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Title: Gendered impacts from shrimp aquaculture development in southern Esmeraldas province, Ecuador



Development agendas for the Global South promote the growth of productive sectors through the integration of peripheral lands into national and international markets. In coastal Ecuador, this has transpired from the introduction of shrimp aquaculture development. The growth of this economic activity occurred at the expense of the environment – particularly mangrove forests – and the cultural integrity and well-being of coastal communities. To explore the impacts of these environmental transformations, ethnographic and geolocational data were collected in Bolívar, a mangrove dependent community in southern Esmeraldas province, Ecuador. This research sought to identify how traditional mangrove users perceive and utilize mangrove forests, and how the introduction of the shrimp aquaculture industry affects their spatiality. The findings of this study show that the replacement of mangrove forests with shrimp ponds drastically decreased spaces used carry out traditional livelihood practices, resulting in local financial instability and food insecurity. Moreover, the gender of a person largely informs how an individual perceives and is affected by these developments. Contrary to what was expected, the introduction of the shrimp farming industry resulted in a decrease of employment opportunities for men. Women have also been directly affected because they lost access to mangrove resources they have historically relied on to nutritionally and economically sustain their households. To overcome the impacts introduced by the shrimp farming sector, mangrove users from this community have had to reconceptualize how they perceive and utilize mangrove forests, and the livelihood activities they engage in to financially support their families.