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Family Relations and Socio-Ecological Resilience within Locally-Based Tourism: The Case of El Castillo (Nicaragua)

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Received: 5 June 2020; Accepted: 16 July 2020; Published: 22 July 2020

Abstract: Although family-run micro and small businesses largely form the crux of the locally based tourism sector, either as part of a community organization or as independent units of private enterprise, in El Castillo (Nicaragua) can be found an example of how, even in the absence of a community organization to provide a structural framework, the development of local tourism has sustained practically all businesses set up and run by households, organized largely through family relationships. This structure is pivotal in stoking resilience, not only with regard to private businesses, but also to the system of tourism (specific) and, by extension, to the whole of local society and the surrounding socio-ecosystem, or socio-ecological system (SES) (general). The case study presented here, developed on the basis of long-term ethnographic fieldwork, highlights the role of the family structure within Locally-Based Tourism (LBT) in general and also in specific cases, such as the one studied here, in which it takes on a particularly central role. The confirmation of the importance of families and family relationships as key elements in the robust development of tourism in El Castillo, and of the specific characteristics that its local society presents for this, must be taken into account in order to support Community-Based Tourism projects by institutions and organizations interested in promoting sustainable local development. Indeed, once further case studies are conducted, with a view to providing comparative evidence of these findings, it might even be proven advantageous to create a distinctive subcategory within LBT: Family-Based Tourism.

Keywords: tourism; sustainability; resilience; family; Nicaragua

1. Introduction: Community-Based Tourism/Locally-Based Tourism/Family-Based Tourism

Community-Based Tourism is a category established within tourism studies. In contrast to the dominant model of tourism, increasingly determined by global business corporations and oriented towards mass tourism, Community-Based Tourism is endogenous, grounded in local enterprise and based on products aimed at tourists seeking alternatives to the conventional offer [1–5].

Although rooted in the broad sense of the term *community*, this term has been generically established in connection with the primary fundamental characteristic that defines this form of tourism and sets it apart from the dominant model: the community (regardless of the more or less restrictive meaning given to this term from a structural and organizational perspective) owns, manages, and benefits from tourism [6].

Community-Based Tourism (hereinafter CBT) is defined as the type of tourism that is " ... managed and owned by the community, for the community, for the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life (...) provides the communities with opportunities to participate and benefits accruing to the community." [7] (p. 1–2). This idea is shared by other authors [3,8–11].

Understood thus, CBT is rooted, in one way or another, in the logic of *Commons*; one might even use the term *Commons-Based Tourism*, thereby excluding from this field all other forms of ownership, management, and/or distribution of the benefits of tourism that do not have this community character or respond to this logic of Commons.

However, some authors are critical of this category, viewing it as mythologizing and inoperative [12–17], given that, unless the term 'community' is taken purely figuratively, it encompasses varying forms of tourism organization, wherein the common denominator would effectively be the local condition of the agents that promote and manage it. These might include genuine cases of community organization, either fully community or through private enterprises that are dependent on the community organization, but it could also encompass cases in which tourist businesses are managed by local entrepreneurs (both native and non-native) through conventional private enterprises that are not integrated or interlinked beyond the connections derived or determined by market-driven needs.

To avoid this confusion between effectively community-based forms of tourism—in other words, grounded in the logic of Commons and a community-based approach to social organization—and other forms of tourism that have previously been included in this category, a more general term has been proposed [18], which would encompass them all: Locally-Based Tourism (LBT). Through this more generic category, the aim is to avoid community bias and enable a wide range of alternative approaches to conventional mass tourism to be included in analysis. Forms of tourism that could be identified through the common denominator of the local nature (native or integrated into local society) of the agents who control, manage, and fundamentally benefit from tourism, regardless of whether or not they are integrated within a community-based organization, or whether they respond to a logic of Commons. The sole criterion for inclusion in this category would be that they contribute to the generation, maintenance, or strengthening of collective action, to the cohesion and social integration of the population, and the construction of a shared local identity. An identity that might even, in some cases, "generate community" from an organizational and not just a symbolic perspective [19–21].

Accepting this approach, however, and given the substantial diversity that exists, it might be useful to establish subcategories in order to make analyses more precise, thus also enabling a more consistent evaluation of the advantages, drawbacks, possibilities, and risks of the different types of LBT, according to the different circumstances and conditions of each case, to achieve what might seem to be one of the fundamental objectives: generating a model of economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable tourism development, alternative to the dominant model, which promotes resilience by virtue of its adaptive advantages, for the local tourism system itself (specific resilience) and by extension for the whole of its respective local society (general resilience) [22].

The notion of resilience—one of the emerging properties of complex adaptive systems [23,24]—refers here to the capacity of an SES (socio-ecological system) to absorb disturbances and to reorganize itself as it experiences change, retaining essentially its same characteristic functions, structure, identity, and feedback. Understanding thus, the idea of resilience goes beyond the notion of passive resilience or adaptation to drivers of change, also recognizing its proactive, creative, and innovative traits, and the ability to tackle change by seizing opportunities that emerge through crises, not only through traumatic disturbances, but also the favorable circumstances that appear under 'normal' conditions, coping with changes and uncertainty [21,25–32].

The concept of LBT encompasses cases that, even though there is no community organization in the socio-anthropological sense and enterprises are private and individually run, are grounded fundamentally in one of the structural components of this community approach to social organization: households and family or kinship networks, which structure and coordinate the operations of these enterprises in particular, and of the local tourism system in general. This fact endows this approach to tourism development, alongside other factors, with a consistency that allows it to tackle the challenges of a market such as tourism, which is strongly dependent on global agents that are external to local societies. To recognize the specificity of this type of tourism development, it might be useful to have the subcategory Family-Based Tourism (FBT) that, once tested through further case studies, would allow

the comparison of cases more coherently and enhance our knowledge of these alternative models of tourism.

In relation to this, although the participation of family-run businesses is mentioned relatively frequently in terms of the agents that develop tourism in general and its different types [33], there is a notable lack of studies focusing chiefly on understanding the role played by families, households (here we use the terms family and household only to differentiate between the broader sphere of relationships between a set of people tied by bonds of first and second degree kinship (parents, children, grandchildren, siblings, nieces, and nephews) and the specific sphere of each of the groups of people related by first- and second-degree kinship who also live within the same home), and kinship relations in the development of tourism on a local scale [33–42]. As noted by Thomas, Shaw, and Page: "Although the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, it is important to draw a distinction between progress on small businesses research (. . .) and progress on entrepreneurship and family business research in tourism. As others have pointed out, there may be conceptual overlap but the differences between the literatures are significant (Getz & Carlsen, 2005). Some of the work that has been undertaken to understand those firms that are deemed to be 'entrepreneurial' (a process) and those that may be owned and managed by a family (a structure) will cast light on some small enterprises. However, as much research on entrepreneurship and on family businesses includes larger enterprises, not all of the literature is relevant" [43] (p. 965).

This seems even more surprising when dealing with LBT, in which their significance becomes even more evident. The proposed subcategory of Family-Based Tourism (FBT) seeks to overcome this limitation, and the case of El Castillo, in Río San Juan (Nicaragua), offers an excellent example.

In this sense, Ismail et al. acknowledge that the characteristics inherent to family-run tourism businesses favor their resilience to economic crises and natural disasters [44] (p. 625), recognizing, by extension, their role in the specific resilience of the local tourism system and its sustainability [44–48], as well as in the general resilience of the populations and the socio-ecosystem of which they are a part [48].

To analyze the specific forms in which this resilient capacity is grounded, an in-depth procedural study is essential, employing qualitative methodologies such as ethnography with a view to identifying and verifying how the networks of relationships from which this resilience emerges are configured, which other methodological approaches are incapable of capturing.

2. Methodology

The scarcity of specific research on the object of study described above did not allow a selection of cases whose comparative study could corroborate or complement the knowledge obtained through them. Although we intuited that El Castillo's example is not exceptional and we had direct and indirect information on other cases in which families and family businesses play a relevant role, we did not have a solid enough basis to be able to select cases that would allow contrast of this knowledge to expand or deepen it. In this sense, the case of El Castillo should be considered an single exploratory or prospective study case [49], a category defined as that which aims to define a problem to allow more precise research or to formulate first and second degree hypotheses; but also as a descriptive type [49] that aims to analyze what a phenomenon is like, what its components are, and how they are configured through the description of one or more of its attributes.

The data were gathered in El Castillo between 2007 and 2016, over different periods of fieldwork, totaling six months on the ground. Over the course of this time, whilst also observing local life and the development of tourist activity, the researchers had many informal chats with locals, related directly or indirectly with tourism, and conducted a total of 54 in-depth interviews with most of the actors involved in the development of this sector, and with local authorities and active organizations within the territory. The longitudinal nature of this research, along with the fieldwork conducted over different years and at different points throughout the year, provided a diachronic overview of the development of tourism in the area and this allowed observation of the day-to-day of social actors

in very different contexts: from higher to lower numbers of tourists, in the dry and rainy seasons, at different stages in farming cycles and activities, and also under the governance of different political groups. Conversations, interviews, participatory observation, and in short, living alongside people made it possible to gain detailed knowledge of the development of tourism in El Castillo, of the different initiatives developed. But most importantly, it enabled an understanding of how family networks are shaped and operate in the creation, management, and development of different tourism initiatives, as well as the significance of these initiatives for the people and households involved in this dynamic.

The qualitative information on the key aspects for the analysis obtained from the interviews and from the ethnographic observation have been synthesized in several tables and a diagram. The objective of these graphic elements is to facilitate the understanding of the results and to save space in the text. Not being a product of surveys or any other type of quantitative instrument, they have no claim to statistical validity.

To complete this section, and not overload the information, Supplementary 1 in Supplementary Materials Section is included, with the field guide used for the development of the research in which a comprehensive scheme can be found illustrating the research strategy, methods, primary, and secondary data collection and analysis, as well as a list of questions given to informants and points which were systematically observed.

3. Contextualization

3.1. Historical and Socio-Economic Context

El Castillo is a locality with just over 2000 inhabitants, belonging to the municipality of the same name, within the Department of Río San Juan, located on the right bank of the river half way through its course in southern Nicaragua. It takes its name from the Fortaleza de la Inmaculada Concepción (1675), a fortress built by the Spanish monarchy on account of its strategic location to control the whole of the river during Colonial times, a fundamental point in the movement of people and goods between the Pacific and the Caribbean (Figures 1 and 2). Once it was no longer under Spanish control, in the second half of the 19th Century, the river became once again one of the main transit routes for thousands of people who traveled by boat from the East Coast of America to California, lured by the so-called gold rush [50]. During this period, El Castillo became a major stopping point on this journey, providing accommodation, 'restaurants', and provisions to passengers. The boom in this logistical and hostelry development rapidly declined with the dramatic decrease in this traffic from 1914 onwards, once it was diverted towards the newly opened Panama Canal. From that point on, and up until the 1970s, the region of Río San Juan became relegated to a frontier land between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. In this context, El Castillo retained a certain role as a logistics center, but one limited to regional traffic linked to the commercialization of products such as a *raicilla* (ipecac), rubber, bananas, or timber. This situation was further aggravated by the long struggle against Somoza's dictatorship, in which the region played an important role as the base for Sandinista guerrillas. Once Somoza had been overthrown, it then became embroiled in the war involving counter-revolutionary groups, "la contra", who crossed over into the country from the border with Costa Rica. After this, the Nicaraguan government began to make its presence felt in the region, gradually providing services and embarking on government action, including the creation of 'natural' conservation areas, linked to the action of non-governmental organizations (NGO) and the tentative development of tourism.

Figure 1. El Castillo in the context of Río San Juan. Source: own work. (Author: A. Montejo, Sources of data: OpenStreetMaps, Natural Earh).

Figure 2. El Castillo. (Author: J. Escalera).

The structure of land ownership in El Castillo is unequal, in spite of the redistributions implemented by the Sandinista agrarian reforms. Half of the population does not own any land at all. Among landowners, 4.8% own more than 100 blocks (1 block, or *manzana*, as it is known here (mz): 0.7 Ha), 17.3% own between 51 and 100 mzs, 41.3% between 21 and 50 mzs, 14.4% between 11 and 20 mzs,

12.5% between 5 and 10 mzs, and 9.6% fewer than 5 mzs [51] (pp. 47–48). Large- and medium-sized holdings are used for livestock pasture, with patches of secondary forest for domestic timber extraction. As the size of the holding decreases, crop farming and the rearing of animals for domestic consumption become more important, and many small landowners have to find paid work to subsist, as do day laborers without land, who make up half the population. The majority of these day laborers work seasonally on an African palm plantation in the municipality and on industrial crop farms growing pineapples, oranges, and bananas in Costa Rica [52]. Over the past three decades, however, there has been growing economic diversification with an increase in commercial, hostelry, and transport activity, owing to greater safety after the end of the war, and to the appearance and development of tourism.

3.2. Tourism as a Driving Force for Sustainable Development

The region of Río San Juan was hit very hard by the war and was one of the poorest areas in the country. From the late 1980s onwards, it attracted the interest of international bodies, cooperation agencies, and numerous NGOs, which looked to undertake socio-economic development projects in the area, under the umbrella term of 'sustainability', in which the region's natural heritage became the main resource harnessed for the purposes of tourism. The declaration of protected areas (Indio Maíz Biological Reserve, Fortress) and interventions designed to control and manage protected areas, the creation of trails and paths, urban organization, construction and improvement of urban infrastructures (street paving, sanitation . . . .) and tourist infrastructures (municipal hostel, visitors' centre . . . .), training in farming production, hostelry and the interpretation of nature, the promotion of employment initiatives linked to tourism were gradually developed with the active participation of different international cooperation agencies, especially the Spanish International Cooperation and Development Agency (AECID) and different Nicaraguan and foreign NGOs. Similarly, people who worked in tourism could also receive grants and funding to invest in their businesses, mainly refurbishing or extending hotels, restaurants, and passenger boats. All of this occurred following a prior needs analysis that sought to 'involve' the local population, with the collaboration of the Association of Municipalities of Río San Juan, set up at this time, and the Association for Development and Cooperation (ASODELCO).

As this process gradually developed, tour operators (Vianica, Montecristo Hoteles, Audley Travel) began to sell this 'wild' nature to be consumed on river tours and trips to protected areas [52,53].

4. Results

4.1. El Castillo: A Case of Locally Based Tourism

In the specific case of El Castillo, because of the relatively good condition of its fortress, its historical importance, and the actions carried out to restore and enhance the area, 'naturalist' heritage narratives about Río San Juan were complemented by the promotion of its historical and cultural heritage, not only of this locality but also of the region as a whole. In fact, the restoration of the fortress (1991–1993) by AECID and Nicaragua's Institute of Culture can be considered the starting point in the process of heritagization and tourism development experienced in El Castillo.

The result of this intervention, also favored by an international context of strong growth in tourism throughout Central America, was that El Castillo became the main tourist attraction in the south of the country. In 20 years, accommodation and restaurant businesses have been set up, all within the category of "micro-businesses" [39], because half of them do not have any employees (13 out of 26, see tables below), and none of them have anywhere near the 10 employees established conventionally as the minimum threshold to be considered a small business [54]. Furthermore, around 20 people work as tour guides, giving tours around the Indio Maíz Biological Reserve, in Río San Juan, spotting the remains of sunken steamboats, which bear silent witness to the old Transit Route, alligator and crocodile watching, and also visiting private estates with primary forests or cocoa crops, as well as the Fortress, and ethno-tours around the village. However, although El Castillo also acted as a center for supplies and exchange with neighbouring communities, following the arrival of tourists

and the increased population drawn by the establishment and improvement of services, it has become a consolidated commercial and leisure hub: grocery stores, clothing shops, drug stores, telephone services, restaurants, pool halls . . . Finally, greater diversification can be seen in the economic strategies of farmers who, as well as farming for domestic supply and consumption, have also expanded their production to make direct sales to the tourist business.

> "Now you have agriculture, livestock, and a bit of fishing. And the land farmed here is mostly for domestic consumption, because, for example, we plant bananas, cassava, *tequisque* . . . and now, well, it's been gradually developing, thanks to God first and foremost, and then because of the projects that came here to develop tourism. So now people are better off, from someone who planted banana trees to someone who is working directly with tourism, they are all benefitting. Now, V [hotel] says to me «sell me fifty bananas», or the other hotel says «sell me a hundred oranges», and that didn't happen before". (O.D, guide, 2016)

Until 2016, at least, there were no official statistics about the numbers of tourists visiting El Castillo, or about the evolution of establishments and businesses related with this activity. The only official data that were possible to achieve, summarized in Table 1, were for the Department of Río San Juan as a whole, and refer to the Official National Offer of Accommodation in that region.

Table 1. Evolution of tourism in Río San Juan (Authors' own).

San Juan River	Accommodations	Rooms	Beds
Year 2006	14	153	305
Year 2017	39	354	654

Sources: INTUR Tourism Statistics Bulletin, for the years 2006 and 2017 respectively [55,56].

These data, however, are not a true reflection of reality and are very low when compared with the direct information obtained during our fieldwork. Hence, for the year 2015, in this department there were 79 accommodation businesses (hotels and hostels), as well as 35 restaurant businesses (restaurants, diners, and cafes), 5 transport providers, 32 guides, and 6 tour operators [53] (p. 7).

In any case, this difference merely reaffirms the relevance of tourism in the region, and particularly in El Castillo:

In addition to businesses that provide accommodation (16) and restaurant services (10) shown in Table 2, Figures 3 and 4, there are three public transport companies, and 14 "*boteros*", people who transport tourists in their own private boats between localities within the region or municipality, take them to tourist destinations far from El Castillo (Indio Maíz Reserve, Cocoa Routes . . .), or take them on river tours led by a guide (to see the sunken steamer ships, along the Santa Cruz River, Sarnoso River, Bartola River), although some of these transport providers also offer this service if necessary. They are all from El Castillo, and this is due not only to the general initiative shown by the population to undertake activities in the services sector, but also to the fact that, in order to do this job, you need thorough knowledge of the river (the river bed and its rapids) and its variable behavior, depending on the season.

Table 2. Tourism businesses in El Castillo by type (Authors' own).

	Accommodations	Restaurants/ Canteens	Transport Business	Boatmen	Tour Operators	Guides	Others
El Castillo	16	10	3	14	3	19	3

Source: Fieldwork 2016.

Figure 3. Hostel. (Author: J. Escalera).

Figure 4. Lodgment/Restaurant. (Author: J. Escalera).

However, the bulk of tourists get around on public transport that links up the towns and villages around Río San Juan (San Carlos, Boca de Sábalos, El Castillo, and San Juan del Norte). Four families—one from Boca de Sábalos and three from El Castillo—run *pangas* (passenger boats), and also offer cargo transportation using *planas* (barges). In El Castillo, passenger and cargo transport routes are controlled, in order of importance, by the families of E.P., C.T, and M.T. Bearing in mind that El Castillo and its rural settlements to the south of the river cannot be reached by car from other parts of Nicaragua (and in the case of El Castillo, not even from Costa Rica), this type of transport and its control are extraordinarily important. In fact, it is one of the most reliable and profitable sources of income that, with the gradual development of public lines, owing to the increase in trade and tourism, has significantly boosted the economic strength and power of these families, since they control the supply of goods and the transport of passengers. One of these families has clearly expanded this business specifically through tourist activities (hotel, restaurant, transport, and tours), but the other two have done so in a much more limited way, focusing on transporting passengers and goods (Figure 5).

Finally, there are currently 19 tour guides working, all originally from El Castillo. For 9 of them, this work represents their main economic activity. The rest of the guides work occasionally, generally when routes are organized by their own hotels or restaurants or those owned by a relative, and they need to take part in order to cover the number of tours booked (Figure 6).

Figure 5. "Pangas" for passenger transport at the El Castillo Pier. (Author: A.L. Díaz-Aguilar).

Figure 6. Guides meeting. (Author: A.L. Díaz-Aguilar).

Apart from businesses directly related to tourism, there are also grocery stores that sell all kinds of food and household products and which, like the restaurants and diners, have seen their trade increase as a consequence of tourism. In El Castillo there are 3 large *pulperías* (grocery stores) and 27 smaller ones. Some of these stores, as will be seen later on, complement other economic strategies pursued by households, but in other cases, they are the main or even the sole source of income for families, particularly the small stores run by single or separated women (traditionally, *pulperías* were established by men as a means of providing a living to women who had borne their children outside of marriage or from whom they had separated) or widows, for whom these stores are truly a means of survival.

Completing this range of initiatives linked with tourism there are a butterfly house, a souvenir shop, and the transportation of luggage, a task undertaken by four older people who carry tourists' luggage from the dock to the hotels.

Summarizing the information provided in Supplementary 2, the general configuration of tourism employment in El Castillo is set out in Tables 3 and 4:

Table 3. Tourist Plant in El Castillo 2016: Accommodations (Hotels, Hotel-Restaurants, Hostel, Lodgments).

Accommodations	Managed by Members of Family	Capacity (Rooms)	Domestic Group Workpeople/Fulltime Employees	Opening Year	Local/External Initiative	Single/Complementary Activities
P-R. Hotel-Restaurant Medium level	D. Family	3 doubles 1 familiar 1 single	Domestic group: 4 Employees: 1	2010	Local	Destazadora * Land 40 mzs
V. Hotel-Restaurant High level	G. Family	15: doubles, familiars, singles)	Domestic group: 3 Employees: 7	2006	Local	Land 150 mzs Guide
C. Hotel-Restaurant Medium level	G. Family	4 triples 3 doubles 1 single	Domestic group: 2 Employees: 1	2002	Local	Papelería Land (medium) Public officer
F. Hostel Medium level	T-T. Family	7: doublés, familiars, singles	Domestic group: 1 Employees: 2	2016	Local	Shop-liquor store Land 50 mzs
N.L. Hotel Low level	O. Family	5 singles 2 doubles 2 familiars	Domestic group: 5 Employees: 1	2006	Local	Land 60 mzs Tours Tourist transport Guide
H.S.J. Hostel Low level	Ob. Family	3 familiars 2 doubles	Domestic group: 3 Employees: 0	2013	Local	Caffeine Land 115 mzs
R. Hotel Low level	A. Family	2 doubles 2 familiars 2 singles	Domestic group: 2 Employees: 0	2003	Local	Cookery instructor Preparation of meals and cocktails Tourist transport Tours
T. Hotel-Restaurant V. Medium level	P. Family	3 doubles 1 familiar 2 singles	Domestic group:1 Employees: 3	2004	Local	Public transport lines Land 600 mzs Clothes sale Tourist transport Cabins Municipal hostel Billards
L.R. Hotel High level	A-L. Family	2 suites 2 doubles 1 familiar	Domestic group: 2 Employees: 1	2013	Local External	Land (small)
M. Hostel Low level	V. Family	4 doubles 3 suites 2 triples 1 insingle	Domestic group: 3 Employees: 0	Previous 1993	Local	Liquor store Clothes shop Mechanic employed in palm plantation
U. Hostel Low level	T. Family	2 suites 2 doubles 1 familiar	Domestic group: 2 Employees: 0	2002	Local	Tourist transport Pulpería (shop) Guide
M. Hotel-Restaurant C. *** Medium level	E. Family	2 doubles 2 suites	Domestic group: 2 Employees: 1	2013	Local	Pulpería (shop) Tourist transport Guide Kayaks rental Public transport line employee
E.C. Hostel Low level	P. Family	33 beds	Domestic group: 2 Employees: 0	1993	Local External	P. Family business
A. Hostel Low level	O. Family	5 doubles 1 triple	Domestic group: 3 Employees: 0	Previous 1993	Local	Rented pulpería (shop) Butterfly greenhouse management Clothes sale Boatman
G.H. Lodgment Low level	S. Family	3 suites 1 double	Domestic group: 3 Employees: 0	2015	Local Externa	Canteen Tourist transport Guide Tours Pulpería (shop)
L.P. Hotel-Restaurant High level	N.H. Family	3 doubles 2 suites	Domestic group: 1 Employees: 3	2014	External	Single activity

(Authors' own, Source: Fieldwork 2016). * Butchers' shops; *** Restaurant located just on the river pier, separate from the hotel.

Table 4. Tourist Plant in El Castillo 2016: Restaurants, Sodas, Canteens.

Restaurants/Sodas *	Managed by Members of Family	Domestic Group Members/Fulltime Employees	Opening Year	Local/External Initiative	Single/Complementary Activities
H.N. Bar-Discoteque	J.L.M. Family	Domestic group: 2 Employees: 0	**	Local	Musical equipment rental Videogames rental
B.S. Restaurant-Ranch	R. Family	Domestic group: 1 Employees: 0	**	Local	Land Tourist transport Guide
B.C. Restaurant	O. Family	Domestic group: 2 Employees: 1	2006	Local	Single activity
V.S.J. Restaurant	M. Family	Domestic group: 3 Employees: 0	2003	Local	Land 20 mzs Pulpería (shop) Tourist transport Public officer Cheese making/sale
A. Restaurant	O. Family	Domestic group: 2 Employees: 0	2011	Local	Land 30 mzs Street fish sale Street food vendor
D. Restaurant	A-R. Family	Domestic group: 4 Employees: 0	2004	Local	Haberdashery Phone booth Guide Tours
R. Canteen	A-R. Family	Domestic group: 3 Employees: 0	2004	Local	Destazadora (butcher) Guide
D.C. Soda (cafe)	R. Family	Domestic group: 3 Employees: 1	2008	Local	Retirement pension Boats and kayas rental
V. Canteen	T. Family	Domestic group: 2 Employees: 0	**	Local	Destazadora (butcher) Land 42 mzs Pulpería (shop)
O. Soda (cafe)	A-R. Family	Domestic group: 2 Employees: 0	**	Local	Bakery Cabinetmaking Caffeine

(Authors' own, Source: Fieldwork 2016). * *Sodas* are establishments that have been offering food to the river travelers and that now also cater to tourists; ** Information not available.

As can be seen in Tables 3 and 4, tourism in this village is eminently local in character. With the exception of one case, all the other businesses are local enterprises.

The development of this type of tourism ties in with a series of interrelated factors [52,53]. Firstly, in contrast to the situation elsewhere in the region of Río San Juan [57], international cooperation work, especially on the part of the AECID and certain NGOs, has stimulated the economy in which families and people from different socio-economic and political sectors of the locality have participated. This is explained by the way in which the programmes mentioned previously have been designed and executed: the timeframe required for implementation—the AECID Araucaria Programme was developed over 10 years—and the control and monitoring of how these initiatives have been developed on the ground, and above all, the fact that they were approached on the basis of prior in-depth knowledge of local reality. Furthermore, El Castillo has historically been a place that has offered lodgings and sustenance to people traveling along the San Juan River, especially during the days of the Transit Route, leaving an imprint and what could be called a "culture of hostelry", which today has facilitated engagement with and the development of tertiary activities associated with tourism.

From the opening of the Panama Canal (1914) up until the 1980s, in comparison with other parts of Nicaragua and Central America, this locality suffered from relative geographical isolation—from the perspective of the 'western' gaze—and was largely excluded from State initiatives in terms of communications and services. The limiting effect of this isolation on the development of mass tourism, controlled by external agents and transnational tour operators, has, in contrast, favored the slow consolidation of locally-based tourism, free, for the time being, of external pressure, in which local families have been gradually able to get involved with tourist activities, in some cases as their main economic strategy, but fundamentally as side projects within their core household economies [53].

The complementary nature of tourism in El Castillo is another of its defining characteristics. With the exception of one hotel, one restaurant, and one of the guides, where tourism provides the sole source of earnings, the rest are engaged with tourism as just another of the strategies employed in their household economies; activities that, as shown in the tables set out here, in the case of specifically

tourist-related jobs, are also carried out chiefly by families. Therefore, El Castillo offers a clear example of local, complementary, family-run tourism.

4.2. The Family Bases of Tourism Development in El Castillo

The data shown in Tables 3 and 4 highlight the fact that most tourism in El Castillo is organized through family-run micro-businesses. However, this dimension becomes even more important when checked that, internally, businesses are also largely structured through family relations, which form the basis for the distribution of tasks, establishing alliances between households with regard to the management of tourist activities: recommendations and referrals of customers towards certain hotels and restaurants, if their own establishment is fully booked, organization of tours with guides and transport services, use of boats, canoes and kayaks, and the use of their own land for visits—fundamentally for those who have forest land, cocoa plantations to visit, or fruit trees that attract birds for bird-watching expeditions (see Supplementary 2 in Supplementary Materials Section for more detailed information about the characteristics of family businesses in El Castillo linked with tourism).

Before going any further, we should clarify the meaning of the term family within the context of study. In general throughout Central America, and specifically in the case of Nicaragua [58], households differ significantly from the theoretical models of the nuclear family, and even the extended family: promiscuity and high levels of neglect of family obligations among men, the effect of the war and migratory processes, and the seasonal nature of many agricultural jobs, mean that the configuration of family groups can take on a scattered and heterogeneous form, with the frequent existence of extramarital children, widows, and abandoned women. This translates into a high percentage of single-parent families in which the woman must be the sole breadwinner for her household, as well as two-parent families *jefeada*s, or headed up by women, in which the head of the household is the woman, a percentage that is much higher in rural areas [58] (p. 281).

These circumstances explain the prevalent tendency towards matrifocal families, as well as the high economic participation levels among women, fundamentally in commerce (chiefly selling food and clothing in markets, door-to-door, or in their homes) and in domestic service (cleaners, seamstresses, laundry women). This situation is more marked among women from the more underprivileged classes, as a consequence of neoliberal programmes initiated by the Unión Nacional Opositora (liberal party) in the 1990s, which led to a decline in living standards among the lower classes, as well as the removal of social insurance offered by the State, shortfalls that women have sought to overcome by working, increasingly through 'informal' employment. Their economic participation has not translated into greater political participation or a reduction in gender inequality, but rather in a doubling of efforts to ensure their own survival and that of their families in the working classes [58,59].

In any case, these factors explain the importance of women and family in the development of LBT in El Castillo and how, although there are still very poor single-mother families, in other cases, and given the circumstances affecting this population, many women have achieved greater empowerment and wellbeing through tourism businesses. As will be shown below, this also explains the importance of kinship networks, particularly female relatives, and the strong involvement of children in businesses that, in turn, tend to build on their alliances with their cousins.

As noted previously, the starting point for the development of tourism in El Castillo came in 1993 with the renovation of the Fortress, the protection of natural areas, the creation of trails and footpaths for visitors, and the opening of the municipal hostel. Prior to this, however, there were *cuartitos y comidurías* (board and lodgings) available in people's homes for river passengers, people who were drawn to the area by the *raicilla* trade, workers on the banana plantations, and later on the African palm plantation, as well as those who sold fish, and the first ever aid workers in this area.

> "There were family-run hotels, rooms. [Hotel] A is the oldest, and N. L. also had rooms, los Churucos. They provided meals. There were lodgings for four or five people". (N.R, owner of Soda D.C., 2014)

5. Discussion: Family, Tourism, and Resilience in El Castillo

In their study of the different models of CBT in Nicaragua, María José Zapata et al. [60] showed how, in contrast to top-down models implemented by external organizations, local bottom-up initiatives stand a greater chance of succeeding and have a more positive impact on the local economy. The case of El Castillo, which can be defined as a relatively successful experience according to the data, presents a peculiarity. Although the main driver of tourism is rooted in the actions of external agents, particularly international cooperation organizations (state agencies and NGOs), contradicting the conclusions reached by Zapata et al., the development achieved has been chiefly grounded in the active involvement of local actors who, once the actions of said external agents had concluded, from 2010 onwards, contrary to the apparent norm in the majority of experiences analyzed [60], do not withdraw or reduce their activity in any way. Instead, the number of family-run businesses dedicated to tourism has continued to increase: five hotels have opened, along with one hotel-restaurant, one restaurant, and two rural rental properties. Furthermore, new guides and tours have been incorporated into the offer, and just as importantly, the businesses that were running prior to this date are still operational. Furthermore, some hotel owners even intend to expand their business by building cabins and organizing tours on their land, and a fair few of the restaurants are looking into building rooms for guests in the future, as a fairly widespread indicator of their aspiration to cover as many areas as possible of the tourism business within their households.

The solid development of tourism observed here highlights the resilience generated by the family basis, endowing it with flexibility and the capacity to adapt in order to cope with political, economic, climate, or environmental crisis situations, not only for the families involved directly in tourism businesses, but also, by extension, for local society and the surrounding territory as a whole.

Following Berkes and Seixas' four proposed categories of social factors that generate socio-ecological resilience [61], in the case examined here, households and families play a leading role in some of these aspects, such as the capacity to deal with change and uncertainty; local social associations; harnessing collective memory (the experience of activities related with providing board and lodgings); the fusion of local and traditional sources and forms of knowledge with scientific and technological know-how; or the capacity for self-organization. This demonstrates the relative autonomy of the process once the supervision of international cooperation institutions and organizations has withdrawn. Furthermore, the use of informal cooperation and alliance networks negates the need for any other type of formal organization, such as associations of tourism businesses or even the municipal tourist office, a matter to come to later on.

Along these lines, in a bid to define these categories more precisely, tailored to the specific context of El Castillo, here we identified eight factors that boost the resilience of tourism in particular, and the surrounding local socio-ecological system in general. These factors are: (1) the existence of prior experience in activities related with the provision of transportation, hostelry, board, and lodging; (2) the diversification of economic activities and the complementary nature of tourism businesses within the households involved in the development thereof; (3) the non-separation of the business establishment from the family home; (4) reliance on external financing from outside the household to launch, run, and expand tourism businesses; (5) land tenure as a strategic resource; (6) the exclusive or majority participation of the members of said households in running tourism businesses; (7) the prominent role played by women in creating, managing, and running tourism businesses; and (8) the involvement of younger generations in tourism businesses and their commitment to continuing their operation.

In relation to these, the data summarized in Table 5 confirm the resilient nature of most tourism businesses in El Castillo. Resilience that extends to local society and the whole of the surrounding SE system [48].

Table 5. Resilience factors in tourism businesses in El Castillo.

Businesses	Prior Experience	Complementarity of the Tourist Businesses	Business Continuity to the Family Households	External Financing	Land Tenure	Workforce Composed Exclusively or Predominantly by Family Members	Prominent Role Played by Women	Involvement of Younger Generations
H.N. Bar-Discoteque	−	¿?	¿?	−	¿?	+	−	¿?
B.S. Restaurant-Ranch	−	+	¿?	−	+	¿?	−	¿?
B.C. Restaurant	+	−	¿?	−	−	−	−	−
V.S.J. Restaurant	−	+	+	−	+	+	+/−	+
P-R. Hotel-Restaurant	−	+	¿?	−	+	+	+	+
V. Hotel-Restaurant	−	+	+	+	+	−	+	*
C. Hotel-Restaurant	+	+	+	−	+	+	+	¿?
Y. Souvenirs shop	+	+	+	−	−	+	+	+
F. Hostel	−	+	+	−	+	+	+/−	¿?
N.L. Hotel	+	+	+	−	+	+	+	+
A. Restaurant	−	+	+	−	+	+	+	+
H.S.J. Hostel	−	+	−	−	+	+	+/−	+
R. Hotel	−	+	+	−	−	+	−	−
D. Restaurant	+	+	+	−	−	+	+/−	+
T. Hotel-Restaurant V.	*	+	+	−	+	−	+	¿?
R. Canteen	−	+	+	−	+	+	+	+
L.R. Hotel	−	+	−	¿?	+	+	+	*
M. Hostel	+	+	+	−	¿?	+	+	+
U. Hostel	−	+	+	−	¿?	+	+/−	*
M. Tour operator	−	+	+	−	¿?	+	+	+
D.C. Soda (cafe)	¿?	+	+	−	−	+	+/−	+
M. Hotel-Restaurant C.	+	+	+	−	+	+	+	+
E.C. Hostel	−	+	−	−	+	+	+	+
V. Canteen	¿?	+	+	−	+	+	+	¿?
O. Soda (cafe)	¿?	+	+	−	−	+	+/−	¿?
A. Hostel	+	+	+	−	−	+	+	+
G.H. Lodgment	−	+	+	−	¿?	+	+	¿?
L.P. Hotel-Restaurant	−	+	+	¿?	−	−	+	−

Table 5. *Cont.*

Businesses	Prior Experience	Complementarity of the Tourist Businesses	Business Continuity to the Family Households	External Financing	Land Tenure	Workforce Composed Exclusively or Predominantly by Family Members	Prominent Role Played by Women	Involvement of Younger Generations
H.N. Bar-Discoteque	−	¿?	¿?	−	¿?	+	−	¿?
B.S. Restaurant-Ranch	−	+	¿?	−	+	¿?	−	¿?
B.C. Restaurant	+	−	¿?	−	−	−	−	−
V.S.J. Restaurant	−	+	+	−	+	+	+/−	+
P-R. Hotel-Restaurant	−	+	¿?	−	+	+	+	+
V. Hotel-Restaurant	−	+	+	+	+	−	+	*
C. Hotel-Restaurant	+	+	+	−	+	+	+	¿?
Y. Souvenirs shop	+	+	+	−	−	+	+	+
F. Hostel	−	+	+	−	+	+	+/−	¿?
N.L. Hotel	+	+	+	−	+	+	+	+
A. Restaurant	−	+	+	−	+	+	+	+
H.S.J. Hostel	−	+	−	−	+	+	+/−	+
R. Hotel	−	+	+	−	−	+	−	−
D. Restaurant	+	+	+	−	−	+	+/−	+
T. Hotel-Restaurant V.	*	+	+	−	+	−	+	¿?
R. Canteen	−	+	+	−	+	+	+	+
L.R. Hotel	−	+	−	¿?	+	+	+	*
M. Hostel	+	+	+	−	¿?	+	+	+
U. Hostel	−	+	+	−	¿?	+	+/−	*
M. Tour operator	−	+	+	−	¿?	+	+	+
D.C. Soda (cafe)	¿?	+	+	−	−	+	+/−	+
M. Hotel-Restaurant C.	+	+	+	−	+	+	+	+
E.C. Hostel	−	+	−	−	+	+	+	+
V. Canteen	¿?	+	+	−	+	+	+	¿?
O. Soda (cafe)	¿?	+	+	−	−	+	+/−	¿?
A. Hostel	+	+	+	−	−	+	+	+
G.H. Lodgment	−	+	+	−	¿?	+	+	¿?
L.P. Hotel-Restaurant	−	+	+	¿?	−	−	+	−

(Authors' own, Source: Fieldwork 2016). + positive answer; − negative answer; ¿? information not confirmed; * Businesses in which the children are still small and/or are in full-time education.

The data shown above confirm the important role played by the way in which different international cooperation programmes were implemented in the relative success of the development of tourism in El Castillo. Not only did they actively involve the local population right from the outset in defining and executing projects, but also the characteristics of local society were decisively important, including the existence of a previous culture of hostelry and hospitality. Rooted in the role of El Castillo as a logistics point on the river in the transportation of passengers and goods through Rio San Juan, developed in the heat of the Transit Route in the second half of the 19th Century, this culture endured—albeit almost latently at times—in the existence of *cuartos* (rooms) and *comidurías* (eateries or dining halls) to provide board and lodgings to travelers passing through the locality, right up until the 1990s. This 'culture' is a significant factor in explaining the involvement of local society in reconverting or launching the businesses that make up the current tourist offer described here. In almost a third (32.1%) of tourism businesses (9 out of 28), the owners had previous experience in activities related with hostelry and hospitality.

Furthermore, another of the factors that sustains the strength of tourism development in El Castillo is the complementary nature of the businesses launched, a clear factor in the resilience not only of tourism, but the whole of local society [48]. Prior to this new reality, households had been engaged in a wide range of different economic activities. The '*native*' settlers of El Castillo, in addition to the families who have moved here since the 1960s, have gathered fruits from the forest, grown basic grains and other products for domestic consumption, raised livestock, fished and traded, in a variable combination depending on their possession of land, the composition of the household, the national and international market, and political circumstances. These families, who provide lodgings and sell food, have continued and expanded these businesses following the arrival of tourists, and new business initiatives have emerged as an extension of the families' economic bases, as a diversification strategy, whilst continuing to engage in their previous activities. Hence, of the 28 tourism businesses analyzed, at least 26 (92.8%) are to some degree complementary in the economic strategy of the households that run them.

> " ... really, here, as I was saying, few people make their living just from tourism; everyone does a combination. You can see it in the infrastructures, where the same place is a home, hotel, grocery store ... that's what happens here in the village". (S.O, guide, 2016)

> "There are hardly any people who live exclusively from tourism, an example is the family of S. Here people do not leave the farms, they see their money coming into the cows and then they plant their rice, beans and corn ... This is not what They leave. They see tourism as something else. In fact, of the 15 or 16 guides, only three or four are dedicated to it with greater dedication". (R.M. Spanish official, former member of the technical team of the Río San Juan project of the AECID and current member of the El Castillo community, 2014)

> "Tourism is a complement. When it is affected by some external reason, such as the border conflict with Costa Rica, or the drop in international tourism caused by the 2008 crisis; or for internal reasons, as is currently the case with the situation of political and economic instability that the country has been experiencing since 2018, which has plummeted the number of visitors, especially foreigners, so they dedicate themselves to the countryside, commerce or other activities, but none (of the entrepreneurs) has closed their business. They have a very diversified income matrix". (R.M. Spanish official, former member of the technical team of the Río San Juan project of the AECID and current member of the El Castillo community, 2020)

The distribution among the members of the population of the properties seized in the region from the leaders of the Somoza dictatorship after the triumph of the Sandinista revolution contributed to the creation of a sector of small and medium owners who, despite having been rebuilt over time, continue to make an important difference in the area compared to other territories in the Central American

region from the socioeconomic point of view [62], which helps to understand the significance of access to land for the configuration of local society in El Castillo.

One relevant aspect that highlights the nature of the strategy pursued by almost all tourism businesses is the fact that these tourist establishments have been created within the homes of the business owners themselves. In this regard, the case of El Castillo also presents a clear difference from the model described by Zapata et al. [60], since it is not based on the use of domestic spaces adapted minimally to provide board and lodging to tourists (homestay), but rather on the modification of separate spaces for them (rooms and dining areas). This fact shows the type of product on which tourism in El Castillo is based, clearly oriented towards hotel activity, in contrast to the predominant experiences of CBT, and therefore the type of tourists it targets. It also highlights the complementary nature of tourist activity within the framework of economic strategies that are clearly inserted within a family logic, a far cry from the usual characteristics of individual enterprise, based on risk-taking and pursuing maximum profits. In contrast, this logic is fundamentally oriented towards a moral economy and safeguarding the integrity of the family's assets in order to cope with uncertainty and permit the reproduction of the household.

> "If they come here to buy the business, it's not for sale. I don't think any of the people who live here would sell, because they are family businesses, because between the business, and the room … that's where the family actually lives. Because … well, maybe some, but no … investors want to come here and grab the potato while it's hot, to eat it straight away, they're not going to come here to peel it. They'll come because this is going to grow. Some people might be tempted because they don't look to the future, but no … ". (E.P., transport provider, owner of Hotel T., 2016)

> (…) not in my case, but there are cases of other people whose business they have tried to buy and no, because that's how their families survive, and they have realised that in León, Granada, San Juan del Sur, they got an excessive amount of money at the time, but they went through all the money and now they are working for the hotel. So people here think: if I sell my business, I'll eat my way through the money in two years and then what will I do. (…) The fact that the business is your own home also makes a difference, I have my business in own home, I'm the boss and I have a good life here". (J.G., owner of Hotel V., 2016)

> "They offered to buy my business (…) and I said no. Because this is an inheritance. And you have to look out for your children and grandchildren. Land has been sold, but not businesses (…) I feel really strongly about this because I have worked hard my whole life, and so this is all I have, this is what I have created, what I have put into my sleepless nights, into my work, into all my efforts, my exhaustion, that's mine to have and get some peace from it". (M.H., owner of Restaurant A., 2016)

In any case, the fact that restaurants and lodgings are not separate from the family home (21 of the 28 businesses, 75%) situates the household as a unit, exercising caution when considering important investments to expand the tourism business or the possibility of moving capital away from other activities in order to concentrate on tourist activity. This becomes clear when facing pressure from external attempts to control the development of tourism and in their reluctance to take on investment risks. Their businesses are, to some degree, their homes and their children's inheritance, which explains their reluctance "to be in debt to the bank" (D.T.). Significantly, only one case was found that definitely borrowed money from the bank to expand the business (in a further two cases it was not possible to confirm this), whereas in 25 of the 28 (89.3%) businesses, the owners were reluctant to take on debt.

This caution is particularly relevant in the case of widowed or separated women who are the head of the household and who only have this one asset. In this regard, it should also be noted that landownership not only fulfils a purpose in terms of producing food for domestic consumption and generating income for families, but it should also be understood, especially when livestock

is owned, as a capital reserve that can be activated through monetization when the family incurs increased expenses related to rites of passage, such as a wedding, or to balance the books for all the household's activities.

> "Landholdings are capital, you have to understand them like a bank, like a source of capital for special occasions, insurance for your children, for your children's education." (S.O, guide, 2016)

As shown in Table 5, at least 15 out of the 28 (53.57%) households that run tourism businesses in El Castillo they have access to land, either their own or the family's, for growing food and rearing livestock. In at least four of these cases, the landholding can be considered large (more than 50 *manzanas*) and one is very large (600 *manzanas*). The rest own medium-sized holdings, and a couple of them own small plots of land.

Tourism businesses here are largely run by members of the household (23 of the 28 businesses, 82.1%), which has a highly relevant impact on the model of tourism development in El Castillo. Similarly significant is the fact that women—mothers, wives, and daughters—are largely in charge of the restaurants, lodgings, and stores, either as paid workers or not, and, even more importantly, a substantial percentage of them own the businesses. Hence, in 24 of the 28 businesses, the participation of women is predominant (85, 7%), or in the worst case, equivalent to the participation of men (7, 25%). Of the 16 hotels and lodgings in El Castillo, 12 are run and managed by women, and the rest by men. In 19 of the restaurant establishments, 11 are run by women.

Not only does this reflect the matrifocal nature of society in El Castillo, but it is also one of the specific effects on integrating women into the locality's socio-economic development brought about by the provision of specific funding made available by Spanish cooperation agencies to tourism businesses owned by women.

However, reproducing the traditional division of labor based on gender, activities carried out outside of the home (tours and transport)—with the exception of tour guides, and even in this case the participation of women is very low—are performed by men (fathers, husbands, and sons), who are also in charge of working the land and other manual labor, such as carpentry or construction.

Furthermore, one fact that reinforces the family-run nature of most tourism businesses in El Castillo, and which could also be considered a clear indicator of their strength with regard to future continuity, is the participation of younger members of the family. Hence, although in 9 cases it was not possible to corroborate the effective participation of children and grandchildren, and a further 8 businesses do not involve younger members or their children are still of school age, in 12 (42.8%) of the 28 businesses, members of the younger generations carry out tasks related to maintaining the family business or developing complementary tourist activities.

One fact that demonstrates the primacy of the family logic and domestic strategies in the development of tourism businesses is the absence of an organizational structure for tourist activity that goes beyond the actions of each business, along with the existence of collaboration and alliances formed between business based chiefly on family relations. Even though two associations were initially set up—AMEC and ADESIC—in an attempt to allocate visitors to rooms and offer tours using a local rota system (a process driven by external actors who generated and promoted tourism), neither of them managed to operate effectively. There is currently one Tourist Office, managed by the mayor's office, but its activity is practically non-existent. This situation, which could be understood as a weakness or the impossibility of organising tourist activity at a local level, is explained by the family structuring of tourism and the importance within this framework of family relationships as the foundation for enterprise (Figure 7).

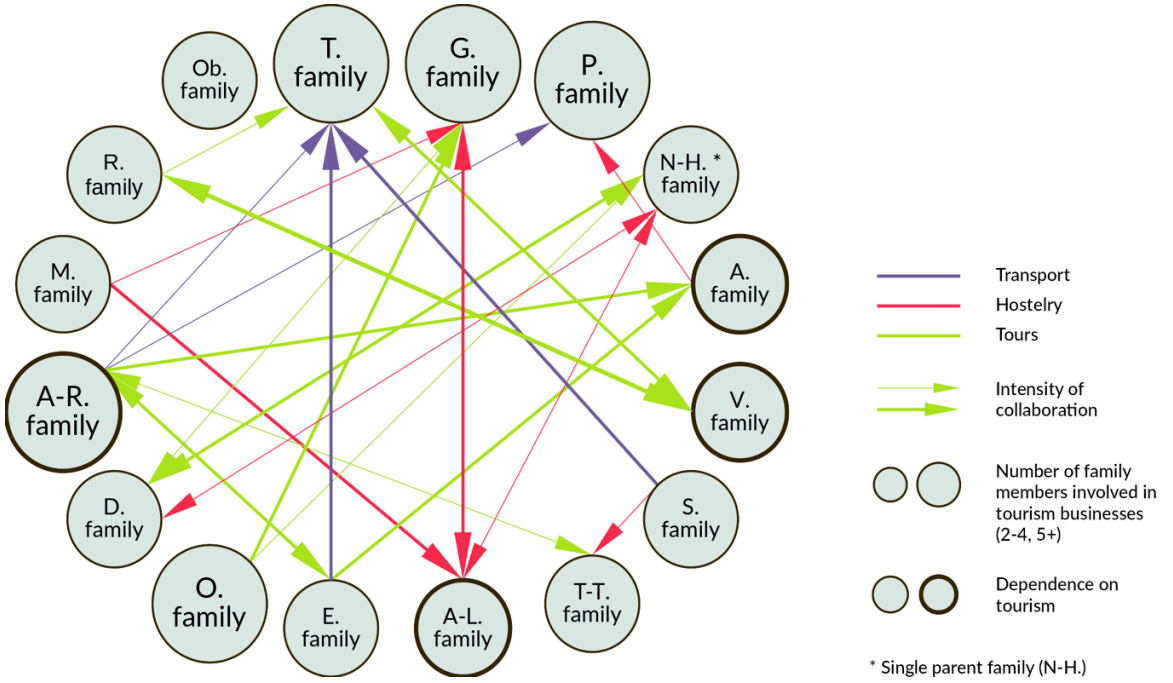

Figure 7. Sociogram of the relationships between families involved in tourism. (Author: A. Montejo, Source: Fieldwork 2016).

The same is true of the political-administrative dimension. In El Castillo, there are two political parties, the Sandinista and the Liberal parties, and the associations and part of the family networks of collaboration in tourism have been, and still are, more or less affiliated with one party or the other. It could be said that there are Sandinista families and Liberal families, and this has influenced cooperation in business, but it has not been a direct consequence, especially not today, given the evolution of Nicaragua's general political panorama; rather, it has in all cases been complementary to family relations.

Almost thirty years on from the initial development of tourism in El Castillo, the balance could be considered positive, in spite of the initial conditions weighing against it. These include: the locality's relative isolation with regard to the rest of the country [53]; the lack of communication infrastructures (Las Tablillas bridge, land bridge to Costa Rica, and a road leading to Managua) and public services; the practical disappearance of financial support provided by international cooperation; the difficulties generated by tensions with neighbouring Costa Rica motivated by border conflicts between the two countries and sovereignty over the San Juan River, and its effects on the flows of goods and people; the negative influence of illegal trafficking of banned substances; and the impact of the 2008 global crisis on inbound tourism from some of the most important markets, such as Spain. Having managed to overcome all these difficulties, tourism has become established as an important activity, in quantitative and qualitative terms, for the economy and social life of the locality. It enhances the resilience of local society and endows it with a greater capacity than many of the rural populations in Nicaragua and other countries in this area when it comes to tackling the uncertainty of new threats or the exacerbation of current ones (political conflict, COVID-19 pandemic). This persistence and relative solidity, in spite of adverse conditions, in our view and as shown by analysis of the data, are largely due to the fact that they are grounded fundamentally in households and family relations. They have also resulted from an ability to adapt to economic, social, and political logic, strategies, and alliances that are based not on individuals but rather on households as the central actors, in which tourism, albeit an important source of wealth, plays a complementary role in the diversification of activities.

The graphic above (Figure 7) represents collaboration relationships between different families/businesses only in activities that are most clearly and specifically related to tourism: transport,

accommodation-restaurants, and the organization of tours. This Figure 7 shows that the structuring and organization of tourism businesses around family units, and the interconnections that exist between them, endow the tourism system with tremendous flexibility and the capacity to adapt. Even the location of businesses (Figure 8) reveals a clear tendency towards concentration in certain areas of the urban center according to family bonds, a proximity that favors collaboration between them. These circumstances explain why there has been no need for formal structures to organize activities, since they are grounded in a significantly horizontal and only slightly hierarchical model of informal governance.

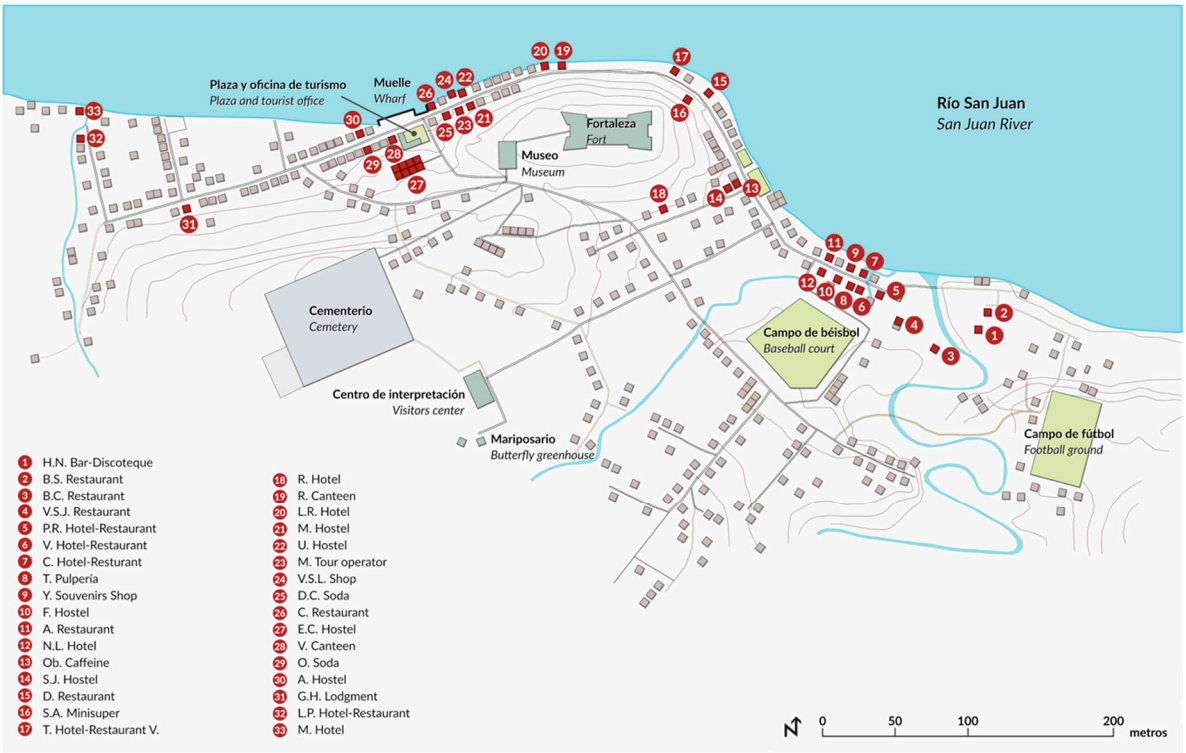

Figure 8. Location of tourism businesses in El Castillo. (Author: A. Montejo, Source: own work. Source of data: Araucaria XXI "Urban diagnosis of El Castillo", 2004).

This network of relationships, together with those based on proximity and friendship, and without refuting the importance of political party affiliation, forms the structure and the glue that holds together the sector of local society related to tourism and, by extension, society as a whole. Specifically, this network enables self-organization, one of the key social factors that generate socio-ecological resilience [61,63], and has thus far negated the need for formal business associations, promoted by Spanish cooperation agencies or the municipal tourist office.

All of the above confirms the positive role that the type of tourism developed in El Castillo has played in strengthening households that encompass a significant number of families in the locality, and family support is one of the factors that clearly explain the consistency of this development. Hence, families who are directly involved in tourism—but also an important number of families who are indirectly involved—and the tourism system itself feed into one another's mutual specific resilience, endowing them with greater capacity to cope with the uncertainties of a market that is so heavily influenced by changing circumstances, as tourism is.

But even more, the specific resilience of this type of family-based tourism extends to the whole of local society and the surrounding SES, thereby strengthening general resilience. Although it is not the goal of this paper to undertake such levels of analysis, our research does provide data that would support this affirmation. With regard to local society, the development of this mode of tourism based

on family organization has strengthened a hugely relevant factor in the success of local development processes [64]: feelings of belonging and local identity among many residents of El Castillo, whose self-esteem has been boosted by the interest shown by tourists in their town, in its historic heritage and the surrounding natural environment.

> "If you look, most businesses are run by locals, and that is very important, because it means we won't lose our idiosyncrasy, our culture, our identity, but (. . .) they say that Granada is the face of tourism in Nicaragua, and it's a very lovely city, a colonial city, but it's a different kind of tourism, the idiosyncrasy of Granada has been lost, the identity of its people, because it's becoming more foreign than Nicaraguan, unlike León, that's different, León is León, it's very pretty and very Nicaraguan (. . .)". (Yamil Obregón Bustos, owner of the restaurant B.C., 2016, *Sit tibi terra levis*)

Furthermore, the development of tourism has helped to improve living conditions in El Castillo: habitability of the housing, improvements in roads, drinking water supply, waste management, increased employment options and diversification, improved public services (school, health, river docks).

Similarly, by extension, the strengthening of families linked to tourism and of the local tourism system spreads to the surrounding territory, feeding into the general resilience of the SES. The development of tourism has increased environmental awareness among the local population.

> "My father used to hunt alligators and today it's disappeared, he's always made a living out of alligators, before he used to kill them and now he shows them to tourists. There are 2000 people living in El Castillo, and close to 40% of them make a living from tourism". (S.O., guide, 2016)

> "[the attitude of the population has changed] . . . a lot, really a lot. In the year 2000, children used to use slingshots, which they made from a branch, and they would use them to kill all the birds, and there was a campaign with the army and the police, saying that if a child was found with one of these it would be taken away from them, [they didn't eat the birds], it was just killing for the sake of killing, and you can see that now there are birds everywhere. The level of cleanliness has improved a lot, because almost everyone who lives here benefits from tourism: the grocery store, the clothes seller, the fruit seller, the liquor seller, the butcher . . . we all benefit. For the *comunidades* [rural settlements outside of the urban center of El Castillo], tourism does not interest them, they are interested in growing their food, but there is a link because they bring us all the food they produce, now they are seeing that tossing out a tree . . . they no longer toss it out because they plant fruit trees or cocoa". (J.G., owner of Hotel V., 2016)

Recognition of the value of the environment, which is the main draw for tourists, has changed their perception about the importance of conserving ecosystems and biodiversity, and there is increasing concern about river pollution, with growing rejection of deforestation to expand pasturelands, conservation of river vegetation so as to avoid erosion, the contamination of water that supplies local populations, or controlling tree-felling for use in construction, a frequent practice previously.

Although this burgeoning awareness tends to be somewhat discursive, and does not always align with the continuance of certain unsustainable practices—one example of which is the disappearance of the river shrimp, used in one of the local culinary specialties, as a result of overfishing to supply demand in local restaurants—there are certain facts that may contribute to the resilience of the SES: the active participation of many guides and some businesses offering tours in the creation, maintenance, conservation, and of the use of trails and paths crossing through the reserve and other areas of interest to tourists; or the rejection of a road for motorized vehicles to the urban center, which would facilitate the movement of traffic, especially for tourist businesses, as it would ensure faster and cheaper provision

of supplies, but would jeopardize the peace and quiet of this place, considered one of the main features that defines the idiosyncrasy of El Castillo.

> "There were loads of people against it [establishing the reserve] but gradually people have gained more confidence in the idea, seeing that tourists will come and take a little tour of the land, and that Araucaria came and raised awareness about the countryside, cocoa, and they planted cocoa, now there's a cooperative, they run cocoa tours, and they are doing well selling cocoa, so they got used to the idea and now they are conserving their forests . . . there is much more awareness now but in the beginning people were really angry, and they were right to be so, in case we left them with nothing". (O.D., guide, 2016)

Another example is the increase in agro-biodiversity achieved as a result of the recovery of traditional crops such as cocoa, or other new crops, compatible with conservation, promoted by different cooperation projects, which enrich local production for domestic consumption, to meet tourist demand, or even for exportation, thereby contributing to the diversification of domestic economies. Furthermore, recognition of the value of maintaining biodiversity (birds, alligators, tortoises) to attract tourists has led several business owners, especially landowners, to implement various actions, such as conserving, planting fruit trees, or putting down food waste to attract and sustain animals.

> "In '75, my father would go up to the mountains every Sunday to burn almond trees. Back then people didn't even think about those things, but now there has been a change in mentality because you could destroy everything. Our environment is the way it is because we would chop down trees and didn't think about it at all. Now, people are planting trees. Before, you were 40 years old and you didn't care about what was to come, but you have to think about those who come after you." (J.G., owner of Hotel V., 2016)

6. Conclusions

The case of El Castillo offers a good example of how, on the basis of a connected local society—essential prerequisite for any type of sustainable development—the involvement of groups based on family relations plays a fundamental role in the development and success of the actions undertaken to this end, which in our study have focused on tourism. This is not only from the perspective of improved socio-economic conditions for these households; it also goes beyond that, as a very important factor that strengthens their specific resilience to cope with their current conditions and the uncertainty of their future, and for the tourism system of which they are a fundamental part. Specific resilience that, by extension, also strengthens the general resilience of local society and the surrounding SES. The situation of social conflict affecting the country since 2018, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourism offer hard evidence that El Castillo is in a relatively better position to overcome this situation compared to other tourist destinations in the region. The complementary nature of the income from tourism businesses for the majority of the families involved in this activity is a factor that decisively contributes to this resilient capacity.

Although further studies are required into other cases with a view to offering comparisons to shore up the theoretical formulation of FBT as a subcategory, the findings set out in this paper endorse the potential usefulness of this term to study different models of tourism development and analyse their socio-environmental consequences.

On the other hand, in relation to the usefulness that the results of this work may have, the confirmation of the importance of families and family relationships as key elements in the robust development of tourism in El Castillo, and of the specific characteristics that its local society presents for this, must be taken into account in order to support tourism from community-based by institutions and organizations interested in promoting sustainable local development.

Supplementary Materials: The following are available online at http://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/12/15/5886/s1: Supplementary 1. Field Guide and Supplementary 2 Characteristics of tourism businesses in El Castillo organized by families and domestic groups.

Author Contributions: Project design, Conceptualization, and Methodology, J.E.-R.; Fieldwork and interviews, A.L.D.-A. (60%) and J.E.-R. (40%); data processing and analysis, A.L.D.-A. (50%) and J.E.-R. (50%); writing—original draft preparation, A.L.D.-A. (50%) and J.E.-R. (50%). All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: Throughout the ten years in which the different phases of the research on the results of which this article is based were carried out, the project received funding from the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo, grants A/5445/06, A/8492/07 and A/017024/08; and the Spanish Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Competitividad, Gobierno de España, grants CSO2012–33044 and CSO2017–84893-P.

Acknowledgments: We deeply thank the people of El Castillo and especially the members of the families linked to the tourist businesses for their collaboration and generosity. Likewise, we want to thank colleagues from the Pablo de Olavide University, the National Autonomous University of Nicaragua-Managua, the National University of Costa Rica and Flacso-Costa Rica for their collaboration in some phases of the development of the research framework project in which it is enrolled this work.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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