Implications of Community Based Eco-Tourism and Conservation: A Study of El Placer, Ecuador

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El Placer is a community located at the base of the Machay ecological reserve in the Tungurahua province of Ecuador. Traditionally an agricultural community, the organization Fundacion EcoMinga has hired members of the community as knowledgeable guides and guards for the surrounding ecological reserves. Additionally, a hosting program for students and researchers has been implemented within the last three years. In its infant stages of eco-tourism, this research aims to quantify the socio-economic implications and impacts of conservation tourism on this small agricultural community. In an ongoing survey, residents of El Placer from various age groups, genders and occupations will/have been questioned about their experience and attitudes of the shifting ways of life. Oral interviews further understanding of personal impacts community members are experiencing. Additionally, a comparative case study demonstrates the potential paths for future developments in this region. This research was conducted while participating in the hosting program as ecological researchers to provide quantitative impacts of ecotourism on the community.

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