Multicultural Tourism, Demilitarization, and the Process of Peace Building in Panama

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RESUMEN

En este artículo, conecto la negación encubierta de derechos ciudadanos por parte del estado con el desarrollo del turismo con el fin de explicar por qué Panamá presenta la imagen de un estado libre de fuerza policial. Abordo dos conceptos principales: un análisis crítico de la gubernamentalidad en el turismo (Hollinshead 1999, 2003) y el concepto de turismo como una fuerza "creadora de mundos" (Hollinshead et al. 2009; Merrill 2009; Noy 2011; Reis and Shelton 2011). Aplico estos conceptos al desarrollo del turismo en el Archipiélago de Bocas del Toro con el fin de ilustrar cómo los procesos turísticos de gubernamentalidad y "creación de mundos" impuestos por las autoridades son experimentados por los afro-panameños a nivel local. Un análisis de estos conceptos nos permite comprender la naturaleza de la industria del turismo, con su énfasis en la desmilitarización, pero con una presencia importante de mecanismos que limitan los derechos ciudadanos utilizados para mantener a los grupos menos privilegiados en su posición de subordinación en el contexto del desarrollo turístico y la prosperidad económica. [turismo, gubernamentalidad, diaspora africana, Panama]

ABSTRACT

In this article, I connect covert denial of citizenship rights with tourism development to explain why Panama presents itself as a police-free state. I engage two main concepts: a critical analysis of governmentality in tourism (Hollinshead 1999, 2003) and the concept of tourism as a "world-making" force (Hollinshead et al. 2009; Merrill 2009; Noy 2011; Reis and Shelton 2011). I apply these concepts to the development of tourism in the archipelago of Bocas del Toro to illustrate how the processes of governmentality and world-making are experienced by Afro-Panamanians at the local level when tourism is imposed from above. An exploration of these concepts assists us in grasping the nature of Panama's tourism industry, with its emphasis on demilitarization, but with

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the practice of denying citizenship rights and maintaining underprivileged groups in their place in the context of tourism development and economic prosperity. [tourism, governmentality, African diaspora, Panama]

THE SUCCESS OF THE TOURISM INDUSTRY DEPENDS on government stability and an assurance of personal safety. Not surprisingly, the industry responds immediately to political instability with substantial cancellations. "There are therefore strong financial incentives for protecting the image that tourism sells" (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994:457). Even in postconflict nations where histories of revolution and political uprising *become* tourism attractions (Babb 2011; Goldstone 2001; Novelli et al. 2012; Sánchez and Adams 2008; Smith 2000), a degree of political and social stability is necessary to bring in tourism development. As Goldstone (2001:2) states, "governments, in conjunction with banking and financial travel institutions, travel companies, and the international lending institutions which traditionally sponsor foreign aid, are working overtime to reengineer former and even current trouble spots as tourism paradises."

In the context of necessary social and political stability, tourism is permeated with differing dynamics of power struggles, empowerment, equality, and inequality. In the following essay, I connect covert denial of citizenship rights with tourism development to explain why Panama presents itself as a police-free state. To do so, I engage two main concepts: a critical analysis of governmentality in tourism (Hollinshead 1999, 2003), and the concept of tourism as a "world-making" force (Hollinshead et al. 2009; Merrill 2009; Noy 2011; Reis and Shelton 2011). I apply these concepts to the development of tourism in the archipelago of Bocas del Toro to illustrate how the processes of governmentality and world-making are experienced by Afro-Panamanians at the local level when tourism is imposed from above.

In the 21st century, tourism has become a primary industry in Panama. Because tourism possesses the power to construct realities, as has happened elsewhere, Panama is intent on securing its borders through peace-making attempts and on developing a positive image of the nation. I conclude that the law and order processes in Panama's demilitarized era include the labeling of Afro-Panamanian populations as safe to tour, while—at the same time—effectively impeding their agency by neglecting these populations and limiting their opportunities to profit from the tourism industry while creating and enforcing laws that disadvantage Panamanian nationals.[1]

Panama is often imagined as a transshipment point for drugs and a corrupt, unsafe, and dictatorial nation.[2] Panama's period of military rule covered almost a

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quarter of a century, from 1968 to 1989, one of the most enduring in Latin America (Gandásegui 1993:1; Ropp 1992).[3] After the U.S. invasion (known as Operation Just Cause) to remove *de facto* Panamanian leader General Manuel Noriega in December 1989, Panama began the postcolonial period of its history by initiating a democratic period and preparing for the removal of direct U.S. influence in both the Panama Canal and Canal Zone. As a result of this transition, successive governments have attempted to strengthen the economy with tourist dollars by constructing an image of a peaceful, demilitarized nation, safe for tourists, and attractive for both its ecological and ethnic diversity.

In this national strategy, marginalized populations—indigenous and black people—find themselves acknowledged and promoted as part of a colorful, multicultural national heritage, inextricably tied to a safe and police-free state. Have these strategies empowered these populations or contributed to their well-being? Are demilitarization and multiculturalism the state's approach to law and order? I make two interrelated arguments: first, that democratic governments in Panama have produced a normalized, police-free state ideally suited for tourism. However, this approach has translated at the local level into circumscribed practices that privilege tourists and foreign investors. Second, the profit-seeking international tourism industry has contributed to a discursive acceptance of Panama's ethnic complexity, producing "harmless" multiculturalism and reducing ethnic cultures to performance within delimited contexts. As such, multiculturalism—often times called upon in connection with tourism—is not always liberating for ethnic minorities. In fact, it frequently brings its own sets of tensions that both destabilize and reinforce traditional hierarchies.

The research on which this article is based was carried out with Afro-Antillean populations in the archipelago of Bocas del Toro. I conducted in-depth, long-term fieldwork for two years (1999−2000) and short-term fieldwork (two to three months at a time) between 1996 and 2007. I engaged in participant observation and archival research and formally interviewed 90 Afro-Antillean men and women of different socioeconomic classes, in addition to resident expatriates and public officials in Panama City and Bocas. I studied the construction of Afro-Antillean racial and gender identities in the context of tourism growth in the region, focusing on the manifestation of these identities through ethnic commodities, particularly cuisine and music. Throughout my years studying the archipelago, I witnessed its transformation from a place where social classes were vaguely delimited and where access to basic resources was available to all because of well-developed reciprocity networks, to a place where some foreign resident expatriates and Afro-Antilleans have profited from unregulated tourism development, while the majority of the population (particularly Afro-Antilleans and Ngöbe) have experienced a substantial decline in their standard of living. In previous articles (Guerrón Montero 2011, 2006a, 2006b), I have addressed the ways in which Afro-Antillean populations at

large have used "infra-political" (Merrill 2009) tactics to generate and accumulate social and cultural capital as a result of their participation in the tourism industry, while recognizing that their economic conditions either did not improve dramatically or were in fact reduced. In this article, I concentrate on the conflicts between the state and Afro-Antilleans, which have resulted in disorganized tourism development and minimal opportunities for effective local responses.

Tourism as World-Making Power

Understanding power as mostly capillary rather than as top-down and based on concrete figures of authority (Clastres 2010; Walker 2012) permits us to explore the connections between states, the construction of tourism destinations, and power. Although states have been destabilized and rendered less relevant as a result of powerful globalizing forces, governments play a pivotal role in demarcating the physical placement and mobility of their citizens, as well as the overall "depth of governmental presence in our lives," regardless of political regimes and the particularities of social organization (Salskov-Iversen et al. 2000; Trouillot 2001:125). In Panama, the depth of governmental presence is experienced in two ways: first, the discursive production of ecological and ethnic multiculturalism as advertising mantras without the concomitant provision of effective economic or social support to the communities; and second, the recent sponsorship of residential tourism as a path to economic growth for the nation-state and its elites (Instituto Panameño de Turismo [IPAT] 1993; 2005, 2008; Klytchnikova and Dorosh 2009).

These policies are lived through a particular approach toward governmentality. This concept, developed by Michel Foucault (1991), is useful in understanding and connecting abstract discourses about society with quotidian practices. Governmentality refers to the governance of a mentality, "a collectively held view that is communicated through a variety of discourses" to guide citizens to follow societal norms (Ettlinger 2011:538; Lemke 2001). In Panama, governmentality is expressed through the normalization of specific applications of the tourism industry, including an undeniable support for high-end tourism projects, and the creation of laws that guarantee that these products take primacy over local small-scale tourism options. This normalization translates in specific quotidian material practices at the local level, thus prohibiting most marginalized groups from benefitting from tourism.

In line with the state's governmentality, certain narratives and attractions have been placed on the forefront in branding Panama as a destination (such as multiculturality, ecological diversity, modernity), while other narratives have been denied and cleansed (violence, corruption, racial, ethnic, and class inequalities). In this sense, Panama has become an excellent example of the power of tourism

in the process of creating meaning and worlds (Hollinshead et al. 2009; Merrill 2009). As Hollinshead, Ateljevic and Ali assert, tourism is an agent of change, a world-making agent that "makes, de-makes or re-makes [. . .] populations, destinations and heritages" rather than merely reproducing them (2009:428).[4] These authors' definition of world-making refers to the process of normalization and naturalization that tourism mediators produce to create destinations on a local, regional, or national scale: the process in which management agencies and other mediators privilege particular representations of people, places, and histories over others in order to create and imagine a destination (Hollinshead et al. 2009:431).

In other words, tourism has the potential to *produce* local, regional, or national worlds that then generate local, regional, or national social relations, rather than merely to *represent* them. In this regard, the degree of agency of local actors with limited power in the national realm is minimal, regardless of the quality and extent of social and cultural capital acquired and the desire to belong to a global cosmopolitan enclave (see Hodge 2005, 2012).

Governmentality and world-making processes in the tourism industry are translated in particular ways in Panama's demilitarized era. In postinvasion Panama, successive democratic governments have constructed a normalized, police-free state ideal for tourism. The discontent expressed by minorities toward governmental irregularities is labeled "disorderly conduct," and where policing and repression of local populations continues to be applied mostly through a legalistic facade that masks corruption and deliberate inefficiency with impunity (Comaroff and Comaroff 2004, 2006; Horton 2006; Mayhem and Jordan 2010).

Tourism and the Demilitarization Process in Panama

Examining the effects of the demilitarization process in Panama is essential to understand its associations with the current tourism industry. Demilitarization and the tourism industry have produced not only the image of normalized peace and a certain way of governmentality but also a collection of institutional ways-of-seeing in tourism (Panama Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2008).

Understanding demilitarization in Panama requires recognizing the extent to which the Panamanian security forces became subordinated to civilian actors and the military characteristics that were removed from the country's security institutions. The Panamanian Defense Forces (PDF) were disbanded within hours of the start of the U. S. intervention in December 1989. The government of Guillermo Endara (1990—94) then set up a public security apparatus envisioned as a civil police force.

Immediately after the invasion, and in response to the crisis that ensued, the Panamanian government and the U.S. military command adopted a series of

measures that became the foundation of Panama's civil police force, which included selected personnel from the recently abolished PDF (Guevara Mann 1996). This was significant because, since independence from Colombia in 1903, Panama had not had separate institutions for policing and national defense; instead it had a single security apparatus with varying degrees of military or civilian influence.

This combined force was the result of U.S. pressure to further construction of the interoceanic Canal and to maintain control of it. As a result, Panamanian military battalions were disbanded after 1904, and the Panamanian security forces were known as police forces until 1952. However, from the 1930s onwards, there was a steady increase in military influence in the police, mostly through the training of officers in military academies. This concluded in the reorganization of the security forces as the National Guard after 1952. The militarization process intensified after the National Guard's 1968 *coup d'etat* culminated in the 1983 creation of the PDF. Albeit with limited scope in terms of military training, the PDF was intended to be a military force able to handle the border and Canal defense (Caumartin 2007:111—112; Gandásegui 1998:153, 159), while also maintaining tight internal civil control.

The reforms of the 1990s produced a complete shift in control from the security forces to civilian authorities and their U.S. allies, creating radical transformations (Caumartin 2007:114). The republic's security apparatus (*Fuerza Pública* or Public Force) was placed under civilian rule (Guevara Mann 1996:192), and the Panamanian government allocated funds for training to strengthen and facilitate its operational capacity (Caumartin 2007:126).[5] Following the chaos of the invasion, reports of crime increased steadily in the early 1990s (notably homicides, thefts, and robberies), coupled with constant coverage and discussion in the media about criminality and the wide-ranging economic crisis (Beluche 1996:9—12; cf. Guevara Mann 1996).

The National Police of Panama (*Policía Nacional de Panamá*, PNP) was established in February 1990 (Executive Decree No. 38). Its mission of guaranteeing internal security for "improving people's quality of life within the framework of the legal system" was instituted in 1997 under Law No. 18 (Policía Nacional de Panamá). There are two subunits of the police force in charge of tourism: the National Tourism Police (*Policía Nacional de Turismo*, PNT) and the Technical Judiciary Police (*Policía Técnica Judicial*, PTJ) founded in 2001. The PNT was founded in 1992 with 60 members; currently it has 170 members. In addition to their regular police training, the Panama Tourism Authority (*Autoridad de Turismo de Panamá*, ATP)[6] trains this force as tourism guides. The PTJ was formed primarily to assist tourists who are victims of crime and secondarily to identify tourists who commit crimes. At the present time, the National Border Service (*Servicio Nacional de Fronteras*, SENAFRONT) or the border police is the only policing group with some degree of militarization training (cf. Caumartin 2007:125). Recently, the

border police have been highly criticized for participating in a series of repressive incidents involving Panamanian citizens in the provinces of Colon, Chiriquí, and Bocas del Toro.

Constructing Multiculturalism in Panama's Tourism Industry

Until the middle-to-late 1990s, Panama was not an established tourism destination (Guerrón Montero 2005). As previously noted, one reason for limited governmental and private interest in tourism—and the global tourism industry's lack of attention to Panama—was its image as both unstable and highly militarized. Prior to 1989, only three places were marketed for tourism: the Panama Canal, the Duty Free Zone (in the city of Colón), and the Comarca Kuna-Yala in the archipelago of San Blas.[7] State tourism agencies were nascent; in fact, the National Commission of Tourism (*Comisión Nacional de Turismo*) was not formed until 1934, and IPAT in 1960. Immediately following the invasion, Panama recorded its lowest influx of tourists in 1990, with only 187,307 visitors (International Technical Cooperation Agreement 1993:20), compared to 380,000 visits in 1980 (Yoshida et al. 1995:II−3).

With the onset of formal democracy and the imminent departure of U.S. troops from the Panama Canal, both Endara's government (1989−1994) and his successors saw tourism development as the most viable alternative for economic development and peaceful nation building (Adams (1998); Castaneda and Burtner 2010; D'Amore, 1988a, 1988b; Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the United Nations 1997; Ginat and Winckler 1998 Jafari, 1989 Manila Declaration of World Tourism 1980; Singh 2001), targeting the United States and other Western tourists in particular and supporting what Merill (2009:12) calls "soft power," an "intrusive influence wielded wherever global and local cultures meet by agents that often operate outside the purview of the state." This strategy is not particular to Panama. Sánchez and Adams (2008:30) note that many developing nations turn to tourism as a means to develop a positive image of the nation and access capital to execute a much broader nation-building agenda that may include "national integration, strengthening of the state, self-determination (sovereignty), and social equity and justice." Nation-building, then, becomes a wide-ranging plan that includes economic goals, but also political, social, and ideological ones.

Consistent with the neoliberal view of most Latin American countries (Baud and Ypeij 2009), Endara's administration—and even more forcefully that of Ernesto Pérez Balladares (1994−99)—developed tourism as one of the most important industries of the country. The return of the Panama Canal to the Panamanian people (effective December 31, 1999) provided an impetus for these efforts as the closing of the U.S. military bases and the departure of military and civilian personnel would reduce economic inflows. Endara declared tourism a national

priority that would contribute to the country's economic development (International Technical Cooperation Agreement 1993:i). In 1994, Pérez Balladares signed a $685 million technical agreement with the Department of Regional Development and Environment of the Organization of American States (OAS) to formulate a Tourism Development Master Plan (TDMP). This would divide the country into nine tourism sections or zones, provide the framework for the industry's future growth (Anicetti 1998a:70), and be fully implemented by 2002 (International Technical Cooperation Agreement 1993:36).[8] That same year, his government instituted Law No. 8 to promote tourism activities and establish special tax incentives for investors (Anicetti 1998b:72; IPAT 1998). The objective of these agreements and legal measures was "to make Panama a 'brand name' in the tourist market, and [for] each of its nine zones [to] be a 'model' to make this brand competitive" (ITCA 1993:33). The proposed focus was centered on two types of tourism, high-end heritage tourism and ecotourism (Pérez Balladares 1998:4). The governments of Mireya Moscoso (1999—2004), Martin Torrijos (2004—2009), and Ricardo Martinelli (2009—present) have continued these tourism policies adding residential tourism as an important concentration (Panama Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2008; Klytchnikova and Dorosh 2009).[9]

In the early 1990s, and despite the efforts of the ATP to strengthen the image of Panama in the world tourism market, the initial outcome was not successful (International Technical Cooperation Agreement 1993:30).[10] This situation shifted rapidly in the mid-1990s, and by 1998, with an investment in infrastructure of US$200 million, tourism was the third-highest contributor to the gross domestic product of Panama (Guillén 2000:2A).[11] That same year, tourism accounted for four to five percent of the GDP, about the same as exports of bananas, shrimp, sugar, and coffee. The tourism industry also employed 30,000 people directly and indirectly. In 2003, tourism generated more earnings (US$805 million) than the Panama Canal (US$690.3 million), the Canal Zone (US$487.7 million), and banana production (IPAT 2003:1, 9). By 2006, tourism accounted for 20 percent of the goods and services sector and annual expenditures by foreign tourists reached US$960 million, or 6 percent of the country's GDP (Klytchnikova and Dorosh 2009). Currently, according to the ATP, tourism is the first industry of Panama, followed by the Panama Canal and the Duty Free Zone in Colon, and it has represented 76 percent of internal income between 2001 and 2010. In the same period, the number of tourists has increased 9.8 percent (1,716,362).[12]

Alongside this newfound industry, a different narrative is constructed in postinvasion Panama, where the Panamanian government "presents" tourism as a way to replace a militarized approach to peace. It does this by stressing Panama's demilitarization process, the opening of every territory in Panama (including the Canal Zone and the archipelago of San Blas) to peaceful travel by tourists,[13] and giving foreigners opportunities to purchase land in a country deemed safe and welcoming.

In spite of the existence of a strong national security force, the presence of the police is only mentioned in the context of forces trained specifically to serve the needs of tourists (cf. Visit Panama website).

Panama's current tourism slogan, "Panama is more than a Canal," is a remarkable turn in the politics of the nation. Panamanian scholars stress the relevance of the country's struggle, beginning in 1903 when it was instituted as a republic, to assert its sovereignty over the Canal Zone (Gandásegui 1993:1; Sánchez 2002). In fact, one of the purposes of the PDF was to protect the Panama Canal and, as an extension of this goal, pacify Central America (Gandásegui 1998:153, 159). However, the main objective of all administrations since 1990 has been to highlight Panama's many tourism alternatives *other* than the Canal. They have done this by specifically promoting tourism as a viable economic industry (eco- and ethno-tourism in particular) mainly based on the country's rich multiculturalism,[14] by recasting certain ethnic groups and the regions they inhabit as safe and tourism-friendly and, following world tourism trends, by underscoring ethnicity as "increasingly commoditized in specifically touristic ways" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009 Panama Sustainable Tourism Master Plan 2008; Picard and Wood 1997:viii).

In light of the recognition of the potential economic benefits of multiculturalism, the ATP's initial intention was to develop heritage routes. Using this premise, Panama was to become a model country, taking advantage of globalization while maintaining its unique identity and heritage (Pérez Balladares 1998:14). This focus on heritage-based tourism has motivated a fundamental change of course in national cultural policy. In pre-invasion Panama, governments were eager to recognize and showcase the country as predominantly *mestizo*, with some acknowledgment of the Kuna indigenous people for their assumed exotic contribution to Panamanian society (Howe 1998). Nowadays, as ethnic tourism becomes the government focus, Panama exploits and commodifies its ethnic diversity to draw tourists. Panama is depicted as a place of great ethnic and racial diversity, an ideal ecotouristic and retirement destination, and also a nonmilitarized nation. Tourism literature stresses that the PDF were eliminated in 1989 and not replaced by any other military force.

Developing a trained tourism police, utilizing them to patrol a gentrified historic center in Panama City, or using ethnic diversity to increase tourism are all examples of the script produced by successive Panamanian governments and tourism mediators to develop the image of a police-free, peaceful, and safe state. More recently, the world-making power of tourism at work in Panama has transformed the country into a haven for retired U.S. citizens.[15] This push to up-market tourism has been espoused by international bodies such as the World Tourism Organization (WTO) and the United Nations (UN), "which call for diversifying existing tourism products and creating quality facilities and attractions targeting up-scale travelers" (Ioannides and Holcomb 2003:41).

When this happens, what occurs at the local level? How are governmentality and world-making processes experienced in locations where tourism has become the industry of choice? I now turn to the archipelago of Bocas del Toro for a case study on these topics.

Multicultural Tourism and Ineffective Social Control: The Case of the Archipelago of Bocas del Toro

Some degree of ethnic communalism is politically advantageous for nation-states as it contributes to masking class boundaries and limiting class solidarity among lower and middle classes by demoting ethnic cultures to inoffensive representations (Kipp in Wood 1997:9—10). As Kipp notes, reducing culture to performance is a strategy to nominally embrace cultural differences as sources of strength, "while actually delimiting carefully the public arenas (tourist shows, parades, museums, airline stewardess customs) where 'feathers and flourishes' are appropriate" (1993:74).

The type of ethnic tourism advertised by successive Panamanian governments appears to follow this approach. Panama's multiculturality is used to significantly differentiate the country from neighboring Costa Rica, a globally popular tourism destination but one with arguably less ethnic diversity. Because the tourism industry presents Costa Rica as a peaceful eco-paradise, Panama diversifies its offerings by adding ethnic tourism and heritage tourism to the picture, while also highlighting that, like Costa Rica, Panama is ecologically diverse and a "peaceful country" without military rule. These marketing strategies are highlighted in advertisements produced by the Panamanian government and national and international tourism mediators (Contreras 2007; Panama Star Tours).

One such site where ethnic heritage and ecological tourism coalesce is the archipelago of Bocas del Toro, located in the northwestern coast of Panama. It consists of nine islands peopled by approximately 18 thousand Afro-Antilleans, indigenous peoples (mostly *Ngöbe*), Chinese-Panamanians, Panamanian *mestizos*, and, since the 1990s, permanent and semipermanent expatriates mostly from the United States, Canada, and Western Europe. Similar to the ways in which coastal regions mostly populated by Afro-Latin American and indigenous populations have been constructed as hazardous and unsafe throughout Central America (Duncan 2001; Pineda 2006), the archipelago of Bocas del Toro has long been neglected by successive Panamanian governments, and—most importantly—it was portrayed as a dangerous, unappealing, and unwelcoming place due to its geographic isolation and primarily Afro-Antillean and indigenous populations. Bocas del Toro was (and to certain extent continues to be) a forgotten, unwanted, and unsafe place believed to be nothing more than a wild jungle that was also used as a punishment

zone for ill-behaved bureaucrats.[16] According to John Stephenson, a Bocatorenean who attended the University of Panama in Panama City,

> Bocas was very little known. We called it "the forgotten province." We were at the bottom of progress, we were the last to receive information. I think that even today if you ask somebody in Panama, they don't know where Bocas is on a map. When I went to the University (this was in 1989), I had classmates who asked me if there were televisions, or telephones in Bocas. They had very strange ideas about us. They said that we played soccer with coconuts, and things like that, or that we spent all our time eating turtle, and that we traveled from island to island on top of a turtle (interview J. S., July 24, 1999).

Bocas del Toro continues to be largely neglected because it is located in the province with the worst living conditions in the country.[17] However, the archipelago of Bocas del Toro experienced an upsurge of tourism in the mid-1990s because of its placement as one of the zones of development in the tourism master plan (Zone 2).[18] As a result, it attracted national and international tourism, investors, and speculators in large numbers and in a short period of time. As I have argued previously (Guerrón Montero 2006a), tourism allowed Afro-Antilleans—who, in contrast with their position in Panama at large, have had a higher status and a degree of economic stability and authority historically in the archipelago—to present and represent identities that were otherwise suppressed within the national context.

Afro-Antillean music and cuisine (resulting from their pan-Caribbean history) became particularly attractive ethnic commodities for tourism consumption (Guerrón Montero 2004, 2006a). Using the world-making power of tourism permitted the transformation of perilous "coastal blacks" into iconic figures of Caribbean beauty: welcoming, tranquil, attractive men and women ready to entertain the tourists' wishes. Against the background of state-sponsored ethnotourism, Afro-Antilleans attempted to enter mainstream Panamanian society on the basis of their unique heritage, a heritage that was once ignored or considered dangerous and unappealing and that has now been commoditized, recreated, and reinvented for touristic purposes. As a result, Afro-Antilleans have asserted their difference as an ethnic enclave and used their condition as cosmopolitan citizens of the world to claim a re-inscription in the nation as lawful citizens of Panama (Guerrón Montero 2009). However, these new representations have not destabilized the social hierarchies present in Panama, and as is the case in other parts of Latin America, blackness is constructed by national elites to spice up the Panamanian melting pot (Guerrón Montero 2006c).[19]

Cheong and Miller (2000) state that power relationships among state agencies, tourists, tourism providers, and local populations change constantly: thus,

exercising power in the context of tourism may be repressive or liberating or both, not only for tourists but also for local populations at different times and in different spaces. Although my research in Bocas del Toro indicates that Afro-Antillean populations have benefitted to a degree from tourism, both in terms of economic and cultural capital, the repressive power of governmentality as well as the state's limitations in functioning as a social and cultural container (Trouillot 2001) is undeniable.

Klytchnikova and Dorosh (2009:2) note, "from the macroeconomic perspective tourism is clearly an important source of economic growth in Panama." However, they recognize that its impact on the local economy and people is unclear. For most Afro-Antilleans, the tourism industry has brought with it not only a greater degree of economic opportunities and infrastructural improvements, but also land speculation, social and economic polarization not present prior to tourism development, drug trafficking, corruption, and a series of legal misdeeds.

As noted earlier, Bocas del Toro became an attractive tourism destination in a hurried, uncontrolled manner. Although at times tourism planning ran parallel to tourism development, ATP authorities could not cope with the rapid and disorganized growth of tourism. A tourism promoter who works for the local office of the Panamanian Tourism Authority recognized that there was some general knowledge about laws favoring tourism in Panama, but that "the tourism peak took place here before the laws did" (interview S. C., February 15, 2005). These laws and their application at the local level have in effect complicated the already precarious condition of Bocatorenean populations (Afro-Antillean and indigenous). An informant summarized this situation as follows, "Bocas was promoted before [the government] had planned and regulated things, and today [the ATP] doesn't have the capacity to control tourism. When you play with fire, you get burned" (interview J. P., March 29, 1999). My research indicates that most Afro-Antilleans of all socioeconomic classes and levels of participation in tourism are dissatisfied with the rampant land speculation, inflation, drug trafficking, endemic species trafficking, and other irregularities that have resulted directly from unregulated tourism.

Governmentality in Bocas del Toro is experienced in ways that illustrate exclusionary practices experienced by Afro-Antilleans and other minorities, and the privileging of tourists and foreign investors in a neoliberal economy. The governmental abandon that existed prior to the arrival of tourism continues, but it is experienced differently. Prior to tourism development, Afro-Antilleans endured neglect by the national government, but they had some opportunities for negotiating internal political and social conflicts by having direct access to and some leverage with local authorities, particularly *corregidores*.[20] After the tourism industry developed, these mechanisms dwindled as local and national authorities focused on supporting expatriates and foreign

investors in a mostly uncontrolled, unplanned, and often illegal manner (cf. Morgan and Pritchard 2005). The generous visa, immigration, and investment policies of the Panamanian government toward tourists, resident expatriates, and foreign investors, in complicity with local authorities and the police, are translated at the local level into a series of irregularities that benefit foreigners and local elites to the detriment of most poor Panamanians. As Mayhem and Jordan (2010:13) note, "a series of poorly drafted laws meant to encourage tourism development and real estate speculation in Panama has instead resulted in the dispossession and often violent eviction of indigenous Ngöbe [and Afro-Antillean] residents of the Bocas del Toro Archipelago from their homes, yet Panama has not taken steps to remedy the situation."

The Panamanian state exerts governmentality through legislation such as Law 54 of 1998. This law protects foreign investment and grants the same rights of ownership to both Panamanian nationals and foreigners. Other examples of governmentality include a tourism culture that generates policies promoting high-end tourism (five-star hotels and attractions catering to wealthy tourists and international investors) without providing the necessary economic and infrastructural conditions to sustain local populations or to guarantee them benefits from tourism development. These policies are in flagrant contradiction to the mandates of the original tourism plan of 1993 and the most recent plan of 2008. For example, after years of struggling to keep his business afloat, a small hotel owner in Bocas del Toro commented, "the government continues to put its hopes in the big businesses and not in ecotourism, instead of promoting small places as Costa Rica has done. Instead of giving strength to the local investors, they are promoting the five-star hotels in Panama City and Colon" (interview A. E., July 3, 2000). More recently, Law 2 of January 7, 2006, allows for concessions of up to 60 years (renewable for an additional 30) in circumstances when a proposed tourism project requires a lengthy period of investment return and has the potential to create considerable job opportunities for local populations (Mayhem and Jordan 2010:14). Additionally, and for the first time in the history of the nation, this law allows for the sale of island land for certain tourism development projects. Law 2 does include some protections for people already living on lands demarcated for tourism development. However, in practice, the law has had adverse effects on Afro-Antilleans and indigenous peoples "by fostering fraudulent land claims that displace indigenous and other vulnerable residents. While in theory the law protects prior residents, land developers and speculators have circumvented this law to displace people who were living in valuable island properties" (Mayhem and Jordan 2010:14).[21]

A common occurrence in Latin American tourism is the considerable presence of foreign entrepreneurs and transnational companies that tend to dominate the sector. Consequences of this presence include "severe economic leakage due to the export of profits, the import of materials and goods, the interest paid on foreign

loans, the general exploitation of resources and people, and increasing inequality" (Baud and Ypeij 2009:3).

Interestingly, the archipelago of Bocas del Toro is not dominated by wealthy foreign entrepreneurs and transnational companies but by foreigners with minimal capital who invested in small-scale enterprises (restaurants, hostels, bars, tour agencies) at the onset of tourism growth. In Bocas del Toro, a number of resident expatriates on tourist visas, who run small businesses such as restaurants, fishing tours, and bars, engage in irregularities in violation of Article 8, Chapter I of the Legislation on Tourism and Migration.[22] Afro-Antilleans wonder how foreigners who arrive with tourist visas good for only 30 days can quickly buy property titles while some local families have struggled for years to secure legal rights over their properties. National regulations stipulate that to qualify for the status of foreign investor, an individual or company must invest at least US$160,000 in a business. However, the foreign investment in Bocas del Toro has been minimal, and the majority of foreigners who have engaged in business activities are not following those regulations. In fact, some of the businesses run by resident expatriates in Bocas may not have cost more than US$10,000; often, the staff employed is the family of the owner. This practice in actual fact eliminates potential sources of income or opportunities for small business enterprises for Afro-Antilleans, and it also limits the number of jobs available to them. Jaime Philips, a professional cook who works at a local restaurant, stresses that the Panamanian government should strongly reinforce investment regulations in order to guarantee that Panamanians be in charge of small businesses with exclusivity.

> There have been years of abandonment here. There haven't been jobs or savings since the Chiriquí Land [Company] left. It was a miracle that people could live, and that is why foreigners were able to do what they did. For this reason people have sold what they had. Some of these [foreigners] come as tourists first, and now they have a little bar or a little restaurant. Those businesses could have been established by a local, but only with ATP's support (interview J. P., July 10, 2007).

Additionally, the efforts of Bocas del Toro's civil society to organize to benefit from tourism (such as the Association of Microenterprises and the Association of Boat Drivers formed in the mid-1990s) have not been supported by local or national authorities.

The nonenforcement of governmental policies at the national and local levels has allowed for great injustices, including corruption with property titles and land speculation. An Afro-Antillean woman gave her views on this matter with a few simple words: "Bocas has become the Wild West, a lawless land where the biggest bribe guarantees you the best results" (interview P.W., August 12, 2011). In fact, many of my collaborators longed for a return to pre-invasion Panama, where—they argued—tight state control combined with nationalistic policies

impeded foreigners from taking advantage of Panamanians. Governmentality is also experienced in using legal measures or, in extreme cases, police force to evict indigenous peoples and Afro-Antilleans from lands over which they had possessory rights so that the lands can be sold to several potential buyers at the same time. Eviction orders affecting Afro-Antillean and indigenous families have been carried out by Panamanian police who have "acted more as the personal security forces for developers than as public servants" (Mayhem and Jordan 2010:15). As Aníbal Reid, Afro-Antillean, explained:

> People are selling what doesn't belong to them; people are making illegal transactions. There is a [legal] category in Panama called the possessory rights [*derechos posesorios*]. It's a category that was created to guarantee that a person that worked a piece of land had the right to stay there. Possessory rights are given to national lands, not to private lands, and one needs to follow a process to obtain possessory rights over the land: demonstrate that one has been there for a certain period of time, that one has done the best possible with the property. As far as I know, possessory rights are non-transferable. However, people here are selling their documented and undocumented possessory rights, with a little piece of paper (interview A. R., April 12, 2000).

In addition to irregularities in real-estate transactions, land speculation has continued unbridled since the mid-1990s and has not shown any significant decline. A good example of this uncontrolled speculation is a house that was bought from an Afro-Antillean on the island of Carenero for US$1,000 in the 1990s and is now advertised on the Internet after being remodeled as an ideal bed-and-breakfast and "proven money maker" for US$2 million. According to one of my informants,

> [For 15 years] I was working in Panama City, but when I returned I saw the changes; a piece of land that might seem too expensive at US$1,000 sold at US$10,000 in 2000 and US$200,000 in 2007. In addition, you can see that nowadays it is very hard to find a piece of land in town, and land that is available for sale is extremely expensive. But people here don't see further, don't think about their future, don't consider that soon this place will be only for those who have money (interview J. S., July 24, 2007).

Governmentality is experienced in the way the local government has allowed foreign land speculators to exploit the population's trust, vulnerability, and naïveté. According to Monsignor Agustín Ganuza, former bishop of Bocas del Toro, Bocas is a small community; therefore, any change that takes place generates economic and social transformations. "Many people who owned property in this small community were blinded by the possibility of selling it for a few thousand dollars. They thought, having always had very limited means, that the money was never going to end. The investors took advantage of that" (interview M. A. G., September

1, 1998). Kate Schneider, a Canadian now residing in Bocas del Toro, expressed similar views:

> I have a moral problem with the speculators who came here to buy land cheaply and then turned around and sell it for ten times as much and put the money into their pockets [. . .] I feel that they bought too much of the land and they are greedy and I don't think that it serves the purpose of Panama (interview K. S., May 16, 2000).

More than one Afro-Antillean commented that those who sold their land did so because they had never held US$1,000 or US$5,000 in their hands and felt that they had acquired long-desired wealth. Many also trusted that the purchasers were going to employ them in construction or tourism work once their projects had been initiated. For example, Afro-Antilleans are still offended by the fact that an Italian investor had promised to build a large modern supermarket on a property he had bought on the city's main street. The supermarket was going to provide employment for several families, availability of different products, and access to a commonly held idea of modernity. Instead, he sold the property to another Italian businessman, who installed a pizza parlor and employed his family. The general sentiment was that the Afro-Antillean population had been robbed of an opportunity to experience economic and technological advancement.

In spite of the general feelings of resentment and past experiences, some Afro-Antilleans continue to sell property to foreign investors and land speculators. The general consensus is that this continued activity is due to negligence by the local authorities, who either ignore these abuses or are bribed into participating in them. These problems are briefly discussed in a 1998 OEA Report, which cites weaknesses and dangers in Bocas del Toro including disorganized growth, deforestation, and environmental deterioration. There is also lack of clarity with regard to land tenure, land speculation, and the "buying of properties by foreign businesspeople who are parceling out Bocas del Toro in many interests, with the dangerous consequences of social instability and loss of cultural identity" (Organización de Estados Americanos [OEA] 1998:37).

Currently, there are a number of resident expatriates who own land or properties in the archipelago. Many of them fence their properties immediately upon purchase. Bocas is a territory where, prior to tourism development, exclusive ownership was rarely discussed or enforced, where spaces were open and people were accustomed to crossing from one house to another at leisure. Ruben Schneider, Afro-Antillean restaurant owner, felt this was the ultimate violation of Afro-Antilleans' rights as Panamanians. "I don't think somebody from outside can come and prohibit *me* from walking on a beach. The beach cannot be closed; it's the property of the government, of the entire country, not of a person or a mayor" (interview J. S., October 6, 1999). Perhaps the most aggravating fact is

that, because of Panamanian law, resident expatriates who run restaurants, hotels, or tour companies have the enormous advantage of paying Panamanian legal minimum wages to their employees, while charging international prices for their food, accommodations, or services (cf. Prado 2011).[23]

Some of the aforementioned sentiments expressed by Afro-Antillean men and women are echoed in the 2008 Panama Sustainable Master Tourism Plan, prepared by Europraxis Consulting for the Panamanian government. Among the weaknesses cited in the document are unfavorable competitive conditions, competition in tourism spaces, speculative real estate purchases, and a lack of strategies for tourism planning (Panama Sustainable Master Tourism Plan 2008:3).

Conclusion

The perception of safety is essential for the growth of tourism (Ferreira 1999; Mouffakir and Kelly 2010). Although scholars and policy makers worldwide have challenged the often-stated claim of tourism as the world's peace industry (Goldstone 2001; Pernecky 2010), Panama *appropriates* the notion of peace and stability as major tourism attractions and uses it as a way to eliminate negative views of the country, regardless of the actual levels of safety and security within its borders. State elites have been mostly interested in tourism for its economic benefits. As Richter (1989) and Picard and Wood (1997:ix) emphasize, "there is an affinity between nationalism, regime interests, and the touristic promotion of a place as uniquely attractive" and, one could add, peaceful. The governments that followed the 1989 invasion have considered peace as a precondition for tourism development. However, peace has been narrowly defined as "absence of military force." Little attention has been paid to the many examples of disorder evident in the Panamanian tourism industry, issues such as relative safety for tourists, protection from petty crimes, or kidnappings (cf. Brannan Jaén and Palm 2006; Panama America 2003). In this respect, crimes against tourists have been on the rise in recent years and have challenged the official depiction of peacefulness and safety presented in colorful brochures, advertisements, and TV commercials.

Even less attention has been paid to the implementation and reinforcement of migration, property, and possessory rights for disenfranchised Panamanians, particularly ethnic minorities, as the case of the archipelago of Bocas del Toro illustrates. Using the new postinvasion understanding of Panama's police force, governmentality in the archipelago is experienced less often as overt authoritarian demonstrations of power and more commonly as a covert denial of citizenship rights through the creation of laws that benefit foreign investors and the nonenforcement of governmental policies that advantage local populations. This is done

by dismissing complaints as "disorderly conduct," allowing illegal land sales or ignoring abuses of tourist visa regulations, and by not supporting local efforts to participate in the tourism industry.

Since the 1990s, Panamanian elites have promoted images of nationhood that valorize diversity and demilitarized safety, thus ostensibly subverting the ethnic stratification of an earlier time. Nevertheless, these images remain circumscribed within the tourism realm. In Panama as elsewhere, racial and ethnic stratification go hand in hand with economic stratification, and there are very few tangible improvements in the lives of Afro-Antilleans, indigenous peoples, and members of the lower socioeconomic classes resulting from tourism development.

In postcolonial Panama, a myth-making project is unfolding. This project is in the hands of the tourism industry, nationally and internationally, and the Panamanian state. There is support for a world-making approach, where military rules and restrictions are replaced by the image of a peaceful nation by making military approaches to policing less visible, while transforming ethnic groups and regions that were viewed as dangerous into welcoming hosts and inviting places that are safe to tour. The country that was once too dangerous and unappealing to tour is now considered "the best place to visit in 2012" (New York Times January 6, 2012), and among the most desired retirement locations for U.S. citizens. Bocas del Toro, the region that was both feared and ignored by Panamanians throughout the country, is now one of the most attractive destinations in the nation, the "Galapagos of the 21st century" (IPAT 2005). The population that had once been considered dangerous and passive now receives national and international tourists with melodic calypso tunes and savory Caribbean food (Guerrón Montero 2006c, 2004).

An exploration of governmentality and tourism as world-making agent assists us in grasping the nature of Panama's tourism industry, with its emphasis on demilitarization, but with the practice of denying citizenship rights and maintaining underprivileged groups in their place in the context of tourism development and economic prosperity. With the more recent prominence of residential tourism, I anticipate a more grim future for Afro-Antilleans and other minorities in Panama.

Notes

comments on this article. Finally, I thank the late Philip D. Young for his constant support and for his insightful comments on this article.

[2]One could argue that this is still an accurate portrait of the country under the current democratic regime of Ricardo Martinelli.

[3]Notably, and in spite of this strong military presence, it has been estimated that there was less brutality in Panama's military regimes when compared to similar regimes in Latin America (Caumartin 2007:110). Caumartin argues that more Panamanian lives were lost resulting directly from Operation Just Cause than throughout the entire 21 years of military rule.

[4]In similar fashion, Urry (2006) asserts that places and destinations have a multitude of meanings based on the "angle of vision" of the tourists and the toured (cf. Pernecky 2010), or—more accurately— the "mutual gaze" (Maoz 2006) exercised by both.

[5]The force was divided into three national, centralized services: the National Police, National Air Service, and National Marine Service.

[6]The Panama Tourism Authority (ATP) was formerly known as the Panamanian Bureau of Tourism (IPAT). It received ministerial status under Law No. 4 on February 27, 2008.

[7]The San Blas Islands is an archipelago composed of approximately 378 islands, 49 of them inhabited. The archipelago is home to the Kuna indigenous peoples, and it is the most visited part of the comarca Kuna Yala, along the Caribbean coast of Panama.

[8]Currently, the plan includes ten zones.

[9]Residential tourism refers to the availability of housing in touristic zones for national or international tourists as a permanent or second residence or for rental income, as the optimal marriage between the service and construction industries (cf. McWatters 2009).

[10]For instance, the 2001 Lonely Planet Guide for Central America notes, "Panama offers some of the finest natural scenery and ecotourism possibilities in Central America, yet most foreigners only know the country for its canal and the 1989 U.S. invasion to depose General Manuel Noriega" (Zingarelli et al. 2001:685). By 2008, the Panama Sustainable Tourism Master Plan notes that one of Panama's strengths is the perception that tourists have of the country as a safe destination (2008:3).

[11]Traditionally, the two main contributors to the GDP of the country have been the Panama Canal and banana production.

[12]http://www.atp.gob.pa/archivos/pdf/aspectos˙economicos2001--2011.pdf.

[13]The Global Peace Index ranked Panama number 61 among 158 countries in terms of security.

[14]Panama is an unquestionably complex society. In a population of 3,516,820 inhabitants (Censos Nacionales 2010), there are eight indigenous groups, and at least two distinct Afro-Panamanian groups. There are also Panamanian Latinos, Asian Panamanians, and rural and urban *mestizo* groups.

[15]Panama defines permanent residents who are not citizens as "resident tourists," an interesting slight-of-hand that serves to inflate tourism numbers and earnings (Young, personal communication). The official name for the type of visa that the Panamanian government issues to most permanent residents who have migrated to Panama in the last decade is "pensioned tourist visa" (*turista pensionado*, McWatters 2009).

[16]For instance, a school teacher from Bocas pointed out that more than one colleague assigned to work in Bocas Town arrived dressed in long pants and rubber boots, the better to survive the assumed difficulties of the terrain.

[17]Of the five poorest areas of the country, four are located in the *Ngöbe-Buglé* territory (in the provinces of Bocas del Toro and Chiriquí, Traa-Valarezo 1996:1).

[18]Currently, Bocas del Toro is Zone 1 of tourism Development in the 2008 Panama Sustainable Tourism Master Plan.

[19]It should be noted, however, that recent cultural politics (partly resulting from tourism) have forced the state to acknowledge the disadvantages suffered by Afro-Panamanians and attempt to remedy institutional racisms.

[20] *Corregidores* are the authorities who represent *corregimientos* (divisions of a district) to the Municipal Council. Typically, c*orregidores* are elected by popular vote for a five-year period.

[21] In 2009, the government passed two new laws to promote island property speculation which have led to added instances of violence and abuse (Mayhem and Jordan 2010).

[22] Article 8 states, "tourists are not allowed to work or engage in lucrative activities of any kind in the national territory" (in Fábrega 1986:25).

[23] These issues are discussed in the documentary "Paraíso for Sale" by Anayansi Prado.

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