

CHAPTER

1



RESEARCH
ARTICLE

Gendered pluriactive and multifunctional development in Western Mexico

The case of the indigenous women’s group “Colour of the Earth”

By

Peter R.W. Gerritsen

Professor

*Department of Ecology and
Natural Resources
South Coast University
Centre, University of
Guadalajara, Mexico*

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC



About the author

E.S.

Peter R.W. Gerritsen

is a full professor in Rural Sociology at the Department of Ecology and Natural Resources at the South Coast campus of the University of Guadalajara, in western Mexico. He is Dutch by birth and Mexican by naturalisation. He holds an MSc in Agro- and Social Forestry (1990) and a PhD in Social Sciences (2002), both from Wageningen University, the Netherlands. For almost 30 years Peter R.W. Gerritsen has been working on action research and development activities. His research includes rural sociology, political ecology, agroecology and rural development, grounded theory and multispecies ethnography.

Email: pedritus@startmail.com

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

Abstract

The Mexican countryside faces numerous social and environmental challenges. Environmental conflicts have also increased substantially. However, farmers have developed new strategies that aim to make better use of resources and strengthen autonomous production methods. These efforts relate to different components of the production chain. Additionally, they revalorise the multifunctional character of the Mexican countryside.

Even though gender roles are more or less clearly defined in rural Mexico, new spaces for women farmers are emerging.

This is exemplified by a group of indigenous women farmers in the south of Jalisco state in western Mexico. The group, called “Colour of the Earth,” works in agroecology and rural tourism. Its activities have evolved from handicrafts and embroidery to the production of coffee and other agroecological products. Since 2006, the group has welcomed increasing numbers of visitors who are drawn to the women-managed coffee gardens.

Its members have faced gender-related barriers at the family and community level along with other socio-economic and

cultural obstacles. However, the evolution of the group’s activities closely reflects changing gender roles. Their work can be considered as an example of rural development alternatives that strengthen the multifunctionality of the Mexican countryside. The group’s experiences are grounded in the local context of its activities, which also allow the adaptation of traditional rural life conditions vis-à-vis globalisation. The collective incorporates a gendered point of view, centred on the indigenous women farmers that are members of the “Colour of the Earth” group.

Keywords:

gender

multifunctionality

pluriactivity

western Mexico

indigenous women

Introduction

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

We have entered a new era of unprecedented socio-environmental transformations. This era is commonly known as the Anthropocene, or when a more explicit political economy standpoint is taken, the Capitalocene (Moore, 2011, 2017; Steffen et al., 2011). It is marked by the existence of intersecting socio-environmental challenges, such as global warming (Klein, 2014; Moore, 2018).

The recognition of the Capitalocene brings into sharp focus the urgency of sustainable development (Steffen et al., 2011; The Worldwatch Institute, 2014). Underlying these social and environmental challenges is a neoliberal development model that aims at capital accumulation. In this model, social and environmental costs are treated as externalities, which profoundly undermines sustainable development efforts (Moore, 2018).

Poverty remains an outstanding concern. Indeed, many people are still unable to fulfil their basic needs. Global biodiversity loss is another major challenge that humanity faces. The loss of plant and animal species is rising at an unprecedented rate (UN, 2018). Both challenges, poverty and biodiversity depletion, appear as interrelated in mountainous environments, which are often inhabited by structurally disempowered and marginalised indigenous peoples. Mountains are also considered to be biodiversity hotspots in Latin America and Mexico, where this case study is located (Toledo & Barrera, 2008).

Within the existing debate on poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation, there is considerable attention on endogenous rural development initiatives. As Ploeg and Long (1994) state, these initiatives are “born from within,” which is to say that they build on local socio-cultural and natural resources, local actors’ agency and local organisations. As such, endogenous rural development initiatives are considered to have more potential for strengthening sustainable development than exogenous development schemes (Gerritsen & Morales, 2007).

In this paper, I focus on an endogenous rural development initiative in western Mexico. More specifically, I present the experiences of a group of organised women in the indigenous community of Cuzalapa in the southern State of Jalisco. This group, which is known as the “Colour of the Earth,” turned 25 years old in 2021. They are situated in the mountainous Sierra de Manantlán area in western Mexico (Figure 1).

Because the case that I discuss deals with a women’s group in a mountainous area in western Mexico, reference must be made to the themes of gender and mountains as the specific social and

environmental setting in which gender relations are configured and reconfigured. I discuss these themes in the next section.

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

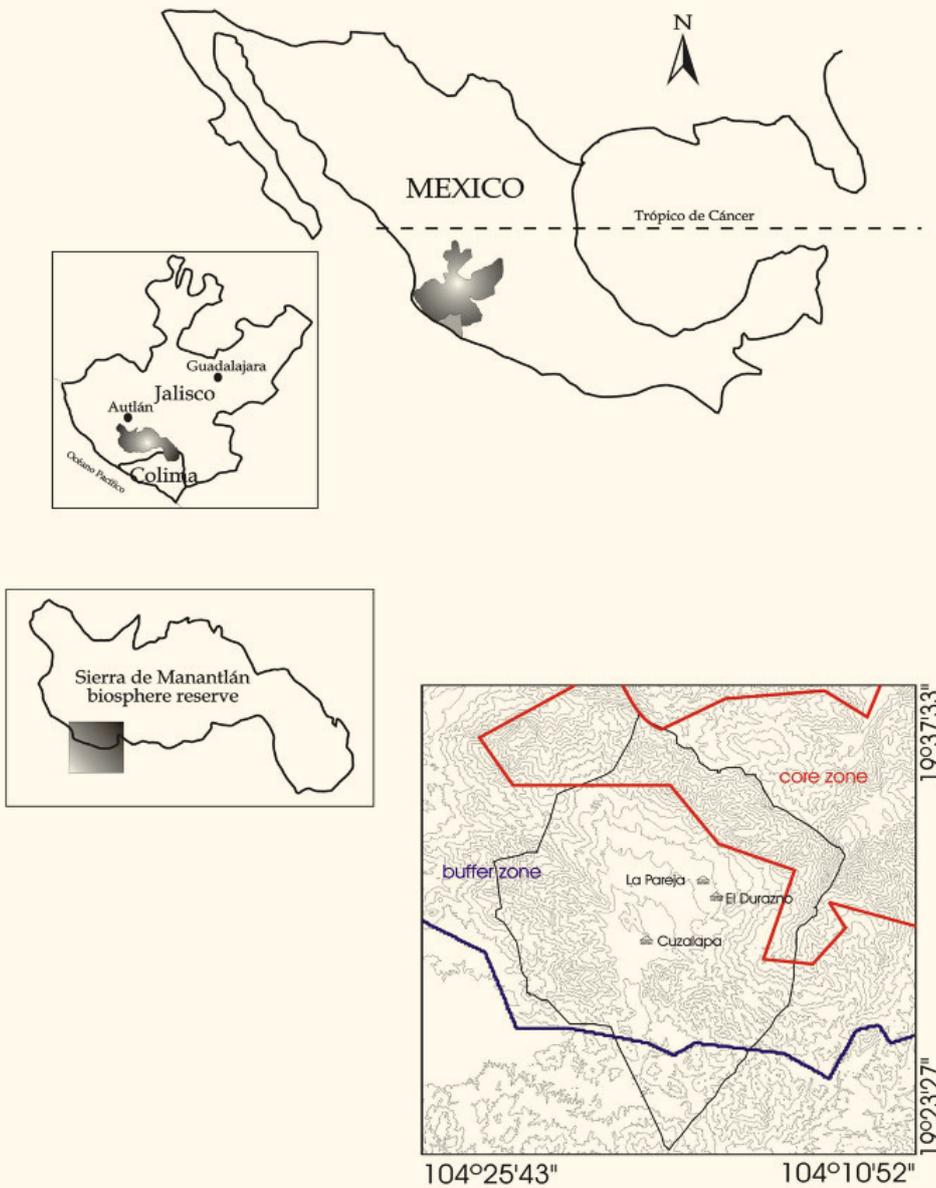


Figure 1. Location of the Sierra de Manantlán and Cuzalapa

Source: Gerritsen, 2002

Gender, mountains and mountain women

As an object of study, gender entered the scientific realm since World War II, and was further given (political) visibility by the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s (Moser, 1993; Braidotti et al., 1994; Haraway, 1991). Increasingly, gender has also gained renewed attention in mountainous areas in particular (Rudaz & Debarbieux, 2012).

In rural contexts, explorations of gender are mostly concerned with the different access male and female community members have to land and natural resources. Gender issues also involve the daily life activities that each gender performs (Moser, 1993; Premchander & Müller, 2006; Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014). Accordingly, Moser (1993, p. 27) describes the triple role that women perform in daily life: 1) reproductive work (childbearing and rearing responsibilities), 2) productive work (both on- and off-farm) and 3) community management work and politics (regarding collective needs and interests). However, the conceptualisation of gender goes beyond the different roles of men and women; both groups also have different needs. As such, a further distinction can be made between practical and strategic gender needs. Practical gender needs are formulated from the concrete conditions of women's experiences. In turn, strategic gender needs are those that are formulated from an analysis of women's subordination to men (ibid., pp. 39–40). See Table 1 for an elaboration of practical and strategic gender needs as captured in Moser's (1993) multidimensional framework of gender relations.

Approaching gender from a multidimensional perspective allows an understanding of the heterogeneous nature of the relations between women and men. This perspective also indicates that one must necessarily go beyond the conceptualisation of gender roles in static categories. In contrast, beyond these categories, heterogeneous social constructions are hidden that are place- and space-based (i.e., context-related) and that have a fluid and relational nature (Escobar, 1992; Harraway, 1988; Sundberg, 2004; Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014). Above all, the nature of gender is embedded in existing, historically constructed power relations (Rudaz & Debarbieux, 2012; Long, 2001).

This means that various gender barriers can be identified for the economic, political, psychological and social empowerment of women (Gil-Arroyo et al., 2019). Additionally, other (possible) barriers to women's empowerment include differential gender access to labour markets, intrahousehold violence and crime, emigration (feminisation of rural areas), access to working capital, lack of technical skills and training, female unemployment, unequal access to paid work, and gender wage gaps, amongst others (Stuart et al., 2018).

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

Table 1. Moser's multidimensional framework on gender relations

	PRACTICAL GENDER NEEDS	STRATEGIC GENDER NEEDS
REPRODUCTIVE SPHERE	X	X
PRODUCTIVE SPHERE	X	X
COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT AND POLITICS	X	X

Source: Moser, 1993

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

Regarding the role of women in mountainous areas, Rudaz and Debardieux (2012) argue that the category of “mountain women” does not exist as such and is a contested identity. They further assert that when discussing “mountain women,” reference is made to a social rather than a collective identity. This clarity is needed to reflect the diversity that exists amongst the women who inhabit mountainous regions and who do not necessarily self-identify as a specific group within the women’s movement. This diversity, in turn, reinforces the need for a thorough empirical approach to understand the characteristics of women in mountain environments and the ways they identify themselves vis-à-vis other women and other actors including men and external intervening agencies (Sundberg, 2004).

On the context and concepts used

In the first section, I stated that the neoliberal development model underlies many contemporary social and environmental problems. In Mexico, where my case study is located, neoliberal policies have deepened a rural crisis that has its origins in the 1960s. This crisis affects livelihood strategies and biodiversity conservation in the countryside and has also expanded to urban populations (Morales, 2004; Gerritsen, 2010a).

Few Mexican producers have benefitted from the neoliberal development model (Morales, 2004). In fact, many conflicts have emerged from the incompatibility of neoliberalism with specific farmers’ conditions, especially those of indigenous peoples, in the Mexican countryside (Toledo, 2000).

The persistence of social and environmental challenges in rural areas has forced the design and implementation of new development models that are more suited to the particular conditions of each region and where the most affected actors, namely peasants and indigenous people, can build and enhance innovative strategies to solve socio-

environmental problems (Gerritsen, 2010a; Gerritsen, 2010b). Within this context, the notions of “pluriactivity” and “multifunctionality” have emerged. Both notions involve an examination of the endogenous potential of rural areas and the connecting and transforming capacity of their inhabitants to change the direction of rural development. Pluriactivity and multifunctionality can be understood at a family or collective (group) level, and thus they focus on both peasant households and producer organisations (Giel et al., 2007).

I expand my case study through this conceptual lens, which I discuss in the next two sections. Such an exploration may permit us to identify (new) “alternatives to (neoliberal) development” (Escobar, 1992; Hurni et al., 2004).

Producer organisations, pluriactivity and multifunctionality

Producer organisations have played an essential role in solving the socio-environmental problems that the Mexican countryside faces. These organisations consist of groups of peasants and indigenous people who have common objectives, such as improving family and community welfare, defending territory and socio-cultural identity, access to land, and food security, amongst other objectives (Blokland & Gouët, 2007).

The nature of producer organisations can vary; they can have a formal status (for example, a cooperative or civil society) or they can function based on a social agreement among their members (Ton et al., 2007). Often, they share an organisational culture and a specific identity, and they have collective work experiences both with the natural resources they manage and their particular political-economic context (Valk, 2007).

I am interested in producer organisations that seek to revalue the endogenous properties of their local environment, including agricultural activities (Ploeg & Long, 1994). An investigation of the endogenous potential of particular contexts can open new perspectives for rural development, such as the related notions of pluriactivity and multifunctionality.

With the term pluriactivity, I refer to the combination of agricultural and non-agricultural activities developed by farmers or producer organisations. Contrary to productive diversification, pluriactivity refers to activities that occur outside the farm household (Huylbroeck &

Durand, 2003). Related to the notion of pluriactivity is the concept of multifunctionality. With this term, I refer to the full range of functions, both tangible and intangible, that farmers or producer organisations generate through agricultural or non-agricultural activities (Reig, 2001). See Table 2 for examples.

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

Table 2. Possible functions generated by agricultural and non-agricultural activities

ECONOMIC	ENVIRONMENTAL	SOCIAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-sufficiency • Fair trade • Employment of family labour • Technological innovation • Income diversification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conservation of soil fertility • Diversification • Preservation of local varieties • Natural equilibrium • Water conservation • Landscape maintenance • Generation of biological control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of local knowledge • Occupation of territory • Food security • Social organisation • Knowledge transfer • Commitment to the earth • Cultural identity

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

Adapted from van Huylenbroeck & Durand, 2003

The functions that are generated depend on the mode of production and the particularities of the different farming and livestock management systems that are either individually or collectively managed. That is, the generated functions are related to farming strategies (Toledo, 1995).

The attention to multifunctionality arises in a context where there is a need to develop a new understanding of rurality from the perspective of the Mexican countryside that is strongly transformed by the processes of urbanisation and globalisation (Gerritsen, 2010a; Gerritsen, 2010b). Both of these processes have not only deepened the rural crisis but also opened new possibilities as well as limitations for farmers. In this sense, pluriactivity and multifunctionality go hand-in-hand, since the development of new activities can generate new functions in the Mexican countryside (Gerritsen, 2010b).

Research on the specific role of women in the development of pluriactivity and multifunctionality started in the 1990s (Seuneke & Bock, 2015). Many studies argue that although neoliberal processes have marginalised (farm-)women, women have also succeeded in developing new activities and rebuilding their labour domain (Brandth, 2002). Accordingly, pluriactive and multifunctional development initiatives have permitted women to enhance the fulfilment of their practical and strategic gender needs, allowing them to overcome (some of) the gender

barriers mentioned before. This enhancement has been made possible by the inclusion of new activities and functions that are integrated with existing activities and functions (Seuneke & Bock, 2015).

In the following sections, after making some methodological comments, I present and analyse the case of the “Colour of the Earth” group in western Mexico by using the concepts elaborated earlier.

Some methodological comments

In this paper, I analyse the experiences of the “Colour of the Earth” organisation through a gendered lens and explore what bearing that has for the concepts of pluriactivity and multifunctionality. Since its foundation in 1996, I have accompanied the group as an action-researcher for various lengths of time (see Gerritsen, 1998, 2010b, 2014; Villalvazo et al., 2003; Gerritsen et al., 2008; Olson & Gerritsen, 2011; Gutiérrez & Gerritsen, 2011; Figueroa et al., 2013; Gerritsen, 2014; Gutiérrez & Gerritsen, 2017). Therefore, the results I present below are based mainly on my experiences with the group and the use of three methods of action-research: informal interviews, participant observation and participatory workshops. I contextualise my empirical experience within the literature on gender, producer organisations, pluriactivity and multifunctionality.

My experiences as described in this paper are complemented by the results of one bachelor’s and three master’s theses realised by students I have supervised, all of which have helped to deepen my insights on the group, its work and the contexts they have been influenced by (see Gutiérrez, 2006; Larco, 2010; Licona, 2013; Ancona, 2015).

Study area

The “Colour of the Earth” group is located in the indigenous community of Cuzalapa in the municipality of Cuautitlán de García Barragán to the south of the Sierra de Manantlán mountain range. In turn, the Sierra de Manantlán is located in the southern part of the state of Jalisco, as well as in the neighbouring state of Colima in western Mexico.

The Sierra de Manantlán, with an extension of 140,000 hectares, was declared a biosphere reserve in 1987 due to its high biological diversity. There are three core zones within the reserve that have prohibited access to humans; together these zones make up 30% of the reserve. The remaining 70% is declared as a buffer zone, where special rules and regulations govern land use. The reserve’s rules and regulations,

which are based on Mexican environmental law, are imposed on top of existing land tenure regimes and its institutions. The conservation mission for the biosphere has expanded from the protection of species to an integrated conservation and development project. This dual mission has challenged the reserve managers (Gerritsen, 2002).

The indigenous community of Cuzalapa is located on the southern slopes of the Sierra and encompasses 23,963 hectares. Currently, 71% of the indigenous community forms part of the buffer zone and 19% lives outside the reserve in the so-called influence zone. The community includes 1,500 inhabitants in a central village and several hamlets. The productive activities in Cuzalapa are mainly agricultural. In the lower parts, corn and bean dominate. Cattle raising is conducted extensively in the middle and upper parts and has had a boom in recent decades. Consequently, pasture establishment has primarily replaced traditional crops. Regarding the forests of the community, the decree to make the region a biosphere reserve was triggered by the indiscriminate felling of forests between the 1970s and the late 1980s. This resulted in approximately 10% of the Cuzalapa territory becoming part of one of the three core zones. Currently, forest use is limited to domestic use. Consumption of wood is limited to use in fence posts and the beams and butts of roofs (Ibid.).

Gender relations in Cuzalapa

In rural Mexico, gender roles are generally clearly defined, and men and women typically have pre-assigned social rights and responsibilities. In this sense, gender roles are embedded in a highly patriarchal structure characterised by very clear social boundaries (Segrest et al., 2003). Furthermore, Mexican culture, and thus gender roles, is based on social hierarchy and conflict avoidance (Paz, 2015). Closely related to a patriarchal structure is a generalised male attitude known as *machismo*. The notion of *machismo* refers to a form of masculinity that is characterised by male dominance over and a feeling of superiority vis-à-vis women (Segrest et al., 2003). This dominance is manifest above all in the social and economic spheres, although it is also present in the political and psychological spheres (Gil-Arroyo et al., 2019).

In the rural areas of Mexico, the patriarchal structure and attitudes of *machismo* are explicitly present. This is also the case in the Sierra de Manantlán and the indigenous community of Cuzalapa. Although differences can be observed according to the family life cycle, clear-cut roles can be observed amongst women and men. I illustrate this by revisiting Moser's (1993) ideas on the three roles of women (Table 3).

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

Table 3. Moser’s multidimensional framework on gender relations (1993) as applied to Cuzalapa

	PRACTICAL GENDER NEEDS	STRATEGIC GENDER NEEDS
REPRODUCTIVE SPHERE	Female-dominated	Female-dominated
PRODUCTIVE SPHERE	Male-dominated	Male-dominated
COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT AND POLITICS	Male-dominated	Male-dominated

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

To start with, women are primarily expected to attend to the reproductive role within the household. They are the primary adults responsible for childcare and all the activities related to the household, such as cooking, cleaning and washing. They are also responsible for the health and education of the children. Men’s activities in the home are limited to very occasionally helping their wives. This is closely related to the family life cycle, as it is mainly elderly husbands that assist their wives. Agricultural activities, on the other hand, are very clearly the domain of the male members of the family (the father, assisted by his sons), who go to the fields and manage the cattle. Women may participate but mostly do so when there is a labour shortage, which is mainly the case during harvest time. Finally, regarding community management and politics, women again play a secondary role. Women may participate in health or school committees, but these efforts are never compensated. Regarding land and natural resource management, the general assembly of (landholding) farmers and the related local institution are dominated by male farmers. When women participate, it is generally limited to widows who have inherited their husbands’ land. However, even then, women’s participation is extremely limited, and they usually do not intervene in the discussions.

← TC

Origin and development of the “Colour of the Earth” group¹

As stated above, a patriarchal structure and *machismo*-based gender relations are the context in which the “Colour of the Earth” group emerged. Over its almost 25 years of existence, the group has made

¹ This section draws on Larco (2010), who beautifully describes the history and internal dynamics of the “Colour of the Earth” group.

remarkable strides (summarised in Table 4). The group's origins can be traced back to 1994 with the arrival of a woman farmer named María.² María came from another peasant community in the Sierra de Manantlán, following her husband who accepted a job at the Biosphere Reserve in the community development centre of Cuzalapa (see also Gerritsen, 1998).

Table 4: Important moments and stages in the development of the “Colour of the Earth” group

YEAR	ACTIVITY INITIATED
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> First gathering of girls and mothers
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal founding of the group
2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incursion in regional markets Start of coffee recollection and processing
2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition of the group by the local authorities
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start of rural tourism activities
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organisation of the first coffee cultural festival Start of formalising the group's status (as a cooperative)

After her arrival, María started a course on embroidery for 12 girls from the community. With the help of a community development worker who was affiliated with the biosphere reserve project, the products were successfully sold in the cities of the region. This, in turn, motivated the mothers of the girls to also participate in these activities. Accordingly, the founding members of the group recalled that 1996 was the year when the seeds for the “Colour of the Earth” organisation were planted. In the following years, using funds obtained throughout the reserve, the women were able to receive training in different activities, such as embroidery, potting, and the preparation of marmalades, amongst others. In this way, the group started to diversify its activities and commercial success soon followed.

In the year 2000, the group was already participating in regional artisanal events and selling and innovating its products. Also, in this period, the motifs used in their embroidery shifted from biosphere

2 A fictitious name is used here.

reserve-related designs (mainly plants, animals and maps of the reserve) to themes that were closer to their life worlds (i.e. plants and flowers that are found near their homes).

In 2001, the group requested recognition before the local authorities, and the “Colour of the Earth” group was formally founded. In this year, the group started to collect and process coffee beans from the coffee plant-dominated agroforestry systems in the community. Traditionally, men collected coffee beans, however men abandoned this activity when coffee prices started to fall.

Due to coffee sales in the region, people started to notice the group. Over time, an increasing number of (mainly foreign) tourists started to visit the coffee home gardens. The steady influx of tourists kept the women busy, and they worked hard to clear the waste that was left behind by visitors.

Eventually, in 2006, a rural tourism project came into fruition. Its origins lie in my student’s bachelor’s thesis (Gutiérrez, 2006) that was converted into an action-research programme (Gutiérrez & Gerritsen, 2011). Since 2016, the group has organised a yearly cultural festival around coffee. This festival has received widespread attention and involves not only the group’s members but also the wider community.

Finally, the group received financial support from the Directorship of the Sierra de Manantlán Biosphere Reserve and the municipality of Cuautitlán (to which Cuzalapa belongs). This has permitted the construction of a visitors centre, with a shop, restaurant, kitchen and production area managed by the group. The University of Guadalajara has also played an important role; several researchers have offered training courses to the group’s members.

A view on the group’s pluriactivity and multifunctionality

Today, the group integrates 15 members, one of which is male. The male member was recently incorporated by inheriting the right to participate after his mother died. Table 5 provides an overview of the products that are processed and commercialised.

Over the almost 25 years of its existence, the group has evolved into a dynamic organisation that continually innovates by developing new production, processing and commercialisation activities. Its activities also contribute to the socio-cultural and economic valorisation of natural

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

resources such as through rural tourism and coffee festivals. Table 6 compares the different activities of the group (i.e. pluriactivity) and the functions that they generate (i.e. multifunctionality).

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

Table 5. Products that are elaborated (ordered according to production volume)

- Organic coffee
- Maya nut “coffee” (locally known as mojote)
- Traditional embroidery
- Artisanal products
- A vast array of local (produced and processed) food products, such as pipián (ground squash seeds), pinole (ground maize), fried banana chips, tortillas, marmalades and honey

Table 6. Activities and accompanying functions generated by the “Colour of the Earth” group

ACTIVITY	DIRECT FUNCTION	INDIRECT FUNCTION
COMMERCIALISATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-sufficiency • Capitalisation • Employment generation • Increase in productivity • Increase in organisational capacities • Knowledge transfer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productive diversification • Preservation of local varieties • Conscious consumption • Technological innovation • Food security
ELABORATION OF ARTISANRIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge conservation and transfer • Increase in organisational capacities • Cultural identity strengthening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge transfer • Bonding with land and nature • Occupation of territory
PROCESSING OF FOOD PRODUCTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productive diversification • Preservation of local varieties • Generation of family labour • Technological innovation • Generation of biological resistance • Self-sufficiency • Saving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse productivity • Knowledge preservation • Food security • Social organisation • Knowledge transfer • Cultural identity • Natural equilibrium • Water conservation • Landscape maintenance • Conscious consumption

RURAL TOURISM

- Natural equilibrium
- Landscape maintenance
- Income generation
- Family employment
- Use of territory
- Social organisation
- Knowledge preservation
- Knowledge transfer
- Bond with land and nature
- Cultural identity

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

Currently, the “Colour of the Earth” group is regionally recognised for its work. It has obtained many awards from governmental and non-governmental institutions for being a successful example of an endogenous rural development initiative (Gerritsen, 2011). Throughout the almost 25 years the “Colour of the Earth” organisation has existed, several factors have been crucial to the permanence of the group.³ These factors are as follows:

1. *Strong leadership and teambuilding*

María’s arrival in 1994 was crucial in bringing the women together. María has worked on teambuilding from 1994 until now and is the group’s unofficial leader. It is essential to note that her leadership was based on motivating other members rather than centralising the decision-making process.

2. *Importance of training and the acquisition of machinery and infrastructure*

The second factor includes the development of human capital in the organisation through training courses both from the University of Guadalajara and different government institutions. The acquisition of machinery and infrastructure has accompanied human capital development.

3. *Markets and product quality*

The third factor consists of entering into new markets in the region. Participation in new markets has demanded the improvement of the quality of the products.

4. *Internal organisation*

Another critical factor to the success of the group is its internal organisation, where an organisational structure was formed that included different committees. Also, a common fund was established for the collective needs of the group.

3 The following draws on Ancona (2015), who explores the group’s dynamics and associated structuring factors.

5. Expanding activities

Almost from its beginning, the “Colour of the Earth” has incorporated new activities, such as coffee collection and processing and rural tourism, amongst other activities.

6. Negotiation capacities vis-à-vis external actors

The group’s interaction with outside agents has been crucial for obtaining financing for the construction of the group’s visitor centre and funding its training needs. This interaction has also helped to provide visibility to the group and its work outside the region. Table 7 groups these factors together with reference to the activities undertaken.

Table 7. Relationship between pluriactivity and the structuring factors of the group

ACTIVITY	DETERMINING FACTORS
COMMERCIALISATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong leadership and teambuilding • Markets and product quality • Internal organisation • Expanding activities • Negotiation capacities vis-à-vis external actors
ELABORATION OF ARTISANAL PRODUCTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding activities
PROCESSING OF FOOD PRODUCTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of training and the acquisition of machinery and infrastructure • Markets and product quality • Internal organisation • Expanding activities
RURAL TOURISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong leadership and teambuilding • The importance of training and the acquisition of machinery and infrastructure • Internal organisation • Negotiation capacities vis-à-vis external actors

On gender, pluriactivity and multifunctional development

The women of the “Colour of the Earth” group have been working together for almost 25 years. This longevity has allowed them to develop social capital based on a specific pluriactivity that, in turn, has enhanced multifunctionality. Both pluriactivity and multifunctionality have permitted

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

the group to improve its members' socio-economic status and revalorise the community's natural resources, such as the coffee home gardens. Accordingly, poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation are at the heart of the work of the women. Both poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation are relevant interventions for mountainous areas, as stated at the beginning of the paper.

Although this was never an explicit issue for the women or for the external agents who worked with them, the group's work has contributed to opening up new social spaces for achieving the women's (practical and strategic) gender needs. In other words, a process of gender role reconfiguration has occurred, even though the women are still confronted with traditional gender barriers. Again, both this fulfilment and reconfiguration can be associated with the pluriactivity developed and the multifunctionality generated by the group.

Changes in traditional gender roles are the most visible in the reproductive sphere. Notable shifts have been observed regarding what activities women do and are allowed to do. The process is very much activity-related; some of the group's activities have had more impact on the established roles between men and women than other activities. Training activities, the obtaining of technology, leaving the community to sell produce in the region, and contact with external actors have significantly impacted expectations associated with gender roles. Consequently, tensions and even conflicts have emerged within families, which has led some women to leave the group. However, these tensions disappeared in most families when the group started to achieve commercial success. As the majority of the women members belong to poorer social strata, the income that they obtain from their work has been a welcomed mechanism for poverty alleviation. However, it has taken time for the men to accept that the women can have their own income, leave the community unattended, and talk with outsiders.

Shifts in gender roles in the productive sphere were less conflictive. First, the main activity in the productive sphere, i.e. coffee collection, had been abandoned by male farmers since the late 1990s. Second, the other activity, rural tourism, was not implemented until 2006, by which time many men had already accepted the new activities of the women. Moreover, as tourism is a non-traditional function in the productive sphere, it was not perceived as being threatening.

However, few changes within gender roles in the community management and political sphere have occurred. For a long time, local authorities considered the group to be "those poor women doing things together in order not to get bored," who were of no threat to the interests

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

of the dominant political group in the community. Later, by 2001, when the group had gradually obtained recognition and success within and outside the community, local authorities officially recognised it. Because its work also benefitted the wider community, including other families not directly affiliated with the group, it was allowed to continue. However, again, it was allowed to continue as it posed no threat to the local political establishment.

Overall, gender role changes in all of these three spheres have been a gradual process and they are considerably related to the learning processes of the group's members. A much-discussed illustrative example that is fondly remembered by the women is commercialisation. When commercialisation activities began, several of the group's members were not allowed by their husbands to leave the community by themselves. In a later stage, women were allowed to leave the community to sell their products, but only when accompanied by one of the husbands. At present, women can leave the community by themselves.

Although important progress has been made, many gender barriers still exist. These barriers are mainly related to the patriarchal structure and machismo attitudes of male family and community members. Following Gil-Arroyo et al. (2019), empowerment of the members of the "Colour of the Earth" group has taken place, above all in the economic and psychological spheres and, to a lesser degree, in the political and social realms.

The group's work has also had spin-off effects. A new group of women farmers dedicated to making and selling embroidery emerged in the community, and the (male) owners of the coffee home gardens united in a producer organisation aimed at the rehabilitation of coffee production. Interestingly, many producers no longer sell to middlemen but to the "Colour of the Earth" group.

Regarding the practical and strategic gender needs of the women, the generation of new functions has mainly contributed to fulfilling practical gender needs. This fulfilment goes beyond mere economic needs (extra income) to involve matters of culture and identity as well as psychological wellbeing, such as solidarity and feeling proud of one's work (see also Licona, 2013).

Regarding the women's strategic gender needs, it is not so much multifunctionality but pluriactivity that has had a major impact on the reconfiguration of gender roles. Pluriactivity has strengthened the role of women vis-à-vis men and has increased feelings of self-respect and self-esteem.

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC



Figure 2. Members of the “Colour of the Earth” group

Photo credit: Peter R.W. Gerritsen



Figure 3. A monthly meeting of the group

Photo credit: Peter R.W. Gerritsen



Figure 4. Learning how to observe birds

Photo credit: Peter R.W. Gerritsen



Figure 5. Preparing food for visitors

Photo credit: Peter R.W. Gerritsen



Figure 6. Coffee plants, the main product of the organisation

Photo credit : Peter R.W. Gerritsen

From theory to practice: policy recommendations on gender and ecosystem management in mountain communities

The experiences of the women's group "Colour of the Earth" permits the identification of lessons that might be useful for policy makers and implementers. In the specific case of the women's group of Cuzalapa, the policy recommendations relate to the gender roles and needs of women in mountainous environments. Here, I provide four policy recommendations.

First, the "Colour of the Earth" shows the importance of strengthening farmer organisations with women-only members. In this respect, strong organisational culture and social cohesion have permitted the group to continue for almost 25 years and overcome many barriers. Second, the strong leadership of María was crucial for the development of the group; her leadership has not only promoted internal social cohesion but has also stimulated the exploration of new activities within and outside the community. This type of leadership has been crucial to motivating other members to assume active roles rather than centralising decision-making. Third, natural resources and socio-cultural practices have

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

permitted the local embedding of the group's productive and commercial practices. The women have identified 'gendered' niches within local ecosystems and their management. That is, they forged a gendered endogenous rural development initiative. The notions of pluriactivity and multifunctionality have been important in understanding the specific characteristics of this initiative. Finally, the support of both governmental and non-governmental institutions has been very important and has facilitated the financing of both infrastructure and training.

In conclusion, as stated in the first part of this paper, I argue that references to "mountain women" imply a heterogeneous social group which, in turn, requires an empirical approach to understand the specific characteristics and conditions under which women live, work and thrive in mountainscapes. Accordingly, this approach requires that the implementation of policy recommendations, such as the recommendations above, must be embedded in a participatory bottom-up approach. Only then will policy interventions be able to strengthen rural development initiatives that are "born from within" and employ a beneficial gendered lens.

References

- Ancona, B.P. (2015). 'Beyond Poverty. Livelihood Strategies of Women Coffee Producers in Western Mexico'. MSc thesis. Wageningen, Netherlands: Wageningen University and Research.
- Blokland, K. and Gouët, C.N. (2007). 'The Farmers' Organisation Route to Economic Development'. In: G. Ton, J. Bijman and J. Oorthuizen (eds.) *Producer Organisations and Market Chains. Facilitating Trajectories of Change in Developing Countries*, pp. 91–116. Wageningen, Netherlands: Wageningen Academic Publishers.
- Braidotti, R., Charkiewicz, E., Häusler, S. and Wieringa, S. (1994). *Women, the Environment and Sustainable Development: Towards a Theoretical Synthesis*. London: Zed Books.
- Brandt, B. (2002). 'Gender Identity in European Family Farming: A Literature Review'. *Sociologia Ruralis* 42 (202):181–200. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9523.00210>.
- Escobar, A. (1992). 'Imagining a Post-development Era? Critical Thought, Development and Social Movements'. *Social Text, Third World and Post-Colonial Issues* 31/32:20–56. <https://doi.org/10.2307/466217>.
- Figueroa, P., Villalvazo, V.M. and Gerritsen, P.R.W. (2013). 'Resistencia y autonomía campesina en tiempos de globalización neoliberal: caso del sur de Jalisco'. *Revista El Otro Derecho* 44:269–285.
- Gerritsen, P.R.W. (1998). 'Community Development, Natural Resource Management and Biodiversity Conservation in the Sierra de Manantlán Biosphere, Mexico'. *Community Development Journal* 33 (4):314–324. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/33.4.314>.

- Gerritsen, P.R.W. (2002). *Diversity at Stake. A Farmers' Perspective on Biodiversity and Conservation in Western Mexico*. Wageningen, Netherlands: Wageningen University.
- Gerritsen, P.R.W. (2010a). *Perspectivas campesinas sobre el manejo de los recursos naturales*. Mexico City: Mundi-Prensa.
- Gerritsen, P.R.W. (2010b). 'Panorama de la investigación sociológica en la Costa Sur de Jalisco (1993-2010)'. In: G. Hernández and L. E. Castañeda R. (eds.) *Abordajes regionales: formas de concebir, maneras de interpretar*, pp. 427–438. Guadalajara, México: Universidad de Guadalajara, Centro Universitario de la Ciénega.
- Gerritsen, P.R.W. (2014). 'Working with Indigenous Women on Multifunctionality and Sustainable Rural Tourism in Western Mexico'. *The Journal of Rural and Community Development* 9 (3):243–257.
- Gerritsen, P.R.W., Gutiérrez, M. and Zepeda, A. (2008). 'Turismo rural sustentable en la Costa Sur de Jalisco, Occidente de México'. *Revista de Estudios Turísticos* 178:95–112.
- Gerritsen, P. and Morales, J. (eds.). (2007). 'Respuestas locales frente a la globalización económica. Productos regionales de la Costa Sur de Jalisco'. Guadalajara, México: Universidad de Guadalajara/ITESO/RASA.
- Giel, T., Bijman, J. and Oorthuizen, J. (eds.) (2007). *Producer Organisations and Market Chains. Facilitating Trajectories of Change in Developing Countries*. Wageningen, Netherlands: Wageningen Academic Publishers.
- Gil-Arroyo, C., Barbieri, C., Sotomayor, S. and Knollenberg, W. (2019). 'Cultivating Women's Empowerment through Agritourism: Evidence from Andean Communities'. *Sustainability* 11:3058. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11113058>.
- Gutiérrez, M. (2006). "Diagnóstico del potencial turístico en la comunidad indígena de Cuzalapa, Municipio de Cuautitlán, Jalisco". BSc thesis. Atlán de Navarro, México: Universidad de Guadalajara, Centro Universitario de la Costa Sur.
- Gutiérrez, M. and Gerritsen, P.R.W. (2017). 'Estrategias de desarrollo turístico: estudio de caso de dos organizaciones de productores'. *Revista Gestión Pública y Privada* 2017, 27–28.
- Gutiérrez, M. and Gerritsen, P.R.W. (2011). *Turismo rural sustentable. Estudio de caso de la Costa Sur de Jalisco*. Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés.
- Haraway, D.J. (1988). 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'. *Feminist Studies* 14 (3):575–599. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>.
- Haraway, D.J. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Hurni, H., Wiesman, U. and R. Schertenleib. (2004). *Research for Mitigating Syndromes of Global Change. A Transdisciplinary Appraisal of Selected Regions of the World to Prepare Development Oriented Research Partnerships*. Volume 1. Bern, Switzerland: Geographica Bernansia, Perspectives of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South, Bern University.
- Huylenbroek, G. van and G. Durand (eds.) (2003). *Multifunctional Agriculture. A New Paradigm for European Agriculture and Rural Development*. Cornwall, UK: Ashgate, Perspectives on Rural Policy and Planning.
- Kaijser, A. and Kornsell, A. (2014). 'Climate Change through the Lens of Intersectionality'. *Environmental Politics* 23 (3):417–433. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2013.835203>.

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

- Klein, N. (2014). *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. New York/London/Toronto/Sydney/New Delhi: Simon & Schuster.
- Larco, J. (2010). "Un ejemplo de desarrollo rural sustentable: Estudio de caso de la Organización 'Color de la Tierra', Cuzalapa, Estado de Jalisco, México". MSc thesis. Paris: Museo Natural de Historia Natural.
- Licona, I. (2013). "La transformación del sistema agrario y su multifuncionalidad en dos comunidades indígenas del estado de Jalisco: Cuzalapa y Ayotitlán". MSc thesis. Puebla, México: Universidad Iberoamericana de Puebla.
- Long, N. (2001). *Development Sociology: Actor Perspectives*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Moore, J.W. (2011). 'Transcending the Metabolic Rift: A Theory of Crises in the Capitalist World-Ecology'. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (1):1–46.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2010.538579>.
- Moore, J.W. (2017). 'The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis'. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44 (3):594–630.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2016.1235036>.
- Moore, J.W. (2018). 'The Capitalocene, Part II: Accumulation by Appropriation and the Centrality of Unpaid Work/Energy'. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 45 (2):237–279.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2016.1272587>.
- Morales, J. (2004). *Sociedades rurales y naturaleza. En busca de alternativas hacia la sustentabilidad*. Guadalajara, México: ITESO/Universidad Iberoamericana.
- Moser, C.O.N. (1993). *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Olson, E.A. and Gerritsen, P.R.W. (2011). 'Some Reflections on Community Development and Outsider Intervention in the Context of Protected Natural Areas in Western Mexico'. *Ecological and Environmental Anthropology* 6 (1):10–25.
- Paz, O. (2015). *El laberinto de la soledad, postdata, vuelta a El laberinto de la soledad*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Ploeg, J.D. van der and N. Long (eds.) (1994). *Born from Within: Practice and Perspective of Endogenous Rural Development*. Assen, Netherlands: Van Gorcum Publisher.
- Premchander, S. and Müller, C. (2006). *Gender and Sustainable Development: Case Studies from the NCCR North South*. Volume 2. Bern, Switzerland: Geographica Bernensia/ Perspectives of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research (NCCR) North-South, University of Bern.
- Reig, E. (2001). *La multifuncionalidad agraria en una perspectiva internacional. Posibilidades y límites de un concepto*. Valencia, España: Universidad de Valencia.
- Rodríguez, G. (2001). *La multifuncionalidad de los sistemas agroalimentarios locales. Un análisis desde la perspectiva de tres casos en Colombia*. Bogotá, Colombia: CORPOICA.
- Rudaz, G. and Debarbieux, B. (2012). "'Mountain Women': Silent Contributors to the Global Agenda for Sustainable Mountain Development'. *Gender, Place & Culture* 19 (5):615–634.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2011.625084>.
- Seuneke, P. and Bock, B.B. (2015). 'Exploring the Roles of Women in the Development of Multifunctional Entrepreneurship on Family Farmers: An Entrepreneurial Learning Approach'. *NJAS-Wageningen Journal of Life Sciences* 74–75:41–50.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.njas.2015.07.001>.

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC

- Segrest, S.L., Romero, E.J. and Domke, J. (2003). 'Exploring the Role of Machismo in Gender Discrimination: A comparison of Mexico and the US'. *Equal Opportunities International* 22 (1):13–31. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02610150310787298>.
- Steffen, W., Grinevald, J., Crutzen, P. and McNeill, J. (2011). 'The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives'. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of Anthropology* 369:842–867. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsta.2010.0327>.
- Stuart, S., Gény, L.R. and Abdulkadri, A. (2018). *Advancing the Economic Empowerment and Autonomy of Women in the Caribbean through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Santiago, Chile: United Nations.
- Sundberg, J. (2004). 'Identities in the Making: Conservation, Gender and Race in the Maya Biosphere Reserve, Guatemala'. *Gender, Place and Culture* 11 (1):43–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369042000188549>.
- The Worldwatch Institute (2014). *State of the World 2014: Governing for Sustainability*. Washington, DC: The Worldwatch Institute.
- Toledo, V.M. (2000). *La paz en Chiapas. Ecología. Luchas indígenas y modernidad alternativa*. Mexico City: Ediciones Quinto Sol/UNAM.
- Toledo, V.M. (1995). *Campesinidad, agroindustrialidad y sostenibilidad. Los fundamentos ecológicos e históricos del desarrollo rural*. Report No. 3. Mexico City: Interamerican Group for Sustainable Development of Agriculture and Natural Resources.
- Toledo, V.M., and Barrera-Bassols, N. (2008). *La memoria bio-cultural. La importancia ecológica de las sabidurías tradicionales*. Barcelona: Icaria Editorial.
- Ton, G., Bijman, J. and J. Oorthuizen (eds.) (2007). *Producer organizations and market chains. Facilitating trajectories of change in developing countries*. Wageningen Netherlands: Wageningen Academic Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.3920/978-90-8686-623-6>.
- United Nations (UN) (2018). *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018*. New York: United Nations.
- van der Valk, O. (2007). 'Creating a Balance between Loyalty and Efficiency: The Importance of Organizational Culture for Market Integration of Coffee Producer Organisations in Chiapas, Mexico'. In: G. Ton, J. Bijman and J. Oorthuizen (eds.) *Producer Organisations and Market Chains: Facilitating Trajectories of Change in Developing Countries*, pp.53–70). Wageningen Netherlands: Wageningen Academic Publishers.
- Villalvazo, V.M., Gerritsen, P.R.W., Figueroa, P. and Cruz, S.G. (2003). 'Desarrollo rural endógeno en la Reserva de la Biosfera Sierra de Manantlán, México'. *Sociedades Rurales, Producción y Medio Ambiente* 4 (1):41–50.

E.S.

CH.1

CH.2

CH.3

CH.4

CH.5

CH.6

CH.7

CH.8

← TC