



# Dismantling the Banana Enclave: Heritage preservation, labour, and exhausted landscapes in Costa Rica's South Pacific

## Abstract

From 1937 to 1984, the United Fruit Company (UFCO) developed a colonial project in the South Pacific region of Costa Rica, radically transforming thousands of hectares of tropical forest into banana plantations. This project was not only a strategy to control land but also to dominate the bodies of workers who became the labour force, the squeezed employees (Horgan 202) that enabled millions of dollars in profits for the first modern multinational corporation. Such violent transformation entailed the imposition of new urban and architectural forms and numbered geometries, called “*fincas*”, all administered under the urban hierarchy of “Division Cities,” where housing, labour, recreation, and mobility were organized and categorized by class, race, and gender. Golfito, the main Division City in this enclave system, exemplifies how the banana plantation enclave reshaped and produced a landscape of exploitation and dispossession, masked by the propaganda of the “Compañía” and echoed by Costa Rican governments. This silencing was later reproduced in the official designation of some enclave period buildings as national heritage. This paper discusses the need to dismantle those narratives that centre UFCO as the primary agent of development and instead argues for placing at the forefront the labour force that has been erased and romanticized by the official discourses. Through a review of documents and images, this reflection is structured around three key points: the recognition of preservation as a colonial practice; the treatment of Division Cities and its architecture as instruments of power; and the understanding of the transformed landscape, as noted by Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing, as a product of movements that induce being and non-being territories, shaping exhausted landscapes, bodies and ecological dynamics, which can be placed at the centre of built heritage preservation narratives associated with the Banana Enclave system.

## Keywords

Plantation Landscape, Built heritage, Labour, Corporate colonisation

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### Introduction: Banana Enclave, Power and Landscape

The banana enclave project, carried across Latin America and Costa Rica, did not operate solely as a productive strategy; rather, it was articulated through the control of land and people's bodies, many of them migrants, who became the labour force that generated millions of dollars in profit for the first modern multinational corporation. This violent transformation is examined here through the case of Costa Rica's Southern Pacific region, where the UFCO operated between 1938 and 1984. Under a colonial-extractive logic, the Company imposed a radical reorganization of territory oriented towards maximizing productivity and control. This process reconfigured labour relations through regimes of racialized and class-based inequality, while simultaneously producing profound socio-ecological exhaustion, evidenced in the large-scale deforestation of tropical forests and the intensive exploitation and contamination of soils.

But the Enclave also established new urban and architectural forms, together with meticulously numbered and coded geometries known as "*fincas*", a system administered under the territorial hierarchy of the "Division Cities", where housing, labour, recreation, and mobility were organised and categorised according to class, race, and gender relations.

The analysis of the production of this landscape, characterised by processes of exploitation and dispossession, masked by the *Compañías's* propaganda and supported by Costa Rican governments, reveals how discourses that have attached slogans of progress, employment, and "sustainable" development to the invention of the regional heritage, resulting in the silencing of experiences and voices produced by the communities along with the social-environmental impacts. Therefore, closer examination of the relationship between landscape, built environment, and labour makes it possible to place workers at the core of the analysis, and so, to decentre the narratives that have symbolically "heritagised" those landscapes in tropical zones in the Global South

From this perspective, the plantation space, its organisation ruled through the Divisions Cities, "*fincas*", and the architectures that characterise it, are understood as a dispositif of power;<sup>1</sup> an heir to colonial imperial dynamics and their imprint on the Global South. As Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing argue,<sup>2</sup> this territory, is thus conceived as the product of movements that induce the existence of "terrains of

being", configuring landscapes, bodies, and ecological dynamics of exhaustion.<sup>3</sup> As a result, those landscapes challenge what have had traditionally shaped the symbolic values underpinning, both the discourses of heritage and images associated with corporate well-being.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the Banana Enclave plantation landscapes reveal instead the inequalities, temporal continuities, movement/change,<sup>5</sup> and the struggles of those who produce the territory of the Southern Pacific region of Costa Rica. These aspects constitute key arguments for broadening and critically examining the centrality and power given to conservation practices, agents and discourses. The imprint of different agents and oft-divergent tensions is made visible in the ways land is used, inhabited, and organised, and it is precisely from this perspective that is proposed to open a field of inquiry still scarcely explored in plantation contexts in Costa Rica.

### Banana Enclave and the colonization of territory

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, U.S. financed exploratory campaigns in Central America combined the search for an interoceanic passage with the systematic surveying of natural resources, mobilizing scientific and paramilitary actors to produce cartographic, botanical, and demographic knowledge that underpinned the consolidation of territorial control and the expansion of a U.S. led colonial project in the region. With regard to this process, the enclave system established by the United Fruit Company (UFCO) should be understood as part of a broader and more complex colonial strategy, beyond formal state

1. Michel Foucault, *El orden del discurso* (Editorial Fábula, 2004), 64.

2. G. Mitman, "Reflections on the Plantationocene: A Conversation with Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing," *Edge Effects Magazine*, June 18 (2019).

3. Mitman, "Reflections"; Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities* 6 (2015): 159–165.

4. Luis B. Conejo, "Divisiones bananeras y memoria: un acercamiento al legado de las ciudades bananeras de la United Fruit Company en Centroamérica durante el siglo XX," *Revista de Historia* 78 (2018): 95–118.

5. Milton Santos, "Metamorfose do espaço habitado: fundamentos teóricos e metodológicos da geografia," *Paisagem e espaço*, (1988):21–26; Milton Santos, *O espaço do cidadão* (Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 2007).

agreements.<sup>6</sup>

The consolidation of the Costa Rican enclave model can be traced to the late nineteenth century, beginning in 1871 when President Tomás Guardia granted Henry Meiggs the contract to build the Northern (National) Railway to connect the Central Valley with the Caribbean for coffee export, a project later assumed and expanded by his nephew Minor Cooper Keith into a wider commercial and maritime network linking Central America with the southern United States. This process was decisively reinforced by the 1884 Soto–Keith Contract, which granted Keith both the concession to complete the railway and a 99-year usufruct over its infrastructure, alongside vast allocations of so-called *baldíos* (vacant lands) exceeding 333,000 hectares and further expanded in 1888,<sup>7</sup> thereby establishing the territorial foundations of the agro-export enclave economy. Through lateral railway branches, Keith initiated banana cultivation, inaugurating what Camacho (1982: 61) identifies as the emergence of a new form of territorial control characteristic of banana enclaves, a trajectory that culminated in 1899 with the creation of the United Fruit Company, described by Bourgois as

*the result of the merger of the three largest banana importers operating at that moment: the Boston Fruit Company, headed by Andrew Preston; the Jamaican plantations of Lawrence Baker; and three plantations (in Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia) belonging to Minor Keith.*<sup>8</sup>

From its inception, the UFCO implemented monopolistic practices that displaced its competitors,

offering local producers purchase prices well above market levels.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, it acquired vast tracts of tropical forest at extremely low prices in strategic locations for banana cultivation, supported by governmental incentives in countries such as Costa Rica and Panama. By the mid-1930s, the “*Compañía*” controlled more than 1.4 million hectares across Latin America and the Caribbean, much of which remained uncultivated. Although the UFCO justified this accumulation as necessary due to soil exhaustion and plant disease management strategies, Bourgois (1994) shows that these vast holdings served primarily to prevent rival companies from entering the industry.<sup>10</sup>

The construction of refrigerated cargo vessels, the installation of wireless telegraph systems, and the extension of railway infrastructure through public–private alliances enhanced export volumes and strengthened the UFCO’s capacity to exert economic, political, territorial, and military control across Central America, Colombia, and the Caribbean, particularly from the 1950s onwards.<sup>11</sup>

During the 1930s, new agreements, such as Contract-Law No. 3 of 1930<sup>12</sup> granted the UFCO additional concessions to expand plantations and formalize purchase agreements with local producers. The

6. Philippe Bourgois, *Banano, etnia y lucha social en Centro América* (Colección Universitaria, 1994); Carlos A. Abarca, *Obreros de la Yunai, 1950–1985*. (Costa Rica, 2005); Carlos Camacho, “Configuración espacial y discurso ideológico en el enclave bananero” (Bachelor diss., Escuela de Antropología y Sociología, Universidad de Costa Rica, 1982); Peter Chapman, *How the United Fruit Company Shaped the World* (Canongate, 2007); Rony Viales, “La colonización agrícola de la Región Atlántica (Caribe) costarricense entre 1870 y 1930: El peso de la política agraria liberal y de las diversas formas de apropiación territorial,” *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* 27 (2001): 57–100; Conejo, “Divisiones bananeras”; Anthony Goebel, *Los bosques del progreso: explotación forestal y régimen ambiental en Costa Rica, 1883–1955* (Editorial Nuevas Perspectivas, 2013); Antoni Royo, “La ocupación del Pacífico Sur costarricense por parte de la Compañía Bananera, 1938–1984,” *Revista Diálogos* 4, no.2 (2004).

7. Viales, “La colonización agrícola,” 61.

8. Bourgois, *Banano, etnia y lucha social*, 44.

9. Bourgois, *Banano, etnia y lucha social*, 44–45.

10. Bourgois, *Banano, etnia y lucha social*, 45–46.

11. James Martin, “Cultures of Business, Work, and Leisure in the United Fruit Company’s Caribbean, 1880–1940” (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2008), 27.

12. Royo, “La ocupación del Pacífico Sur”.



Figure 1. Machinery used during the construction of the City of Golfito. Golfito, a History of the Conquest of the Jungle, n.d. Document provided by the Documentation Centre of the Centre for Historical Research of Central America, University of Costa Rica.

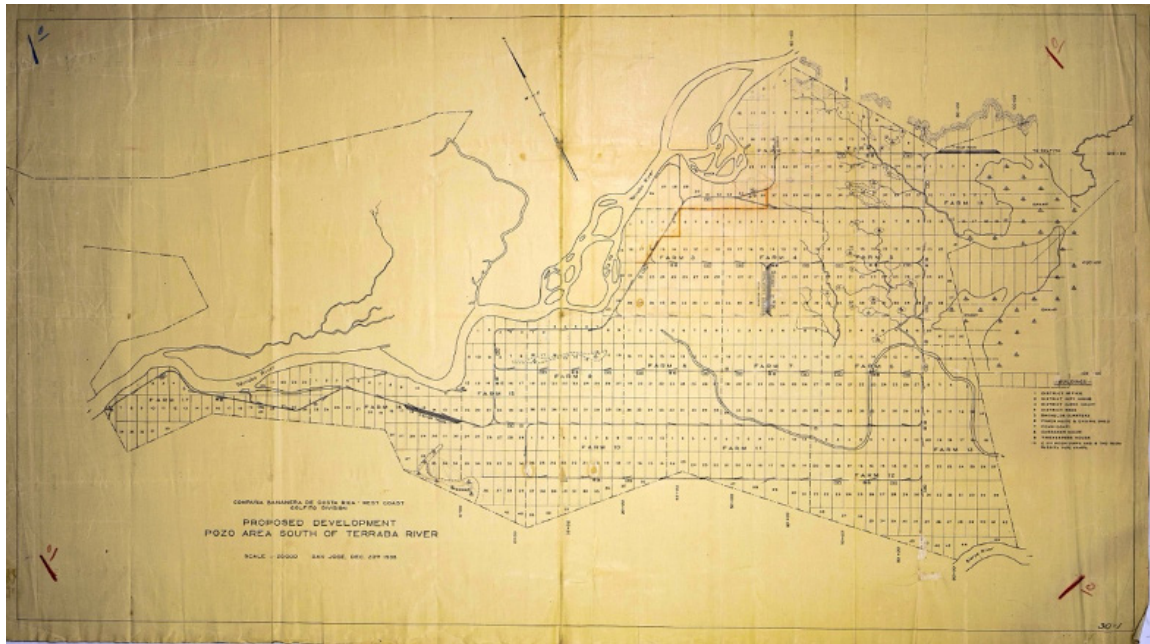


Figure 2. Map of land holdings of the Compañía Bananera de Costa Rica . National Archive.

*Compañía's* failure to comply with these obligations, coupled with mounting pressure from labour movements, culminated in the Great Strike of 1934, which exposed the deterioration of the enclave model on the Caribbean coast. That same year, the multinational signed a new contract allowing it to cultivate bananas on both coasts, facilitating its relocation to the Southern Pacific, a process already underway since the 1920s.

By 1937, operations in the Southern Pacific were fully established; the 1938 contract enabled the construction of port infrastructure in Quepos and Golfito and allowed the planting of at least 4,000 hectares in the region.<sup>13</sup> Subsequently, over the following decade, the UFCO consolidated an operational regime that not only ensured significant market advantages over small and medium producers but also profoundly reshaped the territory through the deforestation and drainage of thousands of hectares of tropical forests (Figure 1).

The new landscape was organized through a geometry of small garden cities, hundreds of carefully numbered *fincas*, all designed to regulate productive processes as well as the lives, mobility, and social relations of the labourers who sustained every stage of the agro-export chain (Figure 2).

Each finca integrated an apparatus of services, as housing, commerce, education, football squares, dance halls called “Club Centro” and small dispensaries, mixed with production infrastructure such as pipelines for the distribution of pesticides and fertilizers and extended drainage channels for runoff control. This urban-productive structure was articulated by roads

that pass through the large extensions of banana plantations, each controlled under administrators or “capataces” who also responded hierarchically to the Division Cities managers. Such hierarchy was designed to prioritize U.S. employees within regimes of control, and implied different living and labour conditions.

#### **Division cities and architecture as instruments of power**

The establishment of the banana enclave in Costa Rica's Southern Pacific region involved not only extensive deforestation but also a deep and lasting territorial reconfiguration. The expansion of corporate enclaves in Central America was embedded in broader colonial logics that combined land appropriation, the reorganization of labour, and environmental transformation. Within this framework, the towns and settlements built by migrant workers in the Southern Pacific departed from the Spanish imperial grid traditionally used in colonial urbanism. Instead, the enclave spatial forms were specifically conceived to enhance the productive efficiency of the enclave, subordinating urban layout and the everyday life dynamics to the operational needs of plantation production and corporate control. These interventions included the regrading of extensive plains, the demolition of mountainous sectors to create new land through extensive filling, as exemplified by the narrow strip on which the Golfito Division City was established (Figures 3-4).

The city of Golfito, located 365 kilometres from San José and extending approximately seven kilometres is bordered by a mountain range protected as a Wildlife Refuge, the bay of Golfo Dulce (recognized as a tropical fjord), and a system of mangroves that safeguard the coastline. Owing to this distinctive geographical setting

13. Royo, “La ocupación del Pacífico Sur”.



Figure 3. Golfito before the construction of the city by the UFCO. Archive owned by Palmatica S.A., located in the Coto 47 sector, Corredores canton, Puntarenas. Reproduced with the authorization of Palmatica S.A.



Figure 4. Golfito after the intervention made by the UFCO. Archive owned by Palmatica S.A., located in the Coto 47 sector, Corredores canton, Puntarenas. Reproduced with the authorization of Palmatica S.A.

the city was designed according to the “Garden City” model as proposed by Ebenezer Howard. In accordance with Choay,<sup>14</sup> Howard’s proposal envisaged a rational distribution of demographic flows and social activities within discrete, quasi-autarkic settlements encircled by green belts, organized concentrically and connected through a railway system.

In Golfito, this model materialized through rows of buildings adapted from the balloon-frame system used in the southern United States conceived to effectively conquer and dominate the tropical climate.<sup>15</sup> The built structures followed the contours of the topography and were arranged among urban garden islands, narrow streets, the railway line, an airfield, a hospital, and three clearly stratified residential-productive zones. At the centre of this configuration stood a highly mechanized dock (Figure 5) through which thousands of boxes of bananas were exported each day.

The urban-landscape model of the enclave in Golfito illustrates the continuity of colonial expansion processes in which “civilization” and territorial control were articulated through the domestication of nature and the disciplining of labour.<sup>16</sup> As the headquarters of the General Management and the principal export port, Golfito functioned as an instrument of political, territorial, and economic power, in which state authority was effectively replaced by corporate governance.

The enclave’s regime also relied on systems of surveillance and social regulation designed to reproduce an environment “like home” for U.S. employees and to reinforce the “corporate welfare” identified by Conejo,<sup>17</sup> which aimed to deter unionization through material and symbolic incentives. These included holiday bonuses, public parades, sports activities, the allocation of “free” housing, and various forms of recognition. As Martin observes, the “*Compañía*” replicated in the Southern Pacific the recreational amenities previously established in the Caribbean, such as sports fields, clubs, and dance halls reserved for U.S. staff.<sup>18</sup>

Despite legal obligations such as those stipulated in Law No. 31 of 1934, which required the multinational to provide hygienic, well-ventilated housing and free access to medicines (Congreso Constitucional de la República de Costa Rica 1934), the actual living conditions, particularly at the *fincas*, were marked by strict socio-spatial ordering based on classed and racialized hierarchies.<sup>19</sup> González captures this landscape of disciplinary homogenization with striking clarity:

*No se distinguen estos caseríos unos de otros: todos iguales, trágicamente iguales, como los bananales, húmedos, oscuros, agobiantes... Hileras de casas grises, muy grises todas exactamente iguales y bien numeradas por la Compañía, forman el cuadrante de la población. La Compañía muy ordenada, todo*

14. Françoise Choay, *A alegoría do patrimônio* (Editora UNESP, 2001), 176.

15. Natalia Solano-Meza, “Aesthetics of Comfort: A Third Moment in Costa Rican Histories of Tropical Architecture,” *ABE Journal* 17 (2020).

16. Conejo, “Divisiones bananeras”, 3.

17. Conejo, “Divisiones bananeras”, 6.

18. Martin, “Cultures of Business, Work, and Leisure,” 107–108.

19. Camacho, “Configuración espacial”; Alicia Albertazzi, “El surgimiento del enclave bananero en el Pacífico Sur,” *Revista de Historia* 28 (1993):141.

*lo tiene controlado matemáticamente: números a las casas, los baños, los excusados, los lavaderos, las escuelas, todo, absolutamente todo, para que la explotación de banano sea perfecta... perfectísima y no pierda ni un centavo.*<sup>20</sup>

Life in Golfito was marked by inequalities also. The American or White Zone, reserved for U.S. personnel, contrasted sharply with the Grey and Yellow Zones, designated for port workers, railway employees, and lower-ranking operatives (Figure 6–7). Differences were apparent in the size of the houses, access to green areas, and the availability of urban facilities. As González notes:

*Como son gentes muy importantes para la Compañía, tienen derecho a tener luz, refrigeradora, casas decentes, jardines, campos de juego para sus niños... pueden también jugar golf, bailar, jugar canasta y beber whisky. Es decir que los yanquis tienen ‘dos modos de vida norteamericanos’, campo de explotación para los trabajadores y zonas elegantes para los gringos.*<sup>21</sup>

As demonstrated earlier in this discussion, the spatial organization of the enclave was inseparable from the exercise of corporate power. In Golfito, work, leisure, and housing were all subordinated to the *Compañía*'s

regulatory apparatus.<sup>22</sup> Daily life was structured by the rhythms of the banana train, port labour, railway maintenance, essential services, domestic and care work, which required an issued card to access the American Zone, and the social practices of payday Fridays, when workers gathered in the Civil Town and in the dancehalls scattered across different neighbourhoods.

Over time, the UFCO diversified its agricultural operations, introducing African oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) in areas repeatedly affected by banana diseases. By the 1950s, it employed nearly 20,000 workers, a number that declined as palm cultivation expanded. In 1975, the *Compañía* adopted the name Chiquita Brands; in 1983, it abandoned 2,140 hectares in Los Cotos, replaced banana crops with oil palm, and dismissed 3,000 workers, retaining only 500. Following a three-month strike, the Palmar Sur sector is closed in 1984, abandoning 2,731 hectares and ending its operations in the Southern Pacific.<sup>23</sup>

The last major banana strike of 1984, publicly attributed to the Unión de Trabajadores de Golfito (UGT), masked the structural causes of the enclave's

20. Luisa González, *Una gira por la bananera* (Editorial Adelante, 2021), 17.

21. González, *Una gira por la bananera*, 20.

22. Camacho, “Configuración espacial”; Lucia Riba-Hernández, “El conjunto histórico del Recinto de Golfito: principios para una gestión integrada,” *Revista Herencia* 24, no.1-2, 2012. Conejo, “Divisiones bananeras”.

23. Royo, “La ocupación del Pacífico Sur”, 11.



Figure 5. International dock of Golfito. Personal collection of Mr Claudio Barrantes (deceased), n.d.



Figure 6. Labourers in the banana “fincas”. Personal collection of Mr. Claudio Barrantes (deceased), n.d.



Figure 7. Amenities at the American Zone in Golfito. Personal collection of Mr. Claudio Barrantes (deceased), n.d.

collapse, including soil exhaustion, the persistent non-compliance with labour rights and workers’ demands, ineffective pest-control practices, and regional political crises linked to the Sandinista Revolution, the guerrilla movements in El Salvador and Guatemala, U.S. and CIA intervention, and corruption scandals.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the *Compañía*’s withdrawal, the territorial configuration produced over decades of corporate intervention persists. The geometries of former plantations, railway lines, division towns, and their architectures remain embedded within the contemporary landscape. Some of these infrastructures have been repurposed by local cooperatives to process African oil palm for Palmatica S.A., a subsidiary of Grupo Agroindustrial Numar S.A. Over the past three decades, extensive plantations of pineapple, rice, timber species, peach palm, and hearth of palm have expanded across the region, encroaching upon areas designated as environmental protection zones, a system that reproduces the labour relations of

exploitation and inequality already present during the banana enclave period.

### Heritage preservation and power, exhausted landscapes

We understand heritage here as a dispositif of power aimed at shaping behaviours and perceptions in relation to specific objects and practices to which special value is attributed.<sup>25</sup> This dispositif operates not only through state procedures expressed in decrees and legislation; it is also activated through discursive designations which, in the case of “tropical” landscapes, have been mediated by categories of environmental conservation and by market-driven labels, particularly those of the real estate and tourism sectors. Among these, both the international propaganda developed by the UFCO and contemporary tourism operations stand out, especially those that present the landscape as part of the value chain for services associated with Costa Rica’s “green and sustainable” brand.

In this regard, the critique proposed seeks to decentre the narrative produced by the Banana Enclave system and by the nation-state, to reposition labour forces through their complexities, tensions, and disputes as central agents in the production of the heritagised landscape in a territorial scale of Costa Rica’s Southern Pacific. This heritage is understood as:

*a dimension which, laden with values intrinsic to social complexity, implies change, manifests conflict and strategies of territorial use, and which, beyond secular conservation practices, would serve as a workspace from which to overcome the enunciations on the pictorial idea of landscape and on heritage as a device of power determined exclusively by the highly technocratic and epistemologically Eurocentric practice of state declaratory mechanisms.*<sup>26</sup>

From this perspective, the narratives that support the invention of what has been recognized as heritage in the South Pacific of Costa Rica, denies the plantation system as an extractivist model that reconfigures local

24. Abarca, *Obreros de la Yunai*; Royo, “La ocupación del Pacífico Sur”.

25. Márcia Sant’Anna, “A cidade atração: a norma de preservação de centros urbanos no Brasil dos anos 90.” (PhD. diss., Universidade Federal da Bahia, 2004), 26.

26. Lucia Riba-Hernández, “Crítica al paisaje cultural como estrategia de conservación del patrimonio paisajístico en Costa Rica: políticas, prácticas y desafíos, el caso de la ciudad de Golfito.” (PhD. diss., Universidade Federal da Bahia, Faculty of Architecture, 2023).

and regional human geographies,<sup>27</sup> as well as the ways in which this space is built and used, along with the forms of labour and interpersonal relations. Those narratives are evident in both the declarations that list the former Administrative Headquarters and the Club Centro in Golfito as historical–architectural heritage, and in tourism advertisements that market the marine–coastal and tropical forest landscapes of Golfito as a hidden gem... a sanctuary where pristine blue-green waters meet lush rainforests.<sup>28</sup>

Placing labour at the centre of the analysis thus allows the recognition of the tensions that define these “landscapes of exhaustion”, as proposed by Haraway,<sup>29</sup> and enables the identification of forms of resistance, persistence and roughness<sup>30</sup> that escape corporate and state narratives. These landscape

configurations allow for a questioning of the authority traditionally attributed to the notion of heritage<sup>31</sup> and for recognizing it, instead, as action, movement and process;<sup>32</sup> that is, as an agency that renders visible the geopolitical conditions of the Global South and the situated realities embedded within it.

In 1998, the buildings of the former Club Centro and the Administrative Headquarters of the *Compañía Bananera de Costa Rica*, located in the city of Golfito, were declared Historical–Architectural Heritage through Decree No. 26655-C, published in La Gaceta No. 30. Figure 8. The declaration justified this designation on the following grounds:

*Considering:*

*1º That the buildings located in Golfito known as the Club Centro and the Administrative Headquarters of the former Compañía Bananera de Costa Rica are of great historical value due to the role they played in the development of banana production in the Southern Pacific.*

*2º That the building of the Compañía’s Administrative Headquarters fulfilled a very*

27. James Martin. “Cultures of Business, Work, and Leisure in the United Fruit Company’s Caribbean, 1880–1940” (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2008), 319.

28. “Discover our Marina, a gateway to ecoluxury in Costa Rica,” Marina de Golfito, accessed January 5, 2026.

29. Mitman, “Reflections”.

30. Maria Aparecida Souza, “Meio ambiente e desenvolvimento sustentável: As metáforas do capitalismo,” *Cronos* 10, no.12 (2019): 101–117.

31. Laurajane Smith, “Desafiando o Discurso Autorizado de Patrimônio.” *Caderno Virtual de Turismo* 21, no. 2 (2021): 140.

32. Santos, “Metamorfose do espaço habitado”.



Figure 8. Club Centro of Golfito. Author’s photograph, 2023.

important function, as the administrative policies that determined banana production—from the Térraba River to the border with Panama—were issued there during the Compañía's operation in the region.

3° That the building of the Compañía's Club Centro hosted sociocultural activities for a sector of Golfito's banana zone.

4° That the buildings of the Club Centro and the Administrative Headquarters in Golfito are structures of great relevance, volumetry and complexity in their internal distribution within the banana region of Golfito.

5° That these buildings, constructed in the 1940s with metal frames and wooden external walls, are faithful exponents of the architecture used in the "American Zone" of the banana plantations.

6° That it is the duty of the State to safeguard the cultural heritage of the country.<sup>33</sup>

The declaration confirms, in line with the discussion above, the association of heritage's value to anchored categories such as "development", "banana production", "sociocultural activities" and "great relevance". As demonstrated by various authors,<sup>34</sup> those attributes institutionalize a narrative that simultaneously constructs and conceals the spatial and structural violences exercised by the UFCO over the territory and its population. In this sense, the declaration fosters a heritage that:

1. Emphasizes the typological and stylistic characteristics of the buildings as a criterion of heritage value (Poder Ejecutivo 1998).

2. Assigns a central role to the UFCO as an agent of development and benefactor of the heritage landscape, reproducing imaginaries of "corporate wellbeing."<sup>35</sup>

The heritage regime applied reproduces hegemonic discourses of progress, beauty and antiquity that silence experiences of labour exploitation, the harassment suffered by women workers, unsanitary living and working conditions, and prolonged exposure of the people, the soil, the water and the air, to

fertilizers and pesticides.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, memories related to union organization, solidarity and resistance, are out of the narratives.

In this context, heritagization cannot be confined to narratives that ennoble the plantation and the corporate power of the Enclave as agencies linked to the symbolic values promoted by the Eurocentric and colonial model of heritage through norms, international charters and the diplomatic arenas of "universal" heritage, particularly those rooted in the UNESCO's principles and guidelines.

The dismantling of these universalized parameters thus requires, beyond the context of the Banana Enclave and of Golfito in Costa Rica, placing labour and human and nature's exhaustion at the centre as devices capable of traversing and reconstituting the power of heritage as "an affective and performative process in which heritage meanings are continually made and remade to address contemporary needs and negotiate cultural and social change."<sup>37</sup>

In this way, political and discursive pathways may be activated to incorporate into the substance of heritage the forms of solidarity, organization and care emerging from practices of resistance, and the ways in which such practices activate change as an inherent mechanism of landscape.

#### Dismantling heritage...a process

The plantation, as articulated by Haraway,<sup>38</sup> constitutes a space of "radical simplification; substitution of peoples, crops, microbes, and life forms; forced labour; and the disordering of generation times across species". As a device inherent to what has been termed the Plantationocene, it is embedded in a historical genealogy that emerges from European colonization and simplifies territories and actors to enable forms of extraction based on the exhaustion of human bodies and ecological systems. From this standpoint, the Banana Enclave, its division-cities and *fincas*, its architectures, and its multiple forms of enacted violence, operated not only as a colonizing practice

33. Poder Ejecutivo, *Decreto Ejecutivo N.º 26655-C*, Costa Rica (1998).

34. Conejo, "Divisiones bananeras"; Abarca, *Obreros de la Yunai*; Albertazzi, "El surgimiento del enclave bananero"; Camacho, "Configuración espacial."

35. Ministerio de Cultura y Juventud, *Informe apertura de expediente para declaratoria patrimonial de los inmuebles donde funcionaron el Club Centro y la Gerencia Administrativa de la Compañía Bananera de Costa Rica en la ciudad de Golfito. Centro de Investigación y Conservación del Patrimonio Cultural*, San José (1997): 5.

36. Between 1967 and 1979, the UFCO implemented the extensive use of 1,2-dibromo-3-chloropropane (DBCP), marketed as *Nemagón* and *Fumazone*, to combat nematode plagues in the plantations. Subsequently, in 1992, the United States Environmental Protection Agency reported the presence of DBCP in exported bananas, reopening litigation in which the UFCO once again emerged practically unscathed.

37. Laurajane Smith, "Heritage, the Power of the Past, and the Politics of (Mis)recognition," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 52, no.4 (2022): 624.

38. Mitman, "Reflections on the Plantationocene"; Haraway, "Anthropocene".

but also as a mechanism that reinforced the capitalist project and its logic of unlimited growth that is only possible due to unfree and forced labour across value chains.<sup>39</sup>

An examination of the production of landscapes presented as emblems of progress, both in institutional discourses and in heritage declarations, reveals them to be inventions and replicas of an aesthetic of corporate well-being and of the exoticization of the tropical. Such narratives have obscured, beneath the slogans of development, employment, and sustainability, the construction of structural inequalities, the exploitation of labour and care work, and the environmental degradation that characterizes the Enclave system of the Southern Pacific region.

The articulation of landscape, built environment, labour enables a decentring of the hegemonic role assigned to the “*Compañía*” and corporative power as the sole producer of development. It also makes it possible to dismantle heritage as a device of power that reproduces “being and non-being” traditions, repositioning workers at the centre. In doing so, it seeks to critically interrogate the narratives that have symbolically “heritagised” the landscapes of corporate extractivist in tropical zones, while rendering invisible the historical violences, but also the forms of resistance, that constitute them.

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39. Amelia Horgan, *Lost in work, escaping capitalism* (Pluto Press, 2021), 24.