

Practices of Transnational Dwelling between ‘Remittance Urbanism’ and ‘Extractive Tourism’

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Remittance urbanism
Territorial extractivism
Tourism

This research investigates how various forms of residential tourism or lifestyle migration, produced by subjects coming from the so-called Global North, have triggered social and spatial change processes in the landscapes and rural environments of Vilcabamba, Ecuador, a small center of about 5000 inhabitants located in the southern part of the canton of Loja. “Residential tourism” is a concept usually used to describe voluntary migratory movements and reterritorializations produced by a variety of subjects: expats, global nomads, counter-culture dropouts, weekend tourists and retired people, as well as the kind of experiences imagined and sought: bohemian lifestyles, rural idyll, exclusive sets or just a “place in the sun”. In this process where two forms of mobility traditionally seen as distinct, the one related to tourism and the one linked to migratory movements, are intertwined and the figure of the migrant is superimposed on that of the tourist. In Vilcabamba, dwelling practices and economies related to residential tourism have reconfigured rural territories as ensembles of “nested spaces”, situations that have the character of protected interiors placed within “colloidal landscapes”. In this sense Vilcabamba and its rural surroundings can be seen as a particular “contact zone” where different tourism economies interact: extractive tourism, a concept describing processes of “extraction” and conversion of local characters and of indigenusness, in exchange values, and remittance urbanism, an expression used to describe those processes of spatial transformation triggered by “orbital” subjects and economies.