

Field report

From early April to mid-May 2023, I had the opportunity to travel to Costa Rica as part of my master's thesis. I study Intercultural Psychology and write my thesis within a project to strengthen the sustainable development of village communities in Costa Rica. For this project, the Department of Industrial and Organizational Psychology at the University of Osnabrück is cooperating with the Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica. I want to contribute with my work to the theoretical underpinning of the project by analyzing the existing resources as well as the development potential of the communities. To collect the necessary data, the qualitative research method of semi-structured interviews offered itself, which would be recorded auditorily and later transcribed. Equipped with an interview guide and a dictaphone, I boarded the plane in Zurich on April 2. The work then started a few days later in Heredia, where I met with a Costa Rican project colleague to discuss final questions on site.

Then I took the bus to the first community I would investigate, called Santa María de Dota. This is a small inland village, located in the middle of coffee plantations, which, in addition to producing some of the world's highest quality and most expensive coffees, is characterized by a whole range of creative small businesses. I interviewed different members of the village community, from producers to political actors, to include a variety of perspectives. I spent most of my free time in the numerous cafeterias, where there are professionally prepared specialty coffees as well as great culinary offerings (from trout tacos to macadamia pie). I was also lucky enough to see a quetzal (a beautiful but unfortunately endangered bird), visited a coffee plantation where the entire processing was explained to me, went on excursions and walks in the surrounding area and cheered on the village soccer team at a community festival. After 10 days, it was time to say goodbye to Dota... and after a short stopover in San José, my journey took me to the second community, in the district of Turrialba.



There are also mountains here, but instead of coffee, mainly cheese is produced - the "Queso Turrialba" even has a protected product designation. After my own little wooden house in Dota, I now lived in an Airbnb between the cities of Turrialba and Santa Cruz - and got along very well with the already somewhat older house owner, who served me every morning a lovingly prepared plate of "Gallo Pinto" (the typical Costa Rican breakfast of rice with beans). Thanks to great hospitality and helpfulness it was no problem at all to find enough interview partners and even to reach a very remote farm for a conversation. Steep and impassable gravel roads are simply part of an authentic Costa Rican experience... I interviewed people with similar functions and backgrounds as in Dota, in order to be able to guarantee a certain comparability of the two regions later in the analysis. Due to the spectacular nature, it was not difficult for me to spend my free time here - I can highly recommend swimming in one of the numerous waterfalls as well as a hike at the volcano Turrialba. As for local specialties, you should definitely try "Tamal asado" (a sweet corn cake) and of course the delicious cheese.



Many people on site made my trip an unforgettable experience! Through the different regions I visited, I was able to get to know the versatile Costa Rica over and over again and profited not only from the unique opportunity to be able to travel as a field researcher myself, but also personally very much from this experience abroad. ¡Pura vida y muchas gracias!

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