialidad: Los datos de las encuestas serán codificados y analizados para una tesis en el departamento de Sociología y antropología en Carleton College, Minnesota, Estados Unidos. Todas las respuestas serán anónimas y usará seudónimos en el caso de que tenemos nombres asociados con sus respuestas. Sus respuestas y su nombre serán guardados en unos lugares seguros, protegido en la medida permitida por la ley, y serán destruidos cuando se complete el análisis de los datos.

Declaración de consentimiento y firmar: Comprendo que este proyecto es de investigación y que mi participación en la entrevista es completamente voluntario. También comprendo que si decido participar en el estudio, puedo detener mi participación y consentimiento en cualquier momento, sin ninguna consecuencia.

Acepto que el investigador realizar una grabación de audio de la entrevista

Nombre del participante: _____ Fecha: _____

Firma del participante: _____ Fecha: _____

Firma del testigo (investigador): _____ Fecha: _____

Por favor, póngase en contacto conmigo con preguntas, inquietudes o comentarios en boydr2@carleton.edu. Gracias!