

WE ARE THE GUARDIANS OF THE SELVA; CONSERVATION, INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES, AND COMMON PROPERTY IN THE SELVA LACANDONA, MEXICO

by

STEPHANIE R. PALADINO

(Under the direction of Overton Brent Berlin)

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, conservation sciences have focused more on the preservation of ecosystem processes and biodiversity than on the preservation of particular species or locations. This shift to a broader-scale, landscape perspective brings many challenges to achieving conservation across local and regional scales. These include how ecosystem perspectives can be integrated with the other frameworks and knowledge that different human populations, local and remote, have in relation to the landscapes in question; the negotiation of this integration in ways that are equitable; and the paucity of models for meshing livelihood, equity, and conservation that support this integration on a long-term basis. The collective management of large ecosystems by indigenous populations has come to be seen as one such model, gaining considerable attention because it promised to address a variety of indigenous self-determination, ecosystems conservation, and sustainable development objectives. This study explores the case of the Comunidad Lacandona, a large, indigenous communal property territory in in the Selva Lacandona, Chiapas, Mexico, part of which was declared the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve in 1978. The indigenous owners of the Comunidad include Maya groups that migrated to the rain forest mid-20th century from nearby parts of the state, as well as one group internationally

known for its rain forest-compatible ecological practices. Drawing on historical, political ecological, and ethnoecological perspectives, the study looks at how this encounter of indigenous communities and protected area has worked out over nearly three decades, using one community, Nueva Palestina, as a focus. For members of this community, a historically insecure and disadvantageous political economic environment has helped cause patterns of expansive land use and efforts to find new ways of working, while current institutional investments focus on other goals. In this void, collective tenure and ownership of much of Reserve land has been used in recent years as a political means to try to leverage resources to meet these aims, rather than as a way of managing resources collectively or to achieve ecosystem conservation. There are few frameworks present to help mesh resident livelihood and conservation goals, as residents focus largely on household and small group economic endeavors.

INDEX WORDS: Protected areas, commons management, ecosystem management, indigenous knowledge, rain forest conservation, Selva Lacandona, Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve, Chiapas, political ecology

WE ARE THE GUARDIANS OF THE SELVA; CONSERVATION, INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES, AND COMMON PROPERTY IN THE SELVA LACANDONA, MEXICO

by

STEPHANIE R. PALADINO

B.A. Antioch College, 1977

M.A. The American University, 1989

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN ANTHROPOLOGY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2005

© 2005

Stephanie R. Paladino

All Rights Reserved

WE ARE THE GUARDIANS OF THE SELVA; CONSERVATION, INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES, AND COMMON PROPERTY IN THE SELVA LACANDONA, MEXICO

by

STEPHANIE R. PALADINO

Major Professor: Overton Brent Berlin

Committee: J. Peter Brosius
C. Ronald Carroll

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
December 2005

DEDICATION

To all those who have an urge to make, create, or give something back. And to those who give it a shot.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As is always the case with undertakings like this, so many people have been essential, whether they have known it or not, to its ever being blessed by the light of the day. To all of the people I name below, and to those whom I have inadvertently left out but whose presence or participation was just as important, I owe eternal gratitude and probably many favors.

There are, however, special acknowledgements I would like to make of two people, each of whom, in different ways, made special contributions. To Brent Berlin, my major professor, for having the faith in his curious and aging student to come through; and to Abelardo Teratol Sánchez, who assisted me with the research in Nueva Palestina, for having the faith and courage to join his fate, for a time, to that of the curious *gringa* researcher who showed up in his town. To many others, who helped me in so many ways, I am in debt:

Ron Carroll; Pete Brosius; Margie Floyd; Lisa Johnson; Alex Brewis; Juana Gnecco; Emuel Aldridge; and Charlotte Blume.

Rocio Rodiles Hernández; Carmen Legorreta Díaz; Tim Trench; Conrado Márquez; Carlos Tejada Cruz; and Juana Cruz Morales.

Dr. Mario Ishiki Ishihara; Isabel Vazquez Lara; Miguel Martinez Ico; Henry Castañeda Ocaña; and Carmelino Sántiz.

Catalina Meza; Jeanne Simonelli; Patty Kelley; Ritsuko Abe; Juan Castillo; Carmelita; Helda Morales; Bruce Ferguson; Fausto and Lucy Bolom.

Abraham Mena; Benito Salvatierra; Miguel Angel Castillo; Doña Olga; and Carlos Fernandez Ugalde.

Alejandro López Portillo Odetta Cervantes; Maria de Lourdes Avila; Arturo Urbina; and Karina Reyna Pérez.

Catalina Meza; Jeanne Simonelli; Patty Kelley; Ritsuko Abe; Juan Castillo; Carmelita; Helda Morales; Bruce Ferguson; Fausto and Lucy Bolom.

Ignacio March Mifsut; Ruth Jimenez; Ricardo Hernández;. Feliciano Domínguez; José Nava.

Pablo Muench Navarro; Rodolfo Díaz Saarvides; Pablo Alcázar Castello; Juan Manuel L.; Fernando Brauer; Porfirio Camacho; Felipe Villagrán.

The Teratol family. Bertha and María Bolom, and Nicolas Bolom Vasquez. Samuel Cruz Guzmán. The family of Sebastain Cruz Espinoza. The family of Juana Gómez Gutiérrez. The family of Modesto Hernández Encino. Manuel Arcos Jimenez and family. Agustín Arias Cruz, María Gómez Encino, and her mother. Pedro Díaz Solís and his family. The family of Carmelino Flores Montejo. Gerardo Cruz Díaz and his wife Enriqueta. Manuel Gómez Sánchez. Juan Jimenez Sánchez. And many other individuals and families in Nueva Palestina who shared with me so generously thoughts, food, ideas, experience, and life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
I. Purpose of the study.....	1
II. Background.....	9
III. Research questions and methods	36
2 SETTING THE STAGE: SHIFTS IN THE POLITICAL ECONOMY.....	47
I. Introduction.....	47
II. Land ownership in Mexico: some background.....	48
III. The Lacandon region before the mid-1900s	53
IV. Shifts in the political economy.....	68
3 EXODUS: MIGRATION TO THE SELVA AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW ECONOMY/ECOLOGY	78
I. Introduction.....	78
II. Exodus	78
III. Internal dynamics: Flows, fission and fusion, and exchange relations	88
IV. Adapting ecological practice.....	94

	V. New relations to the land and to each other: Organization, community, and identity.....	99
	VI. Summary.....	108
4	COMMON PROPERTY: RESPONSES OF THE CAÑADAS SETTLEMENTS ..	112
	I. Introduction.....	112
	II. The creation of the Comunidad Lacandona.....	113
	III. Responses of the Cañadas settlements	131
	IV. Summary.....	139
5	COMMON PROPERTY: RESPONSES OF THE EASTERN SETTLEMENTS ...	143
	I. Introduction.....	143
	II. Incorporation into the Comunidad.....	144
	III. Implications for the Comunidad.....	164
	IV. Implications for Nueva Palestina	171
	V. Economy and ecology	182
6	DIFFERENCE	195
	I. Introduction.....	195
	II. Conservation at the commons table.....	197
	III. Difference: Positions	225
	IV. Difference: Knowledge, objectives, interests	249
7	CONCLUSIONS	275
	I. Introduction.....	275
	II. Summary.....	276
	III. Additional reflections	295

REFERENCES CITED 301

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: Comparison of forest succession terms, Nueva Palestina	256
Table 2: Some common Tzeltal terms for soil color and texture, Nueva Palestina	259

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Location of the Selva Lacandona region and Comunidad Lacandona	4
Figure 2: Comunidad Lacandona and overlapping protected areas.....	8
Figure 3: Physiographic regions of Chiapas	54
Figure 4: Estimated extent of lowland tropical rain forest.....	55
Figure 5: Elevations of Chiapas.....	56
Figure 6: The “finca belt”	58
Figure 7: Comparison of the topography of the Cañadas and eastern regions of the Selva	93
Figure 8: Territorial subdivisions for each “sub-community”	170

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As we better understand the rapidly accelerating rates and scales of our current abilities to effect environmental change, we have increasingly attempted to integrate these understandings into our cultural (that is, economic, ecological, social, political, and symbolic) practices. What to do with this knowledge has not at all been straightforward nor found widespread consensus. Responses have included everything from outright rejection of the validity of scientific evidence documenting these effects (e.g., in relation to global warming), to calls for radical cultural changes that involve the creation of structurally different relationships between economy, ecology, and polity (e.g., bioregionalism, deep ecology). In between and around these poles of responses, there exists a whole array of calls to tweak, transform, or create anew technologies, social institutions, and economic and ecological practices. It is the broadest purpose of this study to contribute to our understandings of these cultural responses, and ultimately, to the development of successful cultural innovations that are fair as well as economically and ecologically sound.

One phenomenon that especially interests me in this regard is the surge of initiatives that attempt to establish ecosystems as a kind of commons that needs management, within landscapes that already have a disparate array of social, political, historical, and economic significances to people, local and remote, and most of which are not centered on ecosystem properties. These

initiatives come in many forms, and have been informed by shifts in the conservation sciences that increasingly focus on preserving ecosystem processes across wider landscapes in place of particular species or habitat locations. These efforts interest me because of the implications they may have for how we view such issues as equity and the relationships among ecology, economy, and polity. Unlike better-known examples of small-scale commons management arrangements, these initiatives typically require building uneasy alliances of interests, understandings, and power, across unprecedented scales of organizational and social difference, in contexts that are often already much fragmented by these very things. This process seems to me to be one of significant cultural innovation, which will demand significant cultural learning.

Over the past three decades, conservation policy, in the form of the protocols, programs, and plans of conservation organizations, nation-states, and international bodies, has reflected this tendency to focus more and more on wider landscapes. Particularly (but not exclusively) in developing countries, this focus has put conservation projects into direct encounters with indigenous and other historically marginalized peoples that live in areas highly targeted for biodiversity conservation. Out of this encounter, a particularly compelling paradigm for conservation has emerged that is still being experimented with today. In this paradigm, indigenous and “traditional” peoples are envisioned as ideal stewards of large, biologically diverse landscapes, a stewardship which depends on the long-term security of collective tenure rights to these landscapes. Since the 1960s, indigenous peoples worldwide had begun organizing to achieve collective tenure to the territories they have inhabited - and often been dispossessed of by colonial and modern states - on the grounds of human rights, self-determination, and cultural survival. By the 1980s, conservation organizations were beginning to consider how the marriage of indigenous people, collective tenure of resources, and conservation of large landscapes could

be an ideal conservation strategy. Similarly, indigenous people were considering in what ways alliances with conservation interests and protected area status could further their own aims of self-determination and self-directed development.

Although much has been learned about this marriage since it first took hold in the conservation imagination, it remains a powerful paradigm. I use the term paradigm because, beyond just representing one possible design or conformation of a conservation intervention, it embodies many ideas and ideals, most notably about relations between humans and nature and about relations among humans, that are particularly attractive for conservation proponents because they seem pointedly different from those relations that have helped produce large-scale environmental degradation in the first place. As such, the paradigm has the potential to reflect back to us much information about how we actually act and think about these relations in society at large. Above all, as the experiments that might be considered examples of this paradigm continue to work themselves out in ever-changing circumstances, we need to keep examining whether or in what ways they actually meet indigenous peoples', conservationists', or other participants' goals.

In the first half of the 1990s, a fair amount of literature emerged discussing this potential marriage of indigenous and conservationist interests. Several conferences and volumes of case studies were produced that already began pointing toward some lessons learned, reflecting both an excitement and a sense of caution. It wasn't till the later 90s that more critical perspectives emerged. It was in between these trends, in the middle 90s, that this study was conceived, with the actual research carried out between 1998 and 2000, and intermittently in 2001 and 2002. I chose as the focus of this study the case of the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve, established in 1978 in Chiapas, Mexico in one of the largest remaining chunks of tropical rain forest in the

Americas, the Lacandon rain forest or Selva Lacandona (Figure 1). I was drawn to this site because it includes key elements that are invoked by the paradigm: nearly 80% of the 331,200 ha. ecological reserve's territory is owned as legally titled communal property, called the Comunidad Lacandona, by the residents of five indigenous settlements. This cohabitation of reserve and indigenous common property has been in existence for nearly 30 years, and the Reserve and the rain forest have attracted international attention as a part of what has come to be called the "Selva Maya", a set of forested areas that extend across nearby Central American countries and are considered a world biological "hotspot" (Conservation International 2000). This would be an experiment that had had ample time to play out some of its dynamics.

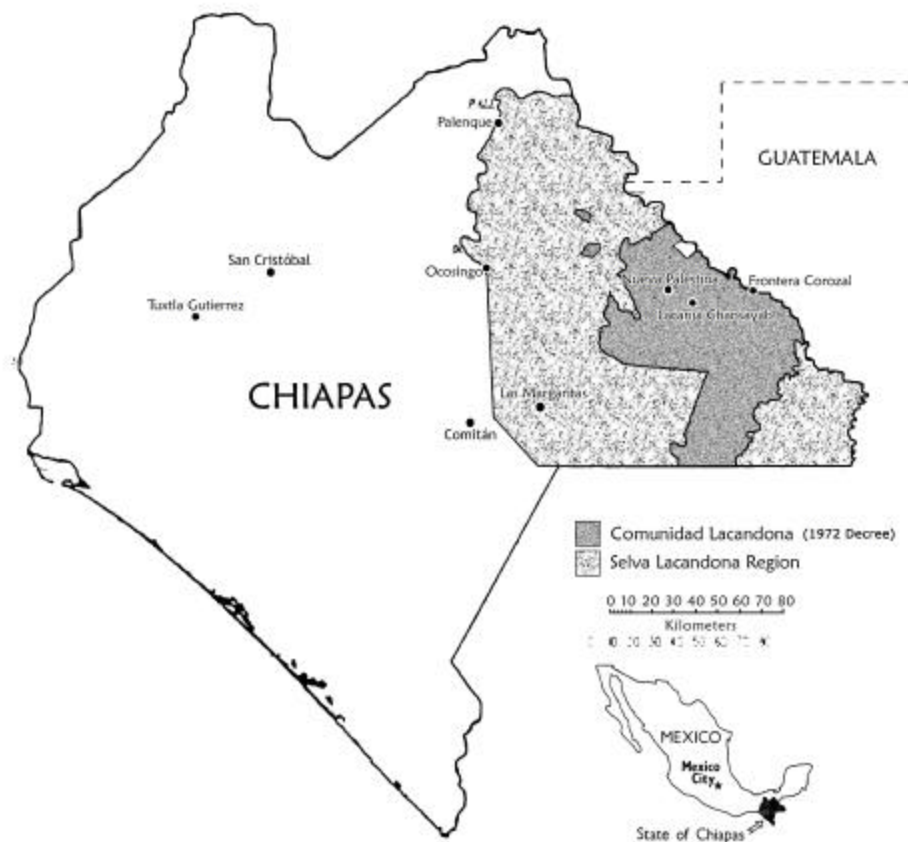


Figure 1. Location of the Selva Lacandona region and Comunidad Lacandona (adapted from SEMARNAP/INE 2000)

I was also drawn to this site because, although I now know far more than when I first conceived the study, I knew even then that it was complicated. The common property territory had been established in 1972, at least officially with the joint aims of cultural survival and ecological preservation for one of the indigenous groups involved, the Lacandons, a Maya group who had lived in the region and nearby Guatemalan forests for several centuries. Having become known internationally as ecologically compatible forest dwellers, they represented an example of the ideal type of indigenous stewards of ecosystems, whose cultural practices, which include swidden production of corn, beans, squash and other plants, as well as wild species harvesting, were intimately interwoven with the forest ecosystem. Yet the Comunidad Lacandona territory was established without any regard to the hundreds of other indigenous people already living in the region, Tzeltals, Tzotzils, and Ch'ols, also Maya language speakers, who were not seen as ideal stewards. These peoples migrated to the Selva Lacandona region from other parts of the state beginning in the mid-1900s, in response to changes in the regional and national political economies. Before arriving in the Selva, they provided labor to large landholders on coffee plantations and cattle ranches, and raised their own subsistence crops derived from the same centuries-old, Mesoamerican pattern of corn, beans, and squash. Many of them were later included as title-sharers in the Comunidad Lacandona communal territory. I also knew that the Lacandons, while known for their ecologically sound practices, were few in number, having maintained population levels of under 700 for decades, while the other indigenous members of the Comunidad Lacandona, typically blamed for much deforestation, numbered in the thousands, and were concentrated in two settlements, Nueva Palestina, of about 10,000¹, and Frontera Corozal, of less than 5,000 (Tejeda Cruz 20002), during the years of my study (Figure 2). In addition, although most of them were now concentrated in the settlements of

¹ My estimation in 2000, based on the records of the two government medical clinics in Nueva Palestina.

Lacanjá Chansayab, Najá, and Metzabok, the Lacandons had historically lived dispersed in the forest, in constantly changing clusters of one to a few households; there was no historic or ethnographic evidence of any explicit form of collective organization above the level of the household. To all accounts, disputes were settled by violence or by putting distance between the parties. On the other hand, the other indigenous groups had been integrated into regional and national political economies, albeit on wildly disadvantageous terms, since the Spanish conquest. And, although I didn't know the specifics of their experiences, they came from cultural groups that were widely known for having tightly-knit, political, social, and spiritual practices that organized community life and mediated access to land. Thus, in contrast with the Lacandons, on this latter count these groups might more closely resemble the ideal component in the paradigm of collective management of resources. On top of all this, the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve (MABR) was laid over much of the Comunidad Lacandona in 1978, a few years after its establishment, apparently without consultation or participation of any of the Comunidad residents. In 1992, four more federally protected areas were created: the Lacantún Biosphere Reserve; the Chan Kin Wildlife Protection Area; and Natural Monuments of Bonampak and Yaxchilan, both important archaeological sites (Figure 2).

Thus, the main elements of the paradigm were in place at the Montes Azules and Comunidad Lacandona site, even if their coincidence evolved from a process that was perhaps less pre-meditated and less self-conscious than the paradigm evokes. The differences apparent among the indigenous *comuneros* (communal property owners) in relation to ecological practices, collective organization, and population size offered the possibility of examining, or complicating, some of the assumptions that normally underlie the indigenous-as-ecological steward image. The presence of the Reserve, its international stature, and the fact that the rain

forest had historically been at the center of other extractive and strategic interests beyond that of conservation, as well as the site of an important new social movement, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN)² or “Zapatista” movement, also guaranteed that this would not be a study of indigenous people, conservation, and ecosystems in appealing but rare isolation from the world around them. Rather, I thought, it would offer the chance to look at how people fare in a situation that probably represents the more common experience for indigenous people and conservation interventions worldwide, that of actors, individually and collectively, pursuing their relative objectives in a world where other actors, individually and collectively, are also pursuing theirs. In this world, those objectives and their pursuits manifest themselves in, and react to, national policies, international agreements, transnational organizations, local, regional, and national elites, budget cycles and funding sources, other rural and urban people, fellow comuneros, competing land claims, commodity prices, development and conservation vogues, commercial intermediaries, social movements, school fees, civil wars, climate changes, young people’s aspirations, changes in government, agency and NGO turf wars, political campaigns, and so on. Exploring the increasingly complicated social, political, and economic contexts within which indigenous people operate, particularly when they are at the center of conservation interests, seems especially important. In Latin America, most of the indigenous population are not isolated, forest-dwellers, but rather more like *campesinos*, peasants or subsistence farmers (Nigh and Rodriguez 1995); and in Mexico, the majority of areas already in or targeted for protected areas are inhabited by indigenous people and managed communally (Toledo 2000; SEMARNAP 1996, cited in Tejeda Cruz 2002).

² Zapatista National Liberation Army.

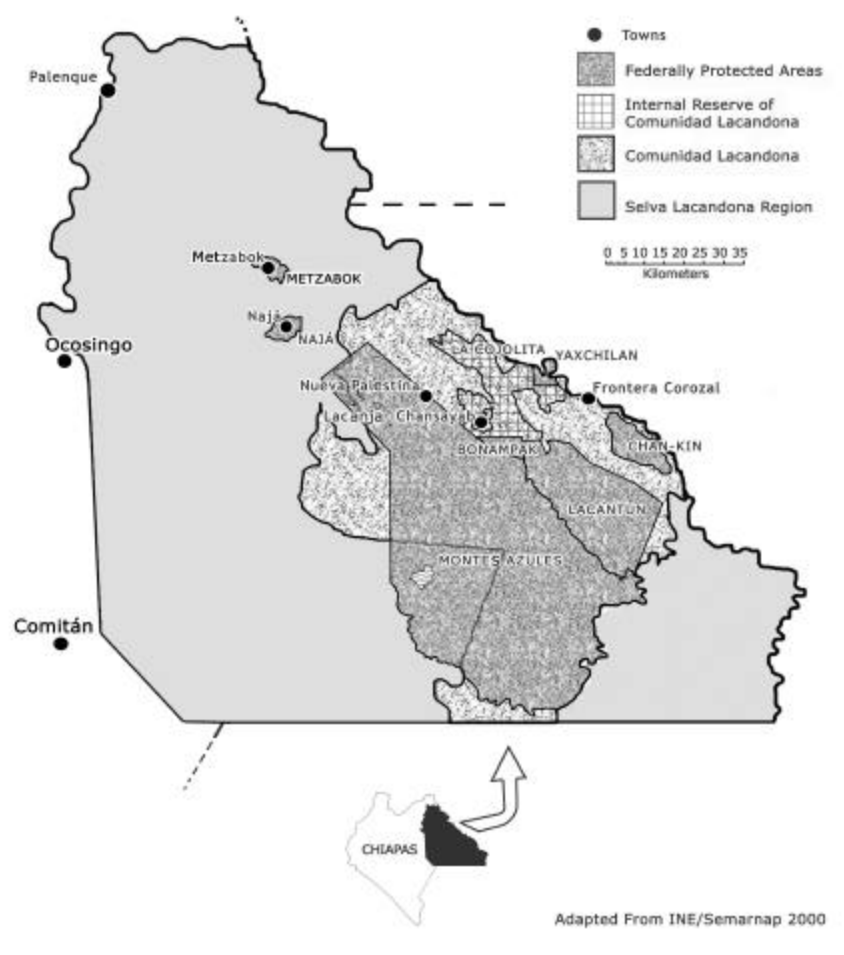


Figure 2. Comunidad Lacandona and overlapping protected areas

The study was conceived as a case study of one instance of this attempted marriage of indigenous rights, ecosystem conservation, and collective management paradigm. The research asks questions about this case study on two levels:

1) In what ways does this arrangement support, or not, the various objectives of indigenous self-determination, ecosystem conservation, and sustainable development? What can this case tell us about the assumptions underlying the paradigm, especially given the increasingly complex social, political, economic, and ecological contexts in which indigenous people and conservation interventions operate?

2) What can be learned about the prospects for developing processes for recognizing and managing ecosystems as commons in the face of competing constructions of social, economic, political, symbolic, and ecological significance?

Methodologically, the study is approached through what McCay (2002) calls “question-driven research.” rather than through a theory-driven or hypothesis-testing model. I assume that the “marriage” of the Comunidad Lacandona’s indigenous groups, common property, and the Montes Azules Reserve is not a static arrangement, but that it has come to be and still is being constituted through the interactions of individuals and collectivities with each other, as well as with more externally structured or patterned social, political, economic, cultural, and ecological phenomena. As a result, I take an historical approach to placing the actors, and their interactions with each other and the natural environment, in the context of these changing dynamics, in order to see how they contribute to the present.

II. BACKGROUND

The ecosystem conservation perspective

In recent decades, the environmental sciences have increasingly demonstrated the many ways in which biophysical processes are interactive across local, regional, and global scales, as well as across different temporal scales. The incremental effects of humans and natural events at local levels can effect changes in ecosystem processes and properties across much larger regions, including globally, and these regional or global changes, in turn, can substantively affect the functions of more localized ecosystems and their associated species. It has come to be understood that the maintenance of biological diversity is dependent on dynamic interactions among communities of organisms and abiotic processes that link, sustain, and challenge

organisms' survival (Meffe and Carroll 1997b; Hudson 1991; Meffe et al 2002). These interactions and processes are not confined to the spatial units defined by humans as property, administrative districts, or even protected areas, all of which have their origins in a variety of economic, social, political, and historical factors. Fundamental elements of ecosystems, such as predator-prey relationships, hydrological cycles, fire disturbance patterns, energy-, matter-, and nutrient flows, and climate patterns, are all affected by dynamics interacting across local, regional, and global scales (Meffe et al 2002; Meffe and Carroll 1997a; Hudson 1991). As a result, conservation policy and initiatives have increasingly focused on the maintenance of ecosystem processes and properties across wider landscapes, whether in or outside of protected areas (; World Resources Institute et al 1992; Meffe and Carroll 1997a; Hudson 1991).

In short, an ecosystem is not a collection of plants and animals. It is a seamless swirl of communities and processes. If you don't save the processes, you won't save the parts. So if you're going to create a preserve, you had better make it a big one. (Waller 1991:.xvii).

In addition to concerns about preserving biodiversity for its own sake and for its potential as a source of goods and scientific information, conservation interventions increasingly use the concept of ecological or environmental "services" as a justification for adopting an ecosystem process or landscape approach. Despite the fact that our economic, social, and political practices have increasingly externalized ecological processes and increasingly rely on globalized networks of energy and resources, we nevertheless remain enmeshed in these cross-scale and abiotic processes. The negative effects of our transactions on ecological processes, particularly at current levels of intensity, still end up being sustained by us, whether by selected populations or more universally, whether now or in the future. The concept of ecological services crystallizes this dependence on natural processes beyond that of nature as merely the source of

“parts” to directly consume, and is also used to point to the economic and social costs that the loss of these services incurs. Thus, forests hold carbon in their tissues and keep it from forming “greenhouse gases” in the atmosphere; different kinds of vegetation moderate microclimates, aid groundwater recharge, prevent stream sedimentation and pollution, moderate water conditions critical to water species, remove pollutants, and prevent flooding; birds, bats, bees, and insects pollinate our crops; predators act as population controls on other species; micro-organisms recycle nutrients from the air and dead organic materials (Salwasser 1991; Callicott 1997; Furze et al 1996). When these “services” are degraded, human ecosystems and economies experience negative effects and incur costs in remedying them (e.g., people become ill from pollution, experience food and water shortages, become subject to flooding, etc.) (Daily 1997).

The ecosystem-based approach to conservation and resource management, often known simply as ecosystem management, became in the early 1990s one of the more visible manifestations of this move toward a wider focus on biodiversity and ecological processes. Though a wide variety of definitions emerged (Carroll and Meffe 1997; Grumbine 1994; Aley et al 1999), the term is generally used to include approaches to environmental management that are not only broadly inclusive of natural processes, employing “large-scale, system-wide perspectives” (Carroll and Meffe 1997:361), but also of humans as social, political, and economic actors in, and beneficiaries of, ecosystems. One of the significant contributions of the concept is that it assumes a variety of human goals, in addition to biodiversity and ecosystem sustainability, will be taken into account in making management decisions, and that to do so requires “adaptive management”, or a learning-based approach that changes as natural systems change and new values, understandings, and priorities emerge. Particularly in the 1990s, many

conservation organizations and natural resource management agencies explicitly adopted significant elements of this approach as part of their policies (Brown 1991; Aley et al 1996). In the middle 1990s, the approach was adopted by several of the U.S. agencies having responsibilities for natural resources, many of them historically known for a more restricted focus on managing particular resources or resource uses. Although ecosystem management labeled as such has faded as an explicit component of these U.S. agencies' policies, many of the core principles and tools of its more integrative approach have been incorporated into their practice, often under other labels (Yaffee 2002). Ecosystem, ecoregional or bioregional approaches, however, remain explicitly integral to many international conservation programs and agreements, such as the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation, and the 2003 Durban Accord and Action Plan resulting from the Vth World Parks Congress of the same year (Mulongoy and Chape 2004).

Ecosystems as commons

Examples of conservation or environmental management initiatives that share this broader focus abound. They have been undertaken by conservation organizations, government entities, groups of area residents or "stakeholder" groups, research institutions, businesses, and collaborations of any of the above. They may be "ground-up" (Bolling 1994) or "top-down". They may call themselves many things: roundtables, dialogues, alliances, councils, associations, management programs, protected areas, or protocols. They may take the form of ecoregional reserves such as those promoted by The Nature Conservancy (Brown 1991; Groves et al 2000), or biosphere reserves such as those formed under the guidelines of the United Nations Man and the Biosphere program beginning in the 1970s (UNESCO 1974; UNESCO 1987), or they may consist of purely voluntary efforts with no legal or normative powers (Brogden and Greenberg

2005). They have developed around particular ecological formations, such as grasslands, badlands woodlands, wetlands, deserts, and freshwater and coastal systems. Watersheds, in particular, have become logically powerful units on which to focus (Doppelt et al 1993). At the international level, there are bi-lateral efforts that focus on the management of transboundary ecosystems, such as rivers and their watersheds (Sandwith 2001; Roca et al 1997). The Convention on Biological Diversity could be seen as a version of the concept extended to the global level (CBD 2002). Many of these efforts were initially sparked by relatively narrow conservation, recreation, or economic interests, and then expanded their scope as the necessity of a more integrative approach became evident. Others started with that broader focus early on.

Challenges of approaching ecosystems as commons

What these initiatives share, as diverse as they might seem, is an attempt to bring the ecosystem processes in question into view and into tangible reality for people whose social, economic, political, and ecological practices may engage them in “seeing” only fragments or elements of the systems. In fact, one of the principal methods employed by many such initiatives, and one of the first tasks to which they often dedicate themselves, is the creation of tools, such as GIS-generated maps, for visualizing the regions as coherent ecological units in which existing land uses, economic activities, development patterns, and political and administrative units are enmeshed. With an ecological matrix in view, these initiatives typically attempt to highlight the ways in which ecological processes impinge on human activities and vice-versa, for instance through quantifying the effects of the loss of environmental services. Through such efforts, these initiatives typically seek to establish in what ways there are collective interests in maintaining ecological processes, in a context already characterized by many other competing interests and understandings, and to develop mechanisms for arriving at

collectively agreed-upon norms for ecosystem use. Negotiating all these perspectives to find, literally and figuratively, “common ground” for collective decision-making - the commons *management* part - becomes a daunting task.

Once these approaches began to be experimented with, the inherently political nature of such initiatives became clear, as evidenced in a variety of ways: the challenges faced by participatory mechanisms, often based on fuzzily defined conceptions of “stakeholders,” in reconciling different claims of rights, risks, responsibilities, and costs, among both local and spatially distant actors; the different biases inherent in different representations, including scientific and cartographic, of ecological risk and appropriate responses; the differential capabilities of “stakeholders” in understanding, accessing, controlling, and contributing to information flows, and consequently to decision-making (Mahanty and Russell 2002; Grumbine 1994; Cortner and Shannon 1993; Cawley and Fremuth 1993; Aley et al 1999). While public decision-making and governance institutions already exist, they rarely have the geographic scope or integrative capabilities for dealing with ecological processes. And, as Brogden and Greenberg (2005) observe about the U.S., most of our governance structures and institutional experience is based on processes that essentially require the development of adversarial and competing positions, to be settled by referendum, rather than on processes that promote on-going synthesis, evaluation, and collaboration among participants. While the emergence of these kinds of initiatives have generated calls for and innovations in developing “adaptive management,” “communities of interest”, and “civic environmentalism,” (DeWitt 1994; Lee 1993; Sirmon et al 1993; Aley et al 1999), the challenges presented by difference, of credible and fair processes for negotiating difference in ways that are equitable, and the models of economy, ecology, and

polity that underlie these challenges, are inherent to the task (Russell and Harschbarger 2003; Gezon and Paulson 2005; Brechin et al 2003).

Collective management of natural resources, commons management

Particularly in the 1980s, a wave of research began to emerge examining collective natural resource management institutions, common property regimes, and commons management. This wave of interest was in large part related to the critiques of the effects of existing development paradigms, which privileged state and private forms of property, on rural and “traditional” peoples, the environment, and the sustainability of development projects. In particular, modernization regimes were critiqued for their tendency to displace these peoples from their traditional resource base and dissolve evidently sustainable forms of collective land management, resulting in the impoverishment of both people and the environment. With the dissolution of these local management regimes, often the areas or resources in question became “no-man’s lands” or open-access areas with no controls against over-use (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Bromley and Cernea 1989; Colby 1989).

Until recent years, there have been two main currents among commons studies. One has tended to develop explanations of successful collective management arrangements from a view largely internal to the collectivity, using mainly actor-based, rational-choice perspectives to understand under what conditions individuals are likely to cooperate with others in order to manage natural resources sustainably. The works of Ostrom (1990) are seminal in this current, but other contributions, including those that derive from game-theory experiments, are represented in many of the classic and continuing works on the topic (e.g., McCay and Acheson 1987; Bromley et al 1992; Berkes 1989). Another current has produced case studies of existing commons management schemes, showing how they function in terms of particular sets of

cultural practices, ecosystem characteristics, cosmologies, and moral economies. Many of these are represented in the collections just cited, but see also Netting (1976), Wolfe (1957; 1986), and Cleaver (2000).

Works from the first current provide useful guidelines for considering what might constitute incentives and disincentives within established groups for engaging in a commons, and have helped to highlight the roles of such qualities as trust; shared understandings of risk and shared environmental knowledge; communication; fair, trusted and legitimate working relations and internal sanctions; the relative distribution of rights, responsibilities, costs, and benefits within the group; and the relative costs and benefits to the group as a whole in monitoring and protecting the common-pool resources. However, even as they have evolved somewhat to take into account more complex commons situations than initially addressed (Dolsak and Ostrom 2003), the contributions from this current have still tended to offer little in terms of understanding how and why such collectivities and management schemes come to exist, or not, in the first place, what other roles they may serve beyond resource management, and how they or their members react to and are affected by other social, political, economic, ecological, and cultural forces. Nevertheless, insights from this current may be useful in understanding factors internal to the Comunidad Lacandona, or its constituent communities, that have a bearing on how they relate to rain forest conservation. Such insights could also be useful in looking at whether or how Comunidad members form a community of interests with Reserve and other agents focused on preservation of the rain forest “commons”.

The specificity of works from the second current can make them difficult to generalize to other situations. However, they have tended to highlight the roles of collective management practices in relation to a broader set of internal and external dynamics, many of which are

particularly relevant to the situation of indigenous peoples, for instance: as responses to scarcity; as defensive measures to protect resources, territory, and identity; as internal conflict resolution and leveling mechanisms; as the basis for “moral ecologies” that serve a variety of social and political needs having little to do with resources and sustainability (Wolfe 1957,1986; Mackenzie 2005; Bruce 1995; Pendzich 1994; Cleaver 2000; Lynch and Alcorn 1994).

Much of the commons management work in both currents has dealt with relatively small-scale collectivities of relatively closely associated people with relatively similar relations to a set of relatively few or highly localized resources (McCay 2002; Dolsak and Ostrom 2003). More recent work has begun to address issues of heterogeneity among group members; more complex and overlapping systems of different kinds of rights within collectivities; multiple-use resource systems; resources that aren't “natural” (such as air waves, shipping ports); and issues of scale (Selsky and Memon 2000; Rocheleau 1997; Steins 1999; Ostrom et al 2002). However, much of this work is still based around concepts of resources, users, and use rights. How the insights of old and new contributions apply to situations where some “commoners” have interests that are not related to actual resource use requires more exploration.

Indigenous rights and cultural survival

Indigenous people, sometimes referred to as “tribal,” “aboriginal,” “traditional,” or “first peoples,” have been especially vulnerable to the centralized, top-down, modernization projects of states, donor/lending agencies, and transnational corporations. Self-identification and identification by outsiders is generally acknowledged as conceived and negotiated within particular political and historical contexts (Sanderson 1996; Furze et al 1996; Gray 1997b). Nevertheless, one of the core elements of both indigenous self- as well as outsider-based identification has to do with historic and present relations to colonial and post-colonial states.

“Indigenous” is not a static concept but a growing phenomenon which is increasingly being adopted throughout the world by vulnerable peoples who claim rights on the basis of occupation prior to the existence of the state (Gray 1997a:16).

Prior occupation usually refers to longstanding relations of particular groups with particular territories or places before and during colonization or nation-state building. Indigenous peoples typically identify themselves as having social, political, symbolic, economic, and ecological practices distinct from those of colonizing and modern dominant cultures. Because states have typically not accorded legitimacy to these practices, indigenous people have been particularly vulnerable to dispossession from their lands, appropriation of their resources, disenfranchisement of their political institutions, forced acculturation to mainstream cultures, and forced participation in state economies on disadvantageous terms, including as slave labor. As a result, they typically occupy a position of political and economic marginalization in relation to state societies (Davis 1988; Davis and Wall 1993; Burger 1990; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos 1994).

The distinctiveness of indigenous peoples from those who are more fully integrated into colonial and modern state societies is typically described in terms of a few common characteristics. One of these is collective forms of resource or land tenure, where individuals and households derive rights to resources through their membership in particular social groups associated with particular territories, landscapes, or ecosystems (Goodland 1991; Lynch and Alcorn 1994; Gray 1997a; Büchi et al 1997). Another characteristic is the common presence of cosmologies in which humans and other elements of nature are bound together in relations mediated by the spiritual world; particular natural settings thus form an integral part of the group’s social and spiritual identity (Gray 1997b; Davis 1993; Descola 1994; Descola and Pálsson 1996; Croll and Parkin 1992). A third characteristic commonly attributed to indigenous

peoples is the use of economic practices based primarily on supplying need, rather than on producing surplus as a value for its own sake (as in capitalist systems), and on “moral economies” of reciprocal exchange relations. Closely related to this is the notion that these economies, based on detailed ecological knowledge, are satisfied within and finely sensitive to local ecosystems (Posey and Balee 1989; Clay 1988; Inglis 1993; Conklin 1954). The combination of these qualities has led to the famous characterization of indigenous people as “ecosystem peoples” (Dasmann 1976), and as managers of biodiversity with a conservation ethic (Nietschmann 1992; Wilcox and Duin 1995; Davis 1993). This is often contrasted with state societies whose economies have been based on inter-regional and global networks of resource procurement and exchange, typically initiate processes of ecosystem simplification, and use inputs (e.g., fossil fuels) from some regions to subsidize increased production in others (Erni 1997; Bodley 1996). Gray notes that the differences between people who identify themselves as indigenous versus those who identify themselves as peasant farmers is sometime a matter of degree rather than kind, and that sometimes these identities overlap: “Throughout the world, rural and urban poor are increasingly identifying themselves as indigenous, and peoples are gradually becoming associated into an international movement” (Gray 1997a:17).

The nature of indigenous peoples’ relation to colonial and post-colonial states has had two kinds of effects on indigenous identity and survival. On one hand, those areas that were not yet of strategic or economic interest to states, state societies, and economic enterprises became regions where indigenous people were able to maintain their long-standing patterns of living, or became refuges for indigenous and other people displaced from more economically desirable areas. As a result, most areas of the world not yet transformed by state-associated economies are the homelands of indigenous peoples, thus consolidating the association of indigenous people

(and cultural diversity) with relatively preserved ecosystems (biodiversity), and their images as ecological stewards (Redford and Mansour 1996; Colchester 1994). On the other hand, as their territories became the targets of increased market and state expansion in the second half of the 20th century, these last outposts of indigenous identity and practices became threatened, and spawned an influential, international movement to support indigenous rights and cultural survival.

Beginning in the late 1960s, indigenous peoples, in alliance with each other and with non-indigenous support groups, began organizing in defense of rights to self-determination before national and international bodies. This includes rights to self-representation through their own political institutions; secure rights to traditional territories through recognition of their own, collective tenure arrangements; rights to determine the nature and terms of their engagement with markets, health and education services, and other development processes; and rights to control over and benefits from the use of traditional knowledge (Garcia Hierro 1997; Gray 1997b; Gray et al 1998; Wilmer 1993; Posey 1997). This movement has progressively encompassed indigenous peoples from throughout the world Gray (1997a). The situation of Amazonian peoples, such as the Kayapó and Yanomami, have been particularly instrumental in bringing the case of indigenous rights to the international public consciousness (Nigh and Rodriguez 1995; Ramos 1993), and has contributed to the image that conservationists and other publics have of indigenous people in relation to nature.

Secure land rights have been at the center of these struggles (Davis 1988), and the early 1990s constituted something of a watershed for indigenous land titling in South America and elsewhere (Cordell 1993). The fact that indigenous groups and conservation groups have both found themselves in opposition to the destruction of indigenous-occupied lands by companies,

states, and uncontrolled development processes has been an important factor in making alliances between them look promising. From a conservation perspective, there are a lot of potential benefits to supporting the recognition and titling of indigenous land rights and tenure systems, including: the protection of ecosystems against these external forces; the preservation of indigenous low-impact lifestyles, both for biodiversity preservation but also as a source of techniques that could serve as models to other residents of similar zones; the preservation of ecological knowledge that might be useful in aiding scientific discovery; the management of large landscapes under a coherent, collective regime so as to avoid the fragmented management that results from division into private properties, as well as the uncontrolled management of an open-access situation. Conservation organizations have also been able to gain moral credit as well as extra funding and for projects that support indigenous causes (West 1991; Erni 1997; Western and Wright 1994; Redford and Mansour 1996; Stevens 1997; McNeely 1997; Kleymeyer 1994).

From the indigenous perspective, alliances with conservation organizations and initiatives also offer potential benefits: an internationally visible and often well-funded set of allies to help press for land tenure; increased recognition in international agreements and conventions; and access to networks of organizations and agencies that might provide funding, technical assistance, information, and political resources (Gray et al 1998; Büchi et al 1997; Kleymeyer 1994).

Nevertheless, a variety of issues are raised regarding the extent to which indigenous and conservationist interests are, in fact, compatible. One is that, in cases where protected areas become the means for defining an indigenous territory, the land remains owned by the state. Even if indigenous rights are specified as part of the protected area constitution, this always

leaves opens the possibility for the state, or a conservation organization it designates, to intervene, or, as has happened frequently, to ignore indigenous rights when more appealing economic uses of the area make this convenient (Henriksen 1997; Gray et al 1998; Centeno and Elliott 1993; Garcia Hierro 1997). A related issue is the differential relation of conservation organizations and indigenous people to the state: the former generally work with the sanction and support of the government, while the latter typically remain distrustful of it, and by extension, conservationists (West 1991). On the other hand, many conservationists and organizations are still mistrustful of giving complete control over priority biodiversity areas to indigenous groups (Colchester 1994). A somewhat related concern that has been raised is the selectivity of conservationists' support for those indigenous people that fit their ideals of inherent conservationists and low-impact lifestyles, versus those who aren't considered to fit the ideal and may be more involved in peasant agriculture or other pursuits. This kind of selective support has helped create conflict among indigenous groups as some get recognition, land tenure, or financial assistance and others don't. It has also made indigenous groups feel that support from conservation interests is in many cases conditional on their maintaining a kind of enforced primitivism, which is antithetical to their goals of self-determination and self-directed development (Gray et al 1998; Sanderson 1998; Garcia Hierro 1997; Erni 1997). These issues expose some of the potential fault lines in the indigenous/common property/conservation paradigm.

Changing paradigms for protected areas

During the same decades that the conservation sciences were broadening their scopes to focus on larger landscapes, system-wide perspectives, and their relationships to local processes, the models for actually protecting these natural systems were also shifting. Protected areas,

particularly in developing countries, became the principal policy applications for addressing biodiversity and ecosystem conservation; disproportionately so, according to some analysts (Brandon et al 1998). Reviews of the protected area literature suggests an evolution from a paradigm that is based on the separation of humans from nature, is imposed “top-down,” and imagines protected areas as islands with definable boundaries; to one which accepts humans as both co-creators and users of even relatively wild ecosystems, is more inclusive of human interests and “democratized,” and imagines reserves as key protagonists in regional ecological, social, and economic processes. Although this evolution occurred over the latter decades of the 20th century, the manifestations of those changes, as, for instance in the forms that parks take, the ways they are managed, or the policies of particular nations, sometimes compete and sometimes coexist within the same setting as the different histories and circumstances of individual parks and regions play themselves out. In making these shifts, the protected area paradigm has both drawn on and contributed to currents of thought about locally-based, sustainable development, traditional ecological knowledge, and indigenous rights.

The exclusionary model

From the 1970s on, in the face of rapid transformation of land- and water-based ecosystems and a heightened international interest in conservation, the creation of conservation parks and protected areas took off worldwide. Between the first World Conference on National Parks, held in 1962 in Oregon, and the fifth World Parks Congress held in South Africa in 2003, the number of protected areas multiplied tenfold, from about 10,000 to 100,000 (Mulongoy and Chape 2004). In Latin America and the Caribbean, there was an almost 80% increase in the number of parks in the 70s and 80s alone (Redford et al 1998). Some of these protected area creations were driven by interests in particular species, such as the charismatic “megafauna” of

tropical forests and African savannas, or in localized natural or culturally important sites. But the rapid loss of important ecological formations such as rain forests, grasslands and estuarine systems due to expanding and more intensive human activities, also drove the creation of parks aimed at saving large expanses of representative ecosystems. Although a variety of models worldwide have historically existed for conservation reserves, including models that include various kinds of human use (Harmon 1991; Kemf 1993), one of the most widely adopted models was that of the national park as it had been developed in the U.S. and codified in the IUCN categories of protected areas (West 1991; McNeely 1994). Under this approach, the exclusion of human activity from set-asides was typically extended to the actual removal of any peoples resident in the designated areas, and the prohibition of all human uses aside from those considered non-intrusive to “wild” nature, such as scientific research or nature tourism. Such parks were (and still are) typically considered national assets, and are usually owned and managed by government agencies or organizations contracted for the purpose according to scientific and aesthetic criteria. This approach treats protected areas as if they are islands in relation to surrounding areas (Mulongoy and Chape 2004). The overwhelming adoption of the model is attributed to the biases of international conservation organizations as well as to the colonial histories of developing countries (West 1991; Brockington 2002). As West further notes, “at the time, all too many in the international conservation community viewed resident peoples as a clear evil, a ‘weed’ to be plucked from the purity of wild nature” (1991:xix).

Problems of the model

The exclusionary model soon encountered challenges. Although these problems were not confined only to the developing country experience, it was in this context that they became particularly influential in pushing conservation paradigms and policies of the last three or so

decades. As pointed out in one review of Latin American parks, the location of the parks of these decades typically followed one of two logics (apart from more serendipitous cases based on particular circumstances): they either tended to be located in remote areas, least transformed by intense human activity and therefore with ecosystems and biodiversity most intact; or they tended to be located in areas subject to great transformation pressures, where establishing a protected area was intended to stop or slow these transformations (Brandon 1998b). In the case of the former, these are the regions which, for political, economic, or technical reasons, were not yet appealing to or feasible for incorporation into high-output production systems. They were also the areas where indigenous and other populations, living outside or at the margins of the larger political economy, were able to continue longstanding patterns of living or find access to resources and refuge after displacement from other areas (Redford and Padoch 1992; Redford and Mansour 1996). In the case of the regions experiencing rapid changes, these are often areas having recently acquired regional, national or global importance: for instance, for extractive resources, for agricultural expansion, for geopolitical strategic reasons, or as a response to national social inequities, such as landlessness or joblessness (Wilshusen et al 2003). Ironically, the migration of economically disenfranchised populations to these regions of change has often been directly or indirectly encouraged by national policies, even while other national policies sought to slow those changes through park creation (e.g. Andrews et al 1998).

In any case, the reality was that these areas were either lived in or depended upon by a variety of populations, frequently indigenous or “traditional”, and typically people with little access to or leverage over policy. Several reviews of park case studies worldwide demonstrate the problems generated by different versions of the “island” exclusionary model, problems that are ecological, social, and political in nature (West and Brechin 1991; Kempf 1993; Furze et al

1996; Brandon et al 1998a). It has been a common experience among the parks to find that local people could not, in fact, be kept out and continued to enter for needed resources or other cultural uses. Often, displaced residents have been merely supplanted by other populations moving in to take advantage of the newly depopulated, apparent no-man's-land created in protected areas (Terborgh et al 2002; Cuello et al 1998; Brandon 1998b). Park designation has sometimes created over-use of park resources in reaction to the anticipated displacement of and restrictions on users, as they, and others, attempt to get what they can before access is closed (Sherpa 1993). This state of affairs could go on for prolonged periods of time due to the logistical and political difficulties of enforcing restrictions and population removal, especially given the typically underfunded and understaffed nature of most parks. Other cases reinforce the findings of traditional ecological research by showing the critical role of longstanding human activities in maintaining "wild" ecosystems. These represent instances where particular patterns of human use and their related social arrangements, once stopped, caused desirable species and communities to decline instead of improve (West and Brechin 1991). Moreover, the cases make clear that the activities of populations living in the areas surrounding parks could be just as influential to park conditions as those of populations inside the parks. Simply removing or keeping people outside the boundaries was not enough to control human influences over park ecosystems, and the increased pressures on fringe areas created by relocation of park populations usually meant increased pressure on park ecosystems as well (Croft 1991; Kutay 1991).

Many analysts point out the frequency with which parks have been declared before any legal, technical, or financial mechanisms were in place to actually implement them. They point out that park creation is fundamentally a political process (Brechin et al 2003): national governments often see parks as prestige items, are pressured into creating them, or include them

as part of ambitious policies on development and conservation. Yet parks and conservation have been given low national priority vis-à-vis other sectors or commitments, including debt service. As a result, they become “parks on paper,” they lack resources to define boundaries or hire staff, implementation is fitfully carried out, park-related policies are contradicted by the actions of other government agencies, and support from extra-governmental sources becomes critical and another cause of competing policies (Brandon 1998b; Mulongoy and Chape 2004; Terborgh et al 2002; Sanderson 1998). Thus, in practice, many nature-only reserves have been unable to actually carry out or enforce exclusionary measures. Moreover, the environments of uncertainty and contradictory policies has often worked counter to park goals, for instance, causing over-use of park resources as people try to get what resources they can before closure; or, creating a no-man’s land that draws in opportunistic interests, some of which, such as logging or mining, may be tolerated for the sake of national interests (Wilshusen et al 2003; Brandon 1998a; Garcia Hierro 1997).

The displacement of resident populations also gave rise to widespread concerns about the human rights implications and inequities of the model (Fortwangler 2003). Park creation has typically given little consideration to the rights to self-determination, territory, and livelihood of local peoples (Brechin et al 1991; Brechin et al 2003); rarely has park creation or design been based on prior assessment of local populations, their land tenure arrangements, the nature of their resource use activities or the actual impacts on ecosystems of these activities (Raval 1991; Kutay 1991; Brandon 1998a). Displaced peoples have often found their resource bases diminished or eliminated, their ecological, social, and symbolic practices disrupted or no longer practicable, and their livelihoods and health in a fragile state (West and Brechin 1991; Brockington 2002; Davey 1993). They have often been put in direct competition for land and resources with other

people already outside the parks, leading to further problems and conflicts. In effect, the hardships, poverty, and disruptions to social fabric and identity experienced by indigenous and other local peoples as a result of displacement from imposed protected areas turned out to be little different from the impacts of large hydroelectric dams, industrialized agriculture schemes, or other such modernization projects imposed by top-down, development schemes.

While many agencies and organizations charged with protected area responsibilities in developing countries appeared to accept the exclusionary model uncritically, others actively challenged it and began “asserting the agendas of Aboriginal land claims, cultural preservation, rural development, and human rights” (West 1991:xviii). Critiques of conservation premised on the exclusion of human activities and imposed by outsiders with little attention to existing residents emerged. The approach to conservation was criticized for being a Western or Northern concept only practicable in richer, developed countries and inappropriate to developing country circumstances; (Pimbert and Pretty 1995; Ghimire and Pimbert 1997); as coercive and even militaristic (Marks 1984; Peluso 1993); as a form of cultural imperialism (Thompson et al 1986).

Responses: the shift towards inclusionary models

The 80s and 90s, particularly, see a process develop of critique, reflection, reactions to realities on the ground, and the influence of social movements (e.g. indigenous rights, cultural survival). The relationship between parks and local people receives a lot of attention, and results in calls to change the nature of those relationships.

One response to the problems caused by the exclusionary model was the idea that some compensation or benefits should be provided to local people for having been denied access to park resources (Martin 1993). In many cases, actions along these lines act as defensive or palliative measures to reduce opposition among displaced populations (Lewis 1993), though they

continue to be among the arsenal of strategies employed by more inclusionary reserves. Examples typically involve providing sources of income generation for former residents, such as the hiring of former park residents as guards, research assistants, or nature tourism guides (Sherpa 1993), the sharing of income from tourism or hunting fees (Slavin 1993), or the selling of services or goods to tourists. Sometimes it has meant providing direct alternatives to park resources, such as raising animals as alternatives to wild meat, or developing substitutes for construction materials. However, rarely have the income or resource substitutes generated been sufficient to truly replace park resources and livelihoods, nor, as in the case of tourism especially, have they generally been able to be captured by affected populations (West et al 2003; Brockington 2003). Moreover, issues of equity often arise in terms of how the relatively few benefits are distributed among the different constituents of local populations, potentially pitting those who capture benefits against those who don't, and raising questions about how "localness" and community are defined (Brosius et al 1998; Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Sanderson 1998).

A broader concept of "benefit" that developed embodies a greater acceptance of the presence of local populations in and around protected areas. This encourages the adoption of more inclusionary reserve models, such as the biosphere reserve concept promoted by the United Nations Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program. Protected areas adopting this approach typically designate different areas of the reserve for different degrees of human activity. Some areas become exclusionary and only allow scientific or ecotourism activities; others are designated to accommodate existing resident populations and permit various degrees or types of uses. In these areas, typically it is intended that conservation development projects will help

these populations maintain or move toward economic activities considered ecologically compatible.

Related to this movement is the development of alternative economic activities for resident populations in and around parks, described as integrated conservation development projects (Larson et al 1997), ecodevelopment (West 1991), ethnodevelopment (Centeno and Elliott 1993), and sustainable development (Furze et al 1996). These activities are guided by a variety of aims: to compensate residents for the loss of park resources and thereby earn their support or, at least, compliance, with park restrictions; to provide economic alternatives to the use of park resources; to stabilize human activities in and around core areas or perimeters, based on uses compatible with park ecosystems; and to establish vested populations around park perimeters that can deter the further entry of people into the park. In many cases, these efforts still constitute a defensive strategy, where economic development, in effect, takes the place of or supplements policing and physical barriers to park use. Whereas some of the more limited benefits-sharing activities mentioned above primarily seek to reduce local opposition to protected areas, many of those referred to here seek to divert pressure from park resources by providing actual alternatives. West questioned whether these strategies, when based on such limited objectives, did in fact constitute an adequate response: “Whereas, in the past, resident peoples’ concerns were swept under the rug as being irrelevant, today they are frequently swept under the rug in glowing praise of ecological compatibility, still coupled with rigorous, exclusionary preservation.” (1991:xxi)

However, sustainable or conservation development also appears as part of a call to create alternative, enduring societal models for meeting both livelihood and conservation needs in the long-term. Just as locally-based development emerged as an antidote to top-down, centralized

models of economic development, locally- or community-based conservation (also, community-based natural resource management) emerged as an antidote to top-down, imposed models of conservation, both apart from, and in conjunction with, protected areas (Brosius et al 2005; Larson et al 1997; Western and Wright 1994; Furze et al 1996; McNeely 1993; some cases in Kempf 1993) exemplify this approach. These approaches are based on the perspective that local people who depend on local ecosystems are most likely to have interests in long-term, conservation management; that sustainability of conservation measures is enhanced when they integrate local institutions, local ecological knowledge, practices, priorities and economic objectives, and when they involve local people in planning and implementation. It is often assumed that outside assistance is or will be necessary to assure long-term sustainability in the face of increasing populations, shrinking resource bases, changing social needs, and linking activities to regional conservation outcomes. Ideally, under many scenarios, in the protected area context, this kind of approach means local people become not only beneficiaries of conservation development activities, but decision-makers. In some scenarios, local populations, particularly indigenous, shift from being merely protected area *residents*, to protected area *owners*, since secure tenure of resources is considered important in order for local communities to be vested in their long-range management as well as their defense against other users (Cordell 1993). A closely related current is co-management of protected areas, with local populations and government agencies sharing varying degrees of day-to-day operations and decision-making about resources.

In the general paradigm of locally-based conservation, “local,” “community,” and “resident people” can mean anyone: peasant, rancher, suburbanite. The focus is on ground-up stewardship of the local environment, with the understanding that conservation doesn’t happen if

it's coerced, imposed, or contradictory to peoples' interests. The same suite of ideas informs many of the U.S. ecosystem commons initiatives, including government-adopted ecosystem management approaches, referred to earlier. However, within this overall framework, much of the discourse, particularly surrounding developing countries, has focused on populations seen as directly dependent on primary production relations with local ecosystems, e.g., fishers, subsistence or low-intensity farmers, herders, forest-dwellers, etc., who presumably suffer the greatest impacts from loss of local resources, whether through degradation or through conservation-motivated restrictions. Following the shifts in development and conservation paradigms, the rights of local populations have been widely recognized and incorporated into international conservation accords and protocols. In these as well as individual institutional policy statements (WWF 1996), however, indigenous peoples have received special recognition for measures that should be taken to ensure their rights and participation in conservation projects (UNCED 1992; WRI et al 1992; CBD 2002; IUCN 1993; IUCN 2003).

Expanded focus: linking conservation and development regionally, globally

Thus, the evolution of conservation paradigms has included significant changes in how the relationship between protected areas and the populations in and around them have come to be seen. Particularly in the 90s and present decade, further shifts occurred that involve how parks' roles are seen in relation to wider regional and global processes. In 1995, a special UNESCO Man and the Biosphere conference held in Seville, Spain, called for biosphere reserves to look beyond their borders to regional processes, and become working examples of how to combine conservation and development for society at large, not just for adjacent populations. For this to be possible, it was suggested that they not only needed to have sound scientific underpinnings, but must reflect the cultural, spiritual, social, and economic needs of society (UNESCO 1995).

The 1992 World Parks Congress in Caracas called for protected area management to be such “that local communities, the nations involved, and the world community all benefit,” and further, that they become “demonstrations of how an entire country must be managed” (Barzetti 1993, quoted in Redford et al 1998:456). The 2003 World Parks Congress in South Africa continued this theme, by suggesting protected areas must address wider issues of economic and political inequity by modeling ways to combine conservation and sustainable development (IUCN 2003).

Further movement towards seeing protected areas in broader regional and global contexts include a trend towards ecoregional or bioregional conservation planning. This approach typically seeks to take stock of large, potentially transboundary, ecologically coherent regions and promotes coordinated region-wide conservation efforts, for instance through creating “ecological networks” of relatively conserved habitat in and outside of protected areas, creating biological corridors, or other methods (Soulé and Terborgh 1999; Mittermeier et al 1999; Dinerstein et al 1995; Roca 1997; Sandwith et al 2001). Because of the geographic scope involved, it often involves an investment in multi-institutional collaborations, the use of satellite imagery, airplane overflights, and GIS tools for visualizing landscape changes and threats, and the compilation of large databases (Olson et al 2001; Olson and Dinerstein 1998). It also puts under scrutiny inhabited areas, previously outside protected areas, for the potential application of land use norms or restrictions, for instance through the establishment of “biological corridors” (Sanderson et al 2003). The establishment of networks of protected areas is promulgated in major international conservation agreements (IUCN 2003) at the same time that locally-based management is encouraged. Concerns have been raised about the implications that this broadening ecoregional perspective, which now puts conservation organizations and scientists in the position of “viewing communities from ‘above’ ” (Brosius 2003:2), might have for the

relative balance of interests among local and other actors in conservation policy (Gezon 2003; Brosius and Russell 2003).

Challenges of inclusionary models

The shift toward sustainable-use approaches to conservation has been neither straightforward nor universal. Many have cautioned against over-estimating the conservationist motives of local populations and their abilities to discern the “big picture” of regional or global ecosystems; against treating communities as units with heterogeneous interests and abilities, or as actors in isolation from wider political and economic contexts, including institutional and policy environments. Many issues have arisen specifically in relation to the role of indigenous peoples.. The shift has also invigorated perennial tensions among conservationists about how biodiversity is best preserved: conservation through use, or strict preservation (Salafsky and Margoluis 2002; Brandon et al 1998b; Brockington 2002). Protected areas have come under fire for failing on both conservation and development accounts, generating calls to abandon restrictive parks altogether for sustainable-use models (Ghimire and Pimbert 1997), as well as calls to return to exclusionary, “fortress” style reserves (Terborgh and Van Schaik 2002). Proponents of the latter argue that sustainable development should be pursued outside of parks, towards achieving long-term human survival, while strict preservation should be practiced inside parks, to ensure biodiversity survival. Sustainable development, they say, as yet remains an ideal that will take a long process of societal learning to achieve; meanwhile, biodiversity is disappearing now, at a rate too fast to wait for the achievement of that ambitious goal.

Other analysts see park difficulties as not so much a function of use-or-not policies, as they are of being at the center of competing objectives, actors, institutions, and policies, of being poorly planned, sited, and supported, and of their vulnerability to adopting untested, one-size-

fits-all solutions to the conservation/development conundrum (Anderson and James 2001; Brandon et al 1998a; Sanderson 1998; Salafsky and Margoluis 2002). While still groping their ways around the still-novel aims of balancing conservation, livelihood, and other needs solely at the local population level, they are now expected to address “structural problems such as poverty, unequal land distribution and resource allocations, corruption, economic injustice, and market failures” (Brandon 1998b:418), be catalysts for development, and address the plight of indigenous people (Furze et al 1996; Redford 1998). By not being able to meet these ambitious goals, parks as a concept have come under fire. Yet, Redford et al ask, “Why are these critics focusing on parks and not on the 90-95% of the rest of Earth’s land surface? Is it because they are unable or unwilling to make demands of the powerful groups that control the destiny of this vast majority of the earth?” (1998:462-463).

The concept of biodiversity itself is one of the sources of these tensions. Major international conventions and agreements place protected areas at the center of biodiversity conservation policies. Yet the different agendas and definitions attached to biodiversity produce conflicting values and policies, and these, in turn, put indigenous people, local populations, and protected areas at the center of conflicting interests (Sanderson 1998). How, for instance, are the conflicting rights of national sovereignty and indigenous peoples, both recognized in the Convention on Biological Diversity, to be reconciled in the context of a state-owned park inhabited by indigenous people (Posey 1997)? Transnational agribusiness and pharmaceutical corporations, indigenous groups, international conservation organizations, nation-states, research institutions, all have made claims on particular definitions and uses of biodiversity (Zerner 1996; Dove 1996), a term that “has very frequently been appropriated from its biological roots by political actors less interested in conserving the biosphere than in who gets to use the biosphere,

under what property rules, and with what allocation of the losses and gains from use” (Redford et al 1991:458).

III. HOW I APPROACHED THE RESEARCH

Research questions:

In this particular instance, how does the combination of indigenous communities, common property, and a biosphere reserve relate to the various objectives of the members of the communities, to achieving rain forest conservation, and to the possibilities of meshing livelihood with conservation? What can this case tell us about the futures of such arrangements, given the increasingly complex social, political, economic, and ecological contexts in which indigenous people and conservation interventions operate?

Intimate knowledge of ecosystems and ecological practices that support high levels of biodiversity are key characteristics assumed by conservationists to make indigenous management and ecosystem conservation compatible, and are also characteristics that many indigenous peoples themselves use as an argument for territorial and cultural preservation. What role does ecological knowledge, either as put into practice by indigenous residents or as construed by other actors, play in this case in contributing, or not, to preserving the rain forest ecosystem or supporting indigenous residents goals? What importance does ecological knowledge have in relation to other factors that are internal to the communities or that derive from broader political, social, economic, and ecological dynamics?

Communal land tenure, and cultural beliefs and practices that mediate access to land through the collectivity, are characteristics that are both part of many indigenous peoples’ self-identification, as well as of conservationists’ identifications of them as good ecosystem stewards.

What importance does collective land tenure play in this case in both furthering rain forest conservation and community members' aims? What importance do collective tenure and collective organization have in this regard in relation to other political, social, economic, and ecological dynamics?

In this case, protected areas were established over Comunidad territory as a result of national and international conservation interests in the Selva region. How are these interests pursued in relation to the Comunidad Lacandona and surrounding areas? For instance, through what kinds of policies, projects, institutions, and conceptions of conservation? How do the particular means and conceptions employed for promoting conservation interests interact with residents' own conceptions of conservation and the pursuit of their own interests?

Framing the research, choosing the sites

The Comunidad includes members of four different indigenous language "groups", living in five communities. Most of the Lacandons, the ethnic group known for forest knowledge, live in the settlement of Lacanjá Chansayab (Figure 2). There are also 2 smaller Lacandon settlements, Najá and Metzabok, that physically lie outside the Comunidad borders, to the northwest. This reflects differences between what ethnographers have called "northern" Lacandons and "southern" Lacandons, with each group historically having antagonistic relations with the other, speaking slightly different variants of Yucatec Maya, and having different histories of interaction with missionaries and other outsiders. In practice, the members of Najá and Metzabok participate little in most of the Comunidad's political affairs. As a result, for purposes of this study, when I refer to Lacandons I am usually talking about those that live in Lacanjá, unless otherwise noted.

The other two communities are Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal. As the text will show, these two towns were formed in the 1970s through the nucleation of some 21 settlements of Tzeltal, Tzotzil, and Ch'ol ethnicity that had been dispersed in the Selva region. Nueva Palestina is predominantly Tzeltal, with a minority Tzotzil population, and a few, scattered Ch'ol families. Frontera is predominantly Ch'ol. These are the members that migrated to the Selva region in the mid-1900s from nearby areas of the state, some of them as late as the mid-1970s. These are also residents who are seen by outsiders as responsible for much transformation of the Comunidad's land from rain forest to cattle pasture, *milpas* (corn and bean subsistence crop fields), and *acahuals* (swidden fallows that are allowed to re-grow secondary forest before being used again for milpa), under current conditions in anywhere from 3 to 10 years.

In framing the study, I knew from the start that I wanted to focus the majority of my attention on the community of Palestina (as Nueva Palestina is commonly called). Much research has already been done on the Lacandons, their ecological practices, and their relationship to the establishment of the Comunidad Lacandona. That is, there is already a substantial body of knowledge to which to refer, even if much of it was not framed in terms of the research questions I pursue here. After I did my research, this body of work was augmented by a much-needed, updated ethnography by Trench (2002) that expands our views of the Lacandons as political actors on their own accounts, rather than primarily as the objects of others' imaginations of them in their special roles as rain forest dwellers. Earlier exploratory research of mine in Lacanjá in 1995, intermittent conversations with Lacandons, and discussions with others working in and around Lacanjá, including Trench, helped to inform this study.

By contrast, so little attention has been given by outsiders to the task of understanding the knowledge, perspectives, aspirations, ecological practices, and histories of the residents of

Palestina and Frontera, even as they, particularly the Palestinos, are characterized as poor stewards of the rain forest. One of the ironies – and very relevant elements – of this particular case is that it involves these dual characterizations, constructed mostly by non-indigenous actors, of some indigenous people who are “good” and some who are “bad” ecological stewards. These characterizations are based on obvious differences in each group’s physical imprint on the land, but are made, it seems to me, with insufficient exploration of the potential reasons for these differences, beyond observations of differences in population size, agricultural techniques, and recent origins.

These are significant, of course. But there is no inherent reason why the non-Lacandon members cannot or would not manage communally-owned rain forest for its preservation. This is especially true, given the extensive past histories of these ethnic groups in other parts of the state as managing land collectively, with some areas designated for family residential and agricultural use, and others, such as forests and grazing lands, designated as communal areas. Moreover, despite these groups’ long-standing integration into colonial and national political economies, their cultural practices still incorporate enduring and significant Maya spiritual beliefs that interweave the spiritual, natural, and social worlds and mediate land use for community members. Yet, as I found in the course of the research, outsider explanations for the non-Lacandons’ greater transformation of rain forest typically give as reasons that they are from different ecological zones, that they therefore have no knowledge of the rain forest environment, and that they have simply transferred traditional techniques from these other zones to the new environment. Another viewpoint implies that the non-Lacandon migrants to the Selva are not, in a sense, indigenous enough, in that they have lost traditional practices that might perhaps once have been more adaptive.

These kinds of explanations may well have truth to them; but what struck me was that they focus exclusively on the question of ecological adaptiveness, and little on any of the myriad other possible factors, internal to the groups and present in the social, political, symbolic, and economic environments in which they operate, that might be more or just as important in shaping interactions with the land. Such judgments, based mainly on observations of ecological outcomes, unfortunately easily lend themselves to speculations on individual and group values, motivations, etc. that may be completely misplaced. Because of their greater physical imprint on the rain forest and these kinds of judgments made by outsiders, I found that Palestinos in particular had come to be seen, as one conservationist phrased it, as the “ugly ducklings” of the Comunidad, or as another phrased it, as having little “value of conservation” or value of “planning for the future,” and as yet a third observer put it, as having “lost their love for the land.” The risk is that such unexplored speculations become the basis of policy, politics, and the allocation of resources, with potentially disastrous implications for both people and rain forest alike.

I also wanted to focus on the residents of Palestina because their experience more closely represents the situations and experiences of the hundreds of other migrants to the Selva, also of Tzeltal, Tzotzil, Ch’ol (and Tojolabal) origins, who have also been the objects of much conservationist concern, for similar reasons. The families that make up Palestina and Frontera were part of the same social fabric and phenomenon that transformed large parts of the Selva to a campesino economy/ecology from the beginning of the mid-1900s onward. However, the history and contemporary experiences of the settlements in some parts of the Selva, particularly the western region known as the Cañadas, have received vastly more attention as the sites of

significant indigenous political movements. By contrast, the settlements in the eastern part of the Selva, in and outside of the Comunidad, have received significantly less.

Early in the research, I considered doing work in both Frontera and Palestina, but in the end, it was more than enough challenge to try to get my bearings and learn something more than superficial in just one town. I did spend several nights suspended in a hammock in Frontera, had extensive interviews with one of the principal leaders of Frontera and occasionally with other residents, and the information from these encounters and perspectives do inform the study. There was renewed research interest in Frontera during my time in the Comunidad, and fortuitously, a master's thesis was produced by Tejada Cruz (2002) that also provides a needed update and fresh view on this component of the Comunidad. The time is probably ripe for more integrative works to be done across the communities of the Comunidad.

A few words about methods

In the construction of the ideal paradigm of indigenous people collectively managing ecosystems for conservation as I am interpreting it, there are at least three key premises. One is the presence of indigenous ecological knowledge and practices that are adapted to particular ecosystems. A second is that collective tenure, organization, and values will promote conservation management of ecosystems or landscapes. A third is that indigenous goals and practices for land use will result in the preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity as it is understood by science and conservationists. Any questioning of these three premises in the Comunidad context suggested the need to explore ecological, cognitive, and social dimensions. For this study, I did not explicitly explore cosmological/spiritual factors as direct contributors to shaping Palestino ecological practices and goals, and this didn't present itself as a salient issue during my study. In any case, such a study will have to be left for another time.

Because I place my exploration of this case in the larger context of exploring how contemporary society is experimenting with new methods and models for balancing conservation and development, I add some other dimensions to be investigated. I have framed these as having to do with the challenges of recognizing and dealing with difference among the “commoners”; of developing processes for recognizing and dealing with difference equitably; and of the ways in which underlying models of economy, ecology, and polity do or don’t support these. In this particular case, I’ve already suggested some points of difference that may be important: the different indigenous groups that make up the Comunidad; the different histories and experiences they may have with regard to collective and ecological practice, colonial and national political economies, and interactions with non-indigenous actors; and the different goals or interests their members may have. I’ve also noted that there are other actors focused on this ecological “commons,” have referred in particular to those associated with conservation agendas: ecological reserves, government environmental agencies, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). But there are also other indigenous settlements in the Selva, political movements, non-indigenous regional populations, federal and state government initiatives of other kinds, research institutions, and international agencies, asserting their own agendas. Such actors have been present in the past as well as the present, even though the particular actors or their relative degree of influence on events in the Comunidad may have changed.

So, difference and process can be looked at on different levels, and here, because my inquiry is framed in terms of the broader definition of an ecological commons, I look at how these dimensions work out among this broader definition of actors. In the conception of difference employed, this may refer not only to such commonly recognized distinctions as characteristics of class, ethnicity, gender, and so on, but also differences in: interests;

objectives; knowledge or understandings of other actors' interests and practices, of what is at risk, and what needs to be done about it; abilities to access, contribute to, and control flows of information and material resources; and other power differentials.

To do the research, I lived in Palestina for two years, with occasional absences of a few weeks. I stayed there generally three weeks out of every month, and spent the other week based in San Cristóbal, a city in the central highlands of the state. This is where El Colegio de la Frontera Sur (ECOSUR), a research and educational institution, and my institutional home, was located. During those weeks, I would use libraries, go to the state capital, conduct agency and organizational interviews, seek out policy and project documents, and so on. I also returned off and on to Palestina from mid-2001 to mid-2002. As there is a high level of monolingualism (Tzeltal or Tzotzil only) in Palestina, a Palestino man in his early 20s, Abelardo Teratol Sánchez, acted as research assistant and translator throughout my time in the community. He is a native Tzeltal speaker, with a sixth grade education, and was trained on basic computer use, transcription, botanical collection, and other activities. Quotes that I use from Tzeltal oral histories or informal interviews rely on Teratol Sanchez's translations into Spanish, and follow both his and Palestinos' vernacular patterns of Spanish usage, as well as the influences of Tzeltal syntax.

Research activities were varied, in keeping with my research goals. They included lots of informal conversation, more formal interviews, good, old-fashioned ethnographic "hanging out", and the formation of relationships in Palestina and the other Comunidad communities. A more structured activity involved obtaining oral histories of older participants in order to get a sense of where the settlers had come from and how and why they came to the Selva. These served as good vehicles for learning about many other topics, as well. Other structured interviewing

exercises, conducted with a small number of people, aimed at investigating ecological knowledge. Another component of the research involved substantial interaction with personnel of the various agencies and organizations operating in the Reserves, Comunidad, and Selva region, past and present, in order to understand not only policy and program interventions, but also their understandings of their and other actors' roles and objectives, the challenges faced, and so on. Just as in Palestina, some of these interactions happened as formal interviews, and some through informal conversations and relationships formed. When I could, I attended inter-governmental agency meetings in the Comunidad, as well as of the Montes Azules Technical Advisory Council, and other Selva region planning exercises. I even led a two-day workshop for the Reserve personnel on environmental conflict management concepts, which allowed me to be part of further discussions with them about difficult issues they faced. Finally, I assembled documents and archival information on policies and projects that had taken place in the Selva region since the 1970s,

Oral histories. These were conducted with older members of the different *barrios*, (neighborhoods)³ of Palestina, as well with as the Frontera leader instrumental in both towns' founding. These histories touched on questions of where the settlers had come from before settling in the Selva, the ecological, social, and political conditions there, their reasons for leaving, migration paths, how Palestina and Frontera were founded, challenges of adapting to their new environments, environmental change in both places of origin and the Selva, and other topics. Ten oral histories were taken formally, in sessions arranged explicitly for the purpose, and included anywhere from one to several people participating in each – all male. Other

³ Palestina had 15 named barrios and Frontera eight during the time of my research. Each barrio more or less represents the original settlers and their offspring that lived in the dispersed colonies that were brought together to form each town in 1976, although there has been movement in and out over the years; in Palestina, also, as the population has grown, new barrios have been added from the original 13.

histories were taken or learned through more informal interviews and conversations with Palestinos. When the individuals spoke Spanish, I conducted the interviews directly. When they didn't or the individuals preferred not to speak in Tzeltal (which I encouraged), they were conducted with the help of Teratol Sánchez. The formal oral histories were video- and audio-taped; transcribed in Tzeltal, translated into Spanish. Both bound and printed copies, as well as copies of the video tapes, were given back to the participants.

Agroecological knowledge and practices. To gain more perspective on Palestino ecological knowledge and practices in the present, another series of more structured activities was undertaken. This included developing agricultural and resource use calendars; mapping individual patterns of agricultural parcel use and management over time, supported by discussions of land quality and other factors that influence those decisions; recording how many hectares particular individuals have and how surface area is distributed among milpa, acahual, forest, pasture, or other uses; visits to agricultural parcels at different times of the year; participation in some agricultural activities; collection of samples of bean and corn varieties planted, with local names; discussions of soil fertility relative to different management techniques; discussions of factors affecting choices of economic activities to be undertaken. These kinds of activities were conducted with a small number of people from different, unrelated families and different origins. In 2000, I also developed a questionnaire in Tzeltal and Spanish to be used in a survey of production problems encountered by individuals who had adopted new practices of not burning milpa, and this process helped elicit information about soil qualities and production practices.

Ecological knowledge. Teratol Sánchez and I collected local plants from plant communities in different degrees of human disturbance, management, and succession, plus rain

forest. We created a traveling catalogue of some 280 dried and pressed species from the different zones. This was meant to be used as an elicitation tool for plant names and knowledge. The idea was that it could be taken to potential interviewees, rather than try to transport them out to all these zones. I was able to get three sets of responses to the catalogue, which are discussed in later chapter. Extra samples of each species were collected, dried, pressed, determined, and donated to the ECOSUR herbarium.

I used a set of photos I took of different plant communities as a tool for eliciting ecological knowledge with a few individuals. Asking each person to use the technique of sorting like photos into piles and then explain their reasons, this method proved useful for learning information individuals know about plant communities, soil types, land management practices, and other topics. Finally, again with a few individuals, I asked about stages of milpa succession and forest types.

CHAPTER 2

SETTING THE STAGE: SHIFTS IN THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

I. INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the 20th century, a complex of economic, political, ecological, and social dynamics began transforming the Lacandon region of Chiapas. The speed and magnitude of this transformation was such that De Vos (2002), a historian who has documented events in the region from colonial times through the present, considers it without precedent not only in the Lacandon, but in the history of Mexico. In the space of a less than half a century, the Lacandon went from an almost unpopulated, densely forested region, to one with an estimated thousand settlements and ranches, supporting some 200, 000 people (De Vos' estimation) . In the same period, it's been estimated that some 50% of the forest cover was removed (De Vos 1992). It was in the context of, and in response to, this rapid transformation that the Comunidad Lacandona and Nueva Palestina were formed.

In this chapter I explore the social, political, and economic dynamics that gave rise to this transformation and, in particular, to the unprecedented migration of indigenous groups to the Lacandon, where a new campesino economy/ecology was created. In so doing, I hope to establish some of the factors that impelled the migration, as well as the context in which migrants' aims and aspirations developed, and their economic and ecological options formed.

First, I provide some background on the patterns of land ownership characteristic of Mexico's development as context for understanding the patterns that developed in Chiapas

In the next section, I set the stage with a description of the political economy and ecology of the Lacandon region in the first half of the 20th century. This period is characterized largely by a highly dichotomized political economy: on the one hand, large landholdings in the hands of a small number of Chiapas families and foreigners that dominate most economically productive land; on the other, a large indigenous population, landless and either living on these landholdings or on tiny parcels of land insufficient for subsistence, that provide the workforce for the former. At this time, the Lacandon rainforest is largely unpopulated and is held by a few foreign and national owners in vast landholdings.

In the final section, I describe the dynamics that begin approximately in mid-century and that set in motion the massive migrations of mostly indigenous populations to the Lacandon rainforest.

II. LAND OWNERSHIP IN MEXICO: SOME BACKGROUND

From colonial times, through independence in the 1800s, and subsequent attempts to “modernize” the Mexican economy along capitalist lines, one of the most persistent characteristics of land ownership in Mexico has been the predominance of the *latifundo-minifundio* dichotomy. In this pattern, most of the productive land is held in large landholdings, *latifundios*, by relatively few owners, while the majority of the population is either landless or owns *minifundios*, small parcels of land that may or may not be sufficient for subsistence, and often are inadequate for capital accumulation. One of the dynamics of this pattern as it has manifested in Mexico is the relationship of interdependence, on vastly unequal terms, created between the *latifundio* and its work force: the *latifundio* is dependent on the availability of a

sufficient work force, and the deficiencies of the minifundios and conditions of landlessness create a population dependent on the latifundio for a source of sustenance.

The latifundio system in Mexico takes its beginnings from the colonial era, when the Spanish crown created the *encomienda* system. Under this system, the Spanish Crown conceded large extensions of land to soldiers that had served in the Conquest. With those concessions came the rights to the labor of the local indigenous populations, who would produce the products that the *encomendados*, or grantees, were required to pay as tribute to the Crown. Although this “ownership” of Indian labor was later prohibited, the *encomiendas*, which expanded through the appropriation of indigenous lands, formed the basis of the *hacienda* and the *finca*: large landholdings with diversified production that made them largely self-sufficient, but which were dependent on the availability of a large labor force. Through their dominance of both the best lands as well as the labor force, the families that owned haciendas formed a class that dominated local and regional political and economic power (SRA 1998; Harvey 2000).

Colonial policies also included that of *reducción* (“reduction”), by which indigenous populations were relocated and concentrated in settlements, where they could be Christianized and brought into the labor force, and their lands appropriated. During colonial times, the Catholic Church became the single largest landholder in the country (SRA 1998). The church operated its own extensions of land, producing both for the self-sufficiency of missions and for the accumulation of capital (Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980). Indigenous people provided the labor and were inducted into Catholicism. When church ownership of property was prohibited in the mid-1800s, these lands were typically absorbed by local latifundio-owning families (SRA 1998).

Haciendas and fincas developed a characteristic set of relations with their labor forces, including: the hiring of wage workers, some of them seasonally; a variety of share-cropping and

land-renting arrangements; and the employment of *acasillados* (SRA 1998), families living and working on particular landholdings, often for generations, receiving nominal pay, but bound to the place by debt, intimidation, lack of land and alternative options, and often, real or fictive kinship. Landowners typically had significant power over the workforce beyond just labor relations, which ranged from the authoritarian and abusive to paternalistic and familial (Toledo Tello 1996; 2000; Montagu n.d.; Legorreta Díaz 1998).

In the second half of the 1800s, there were increasing moves to “modernize” and industrialize the economy along more capitalist lines. There were also intermittent attempts to address the severe inequity of land distribution and the resulting poverty of much of the population. One of the most extreme attempts to “modernize” came in the late 1800s during the more than 30-year regime of the dictator Porfirio Díaz, commonly known as the *porfiriato*. The policies of this regime sought to industrialize Mexico’s economy by allowing vast amounts of land, extractive industries, and the building of infrastructure, such as railways, to be undertaken directly by foreign capital interests. The policies of the *porfiriato* even further exacerbated existing patterns of land concentration through laws that encouraged both national and foreign companies to locate and survey all land that had not yet been brought into economic production, had been abandoned, or had never been legally titled. The companies were allowed to keep a third of this “new” land for themselves, to use or sell off. The government, in turn, would sell or issue concessions for use on its newly nationalized lands to private individuals and companies. Throughout Mexico, the lands of many rural and indigenous communities, unable to prove ownership of the lands they occupied and used, were removed from them by this process. By the end of the *porfiriato*, 0.2% of landowners in Mexico owned 87% of all occupied land, while 90% of the rural population was landless (SRA 1998).

The Revolution of 1910-1917 ended the porfiriato and produced a series of land reform laws meant to break up large landholdings and prevent their future accumulation. Both the *ejido* and the *comunidad*⁴ were established as forms of “social property”, constitutionally recognized as forms of collective property ownership that would facilitate land redistribution. Though the laws have undergone some modifications over the years, most recently and radically in 1992, the guiding purpose has been the same: the restitution of lands to communities that had been dispossessed of them, and the granting of lands to those settlements and populations that had none (SRA 1998). Limits were established for the maximum allowable size of private property, though ways were often found to circumvent these, and both latifundios and national lands could be used as the sources of land to redistribute. Communities and other groups which met certain criteria could petition for lands to be granted by the government to the collectivity, either in the form of *ejido* or *comunidad*. In order to prevent the possibility of future dispossession of land, through sale, mortgaging, debt, coercion or cheating, *ejido* and *comunidad* land was not to be sold or rented, even to other members. Rights to *ejido* land were made permanent, inalienable, and inheritable according to explicit rules; nevertheless, the land was still essentially national (government) land being extended as a concession to the members. Public urban spaces and often, forests and grazing lands were to be held in common, while individual house lots and a standard quantity of agricultural land was assigned to each member to work individually or collectively (SRA 1998; Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980)

*Ejid*os and *comunidad*s are very similar in terms of the governance structures that law requires to be established, as well as in terms of rights and responsibilities to land they embody.

One of the main differences is that *comunidad*s were intended to restore to indigenous

⁴ The word *ejido* has different historical usages, and both it and *comunidad* also have generalized meanings in everyday use. Throughout this document I use them to refer to the institutions for holding property in common that are specified in Mexican land reform law

communities lands that had historically been occupied or used by them, while an ejido could be established by anyone meeting the criteria, indigenous or mestizo⁵, whether or not they had historic ties to a particular place. Comunidades are also less restricted in terms of the number of hectares per member that may be granted, and have more freedom to determine the internal allocations and uses of land among members (Legorreta Díaz, personal communication; Sheridan 1996). Nevertheless, ejidos are by far the more numerous of the two institutions, and Sheridan (1996) suggests that this is at least in part due to the greater difficulty involved in establishing a community's prior history of ownership and occupation.

As a response to the inequity of land ownership and the poverty that resulted, the approach has had many problems. The lengthy, bureaucratic process developed to administer land reform, the resistance of local landowners and elites and the corruption of government agents, and the differing priorities given to land reform from one presidential term to another, have meant that the time from petition to actual land grant could take years, if not decades. The land that was granted was often of marginal quality for agriculture, since the better lands were already held in private property, yet government support, in the form of agricultural credit, research, and extension, has tended to be directed towards large-scale, privately owned, commercial agriculture seen as more profitable in terms of national income. One of the severest critiques of the system has been that it effectively doomed grantees to yet another form of minifundism, which at best maintains *ejidatarios* or *comuneros* (land grantees)⁶ at a subsistence level, and at worst requires them to seek wage labor elsewhere in order to survive. Those forced

⁵ The term, meaning “mixed person”, while referring to the mixed indigenous-European ancestry of most Mexicans, is commonly used to indicate a person who does not self-identify as indigenous.

⁶ A *comunero* is the family head, usually male, who is registered as a legal tenure rights holder in the *comunidad*.. Other family members or other people who live in a *comunidad* who aren't registered as such are not technically called comuneros. I must warn the reader that in this text, I have frequently used the term to refer to all residents of the Comunidad Lacandona who are members of communal rights holders' families, thus, in the more general sense of *comunidad* member.

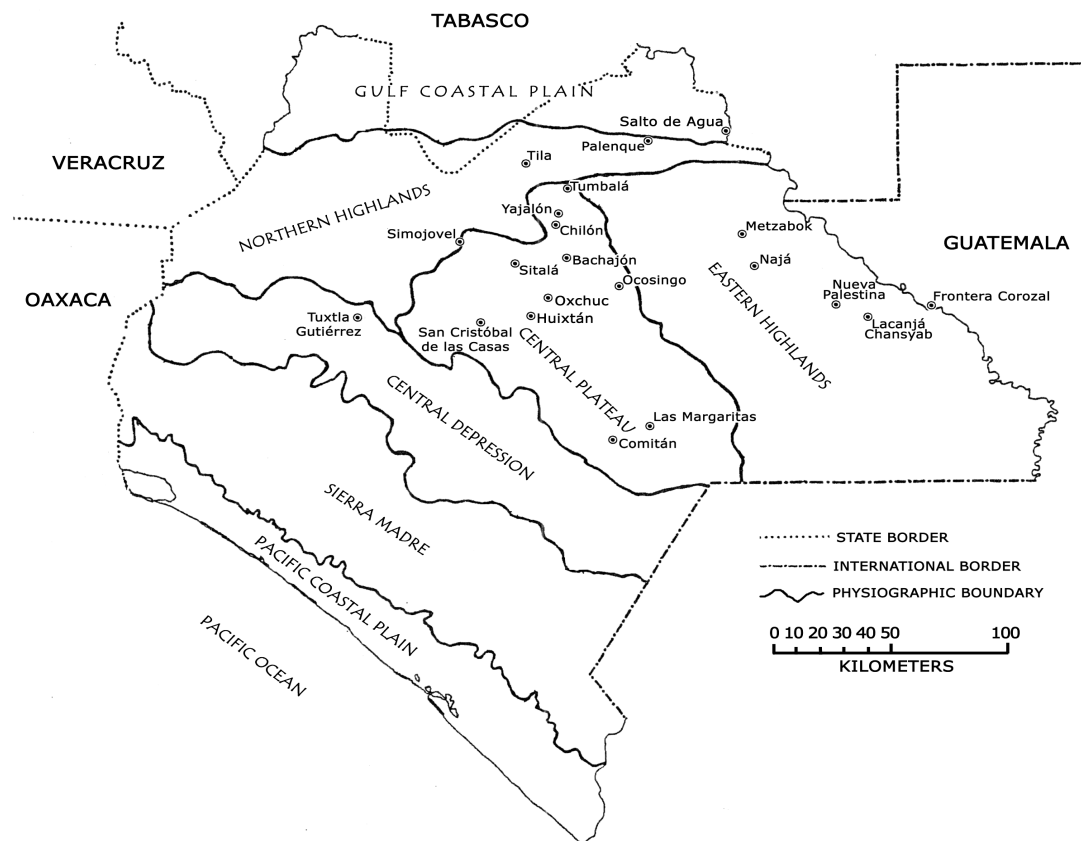
to work off the ejido had an additional “catch”: if they abandoned their land or community service obligations for too long, they could lose all rights to the ejido and its potential as a fall-back option. On the other hand, until 1992, they technically were not allowed to sell their land allotment and get some capital out of it, nor to rent it and keep rights viable in their absence, though in practice these limitations were often circumvented (SRA 1998; Sheridan 1996).

In 1992, fundamental changes were made to the land reform laws, altering significantly the official relationship of the Mexican state to the historic problem of land ownership as a source of social and economic inequity. Highly controversial, these changes include allowing ejidatarios to rent or sell their land allotments to other ejido members, as well as to enter into associations with private capital that had previously been prohibited. The most significant change, however, was the official ending of any future land redistribution as a policy of the Mexican state. Petitions that were in-process at the time of the change were to be reviewed and resolved, but no new petitions would be taken from 1992 onward (SRA 1998).

III. THE LACANDON REGION BEFORE THE MID-1900s

The political economies of the Lacandon region: the finca economy, the forest extraction economy, and the plantation economy

The economies of the regions in and around the Lacandon before middle of the 20th century followed different trajectories of development, but they were also linked. In order to set the stage for later changes in the region, I define here four regions that allow me to talk about ecological, economic, and political dynamics that propel these changes. To help locate the reader, I will reference my description of these regions to Müllried’s (1957) classic definition of physiographic regions (Figure 3).

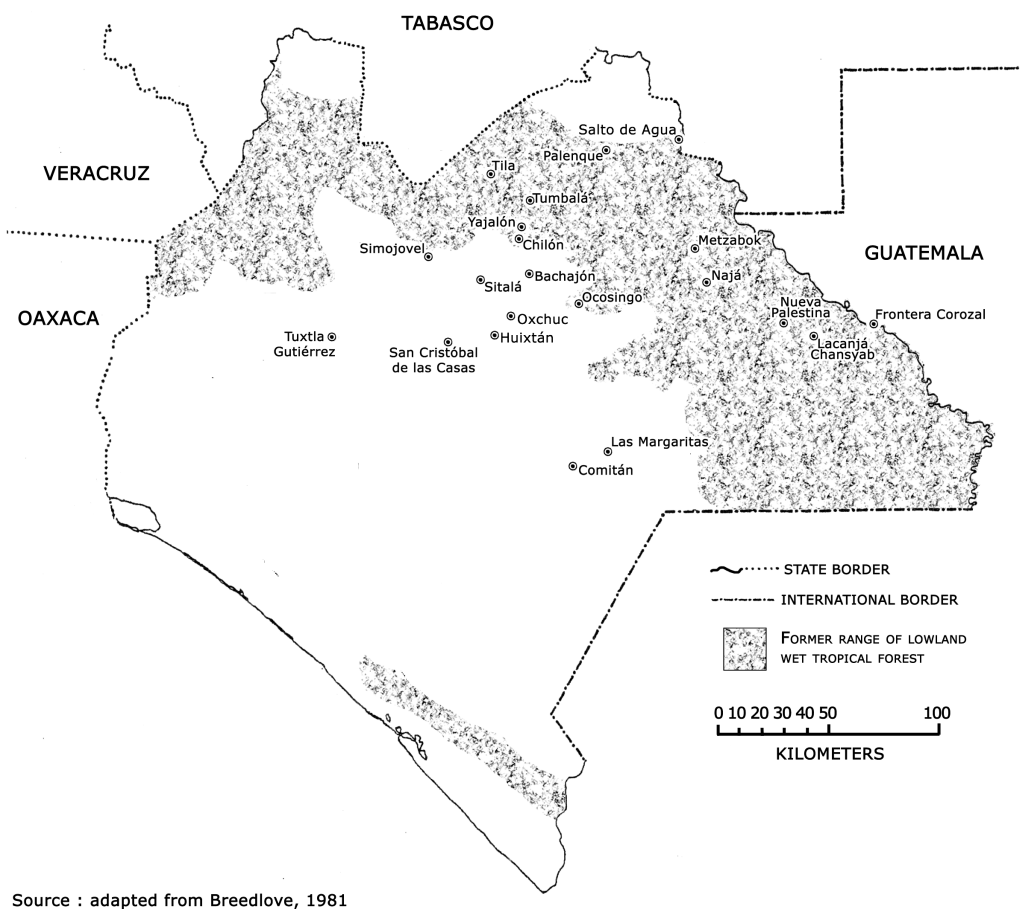


Source : adapted from Breedlove, 1981

Figure 3. Physiographic regions of Chiapas

The first region is the Lacandon. Various current delineations of what constitutes the Lacandon exist depending on the time period involved and the criteria invoked, from administrative purposes to vegetation cover, but they all fall within the Eastern Highlands physiographic region. However, what has been called the Lacandon rain forest is part of an extensive formation that is continuous with the forests of the Petén, across the Usumacinta River in Guatemala, the Yucatan, and even Belize, in what conservation organizations have taken to calling the “Selva Maya” in order to emphasize both an ecological and historical continuity. Following Breedlove (1981), the Lacandon is a remnant of a swath of lowland wet tropical forest types that once extended throughout both the Eastern Highlands and Northern Highlands

physiographic regions of Chiapas (Figure 4). In Chiapas, the name Lacandon came to designate this remnant that was left undeveloped and virtually unpopulated until the second half of the 20th century.



Source : adapted from Breedlove, 1981

Figure 4. Estimated extent of lowland tropical rain forest

The second region is a zone of intermediate highlands that overlaps the western half of the Lacandon and the eastern edge of the Central Highlands, and continues to the northeast and north of San Cristóbal into the Northern Highlands physiographic zone. It is intermediate in the sense that it constitutes a zone of elevational (Figure 5) and vegetational transition between the lower elevations of the Lacandon (and the coastal plains to the north), on the one hand, and the

higher altitude areas in the Central Highlands or Central Plateau, on the other. Typical elevations range from valley floors at around 500m to ridges of 1600m, although there are elevations that go beyond both limits of this range. Most of it is included in Breedlove's lowland wet tropical forest zone referred to above, except where it transitions into the higher elevations. It is also a zone that follows political economic trajectories distinct from the Lacandon and from the upper-altitude, Central Highlands, as we will see. To refer to the latter region, which is the third one I discuss here, I use the term "upper highlands". Finally, the fourth zone discussed here is the Soconusco, which falls within the Sierra Madre physiographic region.

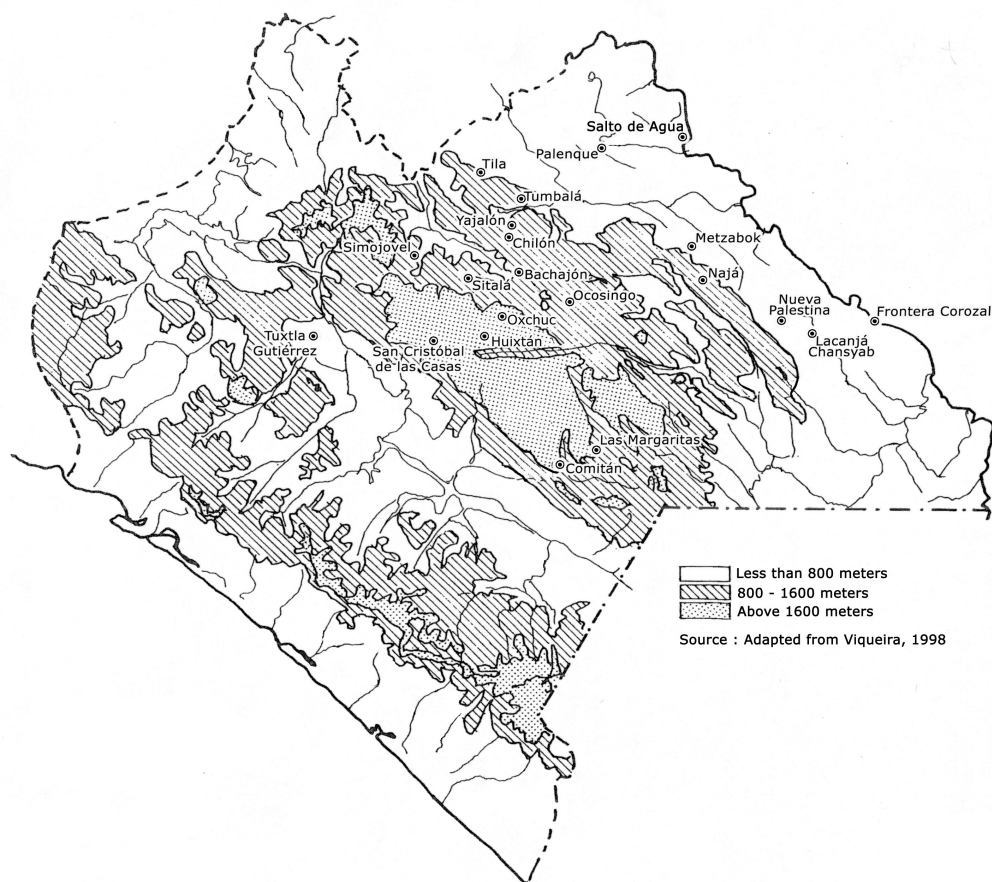


Figure 5. Elevations of Chiapas

In both the upper and intermediate highlands, the pattern of both encomiendas and church-owned latifundios, later transformed into private haciendas and fincas, prevailed. The high mountain valleys of the upper highlands as well as those of the intermediate highlands to the north and west of the Lacandon rainforest were appropriated this way during colonial times. In the upper highlands around San Cristóbal de las Casas, land was taken over under the encomienda system, and its large valley dedicated initially, among other things, to the production of wheat. The production demands made on the indigenous populations seriously debilitated their ability to produce for their own subsistence. Although the appropriation of indigenous land continued throughout the 19th and into the 20th centuries, in this region, indigenous possession of small parcels of land as private or communal property persisted, though these were barely sufficient to secure subsistence. This perpetuated the relations of dependence on the mestizo economy, even when these became based on wage labor arrangements. The indigenous population of this region worked on haciendas in the style of *mozos* and *acasillados*, described below, sold their labor as transporters of goods, or sold their labor on the burgeoning commodity plantations in the Soconusco (see below) and other regions. This extreme dependence gave rise, during the later part of the 19th century, to an additional mestizo-controlled “industry” of the upper highlands: key members of the San Cristóbal elite began dedicating themselves almost exclusively to supplying indigenous labor from the region to the coffee plantations of the Soconusco and the lumber camps of the Lacandon rain forest (Benjamin 1996; Harvey 2000; Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980).

The intermediate highland zone includes the Ocosingo valley, which in colonial times was the site of Dominican landholdings and one of the regions that the indigenous populations from around the Selva region were relocated to under the policy of “reduction”. These church

lands were later incorporated into private haciendas in the 1860s (Montagu, n.d.; Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980). It also includes what Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco (1996) identify as a “finca belt”⁷ that began to develop in the middle of the 1800s, and which formed a key role in the transformation and colonization of the Lacandon forest region. They describe it as roughly lying in an arc that sweeps from Palenque west and southward through Ocosingo, Altamirano, Comitán, and Las Margaritas (Figure 6). The part of the arc from Ocosingo southward that includes the municipios of the same names includes the region of somewhat parallel, interconnected ridges and valleys known as the Cañadas (canyons) region, which is also the focus of Legorreta Díaz’s (1998) analysis of the colonization of the Lacandon region. Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco consider the finca belt to represent the fringes of the Lacandon region, that is, a zone of transition to the upper highlands.

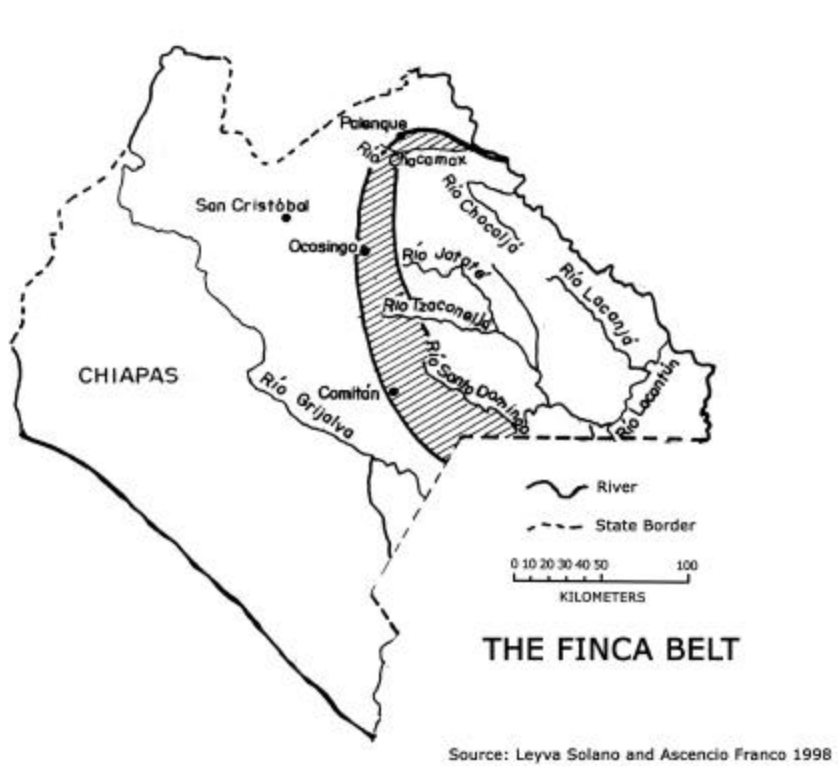


Figure 6. The “finca belt”

⁷ *Franja finquera* is the term adopted by Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco.

In addition to this “finca belt”, the intermediate highlands include municipios to the north and northeast of San Cristóbal that the previous authors recognize as sources of the migration waves to the Lacandon, but which appear to fall outside the arc they define as the finca belt, and for which they present little data. These include the municipios of Simojovel, Sabanilla, Tila, Tumbala, Yajalon, and Chilon. As mentioned above, these fall within the same intermediate range of elevations and ecological transition, and serve equally as sources for the migrations that later transform the Lacandon and give rise to Nueva Palestina. Simojovel was dominated by a finca economy similar to that described for the finca belt, albeit oriented around coffee, and underwent transformations similar to those described for that region (Toledo Tello 1996; 2000; Harvey 2000). Tila, Tumbala, and Sabanilla, developed by the end of the 1800s a booming plantation economy that included rubber and other products, but became primarily focused on coffee for export. In contrast with the other areas in the intermediate highlands, these fincas were foreign-owned, but were based on work relationships with the Ch’ol indigenous populations that were structured in similar ways to those of the regional elite- owned fincas. That is, they relied on resident populations of workers, usually the indigenous populations that formerly owned the lands the fincas appropriated, bound to the owners through debt and the exchange of labor for land on which to grow subsistence crops. Because of their foreign ownership, however, they underwent different processes just prior to mid-century (Alejos García 1998).

Ownership of the haciendas and fincas in the intermediate highlands was, as in the upper highlands, concentrated in the hands of a relatively few Chiapas families who dominated economic and political life of the region (Benjamin 1996; Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996; De Vos 2002; Toledo Tello 1996; Legorreta Díaz 1998). However, in contrast to the upper

highlands, in this zone appropriation of indigenous lands is described as almost total, such that there were practically no indigenous communities in possession of their own land (Burguete Cal y Mayor; Toledo Tello 1996). Toledo Tello recognizes Pueblo Nuevo Sitalá, a comunidad titled in 1878, and Catarinas, made ejido in 1930, as among the few indigenous-owned communities she was aware of in Simojovel before the 1970s, although both Harvey (2002) and Benjamin (1996) notes the existence of more than 20 ejido land grants from the 30s and 40s. By 1910, 80 to 90% of all of the population in the municipios⁸ that comprise the finca belt were living on fincas or smaller private properties known as *ranchos* (Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996).

The Soconusco region to the southwest followed a different trajectory. Practically from the beginning of European settlement, this region became the site of large landholdings focused on commodity crop production for the international market and financed with international capital, beginning with cacao and ending up concentrating on coffee. The Soconusco, however, became linked to the political economy of the highlands and finca belt through its constantly expanding need for labor. The indigenous populations from the upper highlands as well as the finca belt became critical sources of seasonal labor to tend the plantations (Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980; Toledo Tello 1996; Benjamin 1996).

In contrast, most of the Lacandon rain forest region, being difficult to access and not very suitable for hacienda and finca agriculture, were left largely unpopulated by the Spanish. In fact, the Selva was depopulated by early Spanish programs of reduction, whereby Indian populations of the region were removed and relocated to areas adjacent to, or on, the latifundios of the highland valleys (De Vos 1992). In the 1870s, the timber resources of the Selva region began to

⁸ Municipios are county-like governance districts within the state, each of which usually has its administrative center, or *cabecera*.

be exploited for export to the international market. By the turn of the century, a handful of companies, operating with Tabascan (a nearby state) and foreign capital, benefited from the policies of the porfiriato and obtained first concessions, then title, to vast extensions of the Selva for lumber extraction. A vigorous industry of precious timber extraction for export took place, which later died out with the loss of its European market during World War I, and due to government prohibition in 1949 of the export of unprocessed, log wood. Timber extraction during this phase is notable for two qualities. One, exploitation was limited to areas with close access to rivers, on which the logs were floated out; there was no heavy road-building into the forest; and the cutting was selective. Two, the low level of technology involved implied a heavy demand on labor. This period was infamous for its lumbering camps where workers, obtained through coercive and deceptive means, suffered terrible working conditions (Benjamin 1996; Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980; De Vos 1992). This region, too, was linked to the economy of the upper highlands and finca belt. The latter supplied the camps with provisions, often transported on the backs of finca workers over mountain and valley, through dense forest (Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996). The upper highlands became a source of labor for the lumber camps (Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980).

Thus, by the early to mid-20th century, the majority of the Lacandon region still in rain forest was unpopulated by settlements and under the ownership of a few, dormant lumbering companies. In the intermediate highlands surrounding the Lacandon, the indigenous population had been largely dispossessed of its land. Virtually all fertile and agriculturally suitable land in the intermediate highlands was concentrated into large land holdings owned by mestizos. In both upper and intermediate highlands, these lands were owned by a closely-knit set of Chiapas families that dominated political and economic life. In the upper highlands, there was a

considerable indigenous population that still lived in communities but had access only to a reduced amount of small areas of poorly productive land, and was dependent on exploitative work relations to the mestizo landholding class. In the finca belt, nearly all indigenous people lived in settlements located on fincas, in some relationship of wage work, debt servitude (as peones acasillados, but also as wage workers), sharecropping, or renting.

These regions of Chiapas followed patterns characteristic of Mexico's development: regional economies dominated politically, economically, and ecologically by a latifundio-owning power structure and dependent on a disadvantaged and available workforce. Chiapas had always remained a kind of outback province, poorly connected to and distant from the capital of Mexico; it was not till 1824 that it was even incorporated into Mexico. The weakness of the country's central government throughout the 1800s, plus Chiapas' isolation, meant that even while the rest of the country began to undergo changes, these almost feudal political economies remained intact well into the middle of the 20th century and were zealously guarded by the regional elites (Benjamin 1996; Harvey 2000; Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980; Legorreta Díaz 1996). During the Revolution, it even happened that acasillados and other indigenous workers fought alongside *finqueros*⁹ in their attempts to maintain the structure intact (Legorreta Díaz 1998; Calvo et al 1989). The land reforms of the Revolution were intended for just the kind of situation in which the indigenous people of Chiapas were embedded, but in these regions, land reform was little invoked, severely repressed, and posed relatively little active threat to the status quo, until the middle part of the 1900s. This is also when a series of factors, from national policies, to changes in the finca economy, to demographic change become the triggers for the transformation of the Lacandon economy and ecology.

⁹ Term for the class of finca-owning families.

Indigenous relations to the land and to each other in the pre-migration political economies

The fincas in the Cañadas produced a diversified set of crops and products: corn, beans, cakes of brown sugar, as well as cattle. They were relatively self-sufficient, supporting both the labor force and the owners, but also supplying local and nearby urban centers, such as Comitán, or the lumber camps in the Lacandon (Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco (1996)). The Simojovel fincas were similarly diversified and self-sufficient, and might have cattle; however, in contrast with the Cañadas region, their focus was on coffee as a commercial crop. Although this was sold to the export market, Toledo Tello (1996) emphasizes that these fincas were not very entrepreneurial and still very locally-oriented. They were distinct from the coffee plantations of the Soconusco which were organized explicitly on capitalist principles for commodity production and owned by foreigners.

The permanent workers (peones acasillados) had often lived on the same property for generations. Writing in the early 1960s, Montagu (n.d.) found that the workers on the Ocosingo fincas she studied were nearly all descendants of the workers attached to the Dominican estates that these properties had been more than a century earlier. Essentially, the workers came with the property. Interestingly, the fincas she describes in this study seemed already to be in the process of transformation that will be described in the next section, since many acasillados had already left, and many more were getting ready to leave, to form independent colonies on their own, and she says that the workers had freedom of movement off the finca. However other accounts of the fincas portray a much more controlled environment.

Montagu (1990; cited in Legorreta Díaz; 1998), in a more extensive piece, as well as Toledo Tello (1996), and Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco (1996) provide accounts, many based on first-person testimonies, that are very consistent. Nominally, the basis of the economic

relationship between the *acasillado* and the *finquero* was the provision of labor in return for access to land. The *acasillados* were allowed to live in a village and grow crops for their own consumption on finca land. In exchange for these rights, the *acasillado* owed the *finquero* several days of work per week on the finca (in one example, two weeks of finca work for two weeks of time in their milpas; in another, four days per week for the finca). They were often allowed to raise small livestock or tobacco to have something to sell, but in all accounts, this was always at a rate fixed by the *finquero*, usually lower than what the worker would have received had he sold it off the finca, and could require a commitment of additional days' labor from the worker or a commission to the *finquero*. Toledo Tello relates that workers were punished if they were caught trying to sell their products directly to buyers on better terms, though evidently they kept trying. The *acasillados* were paid minimally for their work on the finca, in scrip or cash, but their debts to the finca usually eliminated any gains. One account says that even the price of the corn and beans workers received from the milpas they themselves had worked was also discounted from their pay. In addition, finca workers often found that the costs of putting on religious celebrations or fiestas were charged to their "accounts". Liquor was often a necessary part of these celebrations and a reason for incurring more debt. Former finca workers from Nueva Palestina also reported that their pay was sometimes offered in the form of liquor, thus further perpetuating a cycle of debt as workers drank their wages and then asked for more.

Other permanent workers might include *vaqueros*, the cowboys, who received better pay and had a higher status. There were also seasonal day laborers, *jornaleros*, for instance during the coffee harvest in Simojovel. In this case, Toledo Tello describes how whole families would come and camp out on the finca for that period, but to whom the finca had no other obligation beyond their wages. She also mentions that the *acasillado* workers took note of these families'

meager economic situations, having either little or no land on which to support themselves, and saw this as a confirmation that life off the fincas for indigenous people offered few prospects. Yet another arrangement was that of the *baldío*, someone who essentially rented land from the finca for his own subsistence production, in exchange for labor on the finca, money, or shares of the produce. Upon fulfillment of their part of the deal, these workers were free to leave the arrangement; however, between their own lack of capital and low levels of production, they could become as indebted and dependent on the finqueros as the acasillados.

Until the transformations of the mid-1900s, the acasillados were essentially a captive labor force. The researchers above cite the many reasons that these families stayed tied to the latifundios over generations. Perpetual debt to the owners and the difficulty of accumulating any capital were the two most important ones. The degree of indebtedness could be such that it became inherited from one generation to the next (Benjamin 1996). In addition, they mention the isolation of the workers: the almost complete monolingualism (no Spanish) and illiteracy; the fact that the finquero usually acted as the intermediary for all contact with the outside world; the lack of experience off the finca and the lack of knowledge of other options. In contrast with the first Montagu study mentioned, Toledo Tello also refers to the explicitly enforced isolation of the workers in Simojovel: they were not allowed to leave the finca, unless it was to attend a fiesta at a neighboring finca; and the tight-knit class of finqueros cooperated in capturing and returning any acasillado that escaped. The authors also mention the other side of the paternalistic coin: the sense of protection and security felt in having the finquero intermediate with the unfamiliar and potentially exploitive mestizo world; feelings of loyalty and familiarity that developed over time; and actual kinship ties, as finqueros occasionally fathered children with acasillada women.

In relation to internal organization among the acasillados and how much decision-making they exercised over land or internal matters among themselves, the information is relatively sparse. Organization of the labor force was extremely hierarchical. The finquero, of course, was the ultimate authority; under him there might be a *mayordomo* or other administrator. *Caporales* were selected from among the acasillados to directly supervise and organize the workers. According to Tello Toledo, this person was often far harsher and abusive than the finquero himself, becoming a power broker in his own right, and was often highly resented. By contrast, Montagu (n.d.) in her shorter article describes cases where the finqueros specifically selected caporales who were well-respected among the workers.

In relation to matters internal to acasillado villages, Montagu (n.d.) relates the presence, in the 1950s, of acasillado men, usually middle-aged or older, who functioned as *principales*. They were the central figures, along with respected older women, in guiding decision-making and settling disputes, although extreme cases could be taken to the finquero. She describes the existence of a rotating system of simple religious *cargos* (offices) among the acasillados she studied, as well as an extensive set of beliefs, understandings, and practices related to the spiritual, natural, and human worlds that are clearly Mayan in origin. However, in this article, she found that religious cargos were not associated with authority in a social or civil sense. In her more extensive work (1970; cited in Leyva Solano 1998), she elaborates that the principales, whose moral and spiritual authority was derived from their connections to the supernatural, were also responsible for religious celebrations with the aid of these other religious cargo holders, fellow workers nominated as *mayordomos* and *capitanes*. Visits by a diocese priest were very occasional, and sometimes augmented by the presence of an indigenous *catequista* or helper.

Montagu (n.d.) also highlighted the importance of beliefs among the workers in *brujería* (witchcraft) as a potent control mechanism over social behavior.

Toledo Tello concludes that the finca structure completely eliminated all “institutions, norms, forms of organization, practices and indigenous cultural concepts” (1996: 92) which had been formerly characteristic of the indigenous communities. Yet she also found some practices, such as prayer rituals at caves and water sources, and the celebration of patron saint festivals, still being performed, albeit only when it was ordered by the finquero. The other authors cited (whose research focus was not on religious and spiritual practices) also note the celebration of patron saint festivals on the fincas, though, again, often in some way controlled by the finqueros.

The information I have regarding acasillado participation in environmental decision-making is even less. Toledo Tello (1996) cites testimonies in which workers describe the finquero as keeping the best lands for himself and assigning poorer quality lands for the workers’ milpas, suggesting a minimal role for acasillados in land use decisions. A source cited by Legorreta Díaz (1998) describes what may have been a mutually beneficial interweaving of milpa and finca productive practices: after milpa harvest, the finquero would let his cattle into the field to graze, after which it would be allowed to go fallow and be used for milpa in a later year. Interview data I have from former workers on the Tumbalá region fincas describe the estate owners as exercising complete control over land management decisions. While the techniques the acasillados used for planting and harvesting their own crops may have followed traditional patterns, these examples suggest that finquero goals for land management probably always took precedence over workers’ individual goals.

Montagu (n.d.) mentions that acasillados had fruit trees, coffee plants, and other home consumption crops for home use. She also says that the acasillados treated the milpas like

personal property and had full decision-making freedom over their management, even though they were on finca land, but does not elaborate on how far this goes. She also describes another dynamic relevant to this study: a patch of fruit trees planted by a worker would be considered his property, even if he had permanently left the finca, unless he had “sold” rights to it to another worker before leaving. Although this is sparse data, these observations regarding *acasillado* practices around ownership or usufruct rights of milpa and home plantings are congruent with contemporary Selva settlers’ practices, where time and labor invested in the clearing and planting of land is respected as the basis for establishing exclusive use rights, regardless of any legal or even “customary” titling. This suggests the possibility of some degree of collective decision-making about land use that was internal to the indigenous populations on the fincas, but requires further research.

IV. SHIFTS IN THE POLITICAL ECONOMY

In the middle years of the 1900s, a couple of tendencies in national policy seem to have a direct impact on the economies of the Lacandon region. On the one hand is the tendency that had existed since the *porfiriato* to propel Mexico’s development by bringing into economic production those regions that had remained under- or unexploited (De Vos 2002; Benjamin 1996). By the 1940s, as the lumbering concessions in the Selva granted under the *porfiriato* had gone dormant, the national eye turned once again to the region’s potential as a source of both extractive resources and agricultural production. Another significant tendency was the policy emphasis on import substitution, which focused on developing the capacity of the country’s economy to supply its own needs and thereby avoid the importation of manufactured and other goods. This tendency was an important influence in a reorientation of the finca economy that

happened during these years (Legorreta Díaz 1998). Both policies interacted in fostering a series of actions that resulted in the waves of indigenous migration to the Selva.

In 1946, President Miguel Alemán (1946-1952) established a policy of promoting the development of agricultural colonies, constituted as small private properties, in areas that were not yet in agricultural production. This policy was continued during the next two administrations (SRA 1998). During his term, Alemán also signed a law (the 1948 *Ley Forestal*) that prohibited the export of unprocessed timber unless national demands had first been met. The following outline of how these policies affected the Selva are drawn primarily from De Vos (2002).

Under Presidential order to open the Lacandon to colonization, the Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios y Colonización (DAAC)¹⁰ began initiating in 1950 a series of actions to annul the land concessions of the porfiriato, nationalize them, and open them to agricultural settlement. The first appropriations by the federal government were in 1957 and 1961, in the northern part of the Selva (south and southeast of Palenque), and there were later appropriations of the central and southern regions of the Selva in 1967 and 1972. However colonization in the northern region by indigenous groups from the municipios of Tumbalá and Bachajón, as well as by mestizo ranchers from Palenque and Salto de Agua, was already well under way by 1954, encouraged and supported by both the DAAC and the ministry of agriculture. Lobato (1976) adds that families fleeing internal land conflicts among the indigenous residents of Bachajón had also started settlements in the northern part of the Selva, quite apart from any institutional initiative. The colonization process was so vigorous, that a 75% reduction of forest cover was reported between 1950 and 1957 in the municipios around Palenque.

¹⁰ This was the agency then dedicated to the handling of land reform actions, and is the forerunner of the Secretaría de Reforma Agraria.

At the same time, during this period interests in extracting benefits for the nation from the forest resources of the Selva were revived. First, this was pursued through the efforts of a lumbering company, Maderera Maya, backed with U.S. capital but fronted by Mexican entrepreneurs, to obtain permission to log in the northern Selva. This company spent the period of 1950-65 purchasing vast tracts of land formerly in the porfiriato concessions and trying to get the necessary federal permits. Though the foreign part of the company withdrew its interests in 1966, by 1964 a lumbering company contracted by the remaining Mexican constituents of the company was finally able to begin operations. From that year through 1974, Aserraderos Bonampak initiated a process of timber extraction that had a double impact on the deforestation of the Selva. On the one hand, its methods caused more forest destruction than the earlier, low-technology, river transport-based lumbering operations. It opened roads into the Selva and its heavy machinery destroyed (and wasted) the forest cover surrounding the handful of dispersed species it sought to remove. For example, the company opened a swath of 5km on either side of the road it built from Chancalá to Bonampak. On the other hand, in a pattern well-known throughout the humid tropics, the roads it opened were quickly followed by colonists who now had vastly easier access to formerly remote areas of the Selva. Thus, this era of road-building was accompanied by another wave of colonization during the 60s. Nations (1984) as well as De Vos also note the importance of well-financed mestizos in turning large parts of this region into private property cattle ranches as they bought up cleared areas.

During the middle of the century, the Selva was also being eyed for other potential extractive resources that could serve national development goals. In 1955, De Vos reports the first proposal on the part of the Federal Commission of Electricity (Comisión Federal de Electricidad, CFE) to build a system of hydroelectric dams on the Usumacinta River. Although

it was never realized, these interests have continually resurfaced, in the 70s, again in the 80s, and most recently under the guise of the Plan Puebla Panamá, a Mexico/Central American economic development proposal. The region has also been at the center of national interests in developing new sources of petroleum. Exploration by Pemex, the parastatal that controls this industry in Mexico, began in 1976; by 1992, 19 wells were drilled, nearly all in the northwestern part of the Selva region that coincides with the Cañadas, and in the Marqués de Comillas region to the south of the Comunidad Lacandona. Pemex also opened road access to that southern region. In 1992, Pemex withdrew its operations; however, the potential for this activity to be taken up in the future still hangs over the region.

The above highly summarized accounts help explain the role that national policies had, as they were manifested in Chiapas, in helping to open the way for colonization of the Selva. They don't, however, say much about how it is that a large number of indigenous people came to be in a position such that the hardships of carving remote settlements out of dense forest seemed attractive. Here, we return to the finca economy described earlier.

Before the 1940s, there had already been some movement and colonization in the intermediate highlands and Selva region among both indigenous and mestizo workers. Though greatly resisted by landholding families, some land reform was achieved on finca land during the 30s and 40s, but this yielded mostly small and poorly located ejidos within the intermediate highlands, finca zone itself (Benjamin 1996; Harvey 2000). Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco (1996) note that individuals who had worked in lumbering or wild chicle extraction in the Selva, or on chicle and other plantations around Palenque near the beginning of the century were, as these activities phased out, one source of new settlements at the forest fringes. They also mention workers who had been circulating among the different fincas and began to found

settlements. Finally, field interviews by these researchers suggest that by the end of the 30s, some movement by the indigenous workforce off the fincas in the Ocosingo, Altamirano, Comitán, and Las Margaritas areas had already begun, usually settling around the fringes of the fincas. The early movements of the first pioneering acasillados off the fincas, Legorreta Díaz (1998) suggests, were motivated by their own desires to be free of the system and encouraged by having heard that there was “ nacional”, national land, in the Selva; that is, land without an owner and available for the taking.

However, Legorreta Díaz (1998) and Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco (1996) place a shift in the finca economy during the 50s and 60s as a key generator of the swell of migrations that occurs during subsequent years. Legorreta Díaz (1998) highlights the improvement of communications in the region and the import substitution policy at the national level as being key factors in this shift. Not only did national policy encourage production for the domestic market, but improvements such as completion of the Ferrocarril del Sureste (the Railroad of the Southeast) in the 1950s now made it possible for the fincas to begin doing so with their beef. As a result, the fincas began to change from the diversified, self-sufficient model to one of specialization in cattle. Legorreta Díaz (1998:38) cites first-person testimony by a former finca worker on one way this conversion was achieved, somewhat ironically, through the labor of the acasillados themselves:

“The time came when the owners ordered lots of vegetation and lots of trees to be cut so that grass could be sown, the idea came from Tabasco that it was better to raise cattle in pastures. That was how the finqueros took advantage of our need to make milpas in order to sow more and more grass to make big pastures. That’s how we learned how to make pastures, the finqueros didn’t let (the milpa fields, after harvest) go fallow again, and if there’s no fallow, there’s no milpa. That’s why now we see almost pure pasture in the valleys of Ocosingo where all the best lands are”.

As they converted more and more land to pasture and out of other kinds of production, the need for a large, resident workforce was replaced with the need for a few vaqueros and day laborers. The kind of extensive cattle-raising techniques used required far fewer hands than previous kinds of economic activities. The *acasillados*, who for generations, if not centuries, had lived dependent on these properties, were suddenly extraneous. Thus began their expulsion, or liberation, depending on the point of view, from the *fincas*.

But where would they go and how would they live? In 1934, land reform law had been modified to include *acasillados* as eligible to petition for *ejido* or *comunidad* land, which had not previously been the case (SRA 1998; Harvey 2000), and the laws allowed for portions of *finca* land to be petitioned as *ejido* or *comunidad*. Moreover, most *fincas* were larger than the limits that federal law established for private property, also making them suitable targets for redistribution, which the *finqueros* wished to avoid. In some cases, *acasillados* did petition for *finca* land or were able to acquire small areas as private property, but this often put them into conflict, frequently violent, with the *finqueros*, as well as into a lengthy process of *ejido* resolution (Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996; Legorreta Díaz notes). In other cases, *finqueros* allowed workers to settle *demasías*, lands used and controlled by the *finqueros* but that weren't legally theirs, or national lands that were adjacent to the *finca*, in order to avoid being subject to land redistribution. Even this was sometimes conditioned on the workers clearing some of the land for the *finquero*'s use as pasture. In the Cañadas area, the earliest workers' colonies ended up being not far from the *finca* of origin, and many of them even included the name of the *finca* in the name of the new colony (Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996). As a further way of avoiding land redistribution, many *finqueros* subdivided their land into smaller

properties of legally acceptable size and titled them in the names of relatives. (Legorreta Díaz 1998).

Moreover, the finca conversion to extensive cattle-raising was occurring in an ecological context of valleys enclosed by mountain ridges, both in the Cañadas and other regions of the intermediate zone. It was valley land that was most suitable for pasture, had water sources for the cattle, and was increasingly converted almost entirely to this use, even when it was national land outside the finca proper. It was valley land that was also most suitable for milpa production and settlements. This competition over valley land was not only at the heart of much colonist/finquero conflict, it also meant that the new colonists were increasingly forced into steeply sloped areas, often with no water source. Much of the land that was redistributed was in mountainous areas where maybe 10% of the land was farmable (Legorreta Díaz 1998; Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996).

In settling in the “nacional” - the Lacandon rain forest - the acasillados traded the uncertainties, hardships, but independence of that path for the uncertainties and conflicts of the land reform process and continued conflicts with the finqueros. Here, the role of national development policies and their interpretation by local agents of the DAAC were key determinants, as well. As De Vos (2002) and Legorreta Díaz (1998) note, instead of redistributing the latifundios of the fincas, the DAAC chose to open up national, unsettled lands in the Lacandon to the campesinos. Calvo et al (1998) confirm that attempts to petition for ejido land in the upper highlands was met with a redirection toward the Selva by the DAAC, as well as by agents of the INI (National Indigenist Institute). This may well have served the national project of supplying domestic economic needs, by allowing the fincas to produce beef. However, these scholars emphasize the collusion between DAAC agents and the regional power

structure in maintaining the latter's position (Legorreta Díaz); and a policy that was from its inception, two-faced: one explicit and one hidden (De Vos 2002). The explicit face was the populist one that appeared to be addressing the issue of landlessness by offering up national land; the hidden face was the one that allowed post-Revolution forms of latifundio to prosper by avoiding their redistribution.

In Simojovel, Toledo Tello (1996) indicates there was also a conversion to cattle-raising on many coffee fincas, in a process that may have begun a little later than it did in the Cañadas, but it was accompanied by very assertive and organized attempts to secure land redistribution in situ. She and Harvey (2000) note that as late as the early 80s, there were still *acasillados* living in deplorable conditions on fincas in this municipio. Harvey adds that in 1970, nine families owned most of the best land in Simojovel, while 50% of the population was landless. Throughout the decade of the 70s, having despaired of waiting for land grant petitions to be attended (some of them dating from the 50s), indigenous residents of the municipio began a series of attempts to assert their land rights, from land invasions to organized negotiations, and were met with violent repression (Harvey 2000). By the end of the 70s, when many fincas had made the shift to cattle, the "liberation" of whole families, with no resources and nowhere to go, also occurred in the region. This coincided with the presence of newer generations of families whose parents were members of the few ejidos and comunidades that had formed in earlier decades, and who now, in turn, had no land on which to sustain themselves. It also coincided with federal plans to build a hydroelectric dam that would displace many indigenous families (Toledo Tello 1996). Several of the Nueva Palestina residents I interviewed who were from Simojovel left for the Selva in just these years, some of them making reference to the threat of forced removal from the finca as a motive.

The changes in the municipios of Tila, Tumbalá, and Sabanilla followed a somewhat different pattern. Unlike the fincas owned by regionally-powerful Chiapas families, the foreign-owned fincas of this part of the intermediate highlands were considered appropriate targets for land redistribution from the 1930s administration of President Lázaro Cárdenas onward, and they were vigorously broken up. The indigenous population, almost exclusively Ch'ol, was able to receive land in ejidos and comunidades, and also small parcels of private property. Some engaged in coffee production on these small parcels, some dedicated themselves to subsistence crops and small livestock. However, at the same time, mestizo owners of relatively small ranches, who had long lived in the region and been auxiliaries to the coffee industry, took advantage of the selling off of the fincas to buy and build up their own, now locally-owned latifundios. Once again, the large landholders monopolized the best valley lands, while most of the indigenous lands were on the rocky slopes (Alejos García.1998). In this process, once again, many of the indigenous population became engaged in work and debt exchanges for access to decent farming land on the new fincas or ranchos. The region also became the site of indigenous minifundios soon overworked and unable to support a growing population. Some of the settlers who became residents of Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal came from this region and were fleeing these kinds of conditions.

The demographic expansion of indigenous people of both the upper and intermediate highlands who were confined to the minifundios of ejidos, comunidades, and their own tiny private or rented properties is important. In the intermediate highlands, the Simojovel, Tila, Tumbalá, and Sabanilla examples mentioned above, as well as information from settlers of Nueva Palestina, attest to this phenomenon as one of the other “pushes” of migration to the Selva, aided and abetted by DAAC policies (the “pull”). There is a large contingent, in fact, of

individuals in Nueva Palestina who are the descendants of Pueblo Nuevo Sitalá, an indigenous comunidad in Simojovel, whose migration was set in motion by the inability of that comunidad's fixed amount of common land to support any more people. For the upper highlands, Calvo et al (1989) provide a rich account, based on first-person experience, of the movements of migrants from the municipios of Chamula, Tenejapa, and Huixtán to the Las Margaritas area for similar reasons. They describe the exhaustion of their one to two-hectare plots of land over generations of overwork. Even those highland communities that were able to benefit from land redistribution in the 30s and 40s received land that was already badly degraded. The only options, they say, were either for male family members, and sometimes whole families, to continue selling their labor on the coffee plantations, remaining constantly in debt to the owners and gaining nothing for themselves. Or, as was being encouraged by DAAC and INI, to look for land in the Selva to claim. In Nueva Palestina, there are settlers from upper highlands municipios, primarily Huixtán and Oxchuc, whose migration accounts confirm these patterns.

CHAPTER 3

EXODUS: MIGRATION TO THE SELVA AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW ECONOMY/ECOLOGY

I. INTRODUCTION

In this section, I explore some of the characteristics of the migration to and colonization of the Lacandon that seem particularly important to understanding the campesino economy that developed there and, later, in Nueva Palestina. Here, I focus on four themes: 1) the origins of settlers and the aims they identify as the motives for their migrations; 2) the internal dynamics of migration and colonization that propel both the formation of settlements and their nascent economies/ecologies; 3) the extent to which the settlement in the Lacandon required the acquisition of new ecological knowledge and practices; and 4) the transformations of migrants' relations to each other and to the land.

II. EXODUS

Origins of the migrants

In regard to the origins of the settlers that formed Nueva Palestina, the number of municipios they came from, the percentage of settlers from each place, and the places of origin that are represented among the different *barrios* or neighborhoods of Nueva Palestina: estimates of these vary among the few studies that have been done (Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980; SEDESOL 1993). This could be due to several reasons: different ways in which the information

was gathered; the point in the individuals' movement that is taken as representing their origin (more about that below); movement of individuals from one barrio to another; and later in- and out migration.

Regardless of how they are represented numerically within the different barrios and the community as a whole, the primary source municipios reported in these studies remain consistent with each other and with the information I received in interviews. There is a notable absence of settlers from the municipios of Altamirano, Comitán, and Las Margaritas that are considered important sources of migration to the Cañadas region on the western side of the Selva. Instead, the more northern municipios of the intermediate highlands are heavily represented. This includes Ocosingo to the northwest of the Selva region, and the following municipios and towns to the north: Simojovel (including Pueblo Nuevo Sitalá), Yajalón, Chilón, Bachajón, Guaquitepec, Sitalá, Petalcingo, Sabanilla, Tila, Tumbalá, Salto de Agua, Huixtán, and Oxchuc. Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980) also noted the presence of a few mestizo settlers in the barrio Flor de Cacao in Nueva Palestina. The settlers that became incorporated into Frontera Corozal are overwhelmingly from the Ch'ol municipios of Sabanilla, Tila, Tumbalá, and Salto de Agua.

Reasons for migration

And so, our parents began to think what they were going to do so that their children would have something to eat. (EMG)

It wasn't that we just wanted to leave, it was for our stomach, our food. That's what our parents sometimes tell us, that it was for the very land, not because they wanted to leave, but because of the need for land. (MPC)

The migration histories of the Palestinos I spoke with confirm the economic, ecological, and social constraints in which the region's indigenous populations found themselves in the mid-1900s. The quotes above represent two of the most powerful and consistent drives expressed

by them in response to these constraints as they explained why they had migrated to the Selva. A third one was the desire for independence, to work for their own benefit.

To begin with, there was the need for land. Consistently, the Palestinos I interviewed were in one of two basic relationships to land before arriving in the Selva: they or their parents had rights to minifundios, held either as ejidatario, comunero, or private property. Or, they had no rights to land of their own, and worked land that was *prestado*¹¹, literally, “borrowed”, but which required money, labor or product in exchange. This arrangement was usually with a large landholder, but could be with ejidatarios or comuneros as well. Baldillero and acasillado workers also used this term to refer to their relationship to finca land.

GCD’s father had been one of the workers attached to one of the biggest coffee plantations in the Ch’ol municipios:

And he, he knew how to work, he was a true campesino, he was raised on the rancho, he was raised as a mozo, they all worked as mozos on (the Rancho) El Triunfo.

But his father was able to acquire some private property, likely in the earlier decades when the coffee fincas were broken up, based on the timeframe involved. The land he got was poor quality, and its inability to provide for the family started them on their path to the Selva:

My father didn’t have good lands there in that place that’s called La Cueva Morelos.... that belongs to Tumbalá, Chiapas. (...) And always, in that place, he never had much land, but it was all rocky, it didn’t produce corn anymore, it didn’t produce enough food anymore. And so, well, my father got to thinking, it’s better that we go to the land where they do produce food, where they produce corn, beans, and other things. (...) my father says, here, we’re not going to live anymore, we’re not going to stay here anymore because we can’t find enough food. It’s true, we had a bit of coffee (planted), but it didn’t give us enough to get through the whole year.

¹¹ This term was used frequently and apparently interchangeably with the term for “rented”, and required frequent clarification in interviews.

Many settlers described situations where the small size and poor quality of the land they held meant it was ill-suited for milpa or subsistence production. Instead, the owners opted to dedicate the land to some kind of cash crop they could sell in order to buy the corn and beans they needed to eat. Unfortunately, this frequently didn't work out, as MRA relates regarding the two hectares that were supposed to support his parents and their five sons, some married:

Well, where I lived, it was all grass, or pine, there weren't good lands like (there are) here. And that's why, there from where I came, no one had much land, some had a quarter of a hectare, or one hectare, but it was pure rock and pure mountain. That's why we left there, because we didn't have enough land to plant something to eat. (...) The corn couldn't grow anymore, and beans, even though we planted beans, they didn't produce, we planted coffee, but it all died. (...) Even if we had a little plot of land, a quarter of a hectare, or half, but it needed a lot work, it needed fertilizer in order to produce just a little of what we sowed. (...) The work we did was to plant sugar cane, with that we were working, we ground it and made brown sugar cakes (...) we didn't have anything else to sell (...) that's why we planted cane, sometimes a half hectare.

This is echoed by the experience of PSM:

But when we were grown up, because we were nine brothers, it wasn't that my father didn't have a field to work when we were in the *ranchería*¹², he had coffee planted, something like ten thousand plants of coffee. But it was just that the coffee, what we harvested, it wasn't that we couldn't harvest, we'd all of us harvest, but the problem with coffee is that it (the price) was very low... then it was very far away where we had to sell it, as far as Yajalon, there was no road, no highway, my deceased father would take it out by mule. And so, all we had was the coffee, we didn't have land for our food, just the coffee, that there was, but since we were nine people, that's why the coffee didn't provide enough for us to eat, because it (the price) was so cheap.

Most often, the settlers I spoke to recognized that the poor production from the land they had was not just due to steep slopes and thin soils, it was also due to the fact that these poor endowments had had to be worked heavily, sometimes over generations, because expansion was impossible - all surrounding land being taken by large landholdings or other indigenous communities- and because it had to support an increasing number of people. The story of

¹² *Ranchería* is usually used to refer to a place in the country where maybe one to three families have houses and fields.

migrants that came from Pueblo Nuevo Sitalá, a comunidad titled in the late 1800s according to Tello Toledo (1998), shows all of these factors at play. The following are excerpts from three migrants who came to Nueva Palestina from this comunidad:

Well, I didn't know who my grandparents were. According to what my father tells me, that the parents of our grandparents, well it was they that founded the settlement that is called Nuevo Sitalá, and my grandparents lived there a long time. My father was born there in the town of Nuevo Sitalá; then, after time passed, he had his children, or his children were born, and that's us. (...) And so there, in the town of Nuevo Sitalá, it's a place where nothing can grow anymore. Corn doesn't produce anymore, or whatever we plant, there nothing can grow because in that place, it's a very cold place and what you plant doesn't produce, like corn or other things that are planted to eat. Like corn, we would plant it, and it would grow, but it wouldn't produce corn. And ... when it was the time of rains, like in the month of June, the water would take all the dirt. And that's why the corn would all fall. (MPC)

Just like it's been being said, when we left our old place, it was because the land didn't produce corn anymore. Because it was all *ts'ibilel*¹³, but almost all the land was already *ts'ibilel*. That's why when corn was planted, it didn't grow anymore. (PPG)

We had lands, but it's just that they weren't big, because they were surrounded by pure ejidos, like Vinote, and Frontera. And in Seyva and the ejido Jomail, there they took our lands from us; it wasn't big anymore, the (dividing line) was very close to our houses. (...) So that's why the land wasn't big. (...) And so, we didn't all fit there. (JCP)

These individuals go on to talk about other strategies they or their parents had engaged in to supplement their economy. One was “borrowing” land from a rancho, but as one person, said, “the owner of the ranch has to be paid!” Some had coffee planted, but they recount the same problem mentioned earlier: while the price obtained for coffee kept going down, the cost of buying corn for food kept going up.

The Nuevo Sitalá accounts point to another important result of the economic and ecological constraints that people faced: the repeating cycles of fission that the settlements

¹³ *Ts'ibilel* is a tall, wiry, multi-branched fern that grows where soil is depleted, particularly where it has been burned repeatedly.

experienced, regardless of property regime, as population continued to outstrip the ability of the land endowment to produce. According to these speakers, Nuevo Sitalá was formed by families that had left “old” Sitalá for lack of land, and they wonder if this is to be an ever-repeating cycle:

They did it in our old place (Nuevo Sitalá), there it had been all rancho, there wasn't even one ejido, it was pure rancho. The campesinos began to think that the lands belonged to our fathers. (...) Before in Sitalá, the land they received was big, but they took care with it so that their animals wouldn't damage it where the land was good. But it didn't end up that way, instead our fathers' land was taken away from them. And so they ended up with just the mountains. Because where the land was good, that's where they put the ranchos. That's how the villages got to be so small, they didn't use all the lands they were given in the beginning, and they were taken away. (PPC)

Well I remember when my father talked to me about when the fathers of my fathers left, well with them, too, it was for lack of land. All the ejidos, each time, each day, were growing more, that's why they had to divide off. That's why they came to Nuevo Sitalá, that's how they started to look for where to live. (MPC) Before, the way they did it in the old Sitalá, there was a lot of people. And also, as there were already a lot of people there in Nuevo Sitalá, they didn't know where the young men would work; and before, when they came to Nuevo Sitalá, well it was also all *montaña* [forest]. But since they had a lot of children, and their children were born just like here, now, maybe that's what will happen with this town, too. (PPC)

The father of another settler, whose colony became part of Frontera Corozal, had been a comunero of Emiliano Zapata, a comunidad in Tumbalá. He added some detail to one of the ways in which indigenous common property became converted into private property and the comuneros into finca workers on what had been their own land:

Because there in Emiliano Zapata, the *comisariado* [elected head of the comunidad] didn't know how to read in those days, there was no school. And so as a comisariado, anyone could be named. And there were also a lot of people then that had money, and they bought the land there, and they exchanged it for drink. They would take him so he could go drink, he'd sign a document, he was already giving (away) his piece of land. In that way it got broken up, the comunidad was destroyed, until almost all of it was (private) property. And then the very owners (comuneros) of the comunidad, began working for the finqueros and it was the comunidad's land, because the comisariado had signed. So that's how it was invaded. And when the people saw that they didn't have any land anymore, they started to leave, to search, to come even to Salto de Agua working,

they came working on the rancherías, for the land owners, until they got to Salto de Agua. (PDS)

Some of the settlers I spoke to who came to the Selva because they had no formal rights to land of their own, were usually either working “borrowed” land or were selling their labor on ranchos or fincas. One man and his parents, who worked on one of the large coffee fincas in Tumbalá, tried working land “borrowed” from a big landowner in Bachajon, before heading to the Selva to find their own. Another man worked land “borrowed” from an ejidatario who was, himself, away, working on a ranch. After five years, the owner returned and wanted his land back; the family abandoned their fruit trees and livestock, and began their journey to the Selva to become owners, not borrowers.

The story of SBV, from Huixtán, an upper highlands municipio, reflects that of other settlers from that region. He said the family had only enough land on which to put a house, and members seasonally migrated to the coffee plantations of the Soconusco to try to earn enough to buy food. When I asked him why he had left Huixtán, he told me:

It was old land, there they had worked for years... At the age of 12, 10 years, one already goes out to work on the coast, on the fincas... There's no money. My people are still in Huixtán, the ones that stayed, they work in Cancún, in Villahermosa, I don't know where. All the young ones leave to work. It's all old people still working their half hectare that stayed there. That's why they've had to go out looking. It's not that there isn't land there, but that they can't occupy much land. My grandparents, they sold the land, they didn't know how to preserve it, they sold it for nothing.

Then he corrected himself a bit to explain:

So it wasn't that they didn't know how to preserve it, but that they sold it cheaply to the rich people. All, all, all of it they sold for nothing. But that's what happened to everyone, not just my grandparents, to all, all of them. That's why there were those problems in 1994. Thousands of hectares, the rich people grabbed it.

The work on the fincas was long and poorly paid. SBV went on to tell me that while some fincas treated their workers very badly, the place where he had worked was not one of them. When I asked him why he hadn't chosen to stay with the fincas, he gave me this compelling answer:

For the love of my son, I went searching. There are those that will come behind me. I don't want to leave them as *mozos*, in slavery, that does me no good. That way, things stay the same, if I left them again under the boss's hand. That's what I thought, maybe I'll go look for land, maybe some of my children will learn to read and write something. That's why I went to look for my land, all the way to the Selva.

This sentiment, the drive to leave something for their children, was echoed over and over by the people I spoke to.

Well, since I already had three children, that's why I left there, to look for land for my children. (...) I left because there wasn't any land where I could work, because I also worked on a rancho, which was the Rancho Perseverancia. (IGH)

Because we already had children, that's why I came to look for land, so that they could stay here, it's for them, the land, it's their place, here I leave it for them. (DSH, also a formerly landless worker on a Rancho)

What troubled me was that we couldn't find (enough) to eat, because the corn, beans didn't produce, because my children were already eating and they couldn't bear the hunger. (FSM)

Finally, there is the two-sided theme of independence, on the one hand, and the escape from exploitive relationships on the other. A former worker on large fincas expressed the former:

And everything that we worked, all the things that we worked, it's, they took it all. And what did they leave us, nothing, we were working for someone else. And so I thought, look son, I told him, I'm going to give you a little bit of money, go look for land. And where do I go? Go down there, towards Guatemala, to see, they say that there are rain forests there, that there it's national land. (...) And then I came, I said to my wife, look, I said, we're going to leave here. Ah, they began to cry and cry, the whole family. And, but why are we going? We're going. Yes, I told her, we're going because you see how here we're working for others. It isn't work for ourselves, we're working only for others. (SCG)

Another two men described the abuse at the Rancho in Simojovel on which their grandparents and great grandparents had been born and had died:

On the Rancho, if you were sick and couldn't work, the boss would get furious. He'd tear down people's houses. (JMS).

During the time for planting milpa, if you wanted to get it done and asked to take 3 days, the boss got mad. He'd beat workers when he got mad. If you obeyed him, you were okay; if not, he would tear your house down to get you to leave, and you'd have no place to stay. (MG)

These men left the Rancho, one around '76, the other in '77. They left during a time of particularly heightened and violent confrontations between large landholders and workers. They and at least one other former finca worker from Simojovel I interviewed, who also left during those years, talked about hearing warnings on the Tzeltal radio station they listened to during the day, urging them to flee the fincas before the impending confrontations.

Finally, another man described his reasons for coming to the Selva in terms of his transformation from a man with no land and no boss, to a man with no land and a boss, to a man with land but no boss. Born in Bachajon and having no land of his own, he entered into a work relationship (went to "borrow" land) with one of the big landholders in Sitaká, on the Rancho Santa Cruz. That's how he began his suffering, he said.

We worked from 6 am to 5 pm every day. The owners were super millionaires. All of us workers lived there on the ranch. But then they wouldn't give us our pay in cash, they'd offer us *trago*¹⁴, and that's how we'd pass the weeks. There was no way to get money for the things we needed.

Now, in the Selva, he is his own boss:

We're not in slavery anymore, we're free now. Now, if I want to do something, or plant a coffee tree, or start some pasture, I have no boss, I'm tranquil. Before, I had to go where the boss said to. Now, if you want to work, you can. It's much better. (FDR's father)

¹⁴ Liquor or alcohol; literally "swallow".

My interpretations of these migration accounts suggest some dynamics that seem particularly relevant in understanding the nature of the campesino economies that develop in the Lacandon.

Palestinos' accounts of their reasons for migrating have two strong elements. One is the element of fleeing the extremely difficult and prejudicial conditions in which they found themselves, a reactive impulse to something negative. The other is a pro-active element, in which people express the desire to create something new, to work for their own benefit and not someone else's, to leave a legacy for their children that gives them a chance at having a life that is different from the disadvantageous one that countless generations of their ancestors had led. Often, studies that refer to the migration to the Lacandon depart just from the notion that the migrants were escaping bad conditions. What Palestinos' accounts point out, however, is that they were looking not just to get away from an untenable situation; they were also aiming for some degree of transformation of the terms on which they had been living, as indigenous people, in Chiapas society.

A second observation is that the migration accounts encompass ecological, economic, and social-political elements that created the negative situations people found themselves in. In reference to ecology, they describe the steep slopes and poor soils of a mountain environment which, given the techniques available, are unable to support their populations. In reference to economic dynamics, the accounts recognize the constraints of being small producers with little or no capital, little benefit of scale, difficult access to markets and no control over prices. In social and political terms, though not elaborated in ideological or theoretical frameworks, Palestinos' accounts recognize that the mestizos and foreigners monopolize the best land, technology, and markets, determine the terms on which indigenous people participate in Chiapas economy and

society, and are the centers of political power in the region. Their observations provide corroboration for the analyses of the Chiapas scholars cited earlier.

Finally, a third observation is that Palestinos' accounts reflect an awareness that this complex of ecological, social-political, and economic constraints had been a source of migration and movement in the past, among recent ancestors, as well as the source of their own migration to the Lacandon. They express an explicit concern that, even though their generation acquired land, the same constraints could end up operating on the next generations, their own offspring, as well. In other words, if the same constraints on access to land, capital, markets, social mobility and political power continue to operate on the future generations, they too will find themselves surpassing the capacity of the land to support them, and the cycle of impoverishment of both people and land will repeat itself.

III. INTERNAL DYNAMICS: FLOWS, FISSION AND FUSION, AND EXCHANGE RELATIONS

When Palestinos talked about the migration paths that led them, ultimately, to where they are now, there were many variations in the timing and paths taken. For some of the people I spoke with who left their place of origin after Nueva Palestina was already being established, such as between 1976 and 1981, the path was a straight shot. They left where they were and made their way directly to the new town. But for most, the path involved several stages, often over several years, with as many as five stops of from a few days to a few years, in different settlements or attempted settlements along the way. The accounts describe a remarkable amount of movement going on in the region during the 60s and 70s, movements into, out of, and within the Selva. Through these movements, a lot of information was exchanged among migrants,

existing settlers, and people outside the Selva; groups of settlers formed, broke up, and formed again; older settlements generated their own waves of new migrations; and mutual work and exchange relations were established among colonies that were critical to the development of the nascent, campesino economy.

One source of movement came from the new migrants traveling up and down the broad valleys and narrow canyons, who used existing settlements along the way as places to rest and sources of information until they got to the frontier where there was no *dueño*, no “owner”. Some people had relatives already living in a settlement on or near the colonization frontier, or had an acquaintance who knew where that frontier was and could take or direct them there. In such cases, migrants could go directly to a frontier settlement, where someone would show them where the unclaimed land was.

The existing frontier settlements frequently acted as important bases of support for the newest settlers. Clearing forest and sowing a milpa was not only necessary to claim the location of a new colony; it was critical in order to have food once the families started to actually live there. Clearing forest with axes and machetes, burning it, sowing milpa and building shelters took time and had to be done in certain seasons. In some of the migration accounts, the women and children were left back in the place of origin, while the men scouted for land and started the work of making milpas. Depending on the time of year and other factors, the men might make more than one trip between the place of origin and the new settlement site while this work got done. They might go back to round up more relatives or acquaintances to fill out the colony’s members and do the work. Sometimes the families came with the men and based themselves in an already existing colony. When migrants took shelter in existing colonies for any length of time, they might provide labor to its communal work groups for community projects, and might

work for colony residents in their fields in exchange for corn or money. Even once the new migrants were living in their own settlement, the time until first harvest and the first years could be rough. Work relations with neighboring colonies continued to be important in order to obtain crops for food, or money with which to buy them and the other necessities not produced in the settlements. They also were important in providing sources of labor to existing colonies that helped propel their own economic development.

In order for colonies to petition for ejido status from the government, they had to have a minimum number of families present and working the land for a minimum amount of time. Plus, the process of petitioning for a land grant was expensive: it required repeated travel to the cities, as well as the payment of both legal and illegal fees to the bureaucrats and technicians involved (Lobato 1979; Palestinos even report pooling the produce of their milpas and gardens as informal “inducement” payments to the bureaucrats). As a result, it was important to have enough members to spread the costs among the group. Once it looked like the site chosen was going to be viable, the settlers then had the task of finding more members to fill out the ranks. One of the ways that settlers did this was to return to their places of origin and recruit more people. In the accounts of Palestinos, people related by kinship and from neighboring *parajes* (or villages) in the place of origin often formed the nucleus of a new colony through this kind of recruitment. However, frequently, this was not enough to amass the number of families that was needed. Here, Palestinos’ accounts describe a second pattern for how colonies were constituted: people moving through the Selva in search of land would often come upon new settlements still looking to recruit more members. Palestinos describe joining still-forming colonies in this way; they also describe being directed towards such colonies, only to find out that they were “full” and no

longer accepting new members, or that all the good farming land was already taken, and having to continue on with their search.

Another source of movement in the Selva came from the fission of older colonies. As noted earlier, colonization on the western and northern edges of the Selva began as early as the 40s and 50s. As these first colonies' populations grew, new generations entered into adulthood and were in need of land to support their families. If the colony had achieved ejido status, it might apply for an *ampliación*, an extension of its grant to include adjacent lands. As with applying for ejido status, this could be a lengthy process; and in many cases, nearby land was already claimed by other ejidos or settlements. Where expansion was no longer possible, or instead of waiting for the uncertain approval of an extension, groups of youth from these older colonies, as well as adults who had joined the colonies in hopes of being included in a future extension, took off deeper into the Selva in search of unclaimed land. Conflicts over uncertain land boundaries – even among those that had attained ejido status - were frequent among the colonies, as well as internal conflicts among members. All of these could cause the fission of groups from older colonies. Thus, the older colonies also generated (and still generate) waves of migrants into the Selva, and they, in turn, recruited more people from places outside the Selva, or linked up with either newly arriving migrants or those coming out from the older colonies to form settlements.

Finally, another two important sources of movement identified in Palestinos' accounts had to do with conflicting land claims, on the one hand, and the poor quality of some settlement sites, on the other. In some cases, crops were sowed, houses built, and settlements lived in– and everything subsequently abandoned - when migrants found out that the land they thought was national and unclaimed was actually private property or claimed by another settlement. Other

accounts talk about either joining an existing settlement or starting a new one, only to find out that it is too dry, too wet, too rocky, or that the water source is not year-round, thus generating another abandonment and move. In making these moves, migrants often had to rely, again, on the work exchanges and cooperative relations with other settlements described above to get through the transitions.

These patterns of movement, fission and fusion, and exchange relations among colonies were also reported for the settlements of the Cañadas regions of the Selva (Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996; Legorreta Díaz 1998; Calvo et al 1989) and for the northern and eastern regions by Lobato (1976) and Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980). Because the Cañadas were among the earliest fronts of colonization and their routes of expansion followed the relatively narrower valleys and canyons of that region, they provide a kind of physical history of what Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco call the *ciclo colonizador*, the colonizing cycle. The earliest settlements were on redistributed finca land, or national lands nearby. As the first canyons filled up, the next generations of families solicited land grant extensions, sought work as wage laborers, or went farther into the Selva to start new colonies. As these filled up, the cycle repeated.

What the accounts of the Cañadas scholars and those of Calvo et al add to this picture – that did not show up strongly in Palestinos' accounts – was the element of ecological constraints on population growth and settlement expansion (Figure 7). Given the closer valley and ridge topography of the Cañadas region, expansion outwards implied expansion upwards, and this option was limited by the highly erodable and sparse arable soils, the lack of perennial water, and colder microclimates in the higher elevations. Soils there became quickly overstressed, and the choice of economic activities was limited; cattle- and pig-raising, for instance, could make high demands on the soil, as well as take up too much land needed for milpa. As a result, the

combination of ecological and physical limitations on land, the production technologies being used, and population growth continued to be an active drive for expansion and migration in this new economy – just as it had in so many migrants’ places of origin.

By contrast, Lobato (1976), observing settlements in the north and the eastern half of the Selva put more emphasis on conflicts internal to the settlements (in addition to demographic growth) as one of the major drives behind fission and fusion. The conflicts he describes did often, however, have an ecological component. He attributes many conflicts to the ecological and economic advantages the earliest members of a settlement could have in relation to later members, having taken the best lands and having been able to benefit from the labor of newer migrants. Where these advantages translated into greater political dominance within the settlements, frictions could result in newer members leaving the settlement; they might also leave simply to find better lands.

The demographic and social dynamics of colonization, combined with ecological and technological limitations, have produced a constant of expansion pressure that continued (and continues) to shape the political and ecological development of the campesino economy of the Selva, a thread which will be picked up in subsequent chapters.

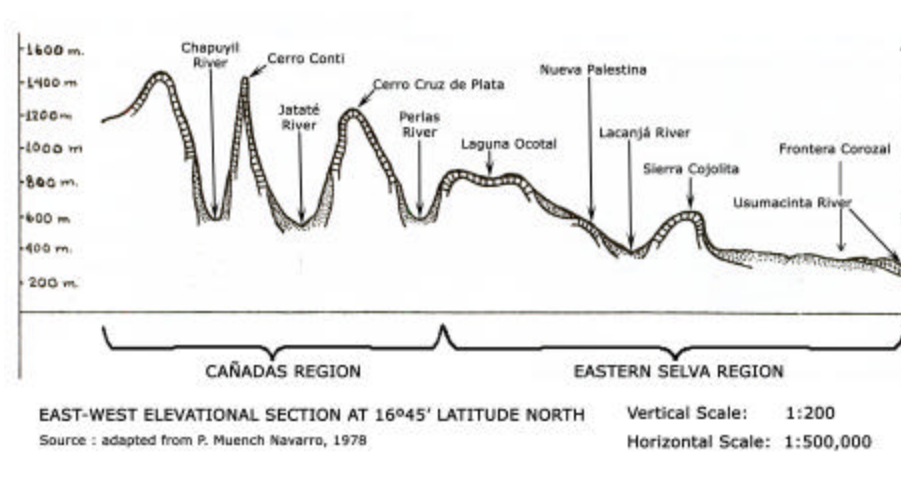


Figure 7. Comparison of the topography in the Cañadas and eastern regions of the Selva

IV. ADAPTING ECOLOGICAL PRACTICE

In coming to the Selva, migrants may have encountered new ecological conditions and had to learn new ways to live on the land. Currently, it is sometimes suggested that the settlers use production practices developed in their places of origin and unsuited to the rain forest soils and climate, or that this new environment was alien to them. Dichtl (1988) is an example of the latter, when she presumes that the migrants came from other “climatic zones” and needed to adapt to their new environment. In my interviews and discussions with Palestinos, I would ask them to talk about the differences between the environments of the area they migrated from and the one they now live in, and in agricultural practices used in each. In exploring this question, it seemed relevant that most of the migration to the Selva, and especially to the settlements that became Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal, was from the intermediate highlands defined earlier. This offered the possibility that many migrants might actually not have experienced such drastic changes in ecological conditions.

The Palestinos I spoke with about this theme typically used several dimensions to describe the similarities and differences between “here” and “there”. Although this question needs to be explored further, the answers were very suggestive.

One of the ways in which ecological differences were described was on the basis of whether a place was *k'ixin k'inal*, hot country, or *sikil k'inal*, cold country. Typically, places in the upper highlands (such as Huixtán) were considered cold country, and in relation to them, the Selva, was seen as hot country. In their descriptions of places of origin in the intermediate zone, individuals sometimes characterized them as one, sometimes as the other, and sometimes as “a little bit” one or the other. This was the case, for instance, with some of the people who

described Simojovel. Given the widely varying elevations, slopes, and micro conditions of the intermediate highlands, this kind of variation is very probable. In any case, the use of the terms is relative to the context. The lands that Nueva Palestina residents work typically range in altitude from around 300m to around 900m, and Palestinos often classify those, as well, as either hot country or cold country according to where they lie in this spectrum. Similarly, residents of Tenejapa have been known to classify the lands of their upper highlands municipio into both hot and cold country (Berlin, Breedlove and Raven 1974). In the absence of some kind of empirical basis for the criteria used in making these distinctions, the relativity of this dimension makes it difficult to use as a basis for comparison.

When talking about vegetation, a few people, particularly from Tumbalá, described overlap in the plants growing in the Selva region and in their places of origin. Some individuals were also familiar with Selva plants from places they had lived earlier in their migration paths. For the most part, however, the people I spoke with based their descriptions of vegetation on the degree to which there were plants that were *sembrado*, planted, and managed by people, versus plants that were *montaña*, a common term for wild or undomesticated vegetation, particularly trees. Individuals who came from both indigenous minifundios and fincas often described their places of origin as nearly all “planted,” whether in pasture, fruit trees, milpa, or food crops. These places also were usually described as having no *montaña* or forest, no big trees, although some spoke of there having been *montaña* or forest in the recent past, before there had been great pressures put on the land.

Another important dimension of description was the relative difficulty of crop production, particularly corn and beans. Individuals who came from indigenous minifundios, in contrast with those of finca origins, almost always described conditions of greatly distressed

landscapes poorly suited to agriculture: that the land was “all grass” or “all *ts'ibilel*” due to much burning and depleted soils; that the land was steeply sloped and rocky; and that the soils were hard, eroded, sparse, or needed fertilizer to produce. This was contrasted with conditions in the Selva, where it was said that what one plants, produces, as long as one allows fallow rotations and knows the micro conditions (soil conditions, hot country or cold country) of one's fields. A couple of people mentioned that, because of greater soil moisture in the Selva and the anticipation that the plants would grow larger there, they planted corn farther apart than in their place of origin.

Finally, another way that individuals talked about ecological differences was in terms of planting cycles; that is, the weather patterns that govern planting times for corn and beans. Here, many people reported no or little difference in the planting times for the main corn and bean crops, identifying May for the former and October for the latter, while others, usually those from self-reported colder country, indicated some differences, such as a later corn planting date in June. In the Selva, it is also possible to plant a second, smaller corn crop in the fall months, while some noted that in colder regions, this was not possible.

I also explored with Palestinos whether they had had to change their agricultural practices to adapt to the Selva region, and how they had learned to make such modifications. This was a line of inquiry that I suspect didn't always translate well or had some linguistic or contextual trick to it; it wasn't always a productive question. However, many individuals did describe learning the best planting times from the people living in already established settlements in the area, whether through directly seeking out information, through working in those settlements for the reasons mentioned earlier, or by having joined, and then left, settlements in an earlier phase of their migration. Some people described bringing corn and other seeds from their places of

origin, sometimes with good results, sometimes not. Some described obtaining seeds from neighboring settlements through the work exchanges mentioned earlier, also a source for chickens or pigs in the early years. No one of whom I remembered to ask the question had had exchanges of knowledge or plant material with the Lacandons, known for their rain forest farming methods.

An interesting point was that many Palestinos, in reference to their places of origin, spoke of having farmed the same plot over years with apparently no fallow rotation. In cases where this was on good and well-watered soils - on fincas - it was with good results that some individuals remember wistfully. Where the conditions were poor – almost always on the indigenous minifundios - plots were sometimes described as being farmed continuously, without fallow, because there wasn't enough land to rotate out of production. This is in contrast with the swidden system Palestinos universally use now in the Selva, where the practice is to cultivate a field during a one-year period only and then leave it fallow for several years. Repeated burning of fields in the places of origins was also cited frequently as a cause of poor soils, establishing that this was a practice in frequent use. Two accounts from the Cañadas studies offer the possibility that milpas on fincas benefited from the input of cattle manure and some degree of fallowing.

In sum, this initial review suggest that many migrants did come from places that had some degree of ecological similarity or overlap with the Selva region, particularly in terms of weather and planting cycles, and some elements of vegetation cover. However, most of the individuals interviewed came from environments that were already so transformed by human use and probable over-use, they are described as bearing little resemblance, in terms of plant species and soil quality, to the Selva, regardless of whether they were considered to be in hot or cold

country or whether they had (or once had) similar vegetation cover. For many of the individuals who came from situations of small, indigenous-owned or rented plots, the differences they describe are as much due to the political ecology of their situation as any biogeographic difference, since the indigenous populations were typically left with the most marginal lands for agriculture, the sloped and rocky areas, while the landowning class kept the deeper, better-watered, and more level soils of the valleys.

My information about ecological practices in the migrants' places of origin, and the extent to which they adapted these to the rain forest region is not definitive, but it does indicate that there was an important role for diffusion of knowledge and plant materials among the Selva colonies, with older settlements often serving as resources for newer settlements. Lobato's (1979) observations provide additional support for this, as well as for the idea that many migrants had previous experience with rain forest conditions. When he talks about Bachajon residents being among the earlier colonizers of the Selva, he describes the Selva as a nearby refuge to which residents frequently took recourse to avoid community conflicts, living for periods of time and then returning to their communities when the problems died down. This confirms the geographic closeness of the Selva to Bachajon and the fact that, for people from those communities, the rain forest was not an alien, unknown environment with which there had been no previous experience. Lobato also saw Bachajon-originated colonies in the Selva as forming some of the earliest platforms from which subsequent migration was launched. The differences in fallows practices needs to be explored further: the non-use of fallow rotations does not mean that migrants didn't have knowledge of its role in soil fertility or never used it as a technique. Work experiences on ranchos and fincas, whether as acasillados, sharecroppers, or wage labor, and the movements among municipios and regions associated with seeking either

wage work or land to rent, also suggest that migrants had opportunities to acquire knowledge about ecological relationships and agricultural practices beyond those limited to the places they identify as their points of origin.

Where clearer relationships show up between past ecological practices and those used in the Selva, is in relation to the adoption of activities related to cash generation, such as coffee and cattle production. This is something that will be discussed in the following chapter.

V. NEW RELATIONS TO THE LAND AND TO EACH OTHER: ORGANIZATION, COMMUNITY, AND IDENTITY

The birth of the campesino economy in the Selva was not only achieved through transformations of the ecology and economy. It was also achieved through changes in the relations that migrants formed to each other and with respect to ownership of the land.

Ethnicity, kinship, and religion

All the movements of migrants, the fissions and fusions, and the different ways of recruiting members to new colonies resulted in a mosaic of linguistic and religious diversity across the Selva landscape. This diversity was not only among communities, but within them, as well. This is demonstrated in the accounts that Palestinos gave of the formation of their Selva colonies. Such was the case of San Pablo, whose founders came from Bachajon, and who, once the settlement was begun, recruited more members from their home base, as well as from Chilon, Sitalá, and other places. Or the settlements of Macedonia and Flor de Cacao, which incorporated people from Tzeltal and Ch'ol municipios and, in the case of the latter, some mestizos, as well, according to Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980). Thus, depending on their particular histories, settlements might be formed exclusively or primarily of people from the same finca or the same

or closely related villages, have a high degree of kinship among them, and speak the same language. A settlement could have all speakers of the same language, but from different villages and municipios. Or, there could be a mixture of origins and languages represented. Marriages across linguistic groups occurred and continue to take place in the settlements, though they weren't the rule, and the children of these families increased the degree of multilingualism present. These patterns are born out in the accounts of the Cañadas settlements by various authors (Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996; Calvo et al 1998), and for the eastern Selva by Lobato (1979). In Nueva Palestina, through sheer majority of numbers, Tzeltal has become the lingua franca. Leyva and Ascencio confirm that this happened in the Cañadas region for the same reason, with the exception of the Las Margaritas sub region, where Spanish has played that role.

Religious diversity at this stage was probably more often between settlements than within them. The authors of the Cañadas studies report that different religions within single communities did develop there, and Lobato (1976) observed this in communities he looked at as well. It is not clear to what extent new settlements were able to form with members following different religions, versus religious diversification occurring after settlements were already constituted through the conversion by some members to Protestant sects. The literature suggests that many Protestant settlements in the Selva were formed specifically to avoid conflicts with Catholic communities and civic-religious structures in their places of origin (De Vos 2002; Dichtl 1988). Among the settlements that formed Nueva Palestina, Palestina and Macedonia had Presbyterian members; the former, exclusively; the latter may have actually included non Presbyterians (Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980).

Organization

In addition to forming communities that were no longer based on kinship, place of origin, or a common religion, the settlers also took on new relations to the land. Settlers transformed themselves from *acasillados*, *mozos*, sharecroppers, and “borrowers” or renters of land, to land owners; from families whose lives were tightly controlled by a boss, to families whose lives were now their own. Some migrants, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, actually bought small tracts of land and set up little *rancherías*, small rural private properties owned by one or two families (Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996). However, the majority of the colonies took over land with the idea of petitioning for an ejido land grant. In order to do this, colonies had to appoint a *Comité Ejecutivo Agrario* (Executive Agrarian Committee) to undertake the petition process. In Palestinos’ accounts, the members of these committees not only represented the colony in its land solicitation process, but also assumed significant leadership roles within the community and in dealing with other settlements. They recount how settlers picked individuals for these positions based on the skills deemed necessary for dealing with the mestizo bureaucracy, facility with Spanish and some degree of literacy being priorities. Because of this, younger individuals who had managed to acquire some schooling, or who had worked as wage laborers out in the mestizo world could take on leadership roles they might not have under systems based on age and participation in religious roles. Once the settlement got to a certain stage early in the ejido approval process, the decision-making body became the *asamblea*, the assembly of *ejidatarios*, whose decisions were carried out by the elected officers. In theory, all ejido members stand in equal rights to the land and to each other; in practice, individuals with more skills for or experience in dealing with the mestizo world, or who had better land endowments and were economically better off, often became more powerful figures. Thus the

process of ejidoization both offered and imposed its own particular, secular structure for organizing these new communities, and presented its own challenges.

Without the shared ties of kinship, tradition, or civic and religious institutions that may have formerly been the “glues” of collective organization, this organizational process was not without problems. Internal tensions were sometimes the generators of fission, as mentioned earlier, and frequently, violent “frontier” justice prevailed within the colonies (Legorreta Díaz 1998). Colonies of different language groups were sometimes antagonistic towards each other. Pedro Díaz Solís, one of the principal actors in organizing the settlements that were to become Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal, identifies the condition of lawlessness and conflict as one of the reasons he supported the creation of the two new centers.

Exodus: The Promised Land and the indigenous community

A very significant influence in helping the new settlements to find new form and identity as communities came from religious missions, both Catholic and Protestant, that became active in the indigenous communities of the Lacandon in the middle of the 20th century.

Protestant missions were actively proselytizing in highlands communities in the 40s. De Vos (2002), Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980) and Dichtl (1988) focus on the activities of Presbyterian missionaries of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, in particular, as having a special impact in the Selva colonies. As part of a policy to assimilate indigenous populations to mestizo society, and as a counterweight to the influence of the Catholic Church, the SIL was invited to Mexico in the 1930s by President Cárdenas (Dichtl 1988). The Presbyterians became very active in upper highland communities in Tenejapa and Oxchuc in the 40s, and set up training centers for indigenous missionaries at Yaxoquintela, in the Ocosingo valley, and Altamirano. One effect of proselytization in the highlands was the development of serious

divisions in the communities between Catholic and Protestant adherents. The Presbyterian mission became very active in encouraging converts to move to the Selva to escape antagonisms in their home communities. However, an important part of its offering was the opportunity to create a life free of the political, economic, and religious constraints that community civic-religious structures associated with Catholicism represented, and support for individual pursuit of benefit from one's efforts (De Vos 2002; Lobato 1979; Dichtl 1988).

Protestant indigenous preachers traveled throughout the Tzeltal highlands municipios, promoting migration to the Selva, and the organization provided substantial financial, medical, material, and logistical support to settlers. Airstrips were built and planes were used to transport settlers into and out of the Selva, even to move whole settlements when necessary. Guidance was given on how to pursue ejido petitions and other bureaucratic issues (Lobato 1979; De Vos 2002). Indigenous preachers also made the rounds of existing Selva colonies in attempts to attract more converts (Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980).

Lobato (1979) felt that the Protestant missionaries had a significant effect on colonization in the parts of the Selva he observed. The amount of support provided to the physical establishment and legalization process of the settlements under the Presbyterian wing raises questions about the effects this may have had on their organization and economy. The logistical and material support may have allowed Presbyterian settlers to gain the advantages previously discussed of early and better site selection, possibly leading to economic and political dominance in or among settlements. The fact that these settlers' production need no longer be directed towards redistribution through the community religious-civic celebrations of Catholic communities may have also contributed to their ability to gain economic advantage. Finally, the absence of those structures and ideologies as the basis of internal community organization raises

the question of what structures and ideologies were promoted in their stead. Interestingly, Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980) confirms that Palestina, the settlement from which Nueva Palestina took its name, was the direct result of this Presbyterian effort. This settlement, she says, was one of the earlier ones in that particular area. As a result of its seniority and occupation of good lands close to transportation access, its members were able to engage in commercial Chile production, thus accumulating capital and becoming one of the most prosperous and politically dominant settlements at the time of Nueva Palestina's founding.

In the early 50s, the Catholic diocese based in San Cristóbal, responsible for the Lacandon and highlands regions, began a re-orientation of its relationship to the indigenous population. This was in response, in part, to the Protestant evangelization going on, and in part to a trend worldwide of reflection in the church. Recognizing the inaccessibility of much of the indigenous population due to isolation and language barriers, it began a process of decentralization in which lay indigenous people took on more religious responsibilities in the communities (De Vos 2002; Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996; Legorreta Díaz 1998). In the 60s, this movement gathered considerable force and direction as the diocese adopted the tenets of liberation theology as the basis of its practice, a transformation that occurred widely throughout Latin America. Liberation theology recognizes that there are structural reasons for poverty, and commits the church to supporting the poor in their liberation from these conditions in the here and now, rather than after death (Legorreta Díaz 1998). A vigorous program of courses for members nominated by the indigenous Selva settlements, who came to be known as *catequistas*, was begun in the 60s that not only involved training in religious precepts and practice, but also in Spanish literacy, in trades, and in the history and analysis of the indigenous condition. At first, the process was structured by typical teacher-student relations. As the

Church sought increasingly to develop a religious practice grounded in indigenous culture and practice, it came to emphasize the role of the participants in their own analysis of information, through the methods of group discussion and reflection. The validation and revitalization of indigenous culture, based on concepts of egalitarianism and consensual decision-making, and freed of the “corrupting” influences of mestizo culture and exploitive relationships, became the ideal. The new Selva colonies began to be seen as opportunity to realize this ideal, in which indigenous people became enactors of their own liberation, not the objects of others’ repression. (Legorreta Díaz 1998; Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996; De Vos 2002).

Out of this process, there emerged the “*catequesis de exodo*” (Exodus catequism), in which the Exodus of the Bible became a metaphor for the migration to the Selva. The migration was interpreted as an expression of God’s mandate for the indigenous people to liberate themselves; the Selva became the “promised land,” where the new indigenous communities, based on self-determination and free of oppressive relationships, would constitute the original, true Christian communities and create God’s kingdom here on Earth (Legorreta Díaz 1998; De Vos 2002; Leyva Solano 1998). Members of the Catholic missions began accompanying the Tzeltal migrants in their journeys to the Selva, and the catequistas disseminated the practices and ideologies of the movement to the colonies. In the 70s, a further development was the training and initiation of indigenous *diáconos*, who could make up for the absence of priests in the communities by administering the sacraments. Both catequistas and *diáconos* were nominated by communities, and couldn’t serve without their support (De Vos 2002; Leyva Solano 1998).

The efforts of the Catholic missions and the catequistas had a profound social and cultural influence on the Selva communities of the Cañadas during the 60s, 70s, and into the 80s (Legorreta Díaz 1998; De Vos 2002; Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996; Harvey 2000).

They influenced relations within and among the colonies, providing alternatives to the frontier justice referred to earlier. They helped build links between the communities, an awareness of conditions they had in common, and the beginnings of an identity, based on those commonalities, that transcended linguistic and other differences. Through mission courses and reflective processes, members of the communities – the catequistas - acquired literacy and other skills, and knowledge about the wider social and political economy that had typically been inaccessible to them. They developed leadership skills for biosphere reserve and mediating between the mestizo and indigenous world, abilities that would later become instrumental in the development of the colonies as political actors. One event that built on this process was the Congreso Indígena of 1974, held in San Cristóbal, which marked the beginnings of the first efforts of the colonies and other indigenous populations to organize themselves around the basic issues of land rights, health, education, and economic development that they shared in common. Those efforts, in turn, became the basis of much more extensive organization among the colonies over the next decades, including the eventual development of the ARIC Union of Ejidos, and the Zapatista movement (Legorreta Díaz 1998; De Vos 2002; Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996).

In the colonies that were influenced by the catequistas, the method of reflection and discussion in assembly, developed initially for religious matters, was adopted as the common mechanism for community decision-making. In contrast with upper highlands communities, where civic and religious roles were intertwined and decision-making power was invested in those who participated in the associated hierarchy of offices, the tendency in the colonies was to emphasize more horizontal, participatory arrangements, where civic and religious roles were rotated frequently among the general population (Legorreta Díaz 1998; Harvey 2000; Leyva

Solano 1998). Important roles for elders and religious office-holders were not completely abandoned in the new colonies; in fact, the system of religious roles, as well as the patron saint, was usually transferred from the place of origin to the new settlement. Rather, they were modified in various ways to co-exist within the framework of the community assembly, which nominated and held accountable both religious and ejido office-holders alike, as well as the various committee members and representatives to external organizations, such as the later ejido unions (Levy Solano 1998). Within this structure, of course, political power could still come to be dominated by particular individuals or factions. The catequistas, in particular, by virtue of the skills gained in their roles as primary intermediaries with the mestizo world, were often given much power by the communities, and could become major brokers of internal as well as external political and economic relations. Almost all the leaders that emerged in later political and economic organizing initiatives had been involved in the catequista movement (Leyva Solano 1998; Legorreta Díaz 1998).

The influence of the catequistas and the Catholic Church's ideology of liberation were profound in the Cañadas settlements, as these and other scholars attest. Among the Catholic settlers that formed Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal, however, I have little information on the influence this movement may have had. One of the primary organizers of the settlements at the time of their nucleation spoke of being involved, for a time, with some part of this early catequista process and later rejecting it. Another individual referred to an uncle who had been a catequista, whose knowledge of Selva settlements helped in informing his migration path. Clearly, the Catholic settlers of Nueva Palestina were not isolated from the movement, and their ties to formal Church structure are now, as they were then, through the San Cristóbal diocese under whose auspices the catequista movement and liberation theology was put into effect. Yet,

other than the above, the migration accounts of the Palestinos I spoke with offered up virtually no references to the roles that the movement might have played in the early settlements. The topic, however, is a sensitive one in Nueva Palestina, where the contemporary Zapatista movement is associated by many with the support of the San Cristóbal diocese, and one can hear, on occasion, a Protestant resident refer to some Catholic group in town as “those Zapatistas.” Nueva Palestina, as part of the Comunidad Lacandona, has been allied since its inception to the formerly dominant governing political party, the PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party), and the discourse adopted in public there towards the Zapatista movement is often disparaging. It is my impression that, as a result, the Catholics in Palestina feel protective about how their relations to the Church are interpreted.

VI. SUMMARY

The information that Palestinos’ provide about why, how, and from where they migrated corroborates that they were part and parcel of the broader phenomenon of regional political economic change and colonization of the Lacandon described in the previous chapter. The accounts they give of the conditions they were escaping and the aims they were pursuing are congruent with those expressed by colonizers of the Cañadas side of the Lacandon, as reported by scholars of that region.

Palestinos’ migration accounts show that they were trying to escape conditions of extreme hardship and poverty. However, they also highlight their desires to create something new: to become independent, and to leave a legacy for future generations that would save them from the very fate they were escaping.

Palestinos' descriptions of the conditions they were fleeing give evidence of the ecological, social/political, and economic constraints that caused indigenous populations of the region to have insufficient land on which to subsist, let alone prosper. In seeing that these constraints operated on preceding generations as well as on themselves, Palestinos express a concern that the tendency to overuse existing land, and the constant need to seek new land that results, may continue to drive the futures – and potential impoverishment - of the next generations, despite their own success. Indeed, that constant pressure for expansion is evident in the spiraling cycles of colonization described above, wherein earlier settlements in the Cañadas, as they matured, found their options constrained, forcing younger generations to seek land elsewhere. The implication is that as long as there are no other options, that is, as long as ecological, social-political, and economic terms of engagement with the wider society remain essentially the same, access to land will be their only future, and the pressure for expansion will be a constant. This anxiety is expressed in Palestinos' migration accounts and is a significant feature of their contemporary discussions about the common lands of the community and the future.

In recent years, the claim is sometimes made that one reason why the settlements have had a great impact on the ecology of the Lacandon is that the migrants had little knowledge of the new ecological conditions and/or employed agricultural practices that were developed for other conditions. This claim will be explored further in a later chapter. However, my initial exploration of differences between the migrants' environments of origin and those of the Selva, and in the ecological practices used in both places, suggests that the differences may not have been so great. Among the Lacandon rain forest region and the intermediate highlands from which most of the migrants came, there is considerable elevational and potential vegetational

overlap, as established in Chapter 2. Some migrants' accounts corroborate these similarities, while others suggest differences of varying degrees. The greatest differences are expressed by migrants from the upper highlands region, which represented the minority of settlers in Nueva Palestina and the Selva in general (Leyva Solano 1996). Moreover, many of the differences described appear to derive from the characteristics (rocky, sloped, microclimate extremes, etc.) of the particular "slice" of the local ecosystem to which the indigenous populations were restricted, while within the same ecosystem, large landowners had the "slices" with more favorable characteristics (fertile, level, deep soils, etc.).

Even where differences in ecology and ecological practices may have been significant, there is evidence for a considerable amount of diffusion of knowledge among earlier and later colonizers of the Selva. The fact that the earliest settlements tended to be founded not far from their residents' place of origin, at least in the Cañadas and Bachajon regions, provides additional support to the idea that they could serve as a source of appropriate knowledge diffusion. The fact that migrants often had experiences beyond their own minifundios, including work on the better finca lands and in other regions, suggests the possibility of a broader knowledge of ecology and techniques than what they invoked in describing their own lands.

As part of the process of creating a new life in the Lacandon, migrants throughout the region had to create new forms of community, based on new relations to the land and to each other. Out of the mosaic of settlers with different linguistic, place-, and religious origins, settlements were formed, as was Nueva Palestina. The process of forming and petitioning for an ejido land grant, the influences of Protestant missions, and the practices promoted by the catequistas and the Church's interpretations of liberation theology, all provided alternative frameworks for organizing new communities in this context. Each of these emphasized non-

hierarchical, egalitarian relations among settlers, but none of them were immune to the development of individuals or factions that could dominate political and economic power. However, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Catholic framework is the considerable investment in the development of a method for collective decision-making, and in building skills and knowledge for interactions outside the community with both mestizos and other indigenous entities. In the case of Nueva Palestina, all of its constituent settlements had been organizing themselves to form ejidos, and there was significant influence of the Presbyterian missions in the founding of one or two. However, it is not clear what role the methods and ideologies promoted by the Catholic Church may have played in the other settlements or in their ideas of themselves and the lives they were forging. Even if this influence was minimal, the extensive influence that the Catholic Church had on the organization and ideologies of the Cañadas settlements did become significant in the future of Nueva Palestina and the Comunidad Lacandon, a thread that will be taken up in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

COMMON PROPERTY: RESPONSES OF THE CAÑADAS SETTLEMENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

The past two chapters provided some background for the formation of an indigenous, campesino economy/ecology in the Selva Lacandona. In the next two chapters, I look at how, in this context, the communal territory Comunidad Lacandona comes to be formed, the effects this has on settlements in the Cañadas and those in the eastern region, how Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal become incorporated into the Comunidad, and the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve lain over it.

One of the significant effects of the creation of the Comunidad Lacandona lay in the different ways that communities in the Cañadas region and those in the eastern Selva responded to its establishment. Although, these responses led them on distinct trajectories in relation to land tenure, the government, political identity and activism, and to a certain extent, ecological practices, in many ways their fortunes have remain linked through to the present. For that reason, this chapter provides an account of the relevant events in the Cañadas that help shape that region's relationship with the Comunidad then and contribute to these relations now. The Cañadas experience becomes an important reference point and influence on the ways that Comunidad members, and especially Palestinos, interact with their communal territory and the conservation projects of the Montes Azules Reserve and other agencies. In the next chapter, I turn to the experience of the eastern Selva settlements.

For the understanding events in the Cañadas region, I was able to draw on the work of a few individuals whose perspectives are drawn from a combination of historical research, the testimonies of individuals directly involved, and, in the case of some authors, from their own firsthand knowledge of events as participants.

II. THE CREATION OF THE COMUNIDAD LACANDONA

Rationales and process

On Nov 26, 1971, President Luís Echeverría signed off on the Presidential Decree that created the Comunidad Lacandona; it became effective on March 6, 1972 with its publication that day in the federal Diario Oficial. The comunidad is a form of communal property, legally established through national agrarian land reform laws and intended to be used to return traditionally-held lands to indigenous groups who were dispossessed of them through the actions of pre-1910 regimes (SRA 1998). The decree delivered 614,321 ha of land in the Lacandon Selva region to some 350-400 Lacandon Indians, or a total of 66 families. This action is justified in the decree by statements that the Lacandons had “been in continuous public, peaceful possession... of the communal lands since time immemorial” (Diario Oficial 1972:10), and that there were no competing land claims. Even taken at face value, that is, as a gesture to guarantee territorial rights to a threatened indigenous group, the decree is remarkable for several reasons: for the enormous amount of land deeded to so few people; for the fact that its total land area constituted from one-third to one-half of the Lacandona Selva region (depending on the estimate used of its extension at the time); for the absolutely unprecedented speed with which a land grant was processed through the land reform bureaucracy; and for the fact that it completely ignored the existence in the same territory of many indigenous settlements already in place from the

migrations just described, many of which had solicited or already received legal title to ejidal land through the same legal structure that enabled the Comunidad. The creation of the Comunidad has been explained from several perspectives.

One of these is that represented by the apparent intent of the decree: the cultural survival of the Lacandons, at risk due to the diminishing rain forest on which their cultural practices were so dependent.

By the end of the 1960s, parts of the Selva region had been greatly transformed from what it had been just one and two decades earlier. The northern part of the Selva region, from the area between Ocosingo and Palenque southward, had been rapidly taken up by private cattle ranches and indigenous colonies, a process facilitated in the 1960s by the land clearing and road-building activities of the lumbering company, Aserraderos Bonampak. In 1970, Pedro Díaz Solís, a Ch'ol migrant originally from Tumbalá and now a resident of Frontera Corozal, was directed down the Santo Domingo valley, south of Palenque, to the settlements of Lacanjá Tzeltal and Cintalapa¹⁵ in order to find the then-frontier of colonization. To the south and west of these ejidos, in gently sloping lands broken up by the scattered hills and low ridges characteristic of the eastern Selva, he told me in interviews, he found a few dispersed settlements and plenty of room for new colonies. About 15 km to the south, he found Palestina (from which Nueva Palestina takes its name), which he remembers as having been at that site since 1967. Its inhabitants had earlier lived at, and then abandoned, a nearby site, which Díaz Solís took over for his new colony and rechristened Alfredo Bonfil. About five km to the west of Palestina was Plan de Ayutla, which Díaz Solís understood to have been in place since 1965. A further 15 km to the

¹⁵ Each of which had already received presidential resolution (definitive legalization) in 1966 and 1969, respectively, according to De Vos' (2002) figures.

south of Palestina, he would have found Jalisco, likely in place since 1968, according to Burguete Cal y Mayor's information (1980).

By this time, communities in the Río Perlas valley of the Cañadas region to the west had become launching points for migrants into the eastern half of the Selva, as well. In 1971, in search of land to settle, Manuel Ruiz Aguilar, a Tzeltal from Bachajón (and current resident of Nueva Palestina), arrived with his brothers, father, and brother-in law in Taniperla, where an uncle of his had lived for about six years. In order to locate "empty" land, he explained to me, his uncle took him over the ridges immediately to the east, to a place they called Chonbil Ja', where earlier that year someone had sown milpa in an attempt to claim land. His uncle understood that the site had been abandoned, the person having not been able to return with other families to start a settlement, despite the fact that he had left a kind of "do not enter" sign posted there. Ruiz Aguilar and his relatives stayed three months with another uncle in the nearby settlement of Chamizal while they cleared and planted milpa at the abandoned site that was to become San Pablo. Both of these settlements were some ten km to the west and southwest of Palestina, and were formed, in part, by migrants who initially entered from El Censo and Taniperla in the Perlas valley. Thus, while colonization pressure within the Cañadas region continued to push settlement expansion into the ridges and valleys of the western Selva through the 1980s, as described by Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco (1996), by this time the Cañadas front was also spilling over the last high ridges that separate it from the more open topography of the eastern Selva. At the end of the 60s and early 70s, the region around Palestina was an active front in the eastern Selva for the newest colonies, a front that was being fed from both the north and the west.

A few more kilometers to the southeast of this front was Lacanjá Chansayab, one of the three main settlements, at the time, of the Lacandon Indians. Najá and Metzabok, about 60 km to the northwest, were the other two. Until the colonization of the Selva began in mid-20th century, the Lacandons had lived in dispersed, mobile clusters of two to three households, avoiding contact with non-Lacandons, even with each other. As late as the 1930s, workers from the lumbering and chiclero camps had been their main outside contacts, with whom they sometimes traded tobacco and forest products for manufactured goods and salt, but whose diseases they sought to avoid. To this end, trails to Lacandon milpas and houses typically were allowed to disappear in the forest in order to obscure their destinations. When colonists began moving into the Selva in the 1940s, the Lacandons began withdrawing deeper into the center of the region and began clustering into various locations in the north and the south (Nations 1979; 1984). By 1970, most of the northernmost Lacandons had already contracted into the settlements of Naha and Metzabok, and were feeling increasing competition from surrounding colonies for the lands they used for subsistence, but to which they had no title. The residents of Lacanjá Chansayab, where most of the southernmost Lacandons had congregated, were seeing these pressures looming on the horizon.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, the Lacandons have had a very particular real and symbolic association with the Selva Lacandona. Although different views have been promoted on their history, the one that has gained most currency suggests that the Lacandons, whose language is mutually intelligible with Yucatec Maya speakers, have been living in the Chiapas forest since the late 17th or 18th centuries, having previously lived in the forests of the nearby state of Campeche and the Guatemalan Petén (De Vos 1992; but see Perrera and Bruce 1982 for an alternative view). From the first academic accounts that emerged of them at the turn of the

19th century¹⁶, the Lacandons have drawn substantial national and international attention, for two main reasons. First, in contrast with the other indigenous populations of the region, they appeared to have never been Hispanicized, Catholicized, nor put under the Spanish colonial yoke. Their religious practices showed no evidence of Christian influences: they burned copal incense to an array of Maya gods and used important Classic Maya ceremonial centers in the region, such as Palenque and Yaxchilan, as ritual sites. They practiced polygamy, wore tunics of homegrown cotton or barkcloth, and were, to all appearances, quite able to lead a self-sufficient life just from what the rain forest had to offer. Even a century ago, it seems the effect was something like that of the “discovery” of the “stone age” Tasaday in the Philippines in the 1970s, with the added dimension that the Lacandons might represent the only living practitioners of what some thought was unadulterated Maya culture. This association with the ancient Maya became even more reinforced in the academic and popular imaginations when, in 1946, a few of the southern Lacandons revealed the Bonampak ruins to American archaeologists (see for instance Margain, 1972; Ruppert 1955; and Pina Chan 1961).

The second reason, which gained importance later in the 20th century as worldwide interest heightened in preventing the destruction of tropical ecosystems, was the Lacandons’ ability to live in the rain forest with apparently little ecological impact. As concerns grew about the seemingly unstoppable loss of forest cover to both capitalist and subsistence exploitation, the Lacandons came to represent one of the few visible models for successful human co-habitation with the rain forest. In the 1970s, for instance, significant studies began to be done that documented the ecological practices of the Lacandons, examining everything from population control via pregnancy spacing, to agricultural practices that allow the production of some 79 species of food crops on the same plot of land over 12 years (see Nations 1979; Nations and

¹⁶ For instance, Maler 1901 and Tozzer 1907.

Nigh 1980 ; more recent studies continuing this line include Levy Tacher 2000 and Durán Fernández 1999). A similar interest developed in the ways that Lacandon spiritual and symbolic practices were closely entwined with and supportive of this apparent ecological harmony (for instance, Perrera and Bruce 1982). A strong association emerged between the survival of Lacandon culture and the survival of the rain forest: the Lacandon way of life was seen as dependent on the rain forest milieu; and, in turn, keys to rain forest preservation were being seen as contained in Lacandon thought and practices.

That the perpetuation of the Lacandon way of life seemed to have depended on their isolation from the Spanish, and later Mexican, societies and economies, and on the existence of the rain forest as refuge from these influences, combined with their small numbers, meant that the Lacandons became not only the objects of study and curiosity on the part of nationals and foreigners alike, but that a movement emerged to safeguard both their and the rain forest's survival. One of the most notorious and dedicated of their advocates was Gertrude DUBY Blom. A Swiss anti-fascist in Europe, she came to Mexico in 1940, where she documented the lives of Mexican factory workers and women Zapatistas before taking up the protection of the Lacandons as her personal, lifelong cause (Nations 1984; Harris 1984; De Vos 2002). She developed a particularly close relationship with one of the elders of the northern Lacandons of Najá, who continued the older spiritual practices in the face of many changes around him. DUBY Blom got to know the Lacandons precisely at the time when the Selva began undergoing its mid-century transition. She witnessed the expansion of cattle ranches, the predations of the newer, more industrialized lumbering operations, and the mushrooming of indigenous colonies throughout the Selva. She also witnessed the ironic acceptance of Christianity, after an apparent 500 years of resistance, by most of the Lacandons: the southern group clustered around LACANJÁ Chansayab

was converted to Presbyterianism by the Baers, missionaries associated with the Summer Institute of Linguistics, in the 1950s; and Metzabok residents were converted to Seventh-Day Adventism in the 70s (Nations 1984).

By the 1950s, DUBY Blom and her husband, archaeologist Franz Blom, were vigorously advocating for the establishment of a system of parks that would not only protect the Lacandons and the rain forest, but other indigenous populations and the plentiful archaeological ruins, as well; they also began lobbying for the Lacandons to receive legal title to rain forest lands (Nations 1984; De Vos 2002). In 1970, amidst increasing national and international concerns about the fate of the Selva as well as the Lacandons, and with the entry of the new President, Luis Echeverría, and the new Chiapas governor, Manuel Velasco Suarez, a personal friend of theirs, the Bloms finally found receptive ears (De Vos 2002). De Vos suggests this personal connection played a role in the rapid creation of the Comunidad.

However, most observers, including De Vos, question a concern for the Lacandons and their environment as constituting the real reason for such an unusually swift and generous land grant on the part of the federal government, to such a small and politically inconsequential, indigenous group. The Lacandons had not been a politically active group, pressing for land or other rights; and according to De Vos (2002), legal solicitation for land on their behalf had appeared only once in the federal record, just six months before the decree was passed. In the same volume, De Vos provides a minute analysis of the contradictions, inaccuracies, and anomalies of the decree's passage and contents that suggest political expedience as a driving force. Most analysts, including some indigenous organizations, have seen the creation of the Comunidad as a move on the part of the federal government to protect a variety of its interests in

the Selva region (Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996; Legorreta Díaz 1998; Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980; De Vos 2002; Lobato 1979; Nations 1979; Union de Uniones 1983).

One of those interests was in preserving the benefits from timber extraction for the federal government. The northern limits of the proposed Comunidad were not only established roughly at the frontier of colonization, they were also at the frontier of timber extraction. As mentioned in a previous chapter, in the early 1950s, a foreign-financed logging company, Madereras Maya, had been acquiring Selva lands and soliciting a permit to set up a processing plant. Meanwhile, other government agencies were directly and indirectly encouraging agricultural expansion and indigenous colonization in the area, including on lands the company owned. Unable to obtain the permit (the government didn't want lumber extraction to be controlled by foreign interests), and witnessing the unprecedented rate of deforestation going on around them, the foreign backers of the company pulled out officially in 1966. Before that, in 1964, Madereras Maya hired the company Aserraderos Bonampak to get as much of the precious timber as it could out of company lands while it was still possible. From 1964 to 1972, Aserraderos Bonampak established a sawmill in Chancalá, about 20km southeast of Palenque, built a road from there south to near the Bonampak ruins (some 15 km south of Palestina) and other access roads, and began a veritable race to get the precious timber out before it was burned in the land-clearing fires of indigenous settlers and private ranchers, ironically facilitated by its own road-building activities (De Vos 2002; Lobato 1979). In contrast with the logging of the previous century, this was now heavy machinery-based and definitely oriented towards short-term extraction; swaths of forest were destroyed where the company worked to remove the widely-dispersed, individual trees of only two precious species. Lobato (1979) notes the conflictive relationship between the logging company (or its contractors) and the indigenous

settlers, although it could sometimes be complementary. On one hand, settlers could benefit by earning some temporary wages, while the company gained access to inexpensive labor. On the other hand, the settlers had an incentive to burn more forest than they immediately needed in order to establish their land claims, which they did indiscriminate of the value of particular tree species, causing the accelerated loss of the woods the company sought. In turn, the company would call upon the federal forestry department and military to prevent this burning, confrontations arose, and settlers might initiate even more burning in response. Thus, the logging that was going on was conflict-laden, increasingly inefficient, and the forest wasn't being conserved, whether for environmental or extractive purposes. O'Brien (1998) also notes that Aserraderos' profits were declining.

While this was going on, President Echeverría came to power in 1970; national lumber production was going down; and the new administration promoted the formation of parastatal organizations as a way to keep Mexican forest industry profits in the country (O'Brien 1998; Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980). That same year, Manuel Velasco Suarez took over the governorship. He is described as a scientist, allied to the new president's politics, having few ties to the regional power structure and a mandate to loosen the latter's hold on the Chiapas economy so its resources could be invested in the nation's industrialization (Legorreta Díaz 1998; Lobato 1979). Velasco Suarez felt that private logging through Aserraderos wasn't contributing enough to the state or nation's coffers, either through taxes or value-added processing of the lumber in Chiapas, and had a conflictive relationship with the company. The President intervened in the situation, and at first a "mixed enterprise" involving the state and federal governments, the Lacandons, and Aserraderos was contemplated, but the idea was abandoned (Lobato 1979). In 1972, the year the Comunidad Lacandona's decree became law,

Aserraderos Bonampak was first asked to suspend operations; its logging rights were acquired by the government-owned Nacional Financiera, S.A. (Nafinsa); and in 1974, a federal, parastatal logging company, Compañía Forestal de la Lacandona, S.A. (COFOLASA) was created by decree to undertake timbering in the region. Dichtl (1987) adds that upon purchasing Aserraderos, Nafinsa lost the contracts the company previously had with landowners for timbering rights. During that same year, COFOLASA signed a 16-month contract with the Lacandons, guaranteeing them a fraction of the international market price for mahogany, tropical cedar, and other woods. 30% of their fees were to be paid directly to them; the other 70% were to go to a communal fund held by Nafinsa, administered by the Fondo Nacional para el Fomento Ejidal (National Fund for Ejido Development, also known as FONAFE), and used for community needs (Nations 1979; O'Brien 1998; De Vos 2002; Lobato 1979). Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980) adds that there were other ways to go in regards to managing forestry in the region: the existing Ley Forestal, for instance, allowed for ejidos and comunidades to exploit their forests with the technical and financial assistance of the government or outside interests, but this was not an option pursued. In all, this sequence of events are frequently cited as evidence that the creation of the Comunidad Lacandona had more to do with preserving the federal government's access to the forest and its resources, unimpeded by private property, ejidos, or the new settlements, than it did with the Lacandons' rights or welfare (Legorreta Díaz 1998; Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996; Burgete Cal y Mayor 1980; Lobato 1979; Union de Uniones 1983), although the latter may have served as a convenient pretext to kill several birds with one stone. As Nations says, "It seems likely that the government officials were more eager to deal with 350 illiterate Lacandons than with 50,000 Tzeltal and Ch'ol immigrants" (1979:112).

There are other national interests that establishment of the Comunidad Lacandona may have supported, as well. Earlier proposals to put hydroelectric dams in the Usumacinta River to supply the country with electricity were again being considered in 1971, and oil exploration began in some areas of the Lacandon in 1976. By the late '60s, having nationalized large land tracts left over from the days of the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship in the south of the Selva, the government was envisioning a more stable and controlled pattern of colonization there, through Nuevos Centros de Población Ejidales (new ejido population centers) (De Vos 2002; Dichtl 1988). Under this approach, ejido locations and sizes would be designated *a priori* by the government, which would also recruit settlers, not necessarily indigenous and often from other states, and be closely involved in designating how lands were used and buildings constructed, and in providing credit and assistance for productive activities. In fact, this approach was applied in the Marqués de Comillas region, the southernmost part of the Lacandon bordering Guatemala, albeit without sufficient federal resources necessary to back up the experiments and with a lot of consequent hardships.

Moreover, the federal government had been wary for some years of the stirrings of guerilla movements in countries to the south, and was concerned about establishing a stable presence along the border (Dichtl 1988). Legorreta Díaz (1998) comments that after the repression and dispersal of leftist dissidents from Mexico City in the late 1960s, the government was aware of the potential for poor, outback regions like Chiapas to become fertile ground for opposition movements. The creation of the Comunidad Lacandona could have been seen by the government as supportive of any of these objectives: blocking uncontrolled colonization from the north and west; preserving a large part of the Selva for unimpeded access to extractive resources or other “rational” (as opposed to colonists’ “irrational”) uses for national economic

development; satisfying demands to preserve dwindling rain forest; and creating a stronger state presence in a region which had very little of either local or national government influence. As Harvey (2000) notes, the yawning lack of state presence in the indigenous settlements of the Cañadas region of the Selva opened a space where alternative political alliances and ideologies, such as those nurtured by Catholic liberation theology and leftist political organizers, could flourish.

Indeed, many see the creation of the Comunidad Lacandona as one of the most paternalistic acts of the government to date, pointing out that the Lacandons then became government-sanctioned latifundistas, all the more poignant in the face of the growing demand for land in the region, and entrenched in a pattern of clientelism that continues today (Vasquez-Sanchez 1992; Dichtl 1988). Many observers documented some of the more immediate impacts of the deal on the Lacandons from the influx of the COFOLASA lumbering rights fees and corresponding influx of government agents and services: Lacandon health suffered, and their famous ecological and other practices changed (e.g., Nations 1979). The act also helped etch another still-pervasive pattern into the political ecology of the region, in which the apolitical, relatively few Lacandons essentially become “good” Indians, while the thousands of other indigenous people, some politicized, some not, become “bad” Indians, thus affecting the terms of their interactions with and access to government and outside resources, land tenure, and how they are represented relative to issues of conservation and development. Over the years, even with their evolving responses to evolving opportunities, the Lacandons continue to be identified with rain forest knowledge and conservation, and to be used quite literally as the symbolic face of the rain forest; while the Tzeltals, Tzotziles, Ch’ols, and Tojolabals of the Selva more often are identified as the destroyers of the forest, either from without, as “invaders” of the remaining

forested areas, the Reserve, or the Comunidad Lacandona, or from within, as in the case of the Lacandons' fellow residents in Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal. In this equation, the latter's indigeneity rarely seems to measure up to that of the perceived Lacandon ideal type. They are often cast as either too indigenous, as when outsiders (e.g., government agents, representatives of conservation and other nongovernmental organizations, credit program officers) find their actions inscrutable, unpredictable, oppositional, or clientelistic; or not indigenous enough, as when their ecological practices are judged against those of the Lacandon ideal and blamed for increasing deforestation. Trench (2002) provides an insightful and updated account of how Lacandons' self-identification and identification by others continues to evolve, interact, and shape the opportunities open to them.

Immediate impact on the Selva communities: uncertainty

Probably the most immediate impact of the Comunidad Lacandona decree on the indigenous settlements of the Selva was the uncertainty it created about how their land tenure would be affected. The haste with which the decree was passed; its inaccuracies; the fact that it ignored the existence of tens of already existing settlements, many with legal land tenure, many whose settlement was encouraged by the government itself; and the lack of any consultation or notification process allowing communities to present counter-claims, made for a very messy state of affairs, with substantial repercussions through to the present.

The boundaries of the Comunidad were evidently designed in an office, without benefit of a ground survey of the actual landscape and its occupants (De Vos 2002), nor of reference to SRA records of land grant petitions finalized or in-process. The northeast and southeast limits mostly followed the natural boundaries of the Usumacinta and Lacantún Rivers, respectively. The northern and western boundaries, however, followed irregular lines that spilled over into the

already colonized areas of the northern and Cañadas parts of the Selva, such that the lands of many existing settlements were partially or completely included. Well within the Comunidad's interior were many already established settlements, including the ones mentioned earlier that constituted the colonization front around Palestina. Some of the overlapped settlements had already received presidential resolution, the final legal stage in the land grant process; some even had applications in process for *ampliaciones*, or second-generation expansions of their original land grants. Others were in the very initial stages of the petition process.

As a result, numerous settlements, either partially or fully within the new Comunidad's boundaries, were effectively made "illegal". Different authors' estimates of the numbers and names of the settlements affected vary and show some inconsistencies in the data, and it appears that there is not yet a definitive account. For instance, my reading of Legorreta Díaz's (1998) text suggests that in 1971, in the Cañadas region (not including the eastern and northern Selva), there were from 3,500 to 4,000 families living in around 39 settlements and 6 indigenous *rancherías*, and that of these, perhaps 2,000 families were affected by the decree. An indigenous organization responding to the decree estimated some 4,000 families were directly affected, of which 2,000 families in 33 settlements refused to either vacate their lands or be concentrated in what later became Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal. In the same piece, however, the organization recognized that it didn't precisely know how many settlements were affected (Union de Uniones 1983). De Vos (2002) concludes that 2,400 families in 38 settlements, both in the Cañadas and the eastern Selva regions, were affected. Of these 38, he identifies 17 settlements that had already achieved presidential resolution as *ejidos* or *ampliaciones*, and 21 that had not. The 21 he lists are precisely the settlements that later joined to become Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal, and he presumes that their lack of legal status was key to their

agreement to concentrate in those two centers. However, these were not the only settlements caught within the Comunidad's boundaries that had not yet achieved legal status. Included among these were: Plan de Ayutla, a settlement from the mid-60s whose petition was well-advanced (and definitively legalized in 1973 according to tables in De Vos 2002); San Antonio Escobar, a settlement near Chamizal (mentioned in the oral histories of Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal residents as one of the affected settlements, and later legalized in 1989); and at least a couple of settlements farther to the south, such as San Gregorio and San Antonio Miramar¹⁷. It's possible there were others, as well. When Pedro Díaz Solís, one of the key organizers of the communities that became Palestina and Frontera, talks about this process, he refers to anywhere from 21 to 29 settlements that he was working with at different times, although 23 and 21 are the most consistent numbers he uses. In the end, it was 21 settlements that actually were incorporated into the Comunidad as *barrios* or neighborhoods of Palestina and Frontera.

The task of getting a handle on the land tenure situation, past and present, is complicated by several factors. One of these is the many irregularities in the land reform bureaucracy's (DAAC, and later, SRA) handling of the land grant petitions of the Selva settlements. Speaking of the Cañadas, Legorreta Díaz (1998) recounts how the colonists were subjected to abuses by government agents and merchants who took advantage of their isolation, lack of familiarity with bureaucracy, and the precariousness of their new situations. For instance, *forestales*, agents working for the forestry department, illegally charged them fees to fell forest for preparing milpa; other government agents charged them road taxes even though there were no roads. More to the point of land tenure, SRA technicians and bureaucrats often demanded high fees for carrying out what were routine procedures in the land grant petition process. Whether or not

¹⁷ Montes Azules Reserve staff, personal communication.

they actually carried out the procedures, or properly processed and filed the relevant documents, was often determined by whether they were paid off by local finqueros to stall or block the process. Many of the Cañadas communities, having pressed to have their situation regularized during years of political and bureaucratic inertia, found this process even further delayed by these irregularities in the official records of their transactions. Harvey (2000) adds to this the complication that SRA records in Mexico City suffered damages in a 1984 earthquake.

There were also errors and irregularities in the ways that ejido boundaries were laid out by SRA technicians. Not only might the settlements themselves be in disagreement about where the actual boundaries lay (Lobato 1979; Nueva Palestina oral histories and interviews), but SRA land surveys and records could also be contradictory. New ejidos were sometimes granted lands that had already been granted to other ejidos. In recent years, agencies and organizations attempting to get a handle on the land tenure situation have discovered considerable inconsistencies in ejido boundary maps. Although more recent and adjusted land tenure maps have been produced, the discrepancies remain an issue¹⁸.

Another factor complicating the picture of which settlements were affected by the Comunidad Lacandona decree has to do with the uncertainty of its actual boundaries at the time of its establishment and in the years following. De Vos (2002) points out several ways in which the boundary description given in the actual decree is confusing and produces a territorial outline that is different from the one officially accepted by the government from 1972 onward¹⁹. In the decree, 13,591 ha belonging to already legalized ejidos within the borders of the Comunidad territory are explicitly excluded, but the names of the ejidos are not specified (Diario Oficial, March 6, 1972:11). De Vos suggests that this figure refers to nine ejidos he names whose area in

¹⁸ Ricardo Hernández, employee of Conservation International who was working on sorting out the land tenure history and status of Selva communities, personal communication.

¹⁹ See his maps 7b and 7c,

hectares would provide the correct surface area, but based on his figures alone, we know that there were at least 17 already legalized ejidos overlapped by the Comunidad boundaries. It appears that the lack of specificity over where the Comunidad boundaries actually lay and which of the already legalized ejidos were to be recognized, meant that the settlements themselves, as they learned about the decree, weren't always clear on whether or not they were affected. It also appears to have meant that state SRA officials, when consulted by concerned settlement leaders, weren't always sure, either. Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980) offers as a sign of this SRA uncertainty the fact that some settlements within the Comunidad Lacandona's boundaries continued to be granted land even after the decree was put into effect with its publication in the *Diario Oficial* in 1972. Uncertainty on the part of both settlements and SRA officials alike is also attested to in the accounts of some of Palestina's original settlers and organizers²⁰.

Add to this a critical omission in the decree procedure as it was carried out in this instance. The decree states in two places that the documents and research carried out in preparation for the establishment of the Comunidad were made available to both potential private property owners and adjacent communities, in order that conflicting claims on the part of any of these might come to light prior to finalization. Yet according to the accounts of Palestina and Frontera residents, as well as those provided to and by researchers working in the Palestina and Cañadas regions during the 70s and after, the process by which area settlements found out about the decree was haphazard, often indirect, and well after the fact. A Cañadas man told Harvey (2002) that people in the settlements on the west flank of the Comunidad began to hear about it in 1973, from members of a leftist group that was helping to organize preparations for the

²⁰ Díaz Solís commented that Santa Rita ampliación, San Antonio Escobar, and Laguna Escobar were among the settlements that weren't sure whether they would be affected or not, being located right along the Comunidad's borders, and chose ultimately not to participate in the organized response of the settlements he represented. Plan de Ayutla, definitively within the Comunidad's boundaries, received word that its ejido grant was about to receive presidential resolution, and also chose to withdraw.

statewide Congreso Indígena of 1974, whereupon members of the communities themselves traveled settlement to settlement to spread the word. Others relate that the communities didn't find out till 1974, at the Congreso itself or through other means (Union de Uniones 1983; Legorreta Díaz; 1998 Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980), or until 1975, when the Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC)²¹ convened a meeting to name representatives to a Consejo Supremo Tzeltal (Superior Tzeltal Council) as a follow-up to the Congreso (De Vos 2002). Nations (1979) reports that even some Lacandons didn't know about the decree till after the fact.

Interviews with Palestina residents as well as Pedro Díaz Solís of Frontera suggest that many of them found out during visits made to the SRA office in the state capital, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, to move along their land grant petitions, at which time they began to hear not only about the Comunidad decree, but that the area was destined to become a national park. Some of these accounts are not very specific on the dates when this happened; according to Díaz Solís, at least seven of the settlements, including his own, knew enough by 1973 to begin organizing a response among themselves and the other area settlements. In any case, the lack of prior notification left all the communities, east and west, in some confusion and feeling at risk. As Díaz Solís noted in an oral history:

Yes, they never summoned us. Legally, by law, the Agrarian Reform law says that everyone who is inside the Comunidad Lacandona should be summoned in order to execute the resolution, but they never called us. Like the government thought it would be easy to take them out and run them off like animals, that's what it thought. So it's the government, that's the one that has the problem, that's the one that didn't act as it should have ... In '71, '72, that's how we were left out, it thought that we wouldn't complain, so we were left just with nothing. If it had summoned, if it had sent out a call for an assembly, we would have had to go and argue it, but we didn't have that chance. By the time I hear (it), the presidential resolution is already there.

²¹ An organization formed by the PRI, Partido Revolucionario Institucional, the political party in national power from the Revolution until 2000, as a vehicle for campesino participation

III. RESPONSES OF THE CAÑADAS SETTLEMENTS

When the finca workers left the large landholdings and settled the Cañadas valleys, they were very much on their own. There were no roads, no public services, no health or educational facilities. Except for creating the requisite agrarian committees to push through applications for ejido land grants, and the intermittent harassment of unprincipled government agents collecting “fees”, the presence of the government was virtually nil. Those settlements that competed for decent land with the large landholders had little security and were constantly under threat of dispossession amidst often violent confrontations. The lengthy process of ejido solicitation, often impeded by the regional elites, was also not very secure. The farther they went into the Selva, the more difficult was their access to markets for selling produce and earning cash. Moreover, as mentioned, the ecological conditions of topography, soils, and microclimate put constraints on the levels and kinds of production they could achieve. The following account of the settlements’ responses to this situation is synthesized from Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco (1996), Legorreta Díaz (1998), Harvey (2000), De Vos (2002), and Union de Uniones (1983) except where otherwise noted.

In this context of isolation, but also of the construction of a new life, the San Cristóbal de las Casas Catholic diocese became a profound influence in the region from the early 1960s through the mid 1970s, described as constituting virtually the only institutional presence in the Selva and acting as virtually the only mediator between the settlements and outsiders. As mentioned in a previous chapter, during this period, the Catholic church in the region rooted itself ideologically in liberation theology, and extended its influence throughout the Selva communities via a network of indigenous *catequistas*, *prediáconos*²², and other religious assistants, people from the settlements themselves that were trained to minister to their own and

²² Literally, catechists and pre-deacons.

other communities in the local, indigenous languages. The Selva settlements found compelling the ideology and methods embodied in the church's approach: the valorization of indigenous community, thought, and action as the basis for building a new life, free of social oppression, and the emphasis on community reflection as a method. This sense of religious *comunitas*, as Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco call it, played an important role in the Cañadas settlements' developing identities and aspirations.

Building on this base, the mid-1970s saw the initiation of a new phase in the Cañadas settlements' development, as expressed in the growth of indigenous organizations aimed at dealing with the persistent and increasingly acute problems of land security, economic production, and other needs. The preparation of the 1974 Congreso Indígena represents a turning point in the opening of the Selva to these new organizational processes. At the same time, the coincident timing of the Comunidad Lacandona decree and its apparent threat to many Selva communities' land tenure became one of the principal reasons for Cañadas settlements to form these organizations.

The 1974 Congreso Indígena was a gathering of indigenous communities of all language groups from throughout the state, although the Selva communities were heavily represented. It was initiated upon request of the state governor, Manuel Velasco Suarez, in commemoration of the 500th anniversary of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas' birth. The governor turned to the San Cristóbal diocese to organize it, given the weak presence of the government and the strong presence of the Church among the state's indigenous populations. The diocese, aiming to have the Congreso be an event that dealt with real issues of real significance to the indigenous members of Chiapas, in turn invited members of a leftist group to help organize the meeting around the key issues of health, education, land, and economy. Beginning in 1973, a year-long

process of preparation for the Congreso was begun. The organizers instituted a method of reflection and discussion, also based on the community assembly, only now turned specifically to material issues, their causes and remedies, that became very popular. The Congreso represented a watershed on at least two counts. First, indigenous representatives, despite their varying origins and situations, could see the extent to which they all suffered from common problems with common roots in the wider political economy of the region. Thus, the notion of common causes that could be served through common efforts was reinforced. Second, the process of preparation in the communities prior to the Congreso opened the communities to new ideologies and methods that the political organizers employed, which were later elaborated in more extended organizing and consciousness-raising efforts. In many ways these new approaches were parallel to those used by the Church, but in other ways they also filled gaps the latter had not yet been able to address. That is, the organizers contributed new ideas for understanding the political and material world, how it works, and the Selva communities' position in it, and new methods for effecting change in that world. Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco refer to this as the addition of a political *comunitas* to the identity of the Cañadas region. From the mid-1970s through to the present, these theologically- and politically- based currents sometimes collaborate and reinforce each other, and sometimes compete and give rise to separate organizations, but both became important influences in the Cañadas settlements' identity, aspirations, and methods.

The first outgrowth of this new common consciousness was the formation of the Union of Ejidos²³ Quiptic ta Lecubtesel among some of the earliest settlements formed in the Patihuitz

²³ During the 1970-76 presidential term of Luis Echeverría, the Union of Ejidos became a newly recognized organizational form promoted by the government as a way to bring the neglected, smallholder agricultural sector of ejidos into the national food supply network. By associating in such Unions, ejidatarios could gain access to credit and loans, and other advantages of scale (SRA 1998).

valley. One of the primary forces solidifying it as an organization and leading to its subsequent growth was the threat the Comunidad Lacandona posed to many settlements' land tenure. Formed at the end of 1975 with 18 member ejidos, in the next few years its ranks swelled with the addition of settlements from along the western and northwestern flanks of the Comunidad Lacandona's boundaries that feared displacement. Many of these, such as those in the Rio Perlas valley, had been stepping stones for, or the sources of, migrants that settled in the eastern communities that became Nueva Palestina, and many had kinship ties to residents of Palestina. Some of these were settlements, such as Santa Rita and its *ampliación*, that initially were contacted by the eastern settlements to form a response to the decree, but evidently ended up casting their lots with Quiptic, instead²⁴. As Legorreta Díaz notes, responding to the Comunidad threat was *the* common cause that built a common political identity within Quiptic during these years; it moved the organization from being primarily defensive of the settlements' interests to one that was pro-active in formulating and taking alternative actions. Responses to the cutting of "la brecha," (a several-meters wide swath to be cut through the forest to demarcate the Comunidad's boundaries) included full-out physical resistance, blocking the ways of the technicians sent out to do the work. Quiptic's initial stance was outright rejection of the Comunidad decree; beginning in the late 70s, the organization turned towards a negotiating stance, offering to respect the Comunidad's boundaries, if, in turn, the government would redraw them to respect the existing settlements and legally recognize their tenure. When the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve was decreed in 1978, even though it was legally not an expropriatory act, but rather an overlay of protected status with norms of usage to be subsequently developed, several more settlements found themselves being told by the government that they would have to

²⁴ This and the previous statement are based on my interview data.

leave. Over the next decade and a half (through 1989), 26 settlements become the focus of Quiptic and its successor organization's fight for tenure legalization²⁵.

From 1978 onward, more Unions of Ejidos began to be formed throughout the Cañadas region, bolstered by the church- and politically-based organizing currents that helped form Quiptic. By 1980, again recognizing strength in numbers and common cause, many of these come together to form an overarching organization, the Union de Uniones Ejidales y Grupos Campesinos Solidarios de Chiapas, commonly referred to simply as the Union de Uniones (hereafter, U. of U.). Although this was not a form legally recognized by the government, it did allow its members to gain leverage in negotiating, for instance, with INMECAFE²⁶, the federal coffee processor and marketer, to commercialize their product; to gain support for the formation of a credit union; and to have a stronger political presence in the state. At one point, its members spanned 13 municipios and around 150 communities located in and outside the Selva region. Throughout the 80s, the Union de Uniones and offshoot organizations attempted to address the communities' economic and legal needs, but in an atmosphere of increasing antagonism and repression on the part of the state government and the regional power structure it represented.

Apart from matters internal to the organizations, the Cañadas settlements' efforts were constantly dogged by the issue of unresolved land tenure and how this placed them in relation to the state and federal governments, to their prospects for economic development, and to the

²⁵ A lot of discussions about this issue typically refer to 26 as the number of communities that were threatened by the Comunidad decree, and indeed, in 1989, 26 settlements were finally legalized by President Salinas de Gortari. However, Legorreta Díaz (1998) notes that in 1992, there were still 12 U. de U. communities with tenure status unresolved and in conflict with either the Comunidad Lacandona (four settlements) or the Reserve (eight settlements); these were communities that had not earlier been members of the organization. De Vos (2002) indicates there were 17 settlements with legal status that were threatened with displacement by the Comunidad decree, but that with the decree of the Reserve, the number threatened with displacement rose to 26. The 17 he lists, however, do not appear among the names of the 26 that were legalized in 1989. Evidently, the number 26 does not reflect the full extent of land conflicts with both decrees during the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, since then, new settlements have continued to be established within both territories.

²⁶ Instituto Mexicano del Café (Mexican Institute for Coffee)

regional ecology. It is the interplay of these relations that has continued to link their fortunes to those of the Comunidad Lacandona through to the present. Without legal land tenure, the settlements couldn't get access to loans, production credits, and services and assistance provided by the government. Without access to these inputs, their options for economic development and ability to develop alternatives to extensive methods of land use were limited. This kept them mired in spirals of increasingly impoverished soils and lowered production, and few options but to open up new lands – which, of course, then put them in conflict with the Reserve and the Comunidad Lacandona. On the other hand, while they received some important commitments on the part of the SRA and state government in 1981 and 1984 to legalize the tenure situations of the 26 communities in question, the resolution of their status continued to be blocked by the state government, which was threatened by the increasing organizational and political capacities of the Cañadas communities. The state conditioned the legalization of tenure on the communities becoming members of the PRI organ, the CNC, while the communities were unwilling to be co-opted in this way. Three of the four Chiapas governors of the 1976-82 *sexenio*²⁷ were particularly hostile. One of them, Gov. Juan Sabines Gutiérrez, is described as consciously playing the interests of the Comunidad against those of the Cañadas communities, fanning antagonisms between them. Rather than working for political solutions, he is described as blaming the latter's lack of cooperation – by either joining the CNC or vacating their settlements and relocating to a Nuevo Centro de Población Ejidal (NCPE) proposed for the Lake Miramar/San Quintín area in the southwestern Selva - for the government's failure to demarcate the Comunidad's boundaries, a failure in turn affecting the Comunidad's own sense of land security. His administration is also described as inciting Comunidad residents to run out non-cooperating settlements cast as invaders. In one particularly violent encounter in 1982, residents

²⁷ Presidential terms in Mexico are for six years, thus the term *sexenio*.

of Nueva Palestina confronted several Quiptic communities on the northern flank of the Comunidad, resulting in hostage-taking and two deaths, and the burning of houses and crops²⁸.

In the mid-1980s, mounting international pressures to save rain forests, and the Lacandon in particular, posed another source of insecurity to the Cañadas settlements. Finding themselves increasingly cast as the villains of deforestation in public media²⁹, and still without tenure, they anticipated that rain forest conservation would become one more pretext to displace them. In a calculated move, the U. of U. skipped over the state bureaucracy and went straight to the newly created federal agency with environmental responsibilities, SEDUE³⁰, and made the compelling case, backed up by their own data, that without title, the settlements were condemned to continued impoverishment of their people and lands; but that with title and subsequent access to credit and other assistance, they could be good ecological stewards. As a result, accords were signed in 1987 with an inter-agency commission³¹ representing state and federal agencies involved in the Selva, in which land rights were to be recognized in exchange for the settlements' acceptance of forest- and Reserve norms, and participation in integrated conservation and development projects that the government committed to support. The accord allowed the U. of U. to take the legal form of an ARIC³² and thereby access various forms of assistance. It further committed to adjusting the Reserve boundary so that communities in the southern part of the Cañadas wouldn't be affected (Márquez Rosano 1994). Similar accords were signed with a couple of Unions of Ejidos in the Márques de Comillas region, and,

²⁸ Harvey (2000) lists these as Nuevo Progreso, Flor de Cacao, and Cintalapa; Legorreta Díaz (1998) adds to this list San Antonio Escobar.

²⁹ Legorreta Díaz (1998) mentions in this context a 1985 segment of the television show "60 Minutes" as being particularly inflammatory in its depictions of the indigenous subsistence communities as destroyers of the forest.

³⁰ Secretaría de Desarrollo Urbano y Ecología (Secretariat of Urban Development and Ecology)

³¹ The Comisión Intersecretarial para la Protección de la Selva Lacandona (Intersecretarial Commission for the Protection of the Lacandon Rain Forest)

³² Asociación Rural de Interés Colectivo (Rural Collective Interest Association). With this change in status, the U de U became known as the ARIC Union de Uniones Ejidales y Sociedades Campesinas de Producción Rural de Chiapas.

according to Legorreta Díaz , with the Comunidad Lacandona. These accords appear to be the first evidence of an institutional recognition of the connection between land tenure and conservation (Márquez Rosano 1994), and one of the first to explicitly integrate conservation with development³³. Unfortunately, few of the commitments made by the government agencies came to pass. However, as a result of these accords, in 1989 the newly installed President Salinas de Gortari did legalize the 26 settlements.

Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco note that during the 1980s, the U. of U. had virtual control of a large part of the region. They add that the only outside agents that moved freely through the region were members of the Church, political organizers, and the buyers of pigs, cattle, and coffee. However, the U. of U. had been working for overt, political solutions, using pressure tactics and negotiations to get the government to address the settlements' needs. Given the hostile, regional political environment and unresolved tenure issues, as well as internal divisions, this was a consistently difficult path. In the context of the frustrations and defeats suffered by working this way, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN)³⁴, offering the alternative of an armed movement, was able to take root and grow as one more option, among several, for achieving change. Many residents of the region have participated concurrently in overt and covert political and church-based organizations, keeping their options open. In 1994, the EZLN erupted into public view as an overt political movement through an armed mobilization. Subsequently, its members have adopted a political stance based on indigenous self-development, self-governance, and rejection of government politics and institutions, in a framework with increasingly broader objectives of economic and social democratization nationally and worldwide. Where organizations like the U. of U. had sought to

³³ This is my evaluation.

³⁴ Zapatista National Liberation Army

pressure the government into giving indigenous people full access to the rights and benefits of the political economy, the EZLN took the stance that the structure as it exists does not work for indigenous people and needs to be rejected. Other indigenous organizations in the region have been in varying degrees of support or opposition. ARIC developed one flank that is supportive of the EZLN and one that has tried to distance itself. The region has developed into a changing mosaic of communities in sympathy, full support, rejection, or mixed acceptance of the EZLN movement. Following the concept of indigenous autonomy, large areas of the Cañadas as well as other parts of the state have organized themselves into free (independent) municipios and “pluri-ethnic” autonomous regions.

Just prior to the 1994 EZLN’s entry into public view, a critical policy change occurred that contributed to the tensions of the region. As discussed in an earlier chapter, in 1992, the Mexican government modified Article 27 of its constitution to discontinue the approximately 70-year policy of land redistribution that had been in place since the Revolution. This meant that ejido land grant applications already in-process would continue to receive attention, but that no new applications would be taken from then on. Given the political, economic, and ecological constraints that the settlements labored under to avoid impoverishment of their soils and communities, this now cut off one of the few remaining options for the generations coming up: expansion to new lands, with the hope of gaining legal tenure, was no longer a possibility.

IV. SUMMARY

From the 1970s to the present, then, several processes link what happens in the Cañadas to what happens in the Comunidad Lacandona, and vice-versa, contributing to the development of serious tensions which continue to be expressed into the present. The establishment of the

Comunidad put the tenure situation of many Cañadas communities at risk; in turn, until those communities' situation was resolved, the Comunidad boundaries also remained unresolved and its communities felt insecure about their own tenure (to be discussed in the next chapter). Yet, the desire of the government (particularly at the state level) to break the newly emerging independence of the Cañadas organizations meant that it prolonged this state of irresolution over almost two decades, allowing antagonisms to develop as the communities in each region were largely left, or encouraged, to work out land disputes on their own through confrontational means, often violent. Meanwhile, without land tenure (a problem that extended to settlements elsewhere in the Cañadas), and in the increasingly hostile political environment, the Cañadas organizations found their attempts to gain more control over their economic and social development through established channels (such as credit, loans, commodity commercialization, and technical assistance) to be increasingly frustrated, while government resources were directed towards those Selva communities that cooperated with the CNC (such as the Comunidad and the NCPEs established in the 80s in the Márques de Comillas region). Recalling that settlement in the Cañadas began earlier than in the Comunidad region, having already gone through two to three generations by the time the latter was being colonized; and recalling the physical and ecological constraints to expansion and intensification in the Cañadas, which was not of equally importance in the Comunidad region, the lack of investment would have particularly acute consequences for the Cañadas settlements. Ironically, with the emergence of the EZLN as an armed resistance movement, the government, as both a political counterbalance and as a way to increase military presence in the region, began some substantial investing of resources in the parts of the Selva to which it still had access. One result of all this is the production and continued reproduction of an opposition between the regions: depending on the perspective, the

Cañadas settlements are often represented by the media, the government, or residents of the Comunidad as *invasores* (invaders) and *bandidos* (outlaws); while media and analysts sympathetic to the independent movements cast the Comunidad settlements as agents of the government participating in the repression of these movements, even as *paramilitares*.

Unfortunately, these characterizations often obscure the fact that the underlying problem was not even created by the settlements on either side of the issue, but rather by the combined, often contradictory, and self-interested actions of government at national and state levels, usually with little reference to the settlements' objectives or participation.

With the establishment of the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve, and the inclusion of an increasingly explicit policy focus on conservation in the 80s and 90s, another line of tension was produced. There were still Cañadas settlements whose tenure status had never been resolved, and the expansion needs of the settlements continued to generate new colonies within the Reserve and Comunidad boundaries. On top of this, after the 1992 modification of Article 27, the option of petitioning for new land grants was eliminated, leaving the colonists few legal options for meeting the needs of future generations. As a result, in addition to being cast as invaders of the Comunidad Lacandona (which focuses on land rights), Cañadas settlements also found themselves being cast as invaders and destroyers of the rain forest and its proxy, the Reserve. This came to be contrasted with representations of the Comunidad Lacandona, with the Lacandons as its public face, as conservers of the rain forest. Residents of Palestina add to this their own version of themselves as conservers of the rain forest that they oppose to the behavior of the Cañadas settlements and even to that of the government, to be explored in a subsequent chapter.

These two (and related) discourses, often conflated, are used at different times to justify different positions or actions on the part of government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and the communities themselves. However, they represent selected understandings of the situation that often lead to further divisiveness and conflict, and, in their selectiveness, often distort or obscure important elements contributing to the situation.

CHAPTER 5

COMMON PROPERTY: RESPONSES OF THE EASTERN SETTLEMENTS

I. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I look at how the settlements in the “eastern” Selva were affected by the creation of the Comunidad Lacandona, what their response were, and how it is that many of them came to be incorporated into the Comunidad as the towns of Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal. Often, this process is represented in the literature as one in which the settlements involved are relatively passive vis-à-vis the government and/or the victims of its coercion. In doing the research, I found the reality, as it always is, to be more complicated, in that the residents of the settlements describe themselves as being more active agents in determining their future than is usually represented. Here I present an alternative narrative of how this is negotiated among the settlements and between the settlements and the government. The process of working out their new status as comuneros – in relation to the government, as one of the three main communities of the Comunidad, internally within the new town of Palestina, and in relation to other indigenous settlements in the region - is one that plays out over many years, and has an important bearing on how Palestinos’ economic objectives and ecological practices evolve. In this chapter, the evolution of Comunidad, ecology, and economy is followed through the period just prior to the activation of the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve and other institutional conservation projects in the 1990s. During the period traced here,

national and international conservation interests are latent, as intentions, but do not yet come into play in any concrete way in terms of interacting with comuneros' actions.

The history of this part of the Selva is fairly sparse in relation to other parts of the region. The information for this section comes primarily from the oral histories as well as informal interviews and conversations with comuneros and others long-present in the region. Although my focus is on Palestina, much information also comes from Pedro Díaz Solís, of Frontera Corozal, who not only held key formal leadership positions from 1974 through 1979 for all of the settlements involved, but who is also widely acknowledged among residents as being a key force in what happened. This section also benefits from the works of Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980) and Lobato (1979), who were present in the communities at key moments in their early formation.

II. INCORPORATION INTO THE COMUNIDAD

When most of the residents I interviewed talked about how they came to move from living in dispersed settlements in the Selva to becoming comuneros in the new town of Nueva Palestina, their accounts of this part of the process suggested three determining phases. In the first, they find out that their hopes of obtaining legal tenure for their settlements in the form of ejido land grants is no longer possible. It becomes clear from the sequences they describe, and in some cases from actual dates they mention, that this process begins as early as 1972 and 1973 for many of them. Most of them describe finding this out through their visits to SRA offices in the state capital or in San Cristóbal to follow through on the ejido application process. Curiously, none of them recount being told that this was due to the Comunidad Lacandona decree. More often, the reasons they mention being given are that the government, sometimes specifically the

President, wouldn't permit any more ejidos in the region; or, that the area already was, or was slated to be, a national park. Sometimes they were told that all applications, including for *ampliaciones*, or extensions, were canceled. One fellow remembers being given hope that his settlement's (Flor de Cacao) application might still go through, because the park boundary wasn't established yet and might miss his settlement. However, by 1974, he recalls, they were advised that their application, too, was canceled. Another man, from the settlement of San Pablo, recalled that even though he was told the area was designated to be a national park, there was one section of 900 ha., that they could still apply for and occupy. Later on, they, too, are told this is no longer an option.

A second phase involves the settlements coming to realize they are all in the same boat, and organizing to find a way to be allowed to stay in their settlements in the Comunidad. It seems that at this stage, in 1973 through 1974, the purpose of their collaboration is to avoid being forced to abandon the zone, with relocation to a new center of population in the Laguna Miramar area being the only concrete option the government offered at that point. Neighboring settlements begin comparing notes about their situations, and often, their representatives run into each other in the SRA halls where they have gotten the bad news. As it becomes clearer that the shift in policy means that they're expected to abandon their colonies, the settlements begin to mount joint efforts of their leaders to fight this. About this process, most of the accounts lack detail, but there are references to meetings that are rotated throughout the settlements, and joint commissions of the settlement representatives to Mexico City to both ascertain and press their case. Several residents recall that the state SRA office, in the person of its delegate, Enoc Cruz, was unpleasant, unsympathetic, and obstructionist, consistently maintaining that the settlements would have to leave. Because of this, the settlements adopted the strategy of dealing exclusively

and directly with the SRA in Mexico City. In Díaz Solís' narratives, this cross-settlement organizational process is initiated by himself and the heads of six other settlements, who decide to join forces to fight removal and then set about recruiting the other communities³⁵.

Díaz Solís also comments that during 1973 and into 1974, he and other settlement leaders joined the "organization of the Ocosingo priests". He found the meetings and activities stimulating, and appreciated the forum they offered for sharing and talking about the common issues that the Selva settlements faced. He talked about the catequistas in the settlements, and that organizing to resist being chased from their communities was one of the themes treated. But, by the spring or so of 1974, he says, they left "the organization". The representatives of the eastern settlements felt that they had come late to a process that had already been building for some 20 or 25 years, Díaz Solís said. They weren't comfortable with a current among the organization that seemed to be suggesting the use of armed force if the government didn't respond adequately to their needs. From then on, he said, they were completely on their own.

Once the strategy was adopted of fighting displacement, many acknowledged it was necessary to get the Lacandons' agreement to their continued presence. A watershed moment in this phase that residents recall is an accord signed on July 10, 1974 in Plan de Ayutla, between 23 settlements³⁶ and the Lacandons, with the Director of the Dirección de Bienes Comunales, (the Division of Communal Property within the SRA), José Pacheco Loya, present. Some recall that the settlements' representatives had been talking in advance with the Lacandons and their leader at the time, José Pepe Chambor, to gain their support. One recalls that the Lacandons

³⁵ The seven settlements consisted of Alfredo Bonfil, Díaz Solís' own community; Rio Cedro, another Ch'ol settlement, whose leader Pedro Sánchez Montejo, spoke Tzeltal and facilitated communications; Guadalupe Tepeyac, Rio Colorado, Plan de Ayutla, Palestina, and San Pablo, all Tzeltal communities. Interestingly, Díaz Solís recounted that he and companions had actually engaged in a down-and-out physical fight with these settlements earlier, who didn't want Ch'ols living nearby, and thereby earned their respect.

³⁶ Residents' accounts refer to both 21 and 23 settlements during this phase, usually the latter. From this point on, Díaz Solís refers to 23 settlements for which he is the General Representative, and which are included in the Bienes Comunales census mentioned in the following paragraph.

were adverse to their staying, but that the federal government was asked to intervene and persuade the Lacandons to agree. Díaz Solís remembers that there wasn't resistance from the Lacandons, themselves, so much as from the state government, which used inflammatory tactics to try to turn the Lacandons against them. Most residents framed the event in Plan de Ayutla simply as establishing their right to stay in the Comunidad, conditioned by José Pepe Chambor on their felling as little forest as possible, and as marking the appointment of a few residents to act as a permanent *Consejo*, or commission, to promote their affairs vis-à-vis the government. Pedro Díaz Solís was named the Representante General, with members of other settlements named to positions in the commission; Samuel Cruz Guzmán, from the Tzotzil settlement of Chetumal (and later the first official head of Nueva Palestina), was named *Consejo de Vigilancia*. The commission acted in the name of the Unión de Pueblos Ch'ols, Tzeltales y Lacandona.

The residents interviewed didn't frame this event as establishing under what physical or legal arrangements they would be allowed to stay, and don't indicate what caused the change in status from "having to leave" to "being allowed to stay" to occur. In contrast, Díaz Solís specifically describes the 1974 accord as one that established their future rights as comuneros³⁷, to be pursued now through the organized efforts of the commission of which he was head, and provides a narrative for how this change was negotiated. It starts with the efforts of the initial nucleus of the seven settlements that had joined forces. Díaz Solís recalls them presenting a letter to the government in which they invoked their rights as Mexicans and Chiapanecans to demand their rights be respected. Upon finding resistance at the state level, they went directly to the SRA in Mexico City, where they met with a Sergio Peña and asked him to see the actual

³⁷ Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980) indicates the accord required the settlements to take a role in preventing future immigration, and Lobato (1979) that it required their concentration within the Comunidad in two new towns, although this does not show up in residents' narratives, especially Díaz Solís', till after this event.

Comunidad decree in order to see if there was some way they could legally stay. They also met with José Pacheco Loya, Director of Bienes Comunales, and a representative³⁸ of INI (Instituto Nacional Indigenista³⁹), who offered support and encouraged their efforts. They subsequently returned to Mexico City with representatives of more settlements in tow and a demand for some kind of written resolution of their status. Sergio Peña provided them written support that there was a clause in the decree that allows for other indigenous people in the area to be included in the Comunidad⁴⁰. As a result of this finding and continued meetings in the capital, Pacheco Loya and INI supported their petitions to be included as comuneros, and the July 10, 1974 meeting and accord resulted⁴¹. It also resulted in a census of the petitioning settlements, carried out by agents of Bienes Comunales during July or August of that same summer, to document who the future comuneros will be. This resulted in a total of 1,452 heads of families being registered⁴².

The third phase represented in residents' accounts is that of negotiating on what basis and in what form they would stay in the Comunidad, which continued to generate a fair amount of movement, meetings, and debates. Here, residents described learning that they would either have to concentrate in new population centers⁴³ or leave the Comunidad. Whether or not, and how to do so, primarily occupied them in the years 1974, 1975, and even in 1976, when the two towns were established, but this was part of an ongoing issue that, in some respects, didn't really

³⁸ A Professor Najmatziton (my phonetic spelling of Díaz Solís' pronunciation).

³⁹ National Indigenist Institute, federal organ responsible for advising and carrying out federal policy regarding Mexico's indigenous population.

⁴⁰ There are two somewhat mysterious sections in the decree that offer this possibility (Diario Oficial, March 6, 1972:11, 13), one of the anomalies of the decree that De Vos (2002) points out.

⁴¹ Legorreta Díaz (1998) points out that in 1971, Dr. Aguirre Beltrán of the INI rendered the opinion, in support of the Comunidad decree, that there were no competing indigenous claimants for the territory, and later in 1975 recanted.

⁴² Díaz Solís comments that the settlement of Palestina wasn't included in this census, as its leader, Marcos Sánchez, was still hopeful for some other resolution of its status.

⁴³ Some people refer to them just as new population centers, and some, as new ejido population centers (NCPEs).

get put to rest until December 18 of 1978, with the presidential decree that definitively legalized their rights as comuneros. In addition, that some settlement residents accepted concentration and some didn't, ended up contributing to confrontations and land conflicts that persist through to the present.

In residents' accounts, the most common understanding of the government's rationale for why they had to concentrate was that, as many dispersed settlements, all demanding public services of roads, schools, electricity, and health clinics, the government couldn't afford to support them. However, if they concentrated into two large settlements, the government would be able to provide these services. Some residents also remember being told that as dispersed settlements, they were destroying the forest too quickly, and that, by contrast, nucleating the settlements would prevent this; that is, it was also justified in terms of conserving the forest. Some understood that the area was to be designated as a national park, and that, in itself, required removing the settlements, either completely, or by relocating to the designated areas. Evidently, the possibility of leaving the area completely and relocating to an NCPE in the Lake Miramar region continued to be an option offered to them. These two passages are typical of how residents described the government's reasons for requiring them to concentrate. The speaker is recalling another event well-remembered during this phase, the visits of the governor and the president to Chancalá on May 15 and 30th, respectively, of 1975, to address the issue of the settlements' fate.

So when President Echeverría, when he had come to Chancalá, well right there he said why we were going to concentrate. President Echeverría said, because every time you come to the palace, you ask me for roads, for potable water, for electric lights, but it's very difficult for me to give you that support. Why? Because there aren't people. Because the government has no business spending its money for a little settlement, for providing a good road, or electric lights. That's what President Echeverría said, that's why I want to concentrate you all in one place so

you can get better support. For example, roads, clinic, or good schools, and many more services that will be given to you, the president said. (MPC)

Why do you think I'm going to put you all in just one place? Because, look, every time you burn the milpa, one starts a fire, then another also, then another also starts a fire, when all the fires come together, everything goes at once, the president said. That's how your land is being destroyed, the fertility is being destroyed, the forest, the mahogany, the tropical cedar, the jade palm, everything is being destroyed on the land, you don't know how to take care of your lands, so the land's being destroyed. That's why you're going to concentrate in a population center, so that that way, the forest, it won't be being destroyed every day every year... That's what the government said, why this town was made, so that you'll know to take care of your lands, that you won't be cutting forest, or only in the *acahuals* that you have in each settlement, that you'll just work there. (MPC)

The interviewees talked about the ways in which the colonists weighed the pros and cons of accepting this relocation and the tensions and disagreements that arose amongst them as a result. These discussions reveal some deep-seated ambivalences about relations between the government and indigenous people, given both past and recent history, about issues of self-determination, as well as about their prospects for seeking a future outside the government's offer. It also reveals a confusion or mistrust about what, exactly, an NCPE was, how this would fit with communal property, and what it would imply for control over land, social relations, and decision-making.

One set of concerns expressed a profound distrust of the government and its intentions, and a fear of losing the freedom and self-determination they had so recently achieved:

Well, at that time, since people didn't know anything, some said this: No, they said, you decided to go to Palestina, but you'll be slaves, they said, you'll be the government's people, they said, the government will make you slaves. And those who were frightened by them, they left. Then it's better in the finca, they said, they went back. (RTR)

Isn't it that the government will make us their slave? Won't it be that the government is going to send us there to kill us? (...) That's what people were saying. (GCD)

But then, no one knew what a new center of population is, they thought it was a lie. So, many became afraid and went back. (PSM)

Then, they started to say, it's better if we leave here again, so that we won't be *mozos*, because if not, there'll be a lot of service [unpaid work for the community and lots of cooperation [monetary contributions], they said. It'll be nothing but work, they said. So, that's how it was that some left. (MRA)

Because a lot of people left when they learned (it was being formed as) a New Ejido Center of Population. For instance, they said (we would) be *mozos*, it was going to be something communist, like in Cuba, that I was a *castrista*, that I was manipulating the people. And then it was said, the news came, bad news, where each *comunero* or each family was going to share women with the others. (PDS)

Another set of concerns was about how access to land would be affected. Some felt that having located the best lands for farming in the region, they might be forced to abandon them for other land of unknown quality. Others weren't sure how much land they would be allowed to cultivate under the different arrangements, a concern evidently fanned by agents from outside the community⁴⁴

A group of my uncles went from Chamizal to Limonar to Busiljá. My uncle didn't want to come (to Palestina), even though he was on the list. There, in an *ejido*, at least you'll probably get your 20 hectares, but here, since it's communal, it wasn't known how many hectares you would get here. (MGS)

Marcos, in those days, was saying, don't join the *comunidad*, they'll only give one hectare, so some people left. In the mountains, the actual Marcos⁴⁵, was organizing even in those days. (DTR)

Then they asked if they would keep working there in the same places where they were. For example, Guadalupe, Chamizal, they worked right there where they were... And so, they said that it was alright, they would return to work right there where their fields were, it would just be their houses that they would build in the new population center. (MRA)

⁴⁴ Samuel Cruz Guzmán, of Palestina, remembers several visits of an American Marist nun, who he says tried to persuade him that they would have more freedom and control over such issues if they stayed out in the settlements rather than relocate to the new towns.

⁴⁵ The reference is presumably to Subcomandante Marcos of the EZLN.

For those whose settlements were distant from the expected site for Palestina, such as Jalapa, the hardships of moving so far from their fields was daunting. One man felt he couldn't disobey the government at the time, but felt the decision had cost him:

Because, when we were in the settlements, it was much better than it is here, because it's a lot of suffering, the parcel where we work is far, we have to walk three to four hours, those of us who have distant fields, it's not the same as when we were in the settlement. Because when we were in the settlement, we just walked a half an hour and we arrived where our corn, beans, and everything that we wanted, was. (EMG)

Many people were concerned about starting over again, after so much blood, sweat and tears invested. For some this was a reason to leave; for others it was reason to accept the concentration, since they weren't willing to start over from scratch outside the Comunidad, nor had anything to go back to anywhere else.

There were some who didn't like it that there was nothing, there was no corn, there was no house, since in the place where they were, maybe they had already built a house. (MPC)

And so, from there, our *compañeros*⁴⁶ or those that were in the ejido, Cintalapa, began to think, well, that we already knew each other, and we already had our work [fields]. (MPC)

And we stayed here, we didn't want to leave, because we already had a little piece of land. So we decided, if we end up being the *mozos* of the government, so be it, we said, because where else were we going to go, if there's no land back where we came from to go back to. Then we said, we've already found land, that's why we have to live here, we said. (MRA)

But the people didn't know where to go, there wasn't any other land. But where, they thought. And so they didn't look for anywhere else to go. Because some people's wives had already died here, some people's wives were already buried here, some children had already died, there were men that were widowers and also women that were widows. So that's why they couldn't look for some other place to go. (MPC)

⁴⁶ Fellow settlement members.

And we thought it was good that the government concentrate us, because we were from a rancho, we didn't have land, we were poor, and when we came here, we had no house to sleep in, there's no house, there's no milpa, there's nothing to eat... And so we started to believe and he who believed stayed here, and he who didn't believe is he who still had some land, that's why he went back, what else did he need, since he had his land still. (DSH)

Just like it was said a moment ago, he who accepted, here his bones will be buried, and he who was just passing through, it's he that doesn't know where he will die... those of us that came later are here, who were truly looking for land, and he who was just passing through, well, we don't know where they're buried now. (PPC)

Others thought it better to return where they had something more predictable to go to; some stayed in the settlements they had been in, hoping to avoid relocation, or joined indigenous organizations (such as those of the Cañadas) to help secure their land:

But those who didn't believe, well, that's why they're still being deceived that they will still get their land. Because it will never be worked out, there, where they're fighting now. They keep on deceiving them, and why, well, because the government said there will never be any more ejido grants, nor extensions, in the Lacandon zone; rather, from now on the ejido grants are finished, the president said. That's why, now, that's the suffering of those who didn't want to come to the population center. (MPC)

Then they said, what else do we need, since there's land here that we left, we can go back there again, they said, who's going to run us out, since it's already our land, they said. So they went back there to the same settlements that we had left, they went to build their houses again right there. But since the government had said that no one can stay there anymore, and there wasn't permission to stay in the settlements, we had already left... Later, I said to them, if you don't want to be the government's mozos, better that you leave here, because we, ourselves, are going to work here, I told them. Then they went to organize themselves with other groups, that's how they went against the government, because they didn't know anymore where to go. That's how the organization started, or the politics, because they got very mad at the government. (MRA)

During this phase, probably in 1975, the government took representatives of the settlements to the nearby state of Quintana Roo, where they could see actual examples of NCPEs that had already been built. This gave form and credibility to the government's proposals, and helped persuade many that an NCPE could not only be a good thing, but that the government

might actually deliver on its promises: they saw towns with well-developed infrastructures, houses made of block and tile, and a level of development that members of the settlements couldn't imagine achieving on their own⁴⁷. One gets the sense that for many, this provided an alternative, more prosperous image of the "promised land," the new life and new beginning that they came to the Selva to found: in place of poor campesinos, scraping a modest but independent living out of the forest in isolated settlements, they saw a more urbanized image of indigenous people running their own town that was about as well-appointed as any small, average mestizo town. Nevertheless, the doubts and mistrust were deep and persistent, and, as referred to in the passages above, seriously divided the residents of many communities. It wasn't really clear to people what they would be giving up and what they would be gaining; it was, absolutely, a gamble. And the stakes were high, given the years of deprivation and instability that had preceded getting to the point of finally carving out a piece of independence, the number of times that many had started up and started over, and the context of slim prospects outside the Selva that had driven them there, in the first place.

1975 seems to have been a year in which the settlements grappled with their options, weighing pros and cons and seeking more information. Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980) and Lobato (1979) talk about efforts being mounted on the part of the government to persuade the communities to buy into its plan: SRA teams went settlement to settlement, and the regional representative for INI, himself a Tzeltal, was an effective spokesperson. The visits to Chancalá of Governor Velasco Suárez on the 15th and 16th of May in that year, and of the president on the 30th, are recalled in this context. Some residents' accounts, including that of Díaz Solís, recalled the governor still hostile to their cause at this stage, that he scolded them, called them invaders,

⁴⁷ For instance, Díaz Solís explained that this visit convinced the colony of Palestina, which had previously opted out of joining the movement to become comuneros and therefore not been included in the Bienes Comunes census, to accept concentration in an NCPE.

and told them they had to leave the Comunidad. With the help of university students from Mexico City, a statement was prepared that Díaz Solís read to the governor. In this statement, the union of settlements declared their refusal to leave the Comunidad, that they would not relocate to the Miramar region, but that they would consider some version of relocation to the proposed new centers within the Comunidad. Díaz Solís recalls the governor getting particularly angry at their position, and that the governor evidently had not yet been informed of decisions at the federal level to allow the settlements to stay, if they concentrated. When the president arrived 15 days later, as residents recall in passages above, he made the federal position clear to all.

Again, as with the 1974 accord, most of the accounts give little indication of how the situation changed from being accepted as future comuneros, to having their stay being conditioned on relocation to the two towns to be created for the purpose. Here again, Díaz Solís provides a detailed narrative for what turns out to be some interesting political maneuvering. As he tells it, during the years of 1973 and 1974, as he took a growing leadership role among the settlements organizing to stay in the Comunidad, he saw many instances of the frontier justice and lawlessness that was plaguing the colonies. Plus, it was a fact of life in the Selva that all official business, anything requiring access to public services, required two to three days of walking to get to Ocosingo, the administrative center of the municipio that much of the Selva fell into. Once the 1974 accord was signed that committed the Lacandons and the department of Bienes Comunes to getting the settlements included as comuneros, he decided to pursue the idea of forming a *cabecera* (headquarters or administrative center) in the Comunidad, a town which would have judges, municipal agents, law enforcement, and other public services. He had in mind the example of Oxchuc, in the central highlands, which he understood to be a

comunidad, not a municipio, but which had its own cabecera. In the case of the Comunidad Lacandona, he imagined the cabecera being formed by those residents of the colonies, Tzeltal and Ch'ol⁴⁸, that wanted to live in the new town, while others would be free to stay out in their settlements. He recalls presenting this idea to Pacheco Loya in October of 1974, who encouraged him to pursue it with the other settlers; with their written agreement, the director of Bienes Comunales was willing to pursue it.

When he made the cabecera proposal to the settlements, Díaz Solís says, he didn't think they would buy it if they thought the idea was just his. So, he attributed it to the government, telling them the division of Bienes Comunales said they should form a cabecera as a way of getting some services and administrative infrastructure in the Comunidad. He found that the Ch'ol settlements were interested and would relocate to an urban center; most of the Tzeltal communities, on the other hand, preferred to stay in their settlements but were willing to support the founding of a cabecera. One idea briefly discussed was to lay out a cabecera with one neighborhood for Tzeltals and another for Ch'ols. Díaz Solís considered the area around current-day Palestina as a possible location, but with the aid of the Lacandons, scouted out an area in the southeast section of the Comunidad, along the Usumacinta River, that looked ample enough for a town and agricultural fields. This area became the future site of Frontera Corozal. Getting the Lacandons' help with this involved agreeing to a location that they considered far enough away from their own settlement and lands.

By the end of 1974, however, Díaz Solís found that Bienes Comunales had turned their petition for a cabecera over to another department of the SRA. In a meeting with Pacheco Loya

⁴⁸ Despite the tendency of both resident and government discourse to focus on just the two language groups, it's important to remember that two of the settlements were almost, if not exclusively, Tzotzil (Chetumal and San Antonio), and that there were Ch'ols living in some of the Tzeltal settlements and who later moved with them to Nueva Palestina.

in Mexico City, he learned that Bienes Comunales didn't have a budget for building a whole new town from scratch, but that the NCPE program, which was being funded by a United Nations program, did. The catch was that this program was administered by a different department of the SRA, and that the new centers it funded were structured as ejidos, not comunidades. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, although there are similarities in the laws governing the two legal forms of collective property, such as the internal governance structures required, ejidos imply a much greater role for the federal government in such things as defining the locations and allocations of land, as well as determining how much agricultural land each member gets. By contrast, comunidades, meant to be more accommodating of indigenous cultural practices, have greater freedom in directing internal matters such as land use and allocation among members, and are not restricted in total size. Moreover, since the NCPEs were being promoted by the government as a new, controlled form of colonization, the degree of government intervention planned under this arrangement was even higher.

Díaz Solís recounts that Pacheco Loya encouraged him to take advantage of the NCPE program's benefits, if he could, while still keeping the settlements on the Comunidad track. According to Díaz Solís, this is exactly what they did over the next few years in a sometimes precarious balancing act. In December of 1974, the representatives of the 23 settlements met with the president in Xochimilco (near Mexico City) in the presence of the SRA, INI, and CNC, where they were told that the cabecera would be carried out, but in the form of an NCPE. When the president visited Chancalá in May of the next year and made the statements recalled above about the need to concentrate, he announced that there would be two NCPEs, one for the Tzeltals and one for the Ch'ols. Recalling his plan for one cabecera of both Tzeltals and Ch'ols, Díaz Solís said: *"Pero resulta el gobierno, dice él, no es posible juntar los saraguatos con los*

changos” (But the government, it says it’s not possible to put the howler monkeys with the (other) monkeys). In Díaz Solís’ account, this is how the situation came to be structured, in 1975, into one of forced concentration for all of them, into two separate centers, as a condition of staying in the Comunidad.

A second census, this time by the division of NCPEs, was conducted in 1975, resulting in a list of 1,340 families⁴⁹. To the heads of family included in this census, a credential, in the form of an identification card with photo, was issued. Also on the card is the text of an accord between the SRA and the “Tzeltal and Ch’ol groups of the Comunidad Lacandona.” The agreement establishes that, from the SRA’s point of view, the objective of establishing the two towns for the 23 settlements is to “preserve the forest’s wealth and prevent spontaneous colonization” by “forming a containment barrier against future invasions”⁵⁰. It then lists eight points of the agreement. The first four commit the accredited to move to the two new centers (including to benefit from the infrastructure that will be offered) and working collectively in those areas designated for cultivation. The other four commit the settlers to prevent more colonization of the Selva Lacandona (not the Comunidad), prevent forest fires and destruction of the fauna, report invaders or forest destroyers to the authorities, and safeguard these credentials that establish them as “guardians of the Comunidad Lacandona.” The only commitment on the part of the government represented here is to provide infrastructure and designate areas of cultivation; there’s no mention of land tenure, nor of any rights in the Comunidad or an NCPE. In this text, the expectation that the settlers’ foremost role and commitment in the bargain is to

⁴⁹ The numbers are not the same as for the Bienes Comunales census, because many families and some settlements opted in or out of this new arrangement, which they kept on doing through the next few years, regardless of whether they’d been listed in one or the other census. For many, being included in a census, even if they weren’t sure how they would make up their minds in the context of uncertain and changing circumstances, at least kept their options open

⁵⁰ “Convenio celebrado entre la Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria y los grupos Tzeltales y Choles de la Comunidad Lacandona”. Dated June 22, 1975.

act as “guardians” and “barriers” is explicitly in the forefront, and also places them in adversarial relations to other Selva settlements. In Díaz Solís’ estimation, this credential was an artifact of the ambiguity of the position being adopted by the settlements in relation to the government proposals, having neither achieved comunero status nor accepted their incorporation into NCPEs.

As Díaz Solís tells it, the settlements were able to work it so that when the building of the two towns was begun during the dry season of 1976, it was done using NCPE funds, even though he continued to refuse to sign off, as Representante General of the united settlements, on converting their petitions from communal status to NCPE status. When the department of NCPEs saw that he wasn’t cooperating, it got angry with him; he recalls being offered a hefty bribe at one point to either get the settlements on board or out of the Comunidad. Somehow, though, he was able to keep negotiating with them and pull off his strategy.

But the strategy was also complicated by the imminent change of the sexenio in 1976 and the installment of a new presidential administration and governorship. Typically, this is a time when there is either great bureaucratic inertia and little gets done in government, or, conversely, a time when politicians rush to spend what budget is left in order to leave their “legacies”. Lobato (1979) notes that despite the big federal push in early 1975 for the two NCPEs, and despite the great personal interest that the governor took after the May meetings⁵¹, the government’s plan actually languished throughout the rest of the year, until the settlements, including the Lacandons, conducted a Comunidad-wide blockade of COFOLASA lumbering activities as a pressure tactic. When the project started up in 1976, it was with dwindling funds, far insufficient to carry out the ambitious plans that had been represented to the settlements.

⁵¹ Palestina residents and Díaz Solís recall that Velasco Suárez came every eight days to the Selva to see how things were going, encourage them, and sometimes scold them. Despite his initial opposition, both Díaz Solís and Cruz Guzmán recall developing a warm, although paternalistic, relationship with the governor during this time. Lobato (1979) places this within the context of the governor’s desire to leave his legacy in the Selva, and describes these meetings, in the nearby ejido of Arroyo Granizo, as political shows with little substance or direction.

Díaz Solís recalls that the U.N. funding for the NCPE program⁵², as well as presidential and gubernatorial interest in their situation, ended with the sexenio change in 1976.

The settlers' mistrust of government promises was not ill-founded. As current residents recall it, when the settlements were finally established in 1976, the amount of government support was a far cry from what had been promised. Evidently, there were ample technicians to survey the sites, lay out the streets, and direct the work. At least in the case of Nueva Palestina, there was some heavy machinery to help move tree trunks and later, grade the future streets. Otherwise, the land was prepared and the settlements built entirely by the hand and back labor of the colonists themselves, compensated by the government at a rate of 25 pesos a day for the 90-day period budgeted for construction. The government provided a package of roofing for each family, some basic construction tools, nails, and wire, as well as some food provisions. The government agency, INDECO, that was supposed to provide concrete block housing, only came through for a percentage of families in each town. A government CONASUPO store was established to help provide limited, low-priced basic foodstuffs. A dirt track was opened from Palestina to the north-south road that Aserraderos Bonampak had built, and that road was extended in a very provisional way down to near where Frontera Corozal was being built. But there were no clinics built, no electricity put in, no water supply system, no waste disposal systems, not even latrines. Most of these things came piecemeal, in fits and starts, over the next three decades, usually as a result of pressures exerted by the town's residents, and most of it not until the later 80s or 90s. At the time I did my research, in Nueva Palestina, a town of some 10,000 people, household latrines were a recent phenomenon, as was reliable piped water in some of its neighborhoods.

⁵² The NCPE program didn't end here, but continued to be promoted, as mentioned earlier in the text, in the southern Selva region of Márques de Comillas during the 1980s. However, there, too, much of the federal support promised never materialized (Dichtl 1988).

Palestina residents remember the period of the two towns' construction with a mixture of anguish and pride, as a time of great hardship, but also as a monumental undertaking achieved through their own collective efforts. Initial preparations began in February, and in Nueva Palestina, the actual work began in March and lasted through May. One of the first tasks was to clear the central, public square of the town, and then build two huge houses of wood and thatch to serve as a dormitory and a meeting place. Until that was done, many walked each evening through the forest, often in the dark, to their settlements to sleep and returned early the next morning; many slept under the trees at the new site. Although some kind of food was provided, many speak of having to bring food from home with them daily. Brigades of workers were formed, each dedicated to a specific task and given a target they had to meet for the day: felling wood, sawing planks, clearing and burning the "trash", collecting palm for roofing. The leaders of each settlement worked out which section of town would become their *barrio*, or neighborhood. When the *solares*, or house lots, were laid out and cleared, the houses were not built by individual owners, but rather by *barrio* teams who finished one house and moved on to the next. Individuals from the settlements themselves were assigned to supervise the work brigades. Many residents recall being driven mercilessly by their own appointed leaders: it didn't matter if you were sick and fevered, hungry, or tired, you had to work sunup to sundown, seven days a week. As one resident recalled, they chafed under the command of some of their fellow settlers, who assumed what seemed an arrogant authority over them. At the same time, this resident recalled that people worked with some contentment, seeing that their houses, their places in the Selva, were finally taking form. He remembers standing back to watch the impressive process unfolding before him and wishing that he were literate enough to write it all down. When there were at least provisional houses to move into, the residents were supposed to

dismantle their houses in the old settlements. Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980) adds that the SRA and INI helped the families move their belongings to the new town.

While Palestina residents remember this as a time of suffering, at least they had some advantages over the Ch'ol settlements that moved to Frontera Corozal. According to residents' accounts, Palestina settlers were still able to get food supplies from their old settlements and fields, as well as from the milpas and animals abandoned by the Ch'ols. That meant that when the government monetary stipend and food support stopped at the end of May, at least they had a source of food nearby. Plus, they had a dirt track, passable year-round, to the main highway, allowing easier communications with commercial centers to the north, and an extended presence of government agents. A sawmill was also installed some time during the year that helped produce lumber for house construction. By contrast, as Díaz Solís, as well as Burguete Cal y Mayor and Lobato recount, the eight Ch'ol settlements moved to a site that was some 40 km from their old fields. They took what they could with them while it was still dry season and land transport was provided. When the rainy season hit (typically at the end of May), the track opened towards Frontera was impassable, transport shifted to airlifts, and even less could be brought. In addition to their 25 pesos a day, the government provided two airlifts of food, and then stopped. The beginning of construction was much delayed and took longer than in Palestina because of the logistics of first getting everyone there and then running into the rainy season. Once the rains began, the Ch'ol settlers found themselves in a very rudimentary settlement, cut off from the outside, with little food, and sickness rampant as the rainy season progressed and the river flooded parts of the area. Some actually made trips on foot back to their old milpas to see what they could haul back, and extensive hunting helped fill the gap. The proximity of Guatemala across the river also saved them: the government's stipend, plus the sale of xate and

other understory palm leaves in the forest allowed them to buy food there. Díaz Solís describes how the settlers despaired and turned their anger against him for having gotten them into such a terrible situation.

As Lobato (1979) notes, once the sexenio change took effect later in 1976, the technicians left and the towns were pretty much on their own. Díaz Solís and Palestina residents report feeling abandoned after that, even more so in the case of Frontera. They saw COFOLASA, the parastatal lumbering company, continue to take out lumber from the forests around them (an activity ostensibly prohibited to Frontera and Palestina residents as a condition of being “guardians” of the Selva) and contribute to the government’s coffers, while the basic infrastructure of their towns remained incomplete and government commitments to them unfulfilled. Moreover, despite the great amount of personal effort and suffering they’d endured, they still did not have legal tenure. According to Díaz Solís, Lobato, and Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980), at the end of 1976 and again in February of 1977, both Palestina and Frontera residents resorted to pressure tactics to get the government’s attention. They blocked roads, held up chicle workers near Frontera, set machinery on fire, and sequestered the personnel and equipment of COFOLASA. As a result, Frontera was able to get several months’ worth of grading, clearing and other work that had never been done, as well as somewhat improved road access to the main highway. More importantly, in March of 1977, an accord was signed by the governor, relevant agencies, and the representatives of the Lacandons, Tzeltales, and Ch’ols, that recognized them as having full rights as comuneros (subject to execution by presidential resolution), formalized the structure of internal governance and the distribution of COFOLASA royalties among the three groups, and outlined intentions to designate subdivisions of the Comunidad territory that would fall to each group to use and manage. In exchange for the government’s agreement to

these commitments, the members of the Comunidad Lacandona were to offer their cooperation to the relevant government agencies, and, significantly, allow COFOLASA to do its work⁵³. The relevant presidential resolution was not made effective until two years later, being passed in December 18, 1978 and published in the Diario Oficial March 8 of 1979.

III. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COMUNIDAD

The 1977 accord laid down the basic framework for the internal governance structure that integrates Frontera, Palestina, and the Lacandon communities organizationally as a comunidad. Recognizing that each group has its own “forms of social and economic organization,” and is located at some distance from the others, the accord establishes as the principal means of Comunidad-wide coordination a Consejo, or council, in which each ethnic group would have one representative, with the Lacandon representative always having right of veto. It further elaborates two bodies, based in agrarian law, to carry out the matters of the Comunidad: a Comisariado (or Commission) de Bienes Comunales and a Consejo de Vigilancia, each of which has the structure of a president, a secretary, and a treasurer. In each case, a Lacandon will always fulfill the role of president, while a Tzeltal and a Ch’ol will take one each of the other two offices. The accord justifies the ultimate veto power of the Lacandons as a measure to protect the numerically inferior group from being “subjugated” to the interests of the others. This dominant role for the Lacandons was then formalized in the 1979 decree that gave Palestina and Frontera comunero status. The accord also established that royalties paid by COFOLASA to the community for timber exploitation would be shared with the new comuneros, along the following lines: 30% would be for direct distribution, in equal shares, to each comunero, except that the Lacandons would receive a double share; 35% would be reserved for expenses related to

⁵³ “Convenio sobre los derechos de grupos choles y tzeltales en la zona lacandona”, March 30, 1977.

emergency assistance to comuneros; and the remaining 35% would be put in a fund to be used for general development and infrastructure purposes. In 1977, INI assumed administration of the royalty funds from FONAFE (Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980).

Díaz Solís and Palestina residents indicate they had no problem with the dominant role given the Lacandons. They had, after all, since 1973, taken the Lacandon precedence as a legal given, evolving their joint strategy as one of inclusion in the Comunidad, even though some individual settlements opted out of this and either continued trying to get ejido status or took a position of resistance. As a part of this strategy, the leaders of the settlements had developed what appeared to be warm and respectful working relations with the Lacandon president of the time, José Pepe Chambor, as reflected in their recollections. As Díaz Solís said, from then on, each community pretty much set about dealing with its own affairs.

Over time, the basic framework became further elaborated and was codified in 1992 in a set of written internal regulations for the Comunidad⁵⁴. These regulations recognize the division of the Comunidad into three “subcomunidades”: Lacanjá Chansayab⁵⁵, Frontera Corozal, and Nueva Palestina. Each subcomunidad has its own two administrative and representative bodies, a Comisariado and Consejo de Vigilancia, again each with a president, treasurer and secretary, as well as some ancillary offices dealing with public works, education, etc., all of which, in the internal regulations, are named through the subcomunidad’s general assembly every three years. In practice, however, both Frontera and Palestina change their representatives every year, unless their assemblies decide to remove a leader earlier who has fallen out of favor or extend the term of a popular one. It is widely understood that the decision-making body in each community is

⁵⁴ The “Reglamento Interior de la Comunidad “Zona Lacandona”, dated June 5, 1992.

⁵⁵ Even though they are included as comuneros in the original Comunidad decree, representation of Najá and Metzabok residents in both the 1977 accord and subsequent documents is curiously left unaddressed. According to (Trench 2002) their representation in the Comunidad has always been problematic, as has been that of a segment of Northern Lacandons that moved to Lacanjá in the 80s.

the general assembly, which meets monthly, the decisions of which, they say, are supposed to be carried out by the Comisariado of that community.

The Comisariado and Consejo de Vigilancia of the Bienes Comunales still preside over the whole Comunidad, still structured as before, with the Lacandons always taking the presiding office. These are to be named every three years in the general assembly of the whole Comunidad. In practice, the President of the Lacanjá Comisariado has always been the President of Bienes Comunales (Trench 2002). General assemblies of the whole Comunidad are normally only called under extraordinary circumstances or when it is time to name a new Comisariado and Consejo for the whole Comunidad.

In practice, also, nearly all responsibility for the work of the Comisariados and Consejos de Vigilancia has fallen on their respective presidents, who tend to be individually referred to as the “comisariado” or “consejo,” respectively. This is a pattern that extends from the early days of colonies soliciting ejido grants, when the leaders of each settlement’s Comité Ejecutivo Agrario made countless trips to the state and national capitals in order to move their petitions. Even in those days, the number of trips and consequent expenses was a considerable burden to both the designated leaders and the community members that supported their travel monetarily. Although the purpose of the trips may have changed, the Comunidad’s relative incommunication and the nature of its affairs continue to require constant interaction with government and other distant institutions on a face-to-face basis. Typically, the comisariados from each community have participated jointly in these interactions when they deal with overall Comunidad business. By the time I was in Palestina, Comunidad affairs had become so complicated and demanding that more emphasis was being placed on having the three members of each Comisariado and Consejo participate in these affairs, despite the added costs and hardships placed on the

individuals⁵⁶. For each position, also, a *suplente*, or back-up, was being named to take care of things in the absence of the officials.

Thus, the governance structure links the conduct of affairs of the three principal communities, with the Lacandons at the nexus, but also gives them considerable latitude for dealing with their own internal matters. One of the repercussions of the structure is that it has, in many ways, reinforced difference among the Comunidad's constituent communities. By maintaining them in the key and deciding formal leadership positions, the structure maintains the role of the Lacandons as the public and political face of the Comunidad and reinforces their continued association with conservation of the rain forest that shares their name and territory. As mentioned earlier, this association has generated a continuous stream of researchers, observers, helpers, and other contacts over the years that have affected the kinds and nature of opportunities open to the Lacandons. One expression of this special interaction with the Lacandons is the line of research referred to earlier that continues to look at Lacandon ecological practices as a model for integrating conservation and use of the rain forest. Another is the degree of tourism-related opportunities that have been developed in Lacanjá in recent years.

By contrast, the structure has contributed to the relative invisibility and differential treatment of the non-Lacandon members of the comunidad. In the early years, after all the attention surrounding the creation of the two new towns died down and new politicians and bureaucrats were in power, Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980) reports that the leaders of Palestina and Frontera had difficulty getting government institutions to pay attention to them when it came to matters dealing exclusively with their own communities, unless they had a Lacandon in tow. She judged that public officials were too distracted by the chance to "rub elbows with history" to

⁵⁶ On the other hand, office holders tend to relish the opportunities to be out and about and availing themselves of the benefits of city life, activities which are sometimes condemned as a waste of community funds, but are tacitly acknowledged as one of the compensations of the job.

pay attention to the more fundamental issues facing the majority of less-glamorous, Selva residents. In the first years of their establishment, the creation of the two communities as a novel social and political phenomenon in the Selva led to the production of some academic theses, but after that, there is a big void of research or documentation of their situations, until the past few years, when, for political and conservation policy reasons, the academic gaze has begun to return to them (e.g., Tejeda 2002; García Méndez 2000). Despite their great potential and actual impact on the natural resources of the area, there have been no in-depth studies of their ecological and cultural practices. As a result, both development and conservation policy interventions directed towards them have tended to be based largely on fairly generic understandings of indigenous campesino practices in the region, and haven't really taken advantage of, nor built upon, what they actually do, think, and could contribute. As a further reflection of this relative invisibility, when even Chiapas newspapers cover events related to the Comunidad, they often refer to all comuneros as Lacandons, regardless of their actual identity, and run a stock photo of one of the Lacandon leaders in characteristic dress.

Despite both internal and external perceptions of differences among the communities, however, accounts of past events as well as current observations and conversations suggest that the comuneros have learned to work both their differences and their union to political advantage. Many Palestina residents seem to recognize the strength gained from acting as a block that Palestina alone would never have in relation to the government. They also seem to recognize the political importance of having the Lacandons as the Comunidad's public face. In turn, it seems as if the Lacandons have often recognized the strength of numbers that the other communities offer them. As a result, despite ongoing frictions and rivalries, and recent tensions even threatening some level of dissolution of the union, there seems to be a strong ethic of uniting in

common cause, not only for issues affecting the whole Comunidad, but also in solidarity with individual communities. In earlier days, this block of force was often applied to holding up COFOLASA operations that were important to the government. I have a report of this happening as late as the mid-1980s, when, according to a Palestina resident who was comisariado then, the comuneros were failing to see the benefits to the Comunidad of the lumbering royalties, which by then were no longer distributed directly to comuneros, but going to the general fund for community projects. A more recent example of the latter involved a very tumultuous situation in September of 2000, where members of Frontera Corozal held representatives of the Lacantún Biosphere Reserve and the government environmental agency hostage, because of a dispute over payments owed by the agency and the management plan of the reserve. Although Palestina leaders later said they had not been consulted on this action nor were in agreement with its extremism, they rushed to Frontera to support it, while Palestina men were put on alert to be ready to blockade roads as well as send reinforcements to Frontera should it be necessary. Ironically, as dissent and different interpretations of this event among the communities unfolded afterwards, it contributed to a distancing of Frontera from the other two, and led to talk of Frontera's secession, as well as to discussions of what it would mean to dissolve the three-way union⁵⁷.

Another legacy of the way in which Palestina and Frontera were integrated into the Comunidad was the concept of dividing its territory into three separate areas to be designated for each community's use, as mentioned in the 1977 accord. The 1992 internal regulations indicate that a provisional, division was made by "internal agreement" of Díaz Solís, Cruz Guzmán, and José Pepe Chambor in the early years, and that a partial physical demarcation was made at a point where the three zones meet, at an unspecified date (Comunidad Lacandona 1992). The

⁵⁷ See Trench (2002) and Tejeda Cruz (2002) for more complete discussions of this event.

divisions described in the internal regulation only partially describe the fuller boundaries that are currently represented in maps such as those produced by the Montes Azules Reserve and Conservation International (C.I.) of Chiapas, and I don't know how those were extrapolated⁵⁸ (Figure 8). My understanding is, however, that most of the boundary between the zones allotted to Palestina and Lacanjá Chansayab, particularly where they cross into the Montes Azules Reserve, has not been physically demarcated. In 1995, a section between the two zones was physically demarcated in the process of defining the limits of Palestina's cultivation areas in relation to the Reserve. Most of Frontera's territory, in turn, is fairly well defined by the natural

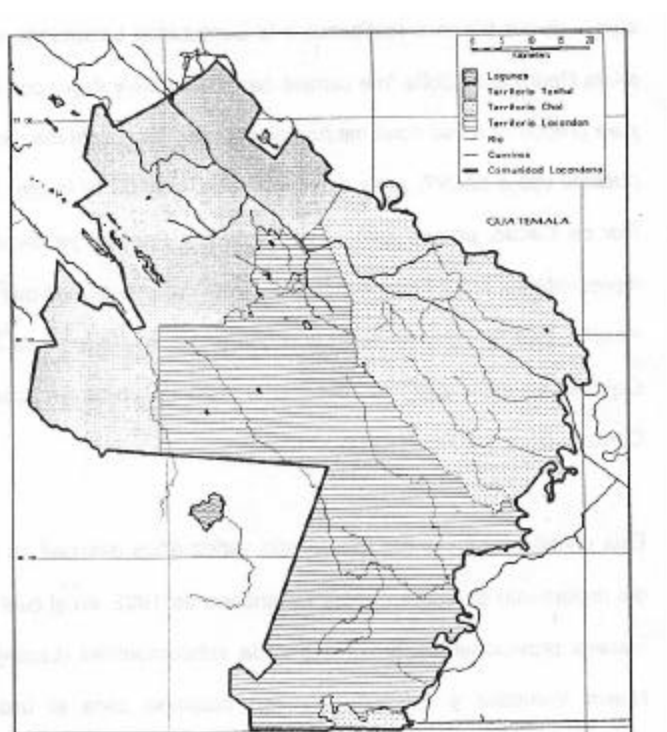


Figure 8. Territorial subdivisions for each “sub-community” (Source: Tejeda Cruz 2002)

boundaries of rivers, according to the 1992 internal regulation descriptions. Making these divisions has probably been important over the years in helping to maintain the peace between

⁵⁸ Palestina's section of the Comunidad is estimated to contain 172,280 ha (Reyes Arriola 1995).

the three groups, as incursions by one group into another's zone have been a source of friction, particularly between Palestina and Lacanjá Chansayab. Indeed, it seems as if the main function of these territorial divisions has been to serve as conceptual, and sometime physical, limits to resource use expansion. It has probably not helped build a broad-scale, across-community perspective of communal property and resources, but rather reinforced the day-to-day tendency of each community to focus on its own affairs. In addition to this, the overlay of Montes Azules in 1978, and of other protected areas in 1992, only seems to have muddied conceptions of collective ownership and responsibility for those areas of the Comunidad that fall within them.

IV. IMPLICATIONS FOR PALESTINA

The legacies for Palestina from this particular process of integration into the Comunidad are many. One of these, again, has to do with the theme of difference. Because the model chosen was nucleation into an urban center, the residents of 13 different settlements, with different histories, different lengths of time in the area, different endowments of land, different religions and language groups, were suddenly put together in one place. One of the first challenges was that of collective governance. Although there was a history of cooperation among the settlements from their fight to stay in the Comunidad, that could be built upon, that cooperation seems to have benefited from the charismatic qualities of leaders like Díaz Solís. It was also not smooth, as other strong leaders, such as those of the settlement Palestina, had dissenting ideas and followed contrary paths. Suddenly, the settlers went from living in hamlets of 60 or 70 families – in which, as has been noted, collective decision-making was no easy or always harmonious task - to a town of around 550 families the first year (1976) , and around 650 by the second (my estimation, based on figures by Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980 and information

from residents). Now, of course, the population is much larger, but the number of voting comuneros was capped at 851 and remains there.

Moreover, the population of residents was not stable for several years. Some families that had been censused didn't join the new center; some left, but came back when they saw the town was becoming a reality, not just a promise; some were there at the beginning but left when the huge amount of community labor required, or the internal factions that developed, became distasteful; some never came back, but their places were taken by late comers who were allowed ingress as comuneros until the original number of comunero slots allowed by the census was filled. In addition, the governance structure imposed on them was a version of the standard format specified for ejidos and comunidades by agrarian law and based on decision making by community assembly. However, this was a structure that was designed for the typical ejido-size population, not for such a large population. As an adaptation to their distinct situation, each barrio maintained its own representative and held its own meetings. But decision-making was (and still is) by community-wide assembly of the comuneros⁵⁹.

It seems that the difficulties of meshing as a collective in the face of differences arose with great force early on, many of which had to do with questions of access to resources, both internal and external, both economic and ecological. Though not uncommon to any size collective, it seems these tensions were particularly exacerbated by the peculiar nature and circumstances of concentration. Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980, on the scene in 1977, found that characteristics of religion and ethnicity were not so much the basis of factional fault lines, as were economic status and access to external networks of power.

⁵⁹ Who, by the way, were and are male heads of family, or young sons who were registered as such in the initial census in anticipation of their approaching adulthood, or, in exceptional cases, a widow.

One of the key differences in relation to the former was the fact that some settlements had been able to accumulate capital and translate this into a local power base through the domination of small businesses, extending credit, and hiring the labor of others, activities which in themselves allowed further accumulation. She observes, as do other observers of the Selva campesino economy (e.g., Lobato 1979; Mauricio Leguizamo et al 1984; Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996), that factors such as the length of time in the region (allowing greater knowledge and appropriation of the better soils), location in relation to transportation, and access to the labor of others (such as newcomers) - factors that were inherent to the process of colonization as mentioned earlier - contributed to some settlements coming to the collective table, as it were, with greater assets. In the case of Frontera Corozal, although surely there were pre-existing differences in this regard, some of which would have transferred over into the new settlement, everyone was essentially starting over from scratch on a land base that is not as varied as it is around Nueva Palestina (see Figure 7). As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the locations of the settlements that joined Nueva Palestina vary in terms of altitude, access to running water, slope, and type of soil, and this has, to this day, affected the kinds of economic activities their residents can undertake, and their consequent ability to build capital. The fact that some settlements were fairly distant from the new center, requiring several hours' walk; or that some comuneros were newcomers, filling in the spaces left by others, also contributed to these differences.

The other dynamic Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980 observed was that access to external resources, political and economic, created other fault lines among the new co-residents. The high degree of State intervention involved in the way the new town was formed meant an initial presence of representatives of different agencies, such as the SRA, the governor and his staff,

INI, and CECODES⁶⁰, and the presence of economic resources, such as the government subsidized food store and COFOLASA lumbering fees. The ways that different agents worked with different segments of the population, and the way that different factions allied themselves with government agents, ended up creating oppositions, which, as Burguete notes, rather than helping to build the skills and cohesiveness of the new collective, worked to reinforce its divisiveness.

One of the biggest issues causing dissension then, as it does today, is how communal resources are to be used by or to benefit the group (all the comuneros) versus individuals or segments of the group. In this case, the use of the communal resources of the COFOLASA royalties and the government store funds quickly emerged at the center of conflicts. But the use of communal natural resources, such as local rock to produce lime, or communal land on which to start businesses, was also an issue. These cause tensions in smaller communities, too; but the pervasive presence of government agents and sudden input of economic resources, and even the issue mentioned above of rock and businesses, were artifacts of the peculiar way in which Nueva Palestina was formed.

For instance, the concept of founding a small urbanized center in the rain forest in order to preserve it is an intriguing proposition, in this case particularly so, since it appears that, while the towns were (ambiguously) under the aegis of the division of NCPEs, they were told they could not open up more than 1 to 2 ha. per family of land to cultivate, according to different accounts⁶¹. Even when the 1977 accord giving them rights as comuneros was signed, also

⁶⁰ Centro de Ecodearrollo (Ecodevelopment Center), affiliated with CONACYT (National Council of Science and Technology).

⁶¹ Díaz Solís and Cruz Guzmán indicate that the first year, they had to specially request permission for each of their towns to expand from 1 to 2 ha. These hectares were supposed to be exclusively in acahuals, places of secondary growth left over from previous milpas or other disturbances. However, Díaz Solís had also mentioned to me starting even before this with ½ ha. This evidently referred to the smaller fall crops of corn (“tornamil”) can be raised, and would have been what Frontera could have sowed the year of its founding (Tejeda Cruz 2002).

according to accounts⁶², they were supposed to be restricted to 2 ha per family, at least until the territory of the Comunidad Lacandona, and consequently the appropriate areas for agricultural use, could be laid out by the SRA. It was probably the case that the NCPE prohibition was also just provisional, until the SRA could determine the appropriate agricultural areas. Díaz Solís indicated that under the original NCPE plans, Frontera and Palestina were to have been allocated 20,000 and 25,000 ha, respectively, which he reckoned would have worked out to 33 ha. per family. From that figure, however, the urban areas, communal spaces and resources, and non-arable lands would be subtracted, resulting in a far reduced figure of agricultural land per family. Regardless of the reasons for the limitations imposed on agriculture, how were all these people supposed to feed themselves in the meantime, in an environment where the only productive technique being used was shifting agriculture?

One government response was to send a team from CECODES to Palestina in 1977, to conduct workshops in what was called “The First Experimental Laboratory for the Training (or Forming⁶³) of Business Organizing Cadres” (CECODES 1977). The team conducted workshops for residents of Palestina that were meant to teach the skills necessary for conducting a variety of trades (e.g., carpentry, mechanics), services, and businesses (e.g., producing lime) that would develop a mercantile sector in the town. Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980 criticized the project for promoting technologies that were in some cases inappropriate for the natural environment, but also techniques and ideologies that were ill-suited to the social and political environment. She observed that this project, too, was instrumental in the development of an alternative faction in town that was perceived as competing with the more prosperous factions, and which ultimately succumbed to accusations that its enterprises were using communal resources for the private gain

⁶² The copy of the accord I obtained from the SRA archives could be missing annexes, but it doesn't specify any restrictions. Yet Burguete Cal y Mayor and other sources, including Díaz Solís, cite this figure.

⁶³ The word used in Spanish is “formación”.

of small groups. The project ended within a few months. On the other hand, some residents who participated in the project recall it fondly, because they felt that they were getting, for the first time ever (and some said, since), substantive help and skills for bettering their lives from the government, and enjoyed the process of working in the cooperative that was the umbrella for the businesses. An account by Cruz Guzmán also supports the idea that there may have been an underlying vision of Palestina as an urban economy; he recalled being told by the governor that residents would live by plying trades, such as hat-making, shoe-making, carpentry, etc., amongst themselves. In any case, one has to wonder where the capital would have come from that would have bought these services and goods, and still, how residents were supposed to provide food in the meantime.

The ambiguity of this curious concept of urbanization in the Selva was not lost on Palestina residents. Seeing, on the one hand, that they were prohibited from opening up agricultural lands, and on the other, that the government was, if anything, withdrawing support rather than helping them to develop alternatives, residents gave up waiting and went back to tending their own affairs as they saw fit, opening up lands as needed and developing what opportunities they could. As far as I could tell, there were no more attempts to help Palestinos develop alternatives to land-extensive techniques for living in the Selva region until the 1990s. And as noted, the support for developing the urban infrastructure dwindled and was drawn out over the ensuing decades. The fields that had been abandoned by the Ch'ols who went to Frontera became available for recent entrants to the community and new families, as did other lands through internal processes of allocation or claim that I couldn't clarify. Díaz Solís says that the current rule, codified in the 1992 internal regulations, which establishes each comunero's right to 50 ha of land for economic use, plus 10 ha for each of two sons, has origins as far back

as these early years, when comuneros of both new towns lost faith that government action was ever going to assure they had enough land to meet the needs of “demographic expansion through the next 50 years,” as promised in the 1977 accord that established them as future comuneros.

This loss of faith was not just due to the lack of support for developing an alternative, more urban-based model for living in the Selva. An anxiety regarding the security of land access and tenure seems to have pervaded Palestinos’ consciousness from the beginning through to the present. First, there was the ambiguity of whether they were going to become ejidatarios in an NCPE or comuneros in the Comunidad, with the different potentials for access to land implied by each arrangement: in the former⁶⁴, only to that amount designated by the government; in the latter, to allotments to be determined by internal agreement. Even after the 1977 accord promising rights as comuneros, they waited nearly two more years before the government fulfilled that commitment. Moreover, there was always the issue of forest conservation and how that would play out in terms of access to and use of land. Staying in the Comunidad had been conditioned, from the start, on restricting the expansion of agricultural lands and confining land use to existing *acahuals*. Even though the Montes Azules decree wasn’t published in the *Diario Oficial* until 1978, it was understood by many residents during the years prior that some kind of national park, likely involving some kind of restriction on access to land and forest resources, was to be established in the same area as the Comunidad. Díaz Solís commented that there were rumors running that it would in some way be an international undertaking, adding another element of uncertainty. Although the Reserve was without benefit of budget, staffing, or management plan for another decade and half, existing only “on paper,” the awareness of actual

⁶⁴ For regular ejidos in the region, the typical grant was based on 20 ha. per ejidatario (this was adjusted regionally and nationally according to the ecological base involved; for NCPEs, at least for those that were promoted in the 80s in Márques de Comillas to the south of the Comunidad, larger amounts of 50 ha. per ejidatario were more common (Dichtl 1988; SRA 1998?))

and impending restrictions was always present. This was especially understandable given that the Reserve's easternmost boundary passes through or alongside the urbanized zone of Nueva Palestina, and encompassed around half of the town's agricultural lands. Indeed, by 1995, an alleyway was opened to physically mark a line around those lands in an attempt to restrict further expansion and contain it to about 41,000 ha (Reyes Arriola 1995)⁶⁵. In addition, the government's interests in protecting its access to precious timber, considered to be one of its principal incentives for trying to block colonization and prevent loss of rain forest, continued to be pursued during the 70s and 80s, albeit on an increasingly less profitable basis (O'Brien 1998).

Moreover, there has been an enduring condition of uncertainty and indefiniteness surrounding the Comunidad's territory that stems from the manner in which it was imposed, the prolonged irresolution of conflicting land claims it generated, and the continuing need of the Selva settlers for more land, given the either unchanged or worsening ecological, political, and technological conditions under which they operated. First, there is the fact that the sites abandoned by settlers who accepted nucleation, particularly those left by Frontera residents, kept being re-occupied, and new sites within the Comunidad, particularly along the north-south highway, continued to be occupied by mestizos and new indigenous families. The means employed to resolve these problems were mostly coercive, and mostly left up to the comuneros to carry out, often with the explicit encouragement of the government. Both comuneros and researchers (e.g., Trench 2002; De Vos 2002; Harvey 2000; Legorreta Díaz 1998; Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980) report numerous specific incidents from 1976 through the mid-1980s in which these settlements were run out by Comunidad members, often through violent means.

⁶⁵ Frontera's lands lay outside of Montes Azules, so this source of potential constriction on productive activities didn't become a potential issue till 1992, when four more federal protected areas were established in the Comunidad, three of them in Frontera's territory. It became a more concrete issue in 2000, when a management plan was undertaken for one of them, the Lacantún Biosphere Reserve, a process that contributed to the hostage-taking of Reserve and SEMARNAT personnel in 2001.

Sometimes these evictions were repeated, as either the same settlers returned or new ones entered to take advantage of the cleared sites and fields. According to Palestina residents, in some cases, such as the Chihuahua and Sinai mestizo settlements on the main north-south highway near Palestina, the settlers were run out repeatedly, and the lands were finally taken over by Palestina comuneros and younger generation families who had either poor or insufficient land to cultivate. In one case, the government actually opted for a political (as opposed to coercive) approach. In 1984 and 1985, it offered some 259 families that had been occupying some of the former sites abandoned by Frontera residents permanent land and tenure at the nearby Desempeño area (De Vos 2002), and at least the possibility of giving them rights as comuneros was considered, according to Díaz Solís. Ultimately, it turned into a charged situation, as the settlements invoked the support of the EZLN and another indigenous organization to demand a bigger land settlement. The area occupied by these settlements is an enclave in the northeast corner of the Comunidad's territory. However, relations are not friendly and many comuneros feel the settlements are a haven for illegal activities and illicit politics, and that they pose an ongoing risk to both comuneros' physical safety and land security.

Then there is the situation of the settlements on the northern and western flanks of the Comunidad whose tenure status was kept in prolonged limbo after the decree was published, thus also delaying the final legal definition of the Comunidad's borders and the extent of its territory. Because of this situation, there were two more "executions" of the presidential decree, published in 1985 and 1989, each adjusting the Comunidad's territorial extension to account for accommodations to be made for settlements with tenure prior to 1971, a handful that were legalized shortly after, and some, such as the Desempeño group and the Quiptic/ARIC Cañadas settlements, that were finally given tenure (De Vos 2002; Trench 2002). With the last execution

in 1989, the Comunidad's territory totaled 501,106 ha; with a few exceptions, the borders have still not been physically demarcated.

However, even with this final execution, comuneros' sense of insecurity has not been put to rest. Since the conditions creating demand for Selva land in the first place haven't fundamentally improved and, if anything, have worsened, new colonists continue to enter the Reserve and Comunidad lands. And because of the extremely polarized politics that grew out of the ways that tenure was handled in the Selva, the Comunidad finds its borders populated by many settlements with emboldened, if not hostile, relations to it. One Palestina resident told me how, sometime in the couple of years after the 1989 execution, his fields near the border ejido Cintalapa were appropriated by force by what he called Zapatistas from that ejido. The ampliación of Cintalapa's land grant was one of those that was cancelled by the Comunidad decree, and some of its applicants accepted nucleation in Nueva Palestina as part of the barrio of the same name.

Ironically, then, despite being the partial beneficiaries of the huge Comunidad Lacandona land grant, Palestinos have operated under considerable conditions of ambiguity and uncertainty regarding their legal and physical ability to hold onto land. During most of the 1970s, their legal rights to land remained in legal limbo. And from the 1970s onward, they've seen the actions or inactions of the changing governments serve, if anything, to muddy and diminish these rights. Reserves were imposed, with attendant and explicit objectives of limiting Palestinos' use of parts of Comunidad land. Comunidad borders weren't defined and its territory kept changing. Parts of its territory were given up; other parts were taken over by new or surrounding settlements and it was mostly left up to comuneros themselves to confront these conflicting claims (albeit sometimes with the help of police force). Many Palestinos express the sense that the government

hasn't honored its part of the bargain that they thought had been struck as part of the agreement to nucleate. They express a sense of ambiguity around the question of who actually decides the fate of Comunidad lands. Is it "the internationals," as Palestinos sometimes say, or other non-local conservation interests behind the Reserve? Is it the other indigenous residents of the Selva who need land and are seem willing to take it by any means? As many Palestinos ask, what about their own younger generations and their need for land?

In this climate of uncertainty and competing interests in Comunidad land, Palestinos have had a lot of incentive to do what they can to establish physical claims on it. According to Díaz Solís and other residents, it was in the mid-1980s, during a particularly active period of confrontations with "invaders" and the beginning of government concessions to them, when residents explicitly decided that each comunero should claim at least 50 ha, plus 20 for two sons, while it was still possible. A man who was comisariado during that period told me of the intense pressures he felt from other settlements in the region to give up Palestina land. Palestinos' accounts also show that comuneros used the evictions of other settlers to expand the landholdings of comuneros and their sons whenever they could. This pressure to assure present and future claims to land, even when tenure rights have theoretically been secured by legal means, I think, is a critical factor that has to be taken into account in understanding Palestinos' frameworks for using and managing land resources. For instance, a Conservation International study, based on interpretations of LANDSAT data, estimated that between 1988 and 1994, the amount of land being "transformed" or actively worked by Nueva Palestina rose from 1,237.5 ha to 29,791.5 ha; between 1991 and 1994 alone it tripled (Reyes Arriola 1995). If these figures are accurate, one has to ask what kinds of factors would cause such a precipitous jump in such a short time. The late 80s is when some Cañadas organizations and settlements finally began to

get government land concessions and responses, including through the reduction of the Comunidad territory. It is also when the momentum of the EZLN and the armed resistance movement was ratcheting up – which the Selva communities knew about - and then made its armed debut in 1994, accompanied by some land seizures. It is also the time when the national and international gaze returned to conservation in the region and resources begin to be directed explicitly towards conservation interventions. For instance, this is when preliminary studies were done in preparation for the development of a management plan for Montes Azules; when four more federally protected areas were declared within the Comunidad in 1992; and when Montes Azules, in 1994, was finally given administrative staff and a budget.

V. ECONOMY AND ECOLOGY

If political solutions to Palestinos' livelihood needs were ambiguous and unreliable, technical solutions offered few alternatives during the decades after nucleation. There is little evidence that, before the 1990s, anything substantive was done by government or other institutions to develop economically viable alternatives to extensive land use methods, a development which might have helped relieve Palestinos' concerns about having sufficient land for a growing population, as well as address conservation agencies' concerns for saving forest. It seems telling that the basic economic activities listed as sustaining the Selva campesino economy in the mid-1980s by Mauricio Leguizamo et al (1984) are the same ones that sustained it during its formation in the earlier decades of colonization, as well as the same ones that sustain it now: wild xate⁶⁶ collection, chicle, cattle, pigs, coffee, and chile. The exception is that extraction of

⁶⁶ Pronounced “shahtay”, the word is frequently used as a catch-all term to refer to a few species in the *Chamaedorea* genus, palms that grow in the shaded understory of the rain forest. Individual fronds are cut, leaving the plant alive and harvestable again within a few months, and sold for international export to florists through a long-standing network of regional intermediaries.

chicle (the original basis for chewing gum) dropped out as a viable activity in the early 80s, when synthetic substitutes took over the international market (Dichtl 1988), and was, in any case, always dominated by cooperatives of *chicleros*, chicle harvesters, from nearby states (Mauricio Leguizamo et al 1984).

Institutional action in the 1970s and 80s

There had been various attempts by government institutions to attend the questions of both development and conservation in the Selva region, but virtually all attempts to do so over the years are described as falling prey to the diversion of budgets to other purposes, official and otherwise; to contradictory institutional agendas and lack of coordination; to the failures of policies and interventions developed in distant agency offices, based on concepts of “modernization” and “rational resource use” with little relation to local environmental conditions and the objectives of Selva settlements; to power struggles between federal and state agencies (and the regional interests the latter represented); and to the lack of continuity and institutional learning created by the massive administrative changes of each sexenio. The history of the Selva is littered with an almost dizzying array of acronyms for institutions and coordinating agencies.

As noted, neither the NCPE framework nor the brief CECODES small business training experiment were able to jumpstart an urban infrastructure or economy in Palestina. According to the 1977 accord establishing communal rights for Palestina and Frontera, the Coordinación General del Plan Nacional de Zonas Deprimidas y Grupos Marginados (COPLAMAR)⁶⁷, through INI, was to coordinate the “investments and actions” of government agencies in the Comunidad, including the use of COFOLASA lumbering fees for infrastructure and development

⁶⁷ General Coordination of the National Plan for Depressed Zones and Marginalized Groups, a federal initiative out of the President’s office.

projects (SRA 1977). However, COPLAMAR is described as having had little ability to coordinate the actions of agencies that competed for constituencies within Palestina in the first years and fostered divisions rather than cohesion (Burguete Cal y Mayor 1978). In 1978-80, the Coordinación Ejecutiva del Programa Ecológico de la Selva Lacandona (CEPESL)⁶⁸, under SARH, the agricultural secretariat at the time, was another attempt at institutional coordination that failed to achieve authority over other agencies (DGDFa; INE/SEMARNAP 2000).

During the 1982-88 sexenio, a considerable amount of money was to be invested in the Selva region through the new president's Plan del Sureste and Plan de Chiapas (Plan for the Southeast and Plan for Chiapas). These plans highlighted the importance of integrating Chiapas into the national economy, developing its road infrastructure and agricultural and extractive potential to that end, and doing so in ways that would take pressure off the remaining rain forest as well as improve local standards of living (Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas 1988; Harvey 2000; Nations 1984; Legorreta Díaz 1998). However, most of the funding that wasn't diverted by the regional power structure went towards addressing national security and extractive resource concerns in the southern Márques de Comillas area along the border with Guatemala. Here, Central American rebellion movements, the resulting flood of Guatemalan refugees into the region in the first half of the decade, plus on-going oil exploration during this period meant the government focused on road-building, colonization through NCPEs, and increasing military presence (Harvey 2000; Dichtl 1988; Legorreta Díaz 1998). Some of this funding did go to the Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Sobre Recursos Bióticos (INIREB), a well-regarded tropical research organization based in the state of Veracruz, to undertake research on "ecological development" for the MABR region (Nations 1984). Several pilot studies were done, including in Palestina and Frontera, on economic production of wild plant and animal species, non-timber

⁶⁸ Executive Coordination of the Ecological Program of the Selva Lacandona.

forest uses, and ecologically-sustainable farming methods (INIREB 1984), but there is little evidence that the techniques explored ever went beyond the initial study stage or affected comuneros' existing economic practices. By 1986, the Comisión Intersecretarial para la Conservación de la Selva (CIPSEL) was created in yet another attempt to coordinate conservation and development interventions in the Selva. As noted in the previous chapter and discussed more fully in the next, this initiative also had a short life and experienced the usual difficulties in achieving inter-agency collaboration, but did make some strides towards official recognition of links between indigenous self-development, secure land tenure, economic welfare, and conservation of the rain forest.

Community forestry, despite some well-known successes in the nearby state of Quintana Roo (Bray 1997), never became an option for the Comunidad and most Selva communities, although it was attempted in the Márques de Comillas region. As noted previously, although existing laws allowed ejidos and comunidades to commercially exploit their forests with outside assistance (Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980), the federal government reserved forestry rights in the most of the Selva region for its parastatal operation, COFOLASA, shortly after the Comunidad Lacandona was established. In the early years, there was an attempt to help members of the Comunidad develop a local business using the wood left after COFOLASA removed the trunks, as well as the trees felled in milpa preparation. COFOLASA had installed a sawmill in 1976 in Nueva Palestina to help provide wood for house construction. One was also installed in Lacanjá Chansayab; Frontera was supposed to get one, but never did. COFOLASA had prior contractual commitments to the Lacandons to help them offer technical and training assistance to run their own business, and this commitment was evidently carried over to the new comuneros after 1977, but never really implemented (Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980). According to a DGDF report

(1980c), Palestinos were never trained properly in administrative aspects, participation was dominated by the members of one barrio, and the project suffered from inter-agency competition between the DGDF⁶⁹ and SRA. By the time the project was resurrected after these difficulties and ready to supply a commercial buyer, it needed approval from the Comunidad as a whole. It ran into familiar issues of how the business, based on the use of communal resources, should be integrated into the Comunidad. The DGDF report mentions that there was a strong perspective among comuneros that the business should be carried out through a Comunidad cooperative discussed below, but the activities of that organization were suspended in 1981.

In any case, by 1984, forestry in the state took a new direction. According to Bray (1997), COFOLASA was replaced by CORFO, a state-owned entity, on the initiative of the new state governor, Absalón Castellanos Domínguez. The DGDF advocated developing community-based forestry management along lines that had been very promising in Quintana Roo, and it had been advising COFOLASA in its interactions with ejidos and communities in the region. With the switch to CORFO, the DGDF's activities in this regard were no longer welcomed by the state. Some further attempts at developing locally-based forestry with Selva settlements emerged in the later 80s, through DGDF activities in scattered communities and through the 1987 agreements signed between the ARIC Cañadas settlements and the Intersecretarial Commission for the Protection of the Lacandon Rain Forest (CIPSEL) mentioned above. However, in 1988, a new governor entered who was closely allied with the new President Salinas de Gortari's pro-environmental policies. Between 1989 and 1993, a set of extreme rules were instituted banning timber exploitation of all kinds. While the restrictions have since been liberalized, the legacy of two decades of government-dominated lumbering plus the extreme

⁶⁹ Dirección General para el Desarrollo Forestal (General Direction for Forestry Development), a division of the Subsecretariat of Forestry and Fauna (SFF), within the Secretariat of Agriculture and Hydraulic Resources, (SARH).

prohibitions enacted in this period effectively stymied one avenue that might have contributed to creating a more options for the campesino economy in the Selva.

On the other hand, various sources report, that the INI, as well as rural development banks and projects, were during this period actively encouraging cattle-raising and coffee production among the indigenous colonists throughout the Selva region through a variety of technical, credit, and commercialization programs (Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996; Calvo et al 1989; Mauricio Leguizamo et al 1984; Nations 1979). And indeed, when interviewed about outside influence on economic activities before the 1990s, Palestinos most clearly recall receiving substantive support for these two activities. Other than that, they recalled brief flurries of projects or promotions that were never supported by technical or marketing follow-up, and were usually abandoned by both residents and the government: there was some consideration of orchid exploitation in one or the other decades; sheep were introduced at some point; rubber plantations, at the end of the 80s; macadamia trees, some time later; and bee-keeping in the mid to late 80s. Plus, Palestinos recall intermittent interactions with the different agricultural Secretariats over the years; for instance, that there were times when they received new varieties of corn seed⁷⁰.

Characteristics of existing economic activities

Given the lack of attention to developing alternative economic options for the growing indigenous populations of the Selva colonies, Palestinos practiced the same basic suite of activities practiced throughout the region, in addition to raising subsistence food crops: xate collection, and the production of chile, coffee, pigs, and cattle. Each of these has somewhat

⁷⁰ I always imagined sitting down with each of the 20-plus comisariados of Palestina, one by one, to talk about developments during their turn of duty, since they are the ones most likely to remember the specifics of dates, interactions with agencies, and so on, but this would have to be left for some other time.

different land, labor, and capitalization requirements, as well as different factors that determine their profitability

Xate collection has a decades-long history of exploitation in the region and was, literally, a life-saver for Frontera residents in their first difficult year: selling the fronds allowed them to buy food from Guatemala to supplement the shortfall of government support until they had milpas to harvest. Xate collection has been practiced throughout the Comunidad, and its advantages include: collection can be done year-round, and so can be carried out around other, more seasonally-bound activities; there are well-established networks for commercialization through intermediaries that come regularly to the Selva to get the product; it's had a consistent market for years; the skills necessary are easily learned; and it's compatible with rain forest preservation. However, it does require transportation of heavy bundles out to pick-up points; increasing pressure on the resource has meant that collectors have had to range ever farther from home base in order to find enough to harvest profitably; and because of the increasing difficulty of its collection, at least in current years it has become more of a younger person's activity. Palestinos report that xate income can help capitalize other activities, but most describe it functioning mainly as a supplement to household income, as something that fills in when other activities have a bad year, and as a necessary option for individuals and households that have poor or little land on which to produce, especially younger households.

In 1978 through 1981, residents of Frontera, including Pedro Díaz Solís as the key principal, tried to gain more control over the xate marketing process and its profit through creation of the Sociedad Cooperativa de la Comunidad Lacandona. Evidently representing the first attempt of the Comunidad to establish an independent organization through which members could improve the terms of their engagement in the economic process, it was capitalized by

contributions from all Comunidad comuneros and a government program, PIDER⁷¹, and was intended to funnel profits back into Comunidad funds as well as pay Frontera working members' salaries. It focused initially on chicle and xate collection, but the effort ended in 1981.

Observers suggest it was too ambitious an undertaking for the time: the work of collecting conflicted with residents' other activities, and the cooperative structure never gained the full confidence of the Comunidad (DGDF 1980d; Mauricio Leguizamo et al 1984). Díaz Solís felt that it succumbed to Comunidad fears that communal resources were being used for the benefit of a few individuals, himself included. It is not until the 1990s that the Comunidad again inserts itself more actively into the xate marketing and production process, via several xate managed plantation projects.

Small livestock production beyond the level of a few household animals, particularly pigs, is described for the Selva in general as mainly a transitional activity, something that was usually carried out in the more recently established or more remote colonies in order to capitalize other activities. One of the advantages of this activity is that time and effort invested is quickly returned because of the animals' relatively quick growth cycle. However, if let loose to forage for themselves, pigs tended to damage surrounding land; if confined, they needed to be fed, and this required sufficient land and labor to grow the extra corn. Thus, those settlements with good land for corn production and enough labor were most likely to be able to support small livestock production. In the Cañadas settlements, arable land was a limiting factor, ensuring pig production would be mostly a transitional or supplementary activity (Mauricio Leguizamo et al 1984; Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996; Calvo et al 1989). In the case of Palestina, I learned of at least a couple of cases of commercial pig production being undertaken during these

⁷¹ Programa de Inversiones para el Desarrollo Rural (Investment Program for Rural Development)

decades, both in colonies prior to their nucleation, but found this activity little mentioned in discussions of the changing Palestina economy.

Chile became one of the most profitable Selva cash crops, particularly in the warmer, “hot country” areas of the eastern region. Interestingly, chile production spread through farmer-to-farmer contact and innovation rather than through any institutional intervention (Mauricio Leguizamo et al 1984; Lobato 1979). Introduced by migrants from Puebla who picked up seed and the specialized drying techniques from Veracruz, Lobato considers that these migrants probably did more for the Selva economy than any government project. Requiring as little as an eighth or a quarter of a hectare to produce a highly profitable crop, it does however, have some capital-, site- and seasonally-specific labor requirements, particularly if it is dried through the preferred oven-drying method, and the humidity of the Selva region makes the crop vulnerable to insects and fungus infections. Chile production in the Nueva Palestina region began early, and according to Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980), was what allowed the colony of Palestina to build its prosperity and subsequent relative economic power in relation to the other settlements with which it nucleated. Many Nueva Palestina residents, if they have suitable land in the warmer areas, reported cultivating chile over the years using these profits to finance their entry into cattle, coffee production or other activities. However, in recent years, the increasing reliance on chemicals to control diseases and price fluctuations have made it less attractive.

Although Palestinos recalled some instances of technical or credit assistance projects for coffee production, this is an activity that many report undertaking on their own, without external support, by acquiring seed and plants from other residents or other Selva settlements. Many Palestinos came to the Selva with extensive coffee-producing experience, both on their own minifundios and on large coffee plantations in the Simojovel and Soconusco regions, and looked

to re-establish this activity when they arrived. For some of the settlers living in colonies more distant from the new town of Nueva Palestina, such as Jalapa and San Pablo, the prospect of leaving behind thousands of several year-old coffee plants to join the new town was one of their concerns (Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980). Among the advantages of coffee, beyond having previous experience with the process, are: as one of the major export crops of Chiapas, it has established commercialization networks, with buyers that come to smallholder areas regularly; in many years it has brought producers high prices; only one or two hectares are needed to make a profit when prices are good; and it's a perennial crop, which needs maintenance but not annual re-establishment. As Palestinos grow coffee under the shade of thinned-out forest, it's also considered a desirable economic activity from a conservation perspective. On the other hand, coffee has to be grown in the cooler and higher elevation areas of Palestina, though not on too-steeply sloped soils; during harvest time it has high labor requirements that come at the same time among all coffee-producers; the producer price, dependent on international markets, can be extremely volatile, such that there are years when producers may leave the fruit to rot, potentially contributing to disease problems in later seasons; coffee incurs transport costs to get it out to the buyer; and Palestina producers have been dependent on the prices offered by intermediaries. Because of the labor requirements, either extra labor or the capital to pay laborers is needed to make coffee production viable. In the Cañadas region, pig production, wage labor, cattle production, or the extra labor provided by newer migrants or Guatemala refugees, were some of the ways that established settlements subsidized their entry into coffee (Calvo et al 1989; Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996). In Palestina, residents I spoke with mentioned chile production, wage labor, government cash payments, and labor exchanges with other residents as some of the ways in the present that they help finance their coffee harvests. Xate collection and

coffee production are often spoken of as complementary economic activities, with the former filling in during the non-coffee harvesting season.

Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco (1996) note that in the Cañadas, many indigenous colonists specifically looked for settlement sites suitable for cattle-raising, rejecting those that weren't. They brought these aspirations with them to the Selva, as well as knowledge from the cattle fincas where they had worked. Many also brought perceptions that cattle provided a higher standard of living than any other activity and was a higher status vocation. Although INI and other agencies were promoting cattle-raising to the indigenous settlements during the 80s, these authors say that many of the colonies self-financed their entry into cattle through work exchanges and producing "on shares" with the fincas, and Mauricio Leguizamo et al (1984) notes similar arrangements with cattle ranchers that facilitated entry in other areas of the Selva. In Palestina, members of at least one settlement, Flor de Cacao, were already engaged in cattle-raising by 1975, before the new town was founded, and they say few other settlements in the area had cattle at that time. At least two local accounts attribute the main entry of larger numbers of Palestinos into cattle to a rural bank credit project in 1985 or '86, although earlier projects are reported for Frontera by Díaz Solís and for Lacanja by Nations (1979) and Trench (2002). Cattle-raising as it's been practiced in the Palestina area is what most analysts describe as "extensive," involving a low ratio of cattle to land, and little management. Under this model, cattle-raising has a lot of advantages as an economic activity: land-clearing for milpa can be used to establish pasture; it requires relatively little labor to manage dozens of cattle, and the labor isn't season-specific; cattle have high "storability," and can be held till market prices are favorable or till cash is needed; cattle can, to a certain extent, be walked out to buying points; and unlike small livestock, they don't require corn production (Leyva Solano and Ascencio

Franco 1996; Mauricio Leguizamo et al 1984). In addition, as Mauricio Leguizamo et al point out, pasture is one of the least labor-intensive ways to show land ownership; and pasture has value even when one has no cattle, as it can be rented out to those who do. On the other hand, under this model, only Palestinos having land with running water on it, and enough land to leave many acres in pasture without sacrificing milpa or other activities, can engage in it; at the end of the 1980s, cattle prices experienced drops; and capital is needed to either obtain suitable land within the Comunidad or buy cattle to put on it. In Palestina, it is currently widely judged that cattle-raising is the surest way to get ahead economically, as well as that it takes money to become a *ganadero*, a cattle-rancher.

In Palestina, most of the areas suitable for cattle are in the eastern and southeastern, lower-elevation areas of its agricultural zone, or in a broad, open area just to the west of the town. Most of the agricultural zones farther to the west and southwest are higher-elevation, cooler, and more apt for coffee. According to Palestinos, even within these sub-zones, there can be much variability in soil type and aptness for different uses. Thus, when Palestinos talked about how they got involved in one kind of production or another, they made clear that the kind of land one has access to, and the capital one has available, have heavy bearings on the kinds of economic activities one can enter into. Palestinos commonly told me that you either do coffee or you do cattle, but that you don't do both. When I asked for clarification, they talked about conflicting demands of time and capital, and that each required different kinds of land holdings. Yet, in practice, several of the residents I spoke with described engaging in as many of the four main cash-producing activities as they could. Others described having been active in swapping or buying parcels in different parts of Palestina's territory in order to be able to add chile, coffee, pasture, or better milpa land to their repertoire. Given the fluctuating prices and increasing

production costs of coffee and chile in recent years, cattle has emerged as the surest way to earn capital, even at its relatively low level of technical management, yet I see ample evidence of Palestinos diversifying their options both in the past and present.

Given the extended insecurity of the Comunidad's boundaries during these two decades, the ever-present threat of more land being given over to "irregular" settlements, the existence, perhaps, of underlying expectations that the Reserve will some day lay down restrictions on the Palestinos, and the lack of any other economic options being opened before them during these years, I suggest two important tendencies influencing Palestinos' land use decisions during this period: 1) The drive to diversify the different kinds and qualities of land that families hold in order to diversify the kinds of economic activities they can undertake. In this process, cattle – raising may have had extra importance as one of the most reliable ways to hold or ensure capital, and pasture, even without cattle, may have been seen as having current and future value. 2) The drive to lay claim to as much land as possible within Palestina's territory to secure present and future rights, with some families acquiring 100, 150 ha, and more, according to comunero reports. As noted above, pasture establishment may play an important role in this process as one of the least-demanding ways to establish claims to land, even when the claimaint has no current prospects for cattle ownership⁷². The combination of these incentives, I suggest, contributes to the pattern of rapid expansion of transformed land around Palestina during this period.

⁷² The expansion of particular families' landholdings as a result of either of these tendencies, may, however, have been at the cost of those who sold their land or had little to begin with. This is one dynamic mentioned by Palestinos as contributing to many families' diminishing economic opportunities.

CHAPTER 6

DIFFERENCE

I. INTRODUCTION

In the 90s, the Comunidad's situation changes. Conservation gets put on the national and state policy agenda. A lot of money, mostly from international sources, is marked for investment in the Selva region to push the conservation agenda, and a lot of the effort is targeted towards the areas where its campesino residents live.

In the Comunidad, this new thrust takes the form of actions to fire up the Reserve, implement measures for its protection, and create more reserves on Comunidad land. It also takes the form of government and NGO projects that complement Reserve protection by promoting technologies or activities among comuneros meant to modify their land use practices in order to take pressure off of the Reserve ecosystems. Taking the case of just the MABR for the moment, as a Biosphere Reserve, it's supposed to accommodate and work with existing human uses of the land. It implies working out different zones for different degrees of human management, and counting on these to essentially deflect human pressures on core zones that are the least disturbed. It's a combination of exclusion and inclusion. But the exclusion part depends on the inclusion part working adequately, such that the communities won't want to or need to enter the exclusionary zones. In this case, the Reserve must deal with the fact that the comuneros are legally the owners of much of the Reserve, and that they are the de facto land managers.

In previous chapters, I've suggested some of the political, economic, cultural, and ecological dynamics in relation to which settlers' land use practices and objectives for Comunidad land may have formed. I've suggested that two particularly important drives have been the need to maintain/defend secure claims to land for now and the future, and the need to diversify landholdings to improve options for economic gain. With the activation of the Reserve and programs for biodiversity conservation, another set of objectives for the Comunidad commons, up till then latent, was put on the table. If we go back to one of the original problems posed in the beginning of this study, in approaching conservation of large ecological landscapes, one of the essential problems is that people have many frameworks of meaning through which they interact with that landscape, which may or may not coincide with the framework of ecosystem or biodiversity preservation as it is being pursued by scientists or conservationists in a particular context. In this chapter, I visit the issue of difference by looking at some of the ways in which it becomes an important factor in the ongoing negotiations among comuneros, Reserve, and other conservation-interested actors over management of that part of the Selva commons that the Reserve and Comunidad share.

First, I describe how the shift gets made to a policy and institutional emphasis on conservation, and the kinds of projects and investments that this shift manifests. Then I outline a series of escalating interactions between comuneros and institutions that develop as each pursues its interests in relation to the Reserve territory, and that seem to harden into a set of difficult to reconcile, antagonistic positions. I then explore the nature of some of the differences in knowledge, objectives, and interests that seem to underlie these conflicting positions.

II. CONSERVATION AT THE COMMONS TABLE

In the 1990s, conservation went from residing mostly as an intention and a goal in laws and plans, to becoming a real presence in the Comunidad Lacandona. In this decade, substantial resources – money, personnel, organizations, and agencies – were dedicated to trying to realize these intentions in the Comunidad and the Reserve.

Policy and investments shift

This process had actually begun in the previous decade, with the creation of the first federal Secretariat having an explicit responsibility for environmental concerns, SEDUE, during the 1982-88 sexenio. It was under the auspices of SEDUE, along with the SPP⁷³, that the inter-agency Comisión Intersecretarial para la Conservación de la Selva (CIPSEL) was formed. In 1986 and 1987, it was through CIPSEL that agreements were worked out with ARIC settlements in the Cañadas and ejidos in the Márques de Comillas regions to support conservation and development activities on their lands, as well as legalize some settlements in conflict with Montes Azules and the Comunidad Lacandona (see Chapter 4). That initiative was notable for having several novel qualities. For the first time, there was an explicit, governmental recognition of campesinos as managers of the Selva. While past plans and programs talked about promoting more “rational” use of Selva resources, here it was at least considered that conservation might be achievable through helping campesinos modify and improve their economic and organizational capabilities. Land tenure was also finally linked to conservation outcomes: it was a result of these interactions that the 26 Cañadas settlements were finally legalized. Finally, also novel, it incorporated teams, via the PASECOP⁷⁴ program, for each of the three regions involved, Cañadas, Márques de Comillas, and Comunidad Lacandona, to engage the communities in

⁷³ Secretaría de Programación y Presupuesto (Secretariat of Planning and Budget)

⁷⁴ Programa de Asistencia y Servicios Comunitarios (Community Assistance and Services Program)

consults regarding their needs and situations. Some Márques de Comillas ejidos still maintain forest reserves and land use zoning that resulted from this process. The initiative was short-lived, however, falling prey to the change of sexenio in 1988; most of the activities agreed to were never carried out; and the goal of inter-institutional coordination and commitment was never truly fulfilled (Márquez Rosano 1994)⁷⁵.

It was during the presidency of Salinas de Gortari in (1988-1994), however, that the conservation presence in Chiapas really ratcheted up. Salinas entered with a strong emphasis on government decentralization, market liberalization, and environmental protection (Harvey 2000; Legorreta Díaz 1998). The three threads had substantial implications for the campesino economy in the Selva. In Chiapas, decentralization meant that the state government took more control over programs related to conservation and development (Legorreta Díaz 1998). Under intense national and international pressures to preserve the Selva, and reacting to the lack of any effective conservation policy during the previous decades, the governorship of Patrocinio Garrido González unleashed a whole series of policy and legal reforms that constituted what Bray (1997:7) calls “environmental authoritarianism”: between 1989 and 1993, a set of extreme rules were instituted banning timber exploitation of all kinds that “read like an environmental extremist’s wish-list: dismantling the forest industry in Chiapas, putting forestry engineers in jail for approving logging, forbidding campesinos from clearing land for their corn fields (milpa), and making it illegal to carry an unregistered chainsaw, among other measures” (1997:7). In addition, the state suspended supports to large-scale cattle-raising and threatened to do so for all activities in the sector; cancelled permits to change land use in the region; instituted patrols to watch for illegal timber extraction, and established the first of 12 wildlife and timber checkpoints

⁷⁵ Rodolfo Díaz Sarvides, who was part of this initiative; Pablo Muench Navarro, personal communications, 2000 and 2002.

planned. The 1992 state environmental law, the *Ley de Equilibrio Ecológico y Protección al Ambiente*, was passed. One of its provisions required campesinos desiring to prepare milpa to first get permission from the municipal government to cut the vegetation, then have it inspected by SARH (the Agricultural Secretariat), and then ask for a second permit to burn it (Márquez Rosano 1994). During this administration, SEDUE was dissolved and its environmental responsibilities were assumed by the new agency, SEDESOL⁷⁶

During this period, President Salinas obtained World Bank funds for the country's four poorest states, through the Decentralization and Regional Development Project. In the case of Chiapas, the funding was conditioned on there being a program of conservation and development for the Selva region. The Programa de Conservación y Desarrollo de la Selva Lacandona (PCyDSL)⁷⁷ resulted, for which around \$30 million dollars was budgeted. The PCyDSL, operating between 1991 and 1994, represented another attempt to coordinate institutional action in the Selva region, this time focused on two fronts: linking community-level social and economic development with conservation, and operationalizing protective measures for the Montes Azules Reserve. SEDESOL was the lead administrative agency, and Salinas' new program PRONASOL⁷⁸, later Solidaridad, provided a framework for channeling funds directly to campesino organizations and cooperatives. The program worked through a special coordinating subcommittee established for that purpose, with a Technical Advisory Group appointed to shape and approve activities. The PCyDSL built on the community-based diagnostic methods used by the CIPSEL/PASECOP initiative of the previous administration. In the estimation of one of the principals of the program, the greatest success was in the degree of collaboration that was achieved across the levels of communities, technicians, and government agencies, something that

⁷⁶ Secretaría de Desarrollo Social (Secretariat for Social Development)

⁷⁷ Conservation and Development Program for the Selva Lacandona

⁷⁸ Programa Nacional de Solidaridad (National Solidarity Program)

had not been remotely approached before. The “social” projects were the ones that “took”: health, education, and women’s micro-enterprises, while scattered and relatively unimpressive results were obtained in the area of sustainable production projects⁷⁹. One still-enduring result was the PEICASEL⁸⁰, a program proposed by ARIC (Legorreta Díaz 1998), which allowed people from the communities themselves to be incorporated into the school system as bilingual (indigenous language/Spanish) teachers. Other enduring “seeds planted” were for organic coffee production in the Cañadas region, a still-functioning honey production enterprise in Ocosingo, and the concept of managed xate plantings that would replace collection from the wild (Grupo Técnico de Apoyo 1994). In the Comunidad Lacandona, this was when the first community xate plantation projects were funded, as well as some aquaculture projects and an ill-fated bee culture project. With the EZLN uprising in the beginning of 1994, however, the World Bank pulled out and the program activities ended; only about \$10 million of the total budget had been spent.

The slim advances made in relation to economic and ecological issues, however, were significant, since the late 1980s and early 1990s was a time of economic and ecological crisis for the Selva campesinos. Mexico signed on to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1992. The associated policies of decentralization, privatization of some former governmental functions, market liberalization, and removal of internal price subsidies had disastrous effects on virtually every product the Selva communities produced, seriously undercutting the few advances they had made on the economic front. In 1989, the International Coffee Organization couldn’t agree on price quotas, and the price of coffee dropped by half; Mexico opted out of the international coffee quota system; and INMECAFE, the government organ previously charged with facilitating the commercialization of Chiapas’ mostly smallholder

⁷⁹ Pablo Muench Navarro, former director of the Technical Advisory Group, personal communications, 2000 and 2002.

⁸⁰ Programa de Educación Básica en la Selva Lacandona (Basic Education Program for the Selva Lacandona)

coffee crop, was no longer available, leaving campesino producers at the mercy of independent buyers. From 1989 to 1993, many producers let their coffee rot on the ground, an act which, unfortunately, contributes to subsequent disease problems. Moreover, if the producers had been the recipients of credit, they now found themselves in debt, being unable to get a return on their product with which to pay it off (Harvey 2000; Legorreta Díaz 1998; Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco 1996). At the same time, beef prices dropped, and the new environmental policies tried to discourage cattle-raising. While producer prices declined for coffee, cattle, cacao, and pigs, the mainstays of the campesino economy, the costs of agricultural inputs rose, as did inflation - by 89.3% between 1987 and 1993 (Harvey 2000; Márquez Rosano 1994). On top of this, the state's new forest policies prohibited timber extraction on any scale, and tried to interfere with the most fundamental act of sowing milpa. As these analysts note, it was almost as if the package of policies was targeted at making the Selva campesinos' lives impossible.

One attempt of the Salinas administration to help ameliorate the effects of NAFTA on basic food producers was the program PROCAMPO. Farmers willing to register the hectares they had in production with the program in 1993 can receive twice-yearly payments of cash that are to be gradually adjusted upward and then downward over a period of 15 years, at which point the payments end. However, these payments required the crucial step of registering land with the government. Even in the Comunidad Lacandona, where comuneros have legal title and were not in opposition to the government, many producers told me they were reluctant to register any or all of the land they had in production because of mistrust over how the government might use the information in the future.⁸¹ In any case, the amount of the payments is typically not enough to finance serious changes in production practices. In the spring of 1999, comuneros received

⁸¹ On the other hand, some people registered more than what they had in production, gambling on bureaucratic incompetence to protect them from discovery.

payments of around \$700-708 pesos per hectare, an injection of cash that they described as useful for supplementing production costs (e.g., to buy agricultural inputs, or paying workers, or helping with transport), making up food supply shortfalls, meeting other household needs, or sometimes, investing in a mini household business.

For the Comunidad Lacandona, the new environmental policies and the influx of funds to support it meant the renewed presence of the government and other organizations in their lives, this time under the guise of conservation. Studies were done in preparation for the development of a management plan for the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve (Gobierno del Estado 1990; Vásquez Sánchez and Ramos Olmos 1992). In 1992, four more federally protected areas were decreed on Comunidad lands: two archaeological parks, Yaxchilan Natural Monument and Bonampak Natural Monument; Chankin Flora and Fauna Protection Area; and Lacantún Biosphere Reserve (see Figure 2). Finally, in 1994, more than 15 years after its decree, World Bank GEF⁸² funds allowed the Montes Azules Reserve to begin operating with staff and a budget. Cooperative agreements were worked out with research institutions to do ecological studies in Montes Azules and to reactivate a biological research station established earlier in the southwestern corner of the Reserve at Boca de Chajul (INE/SEMARNAP 2000). In 1993, the Chiapas office of Conservation International (C.I.) also began implementing its own conservation projects in the Comunidad, targeting projects for places the organization considered “pressure points” on the Reserve, one of which was Nueva Palestina⁸³.

During the following sexenio (1994-2000), federal environmental responsibilities were removed from SEDESOL and transferred to an agency newly created for the purpose,

⁸² Global Environmental Facility; funding mechanism for biodiversity conservation projects following the Convention on Biological Diversity.

⁸³ C.I. staff, various, personal communications 1998, 1999.

SEMARNAP⁸⁴. Throughout the Selva region, including the Comunidad, offices called CAS⁸⁵ were opened under the auspices of SEDESOL, to serve as single access points for the different government agencies and as channels for the coordination of public services. Many saw this as mainly a political move to win support away from the EZLN (De Vos 2002)⁸⁶. According to observers, this is a period when the federal government tended to push aside state government in order to deal with the EZLN crisis, and when government agencies became more protective of their budgets and turf and less prone to coordination, in an environment where the resistance movements made their work difficult. In the Selva region, the work was essentially divided up, with SEDESOL working in the Cañadas region, and SEMARNAP becoming the lead agency in the Comunidad. During 1995, the Comunidad Lacandona had a CAS, under SEDESOL's direction, located at the San Javier intersection near Lacanjá Chansayab. In 1996, the word "Regional" was added to the end of its name (becoming a CASR) and it was placed under SEMARNAP's stewardship. However, the multi-agency function quickly dissipated, with individual agencies continuing to ply their agendas and programs independently, often in competition with or contradiction of each other. In contrast to the previous sexenio, when SEDESOL had been the lead agency in the Selva region and had some success at channeling investments to the communities with multiple objectives of social welfare, infrastructure, livelihood, and conservation, SEMARNAP became the main governmental presence and point agency for Comunidad concerns⁸⁷. Later, in 2000, the concept of a CAS for the Comunidad was revived because of comuneros' frustrations with the government-interface process (CAS 2000). Meanwhile, the Programa de Desarrollo Sustentable (PRODESA), a national program under

⁸⁴ Secretaría del Medio Ambiente, Recursos Naturales y Pesca (Secretariat of the Environment, Natural Resources and Fisheries)

⁸⁵ Centro de Atención Social (Social Attention Center)

⁸⁶ Rodolfo Díaz Sarvides, personal communications 2000.

⁸⁷ Pablo Muench Navarro and Rodolfo Díaz Sarvides, personal communications, 2000 and 2002.

SEMARNAP, became the main government vehicle for addressing development and conservation objectives at the community level.

It's also important to note that during this period, parts of the Selva region, and certainly the Comunidad, saw an influx of resources as a result of the 1994 EZLN uprising. One of the responses of the government was a renewed interest in public works and services in the non-resistance Selva communities. A vigorous road-building and paving program was begun all around the Selva region. Within two years of the uprising, the Frontier Highway (the road parallel to the Usumacinta and the southern border with Guatemala, that communicates the Comunidad with Palenque in the north and the Márques de Comillas region in the south,) was paved. In 1999, Palestina's access road was re-built and paved, as well. There was also an increased militarization of the Selva, with several military checkpoints and bases established along these roads, including near the intersections with the access roads to Palestina, Lacanjá Chansayab, and Frontera. On the Comunidad side of the Selva, the official purpose of the checkpoints was to monitor for drug trafficking, illegal immigrants coming up from Central America, and rain forest contraband, such as illegal timber or wildlife extraction. A military base also took over a site in the northwestern interior of the Comunidad near Lake Ocotol, on the northwest fringe of Palestina lands, that C.I. had been preparing as a future ecotourism center. Access to it is through Palestina and out one of the dirt roads that comuneros use to get to their fields. Although life in Palestina pretty much continued as always, some comuneros complained about the military presence, saying it does nothing to prevent incursions on Comunidad land ("they're out there playing tennis and on vacation", one said of the soldiers at the Ocotol base), that it doesn't keep them safe from the intermittent robberies of public transport along the highway, that the soldiers avail themselves of whatever contraband they find and harasses them

as they go to their milpas every day, and that they bring “bad elements” to the town, in the form of access to drugs, more alcohol, and prostitution. However, at the same time, the soldiers spend money on their trips in and out of town. And, apart from the direct value of the roads and public works themselves, comuneros have also benefited from this governmental response by earning salaries as laborers on the construction projects, and by housing and feeding contractors, outside laborers, and government technicians.

In what many saw as another response to the EZLN movement, the state government also embarked on a program of “remunicipalization,” in which new, smaller municipios would be carved out of the larger Selva municipios. One such new municipio, “Lacandonia,” was being considered for the Comunidad itself in 1999 and was the cause of a great deal of internal turmoil that year, but didn’t survive the process before the program ended in 2000. Aside from causing conflict within the Comunidad, it, too, brought an influx of government representatives and meetings, as well as a source of temporary salaried work for residents carrying out the required population census.

Finally, another event of the 90s helped focus attention on the environment: in 1998, as a result of the El Niño weather phenomenon, the state suffered an intense and prolonged drought. When the time came to burn vegetation to prepare land for milpa-sowing, typically April and May, many fires went out of control and spread throughout the state, burning thousands of hectares. In the Reserve area, there were some 10,000 ha burned; there was a heavy pall of smoke over the whole state for weeks. The next year, the state government mounted a campaign to stop farmers from using fire, yet offered no alternatives to them for ensuring soil fertility or clearing land. During 1999 and 2000, the radio was filled with government-sponsored spots,

claiming there would be “apoyos” (help or supports, generally interpreted by the campesino population as financial) for those who didn’t burn. These were never forthcoming.

Actors and projects

Thus, during the 1994-2000 sexenio, institutional action in the Comunidad became dominated by agencies whose primary focus was environmental. The main protagonists were the Montes Azules Reserve, the PRODERS program (to Palestinos, usually just “SEMARNAP”), and Conservation International. Espacios Naturales y Desarrollo Sustentable, A.C. (ENDESU), a Mexican conservation NGO based in Mexico City, had a less direct role that nevertheless contributed to some controversy during this period⁸⁸.

Other government agencies had an intermittent presence in Nueva Palestina, mostly manifest in periodic multi-agency meetings that took place in the Comunidad or in Palenque: in the middle 90s (primarily 1995-96), under the guise of the Comisión Interinstitucional para el Desarrollo Sustentable de la Comunidad Lacandona⁸⁹ and the CAS/R; and again, it appears, in 1999 and 2000. Representatives of INI occasionally made an appearance in Palestina, particularly (to my knowledge) in conjunction with “ecotourism” projects, incipient or in-process, and a community history project (not carried out, as far as I know). Evidently, an INI team visited a 1999 meeting of the MABR Technical Advisory Council, where they talked about a paper they were writing on how the Reserve should interact with indigenous peoples, but I

⁸⁸ ENDESU signed an agreement with INE in 1998 to take over management of the Chajul Biological Experiment Station (on Comunidad land), and channeled some of its funds to the salaries of residents hired as Reserve guards. It also had other projects independent of the Reserve structure, including a private butterfly commercialization project at the southwestern edge of Reserve/Comunidad land. IDESMAC, based in San Cristóbal de las Casas briefly received funding to provide a workshop in each community in on topics related to agrarian and related laws, as well as computer training for a few community youth. INFROSUR, another NGO, based in Comitán, offered to contract with some Comunidad groups to help with proposal-writing and fund-raising. INFROSUR was also used by SEMARNAP in 1999 to do community-by-community “diagnósticos” or needs assessment/planning workshops, in preparation for a proposed development plan for the Comunidad (CAS 2000).

⁸⁹ Inter-institutional Commission for the Sustainable Development of the Comunidad Lacandona, which had subcommittees dedicated to issues of land tenure, public works, and sustainable development.

never heard of this effort again. The tourism and agricultural secretariats were the other two government agencies with the most visible, if occasional, presences in relation to project interventions in Palestina.

In the first couple years of the sexenio (1994-1996), SEDESOL was still a strong presence; this was a time when funds were channeled into the Comunidad with both a development and conservation focus. Between 1994 and 1996, there was a flurry of activity in relation to infrastructure: investments were made in piped water systems, latrines, community buildings and public spaces. In Palestina, dirt access roads to the main agricultural areas were built, greatly facilitating getting farmers and produce in and out. But international and private funds were also beginning to come in to the region for conservation purposes, directed towards operationalizing and protecting the MABR. Conservation International had also begun investing in the Comunidad in 1993. As part of a strategy to deflect “pressure points” on the Reserve, it envisioned the development of a series of stations around its least-protected flanks. It took under its management two already existing stations, the Chajul biological research station, begun in 1984 and used as a base for ecological research primarily by UNAM in Mexico City, and another location, Ixcán, both of them along the southeastern flank of the Reserve and Comunidad. In 1993, it negotiated with the Comunidad to build an ecotourism camp in the ecologically sensitive Lake Ocotal area, located to the west of Palestina’s agricultural areas and a continuing front for new settlements from the north and west. In addition to establishing a presence to deter future colonization, it was envisioned that this camp would generate employment and environmental awareness within the Comunidad, as well as provide incentives for comuneros’ to feel a greater

stake in conserving the Reserve's resources. A few comuneros were hired as future guides and began a process of training⁹⁰.

Also during these first years of the sexenio, a move emerged on the part of the Comunidad to capture and control some of the new incoming resources for its own, direct benefit. Organized in late 1993 and formalized in 1994, a non-profit organization was formed by the Comunidad, called Lacandonia, A.C. According to one of the key mestizo (and non-comunero) people instrumental in forming it, the idea to form its own organization grew, in part, out of the Comunidad's continued concerns about incursions on its territory and its growing frustration with the continued irrelevance or incompetence of government programs. Documents produced about and by Lacandonia, A.C. refer to it as being started by the Lacandons, and heavily pitch indigenous cultural survival, harmonious ecological practices, and self-development as its reason for being (Marion 1994; Lacandonia, A.C. 1994; Lacandonia, A.C. 1995). Even though the language includes references to the Tzeltal and Ch'ol comuneros, the pitch clearly draws on images associated with the Lacandons' "essence of Maya culture" which resides in the "integration of man with his natural environment" and the "delicate equilibrium" that results (Lacandonia, A.C. 1994:5). The documents also provide sophisticated critiques of the failure of past investments in the region, as well as very informed arguments for the efficiency of investing international funds directly in the grassroots and in sustainable resource use. An advisory council was formed, primarily from a collection of researchers who had long worked closely with the Lacandons (and not the other comuneros)⁹¹, with biologists, agronomists, a former SRA agent, the new director of the MABR, and a World Bank

⁹⁰ C.I.staff, various, personal communications 1998, 1999.

⁹¹ As mentioned in a previous chapter, except for the first years when Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal were founded, and now, again as a result of recent events, these other member of the Comunidad, of far greater numbers and having far greater implications for changes in vegetation cover than the Lacandons, have never drawn the attention of researchers.

representative, among them. All comuneros were automatically members in the organization, and the leadership structure paralleled that of the Comunidad: the president of the Comunidad and the comisariados of Palestina and Frontera took the principle offices.

The organization was able, in fact, to capture funds from a variety of sources during these two or so years. With start-up help from Conservation International during the first year, it opened its own office in the state capital. The organization administered the funds from a variety of government sources that went towards staffing the new wildlife inspection and monitoring checkpoints, many of the infrastructure-building investments mentioned above, a variety of small business projects, and xate nursery projects. Comuneros speak of Lacandonia with mixed sentiments: they often speak with pride of the work it accomplished, ostensibly quickly and under-budget (which they contrast with government interventions), and of the rightness of the Comunidad obtaining its own funds and directing its own development, an enduring theme in comuneros' discourse. They evoked an almost exhilaration when they described members of the Comunidad, in command of their own vehicles, communicating between Tuxtla and the Selva by radio, manning the wildlife inspection station just to the north of the Comunidad border, and the offices supplied with computers and faxes through which they, now, could talk directly with international funding agencies. On the other hand, it is also frequently said that the three comisariados, plus one of the outside advisors, ended up running the organization without participation of the Comunidad and to their personal financial benefit. Most of the other outside advisors distanced themselves, and there were frictions between the organization's principals and the new director of MABR. The organization lodged complaints in 1995⁹² that the MABR director, at the same time functioning as coordinator of Chiapas C.I. projects, was dominating

⁹² Two letters sent to V.H. Hernández Obregon, Dir. of MABR, from the Comunidad comisariados, dated October 2, 1995, and October 3, 1995.

and bottlenecking the distribution of multiple sources of funds destined for the Selva. The experience ended under a cloud of accusations by comuneros against the three comisariados and the key mestizo advisor, the disappearance of the organization's equipment, and the expulsion of the advisor from the Comunidad. Despite the circumstances of its ending, the experience has remained a potent example for comuneros of the autonomy and self-determination they feel still evades them.

At about the same time that Lacandonia, A.C. dissolved in 1996 and the Comunidad lost its fleeting grip on the funding flow, SEDESOL left for the other side of the Selva and SEMARNAP became the lead agency in the Comunidad. There are reports that there were some frictions that led the Lacandons to run SEDESOL out of the CAS; but individuals who were within SEDESOL and SEMARNAP at the time also indicate there were forces from higher up in the agencies that were instrumental in this change. SEMARNAP opened its activities in the Comunidad in 1996 under the guise of a "Sustainable Development Program for the Comunidad Lacandona," invoking the support of then-President Zedillo Ponce de León, to be carried out through the PRODERS line of activity. In an early document, a plan was elaborated for an ambitious community-based environmental planning process in each of the 5 communities of the Comunidad, to be supplemented by GIS information which comuneros would be trained to use. Environmental plans were to be developed through the collaboration of technical teams and members of each community, and projects developed that would include "soil and water conservation methods, the introduction of green manures, the establishment of silvipastoral systems, the establishment of nurseries for native species, and the reforestation of timber and non-timber species for productive uses" (SEMARNAP/Subsecretaría de Planeación/INE 1996:9). The plan is framed in terms of building comuneros' capacities for planning and

implementation, within an overall objective of improving their welfare, at the same time as promoting conservation. Yet, it seems notable that the anticipated project activities mentioned don't explicitly address the economic activities already important to comuneros, such as cattle and coffee, nor other aspects of their social and economic welfare.

As far as I know, the creation of environmental plans based on careful evaluations of soils, vegetation, and existing uses of each community's land, and the GIS components of the plan, were never realized in the Comunidad. But the line of project activities laid out in the early plan did reflect the lines that were promoted over the next few years. In 1999 through 2001, the main target of PRODERS financial support was soil conservation and "milpa sedentarization", meant to extend the number of years the same plot of land could be cultivated, thus avoiding yearly rotations of milpa to a new plot of land. The use of an annual legume in the *Mucuna* genus ("*frijol abono*", literally, fertilizer bean, but also locally referred to as "*nescafé*" for its ability to be made into a poor man's, coffee-like beverage) to keep weeds down and regenerate soil fertility, was a key element of this line. The use of the legumes for recovery of exhausted or eroded soils and abandoned pastures was also supported. Other lines of activity included reforestation, through the planting of native timber and firewood species in acahuals (milpa fallows), pastures, or other areas; and acahual "enrichment", meant to extend the productive use of the fallows stage of swidden agriculture with species providing food, wood, or economic benefits, such as xate. In addition, the program had expanded to include activities more directly related to income generation, such as xate nurseries to supply managed plantings; organic vegetable production; intensive cattle-raising; and the managed harvesting of wild plant and animal species through SEMARNAP's Wildlife Use and Conservation Management Units

(UMAs), introduced at the end of the sexenio and still in a formative stage in terms of actual implementation methods⁹³.

During these later years when I was present in Palestina, the program had evolved into a system where PRODERS provided financial support for materials and inputs, as well as to subsidize the labor involved in carrying out these activities. Each year, the number, kind, and amounts of financial support for projects to be funded with each community was re-negotiated. In an example from 1999, a comunero was to receive a payment for each hectare of active milpa in which *Mucuna* was planted and for which two additional hectares were reforested. In 1999, most of the projects were in the “sedentarization”, soil conservation, and reforestation categories. By 2000, there were more projects included, such as vegetable and xate production, that had the potential to generate income for participants. There were only two intensive cattle-raising projects funded, one in Palestina and one in Frontera. The Palestina recipients of the cattle-related funding were members of a group that had been organized since 1994, and had also received funding for organic chile production. Sadly, they were on the verge of having their product, for which they had lined up commercial buyers, certified organic at the end of a three-year certification process, when another government initiative, aimed at fighting the spread of the Mediterranean fruit fly, inadvertently sprayed their fields with insecticide.

Local PRODERS staffers’ accounts suggest the program operated under considerable institutional constraints that compromised the responsiveness to community needs imagined in the early planning document cited above. Nationally, PRODERS was not a SEMARNAP project; it was meant to be an integrating force across agencies. In the Selva region, it became something of an institutional orphan. When the program was begun in the Comunidad in 1996, it was not clear where in the local SEMARNAP administrative framework it should be placed.

⁹³ PRODERS field staff, personal communications, 1999, 2000, 2001.

Funds for the PRODERS projects were cobbled together every year from a variety of SEMARNAP and other government agency budgets, over which PRODERS had no authority or control. As a result, payments promised to comuneros often came months after the season in which they were needed, or sometimes, not at all. Moreover, field staff found themselves being moved around to different regions; operating budgets for getting out to the communities were drastically cut, compromising project follow-up and verification; and there were changing directives from the SEMARNAP hierarchy above. For instance, there were ongoing issues internally and within the communities regarding how best to distribute project participation among the comuneros, as well as how to verify comunero fulfillment. These questions included whether SEMARNAP should deal directly with comuneros, or whether each community's authorities should take that distributional and monitoring role; and whether participants could be individuals or had to be organized into groups with legally recognized structures. Switching from one policy to the other contributed to misunderstandings between comuneros and field staff. The PRODERS program encouraged the formation of a *Consejo Consultorio*, or consultative council, in the Comunidad to help direct programming, but in Nueva Palestina, this council never achieved trust or legitimacy; comuneros told PRODERS staff that they preferred to deal with them directly. Moreover, despite the fact that PRODERS was intended to be the main vehicle for developing "integrated" conservation and development activities for Reserve-affected communities, PRODERS staff said they did not participate in the Reserve's Technical Advisory Council meetings, where agency action was supposed to be coordinated, adding to what they felt was an already confusing and sometime counterproductive array of institutional actions in the communities. Some of the PRODERS staff had worked in the community-based Selva initiative under SEDESOL in the previous sexenio, where they said they came to know what productive

relations with the communities could be like. Under current arrangements, they felt hamstrung by what they considered to be policies coming from the center, divorced from Selva realities. All of these factors contributed to growing tensions and disillusionment among comuneros around the conduct of PRODERS activities.

The Montes Azules administration was also under SEMARNAP, but was answerable to a different component of the agency than were PRODERS and the other agency units involved in different lines of activity, such as enforcement, reforestation, and commercial forestry. During the 1994-2000 sexenio, protected areas in Mexico were under the Coordinating Unit of Natural Protected Areas (UCANP), within the Institute of Ecology (INE)⁹⁴. A research and advisory organ for SEMARNAP, INE has typically been staffed by well-respected ecologists and biologists, and is described by longtime observers as allied to a fairly strong biodiversity preservation perspective. The executive and technical staff of MABR has similarly been dominated by biologists, mostly trained in universities in Mexico City. This contrasts with the PRODERS program, which tended to be staffed by agronomists, foresters, veterinarians, and others oriented towards developing field applications of technology in social contexts. MABR offices are in the state capital, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, a full day's travel by car from Palestina.

In its first start-up years, the MABR was mainly occupied with developing physical and administrative infrastructure, protective measures for reserve resources, such as the inspection checkpoints and park guards, and strengthening the presence of the camps and research stations around the reserve periphery with C.I.'s collaboration. According to MABR administrative staff, even though the Reserve started up with GEF moneys, the initial process used for their

⁹⁴ During the next sexenio (2000-2006), SEMARNAP became SEMARNAT⁹⁴, as the fisheries component was moved to the agricultural secretariat. While INE was to continue in an advisory and research role for the Secretariat, the administration of federally protected areas was removed from it and placed under a commission developed for the purpose, CONANP (Consejo Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas), and PRODERS was put under its wing.

disbursement meant considerable delays in fund availability. The process has since been modified with the creation of a special trust fund to distribute money among 10 GEF-funded protected areas nationally, but this only covers basic operating costs and the Reserve has always had to rely on the participation of organizations bringing their own resources, such as C.I., in order to carry out program activities. Thus, some of the early activities financed by C.I. as well as those carried out by Lacandonia, A.C. in relation to guards, inspection activities, and the Lake Ocotal camp, are counted in MABR annual reports as Reserve activities. In recent years, the salaries of park guards have been shared by PROFEPA⁹⁵, C.I., and ENDESU (the latter two using corporate funds from such sources as Ford Motor Company and high-profile Mexican businesses), even though the guards all report to and work for the MABR. There has also been a fairly close relationship with C.I. since the earliest years. The first MABR director was also the director of C.I. projects in Chiapas for the period of 1994-1998. Much of C.I.'s work, for instance, in aerial monitoring and interpretation of LANDSAT images of the Selva, has provided a critical technical component to the MABR for which it alone has never had the funding.

Although the MABR began to be staffed in 1994, it was not until 1997 that the required Technical Advisory Council (TAC) was started up and the process of developing a management plan seriously underway. The TAC includes in its membership organizations and institutions from academic, government, "civil" or nongovernmental, and "social" sectors. The latter refers to representatives of communities or campesino organizations within the sphere of MABR influence; in practice, this has included the comisariados from Palestina, Frontera, and Lacanjá, and representatives of a couple of ejidos and a producers' organization from the Miramar/San Quintín side of the Reserve. Other institutions or individuals frequently attend as observers or invited speakers. The official purpose of the TAC is to provide advice to the administrators of

⁹⁵ Procuradería Federal de Protección Ambiental, the SEMARNAP arm that enforces environmental laws.

the Reserve, to serve as a vehicle for coordinating the activities and resources of the different actors and institutions in matters that affect the Reserve, and to help revise the Management Plan (RIBMA 1999). The meetings have been held in Palenque and at least once in Frontera, but most often in the state capital. In practice, the TAC has become one of the primary vehicles for presenting the communities with annual plans and final reports (on which they must sign off) and developments or changes in MABR activities. Significantly, it has also become a political space that Comunidad members have increasingly used to press demands for Reserve or governmental action, demands that Reserve personnel sometimes say have little to do with the purpose of the TAC or fall beyond the responsibilities of the Reserve. Reserve staff sometimes say they feel that Comunidad representatives are either too passive or too grandstanding and obstructive, while comuneros talk about feeling as if they have not been heard nor taken into account. The TAC meetings (supposed to occur at least three times a year), the park guards, and the occasional Reserve-sponsored workshop or field monitoring visit, constitute the main vehicles for interaction between the Comunidad and Reserve personnel.

As an early attempt to build linkages with the Comunidad, the Reserve held a series of three workshops in 1997 for participants selected by comuneros. Billed as “Training Workshops on the MABR Management Plan for Community Promoters”, they covered a range of topics, including background on the MABR and protected areas in Mexico, MABR funding, the importance of the Selva Lacandona, and the different activities and instruments, such as monitoring and zoning, that the reserve would employ. They also included a component aimed at providing comuneros tools for making their own project proposals (RIBMA 1997). According to a MABR administrator, it was envisioned that the workshop participants would serve as an educated body of comuneros that could help inform Comunidad interactions with the Reserve,

particularly in relation to developing the Management Plan, even as the elected authorities changed every year. Some of the attendees were later hired as park guards. For two Palestina men who were participants, the workshops seemed to be symbolic of a general sense of expectations raised by the Reserve and then dashed by what they felt was a lack of follow-through and inattention to comunero concerns. Speaking about the workshops two years later, one gave an example of a topic covered, the need to base land use planning on such things as soil studies. For him, this made sense: why plant coffee where coffee won't thrive; knowing this would save them money and time. "These things," he said, "are useful to us." But then, as far as he could tell, such a thing had never come to pass. The other man read off to me notes he had carefully taken on Reserve funding, its sources, and the amounts used for different lines of activity. He saw money coming in from all over the world, yet none of it was designated for "the benefit of the campesino," it was all research, environmental education, and monitoring, he said. Having taken the information to heart on applying for project funding, he said he put his proposals for productive projects in to agencies and then never got any results. This man understood that the participants *were* Technical Advisory Councilors, and that one of their functions was to monitor Reserve spending and activities. In fact, he told me, the impetus for these workshops and for the TAC finally being formed in 1997 was that the Comunidad had become concerned about the way programming was going, and complained directly to the U.S. A team was sent from there that investigated and made clear that the Reserve had to have an advisory body with community participation in it⁹⁶. This man also felt that by 1998, the local "TACs" had stopped functioning. Some other comuneros I spoke with, non-participants, said that the local "TACs" had never really shared the information gained from the workshops with

⁹⁶ He was probably referring to GEF requirements, based on the Convention on Biological Diversity and other international agreements, e.g. ILO 169.

anyone, highlighting the different assumptions being made by the Reserve and community members about the purpose and functions of so-called “community promoters.” In any case, with the formalization of the TAC and of the Comunidad’s participation in it after 1997, Comunidad leaders had greater opportunities to see how the Reserve management strategy was being shaped, where its resources came from and what they were to be spent on. Theoretically, they also had more opportunity to shape these activities.

Before a formal Management Plan was adopted in 2000, the MABR’s activities were developed in yearly Operational Plans, to which the Comunidad had to provide its consent. In addition to ecological monitoring, research, and protection, activities have included components specifically addressing the populations living in and around the Reserve, consistent with its biosphere status and the circumstances of its creation. Environmental education is one of these, and activities in this rubric have been carried out through a variety of means, such as workshops targeted to community schools, and in more recent years, a variety of written, audio, and visual media. The use of *promotores comunitarios*, or community promoters, became a prime strategy for disseminating information in general: whether related to rain forest ecology, environmental protection, Reserve policies and activities, or the agricultural techniques being encouraged among comuneros. In the Comunidad, the park guards have been expected to fulfill this role, in addition to recording ecological data, patrolling for illegal wildlife use or new settlements (without enforcement responsibilities), and assisting Reserve staff and visiting researchers. Reserve personnel have described relying on the park guards as one of their main forms of “*enlace*” or liaison with the Comunidad, relying on them to disseminate information “down and out” to the communities, as one administrative person told me, but also to keep Reserve personnel informed of what’s going on in the communities. However, while comuneros may

also rely on park guards for information about Reserve doings, the park guards do not have formal political, leadership or spokesperson roles for the Comunidad, and the responsibilities, activities, and time commitments of a park “promoter” are not inherently coterminous with those of park “guard” or data taker.

The Comunidad and the few Miramar-area communities participating in the TAC are not, of course, the only Reserve residents with which the MABR has to contend. Cañadas communities in resistance were not participating in any way in the development of a MABR management plan. And what to do about the so-called “irregular” settlements within the Reserve boundaries was an ongoing and increasingly thorny issue. In the mid-90s, the Comisión Interinstitucional, through a subcommittee especially designated for the task, was the main vehicle for addressing this, and a series of meetings were initiated with ARIC and other communities as well as Comunidad representatives to seek some kind of resolution – with few concrete results. In later years, the MABR began approaching the issue through a multi-agency, *mesa agraria ambiental* (agrarian environmental table), established in May of 1999, which attempted to negotiate directly with those settlements not having legal tenure. According to the Reserve director, the fires of 1998 and the anticipated approach of another drier than usual season in subsequent years gave extra impetus to institutional attempts to deal with the issue. Some were ARIC communities, some were of EZLN affiliation or sympathy; some were of no particular political affiliation, but it was understood that, if necessary, they might invoke the support of the resistance movements. The main strategy pursued was to negotiate the relocation of settlements to lands outside the Reserve. In 1999 and 2000, both signed and preliminary agreements were reached with a few communities, provided that acceptable land was offered by the government and sufficient monetary and other compensation provided. The whole issue, of

course, was and continues to be highly politically charged. On the one hand, the heightened awareness of the potential for fires to escape from milpas seemed to give Comunidad leaders the added impetus to make public statements decrying the continued existence of “invaders” in Comunidad territory and the continued failure of the government to remove them, a persistent source of concern. On the other hand, comuneros could easily predict a particular weakness in the government’s strategy: once a settlement was relocated, another group of people was sure to move in to take over the abandoned milpas and acahuals, a cycle that could theoretically go on forever. To some comuneros, as well as some Reserve personnel, this effectively represented the government rewarding those who knowingly entered Comunidad or Reserve lands with a free ticket to land tenure, houses, and services somewhere else. To complicate things even more, the renewed focus on dealing with the “irregular” settlements during 1999 through 2001, particularly in light of news reports that the government was to send in members of a special S.W.A.T. team-like force to help with fire fighting (not usually their area of competence), caused many Cañadas communities and sympathizers to conclude that conservation had now become the government pretext for invading and/or forcing out the communities allied with the EZLN and other opposition movements. That is, given the failure of the government to reach a political solution with the resistance communities, and the political infeasibility of overt military measures, it was judged that the government was now using the theoretically apolitical cause of conservation to persecute the resistance movement.

Again, consistent with its status as a biosphere reserve and the reality of its circumstances, MABR objectives include helping to move all “social” and institutional actors towards actions that help conserve the rain forest ecosystem. The TAC, officially, is the primary means for the latter; the mesa agraria ambiental and related initiatives represent one means for

dealing with “irregular” members of the former. For those social actors who are legal tenure holders, MABR plans primarily designate initiatives variously called “social development”, “sustainable social development,” or “community development”. While recognizing the existence of other community needs, under this rubric the MABR has targeted activities designed to contain existing land use practices, and if at all possible, reduce the area of disturbed land by converting pastures, milpa fallows, or degraded lands to forest or agroforestry uses, using the same kinds of “agroecological” techniques advocated by the PRODERS projects. MABR personnel have facilitated the distribution of *Mucuna* seed and sponsored some workshops on using it in conjunction with non-burning milpa techniques. In contrast with PRODERS, the Reserve has maintained a policy of not using payments to comuneros to encourage the adoption of these practices. Interestingly, the 1996 Operative Plan, while advocating a hard line on cattle-raising and changes in land use, also gave recognition to a broader range of components important to communities’ resource use patterns, and suggested that attention needed to be paid to credit, production infrastructure, and studying the feasibility of “agroindustrial” options. This was dropped from subsequent Operative Plans. In interviews during the period of my research, the Reserve director and administrative personnel have taken the position that there are other agencies responsible for attending to matters of economic development and social welfare. The ‘96 Plan also explicitly refers to Lacandon milpa management and polyculture as the ideal mode to be adapted and diffused to other Selva communities, characterizing the non-Lacandon patterns of use as monocultures having a high impact on the environment. This characterization, and the position that “development” is not the Reserve’s responsibility, continues to be expressed by MABR and other staff; both perspectives are reflected in the Management Plan finally adopted in 2000, and in the kinds of activities that have been supported. For instance, beginning in 1997, a

series of research activities, supported by private funding, were initiated in Lacanja on Lacandon agricultural practices that might be adapted for use with the non-Lacandon populations. The only cash-oriented productive practices given explicit approval by the MABR have been managed plantations of xate; *pita* (*Aechmea magdalenae*), a wild, terrestrial bromeliad from which a fiber is produced for use in ornament leatherwork and other artisanal products; and vanilla production in some of the Miramar-area communities. In contrast with xate commercialization, which has a decades-long history and well-developed marketing channels in the region, vanilla and pita production will require a fair amount of investment in technical, organizational, and marketing development before they can become truly viable economic alternatives.

To return to the third major protagonist in the conservation scenario, after the EZLN uprising, C.I. abandoned the Lake Ocotal ecotourism project in 1995. C.I. staff say that Palestina residents, in particular, didn't want to be put into confrontations with the movement's members. The camp was subsequently looted by resistance-affiliated campesinos from the west, and later taken over, as mentioned, by the military. Some of the Palestinos who had worked for the project were able to gain employment as MABR park guards. Others later decided to use the experience and knowledge gained to try to develop an ecotourism project of their own out of Palestina. Meanwhile, C.I. shifted its attention in Palestina to promoting the kinds of agroecological and agroforestry techniques promoted by PRODERS and MABR. Unlike the latter two, however, C.I. was able to assign a full-time agronomist to oversee the projects; tree nurseries were started; some local people were hired as assistants and community promoters; demonstration plots in Palestina were developed; and some comuneros were taken on field trips to visit other communities where the techniques had been in use for a while. According to the

coordinator of the project at the time, C.I. first worked with about a dozen Palestinos, offering them monetary compensation for the time invested and free inputs (*Mucuna sp.* and *Canavalia sp.* seeds, tree seedlings, etc.) to try out the techniques on the first round, after which there would be a public evaluation of the results. After that, C.I. continued to offer free inputs only, to those comuneros who were interested. Some Palestinos recounted to me how the presence of the agronomist had also been helpful in dealing with other problems they were having in their milpas or coffee plantations. During this period, also, C.I. organized a women's embroidery project in Palestina. A cooperative was formed and its members were taught how to make attractive shirts with European-style embroidery representing realistic images of colorful, rain forest birds. The idea was to develop an alternative source of income in the community that was linked in a positive way with conservation. Beginning in 1996, also, C.I. supported the start-up of a tourism project in Frontera. The S.S.S.⁹⁷ Escudo Jaguar took advantage of Frontera's position as the only Mexican access point to the nearby Yaxchilan ruins, and was able to subsequently build on the initial C.I. support with other funds to develop a restaurant, cabins, and river transport business⁹⁸.

In the beginning of 1999, however, after some three years of effort invested in the Palestina projects, C.I. pulled out. A new coordinator for C.I. Chiapas projects was in place, and according to field staff, the decision to abandon the projects was made in the Mexico City headquarters. For the women's group, the business and marketing part of the project had never been developed; the members were left without any clear channels to sell their product.

Although C.I. is not the government, to some comuneros it represented one more example of

⁹⁷ An S.S.S. is a Sociedad de Solidaridad Social, (Social Solidarity Association), an organizational form legally recognized by the government and that allow campesinos and small producers to receive credit and funds.

⁹⁸ This summary is based on interviews with several C.I. staff as well as Palestinos involved in the projects, during 1998 through 2001.

another “*apoyo*” or help to the community, in the name of conservation, that hadn’t managed to deliver any real benefit.

For the agroecological projects, the timing of the C.I. pullout had somewhat unfortunate consequences. As mentioned previously, in the aftermath of the 1998 wildfires, the state government was asking farmers not to burn in preparation for milpa, and offered unspecified supports for those who complied. The greatest areas of Comunidad land burned were in Frontera’s territory, but many comuneros recounted how all able-bodied men had spent days in the intense heat, from sunup to sundown, creating firebreaks and carrying water on their backs to try to control the fires. Some comuneros remember a series of uncontrolled fires back in the 80s, but never anything on this scale. Besides the monetary inducements being offered by PRODERS (and, theoretically, the state government) to not burn milpas and use *Mucuna*, this experience probably did more than any demonstration program to convince possibly hundreds of comuneros to try out the techniques in 1999. However, that year turned out to be especially rainy, and conversations with comuneros led me to suspect that some of them may not have used the techniques properly. By the harvest season, many comuneros reported to me heavy losses of corn grain to a fungus, and these losses came to be popularly associated with the fact that the milpas hadn’t been burned. No one was on hand to investigate these associations and either debunk them or, if justified, come up with technical answers and remedies. At this point, the presence of the C.I. agronomist would have been most valuable. Comuneros’ stated distrust of the techniques was exacerbated by their sense that they were expected to adopt changes in tried-and-true practices, with no technical support, back-up, or compensation from the government as

promised⁹⁹. Added to this was a certain amount of confusion expressed about the different institutional programs promoting the use of *Mucuna* and non-burning: some comuneros said they weren't sure if it was C.I. or SEMARNAP or the agricultural ministry that was supposed to pay them.

As I conducted my research in 1999 and 2000, many comuneros told me the methods don't work, "*no sirven*," even when they might agree that use of the cover crop did, indeed, help keep the soil fertile and provide other benefits. Several people showed me samples of corn with fungus. By contrast, a few people told me they found the techniques problem-free, but didn't seem too willing to voice this non-conforming viewpoint in public. Despite an inconclusive survey that barrio representatives carried out with my help in 2000 to try to quantify the problem (how many people had suffered what quantity of losses) and see if there might be any correlation with particular plot management techniques or environmental conditions, I couldn't tell how much of the negative reaction was political, reflecting the growing frustration during these years with the perceived lack of benefit and unfulfilled promises from all these institutional interventions, and how much reflected the disappointing experiences in their milpas.

III. DIFFERENCE: POSITIONS

In this way, then, in the 1990s, explicit rain forest conservation objectives came to be inserted into the Comunidad's life and to dominate the agendas and flows of resources coming into the region. To summarize the situation, in the 1990s, the Selva, the Reserve, and by association, the Comunidad were suddenly on the local, national, and international policy agendas. In the early 90s, there began to be an influx of World Bank, federal, and private,

⁹⁹ In an interview with a local representative of the agricultural secretariat, I was told that the "support" promised on the radio ads actually meant that if enough non-burners were registered in a particular town or ejido, that community would be moved up on the list of places waiting for infrastructure projects like bridges and roads.

corporate resources and corresponding institutional action in the region. In the mid-90s, there seemed to be a particular flurry of activity in the Comunidad part of the Selva, as the Reserve and C.I. began to fire up activities, but also through a certain degree of inter-institutional coordination, facilitated by SEDESOL, that allowed access to funds for livelihood, infrastructure, social, and environment-related projects. There were a couple of pretty heady years when the Comunidad, through Lacandonia, A.C., was able to take advantage of the increased funding for livelihood, infrastructural, and conservation investments, inserting itself directly into the flow and engaging directly with funders or their pass-through agencies, and there was a lot of activity in the communities to show for it. Then Lacandonia, A.C. fizzled out, and SEMARNAP took the place of SEDESOL as lead governmental agency. The other government agencies that funded projects in all sectors were still out there, but inter-institutional coordination dropped out for a few years, and comuneros' access to them became more laborious because of the usual reasons of distance, bureaucratic process, and institutional inertia.

The MABR, C.I., and PRODERS became the main institutional actors channeling resources to the Comunidad. Even though one pair of these had a pretty close, collaborative relationship, and another pair was under the same Secretariat, each of the three responded to different institutional hierarchies and programmatic agendas, had different degrees of liquidity in terms of obtaining or applying resources, and different relations of accountability to the communities. Each one also developed its own mechanism for interacting with the Comunidad, with varying degrees of success in facilitating communications, understanding, participation, or credibility in the communities: a Consejo Consultorio, in the case of PRODERS; the TAC and community promoters/park guards in the case of MABR; and promoters and technical staff in the case of C.I. Yet, despite these differences, and despite the fact that the objectives of social

participation, community development, and “improving the quality of life of local residents” through “sustainable use of natural resources” (INE 2000:19) were invoked for interacting with Selva residents, the three institutions directed their resources to a fairly narrow and consistent set of activities based on a relatively narrow set of criteria. With a few exceptions, particularly within the PRODERS line and the C.I. support to tourism and the embroidery project, these are the dissemination of agricultural or agroforestry techniques that contain comuneros’ land use activities to where they are now, and if possible, decrease the amount of human-transformed land by increasing permanent tree cover. In addition to this, the 1998 fires brought a heightened attention to the question of “irregular” communities, as well as extra resources devoted to reforestation.

As all of the different programs, including the MABR, became increasingly operational and formalized, a variety of tensions developed, and by the time I came on the scene in 1999, were being expressed in the form of confrontations – positions taken, meetings boycotted, hostages held - between comuneros and members of the various agencies. At the same time, there were other events going on that promised to open up possibilities for the Comunidad, or segments thereof, to capture political and economic resources. These also substantially occupied comuneros’ time, and added to the prolific numbers of meetings, discussions, and trips to municipal and state capitals and the other communities that were already being generated by the former tensions. These events contributed to a great deal of dissension within and between the Comunidad’s constituent communities, and things even reached a point where the continuing integrity of the Comunidad as a union of the five “sub-communities” was called into question by comuneros. This was a tumultuous time for the Comunidad, and it was a challenging time for a visiting researcher to get a hold of comisariados and other local authorities and have them focus

on her questions. There was much going on that seemed to have vital implications for the communities' immediate and long term future.

On one hand, there was a series of interactions between comuneros and the Reserves and SEMARNAP, in which a set of escalating and increasingly fixed positions were taken by the Comunidad that the agencies seemed to find institutionally or politically beyond their abilities to address. On the other, there was a contest going on between Frontera and Palestina to capture the administrative center of a proposed new municipio, Lacandonia, that would be more or less coterminous with the Comunidad's territory, give or take a few adjacent ejidos. Meanwhile, towards the end of this period, as the confrontations between the Comunidad and environmental agencies were heating up, the sexenio was about to change. Presidential and gubernatorial campaigns were underway, for the first time offering the possibility of real competition between three political parties; the outgoing governor was in a press to leave some tangible evidence of his political legacy; and the Comunidad was being courted with promises and offers of projects of dubious environmental or emancipatory consequences. What follows is an outline of these events.

As mentioned previously, during the first couple of years of the MABR startup, there had already been concerns raised in the name of the Comunidad, through Lacandonia, A.C., that financial resources destined for the MABR and conservation in the Selva were being dominated by the MABR and C.I., with one person holding directorship and coordinatorship of each, respectively, from 1994 through 1998. In 1997, when the MABR TAC was started up and the workshops for Comunidad "promoters" were held, it seems that these kinds of concerns about Reserve resources not being directed in a way that reflected Comunidad interests continued to persist. The initiation of a participatory mechanism (the TAC and promoter workshops) that

year may have somewhat allayed those concerns, and perhaps even raised expectations of finally having greater input into the Reserve's development. A review of TAC meeting minutes from that year provided little record of overt tensions.

By 1998, both Palestinos' contemporary accounts and TAC minutes suggest that the concerns rise again. This is the year of the out-of-control fires, most of which are in Frontera's territory, in the northeastern corner (Desempeño area) of the Comunidad where settlements were relocated and given land in the 80s, and some on the Cañadas flanks. The issue of irregular settlements and fire prevention is in the foreground. The Lacantún Biosphere Reserve, lying within Frontera territory and till now dormant, has a director named to it, unbeknownst to the Comunidad until announced in a TAC meeting¹⁰⁰. The person named is the till-then director of MABR and coordinator of C.I. Chiapas, against whom the Comunidad (or at least, the principals of Lacandonia, A.C.) had lodged complaints regarding the use of funds destined for the Selva in 1995. According to Palestina's 2000 comisariado, this is also a year when more World Bank money comes to Chiapas "in the name of the Comunidad Lacandona," but gets spent all over the Selva. It is also when ENDESU signs an agreement with INE to take over management of the Chajul research station, proposing to make it into a money-making ecotourism and research center, in order that it become financially self-sustaining¹⁰¹. This agreement, too, was evidently made without the Comunidad's knowledge, even though the center is on Comunidad land. TAC meeting minutes suggest that the process of developing a MABR management plan had begun in earnest, with TAC members reviewing drafts and providing comments. In the September 1998 meeting minutes, Comunidad concerns are recorded about the continuing issue of "invasions"; the lack of consultation on the appointment of the Lacantún director; the lack of clarity of

¹⁰⁰ According to resident and SEMARNAP personnel accounts, and September TAC minutes.

¹⁰¹ Letter from Dr. José Warman, President of the Board of Directors, ENDESU, to Ignacio March, President of RIBMA TAC, dated August 4, 1999.

concepts used in the management plan draft, the need for simple language and accessibility to the other comuneros, perhaps in the indigenous languages spoken. Most notably, the note-taker says of the comuneros that “they perceive prohibitions, the welfare of the community is being pushed aside, the Selva will be conserved in exchange for what”; and that one of the comisariados urges that “the biological posture be transcended to arrive at the social”. During this year, Palestinos told me, the head of the state-level delegation of SEMARNAP was detained in Palestina because “we had sent in projects for the 1999-2000 year and people wanted to know, with what results”. It was also the year that a parcel of Palestina communal land which C.I. had been allowed to use as a demonstration plot became at the center of a dispute among comuneros over which of two factions should benefit from it. Since it was (mistakenly) perceived that C.I. was going to sell the demonstration crops it had planted there for its own benefit, comuneros let cattle into the plot and thereby settled the issue¹⁰².

In 1999, things heated up considerably. The concern about potential fires continues. SEMARNAP pays some 40 or 50 Palestinos to be on-call fire fighters for the 3 1/2 month dry season. The Comunidad establishes an internal rule that requires everyone to establish a 5m firebreak around their milpa, sanctioned by incarceration and fines. There’s increased pressure to not burn milpas and use green manure/cover crop methods. Many comuneros comply, either out of genuine interest or for the promise of receiving payments, and don’t burn, use frijol abono, but the payments are either delayed for most of the year (in the case of SEMARNAP) or unfulfilled (in the case of the agricultural secretariat). Even worse, many comuneros experience crop losses that may or not be associated. Many sign up for PRODERS projects to reforest in their parcels, also with attendant delays in compensation. Meanwhile, corporate and government money goes into paying army soldiers to plant trees in a “reforestation” initiative that leaves a little bit of

¹⁰² C.I. field staff, personal communications, 1999.

money in the communities for seed collection and nursery maintenance, but which both comuneros and conservationists see as a token, ineffective gesture, and in fact creates more damage in some areas. At the end of this year, coffee prices go drastically down, from the previous year's \$24 pesos/kilo to \$5 to 6/ kilo, because of oversupply on the international market.

TAC meeting minutes from this year show an escalating series of demands that comuneros make in these fora. In the first half of the year, Comunidad representatives repeatedly bring up the issue of invasions and what the Reserve is doing about them; request that ENDESU and INE representatives be present in order to explain the nature and financial conditions of the enterprise to be operated at Chajul; complain that the costs of fighting the '98 fires fell entirely to comuneros (disputed by the Reserve director); request paper copies of all financial reports from the Reserve for past and current years; request that there be a central location in the Comunidad where all Reserve-related information and data be made accessible to them; and decry the lack of money being invested in productive or economic projects.

In June, during the visit of a gubernatorial candidate for the 2000 elections to a big, open-air, community-wide meeting in Palestina, one of the comuneros makes a speech in which he recalls the attention received under SEDESOL before 1996, contrasts it with the poor results the Comunidad had been seeing under SEMARNAP's leadership, and requests that SEDESOL be brought back and the CAS revived with its multi-agency meetings. Another brings up the issue that the government has still not removed the "invaders", saying that Palestinos are the ones who are preserving the forest, while the invaders are not. In conversations with Palestinos, there is a current running that the Reserve offices should be in the Comunidad, not way over in the state capital.

Also during that summer, according to one Palestino's account, a group of comuneros attended a TAC meeting in the Márques de Comillas region where the directors of both MABR and Lacantún reserves and representatives of SEMARNAP/PRODESA were present, as well as leaders of communities from that region. This man described the meeting as something of a pivotal point in terms of comuneros' sense of frustration about the institutions. He told me: "The talk developed in a way of theirs, a way that they know. There I was, stubborn with my cattle, talking improvement, talking intensification", and went on to describe how the comuneros left the meeting, feeling that their own proposals were completely rejected. "But they don't accept the knowledge of the community. People were unhappy, leaving the meeting. Our people don't know that kind of talk." The frustration they felt, he said, led to the development of a set of positions that became manifest in more serious confrontations as this year and the next progressed.

In July, probably as a direct follow-up to the above TAC meeting, an extraordinary meeting of the General Assembly of the whole Comunidad was called and an act drawn up stating that, in "protest and rejection of the official posture of the Reserve functionaries and members of the Technical Advisory Council", they had abandoned the TAC meeting, and that until the Comunidad's proposals were taken seriously, the MABR's Operative Plan for the next year, as well as the Management Plan, would not be approved, and all agents of SEMARNAP and INE would be expelled from the Comunidad¹⁰³. At the next TAC meeting in August, held in Frontera, Comunidad representatives called the meeting closed and then boycotted it after the other attendees continued, when they found that representatives from ENDESU and INE still were not present to explain the status of the Chajul station, although letters had been sent by each

¹⁰³ "Acta de Asamblea General Extraordinaria Celebrada en la Subcomunidad Lacanja Chansayab del Municipio de Ocosingo, Chiapas", July 18, 1999.

to be read out loud in the meeting¹⁰⁴. As one comunero put it, “They just wanted us to approve it (the Reserve’s plan) so the Reserve can manage directly all the resources. But members of the community didn’t approve, and left the meeting.” Again, an act was drawn up and presented to the TAC. Reminding the readers that the comisariados, too, are members of the TAC, and in that role have been “attending the meetings and expounding and defending the interests of the residents of our Comunidad as owners of the Natural Protected Areas of the Selva Lacandona”, it states that “we have not as yet received any response to our proposals, being always relegated by the official priorities of SEMARNAP, the National Institute of Ecology and the Reserve Administration, leaving our proposals as ‘general business’ and its solution to ‘the next meeting’”¹⁰⁵. On what I believe to be the last page of the same declaration¹⁰⁶, five decisions of the Comunidad are listed. In order to have more influence on the decisions and activities related to “ecosystem conservation,” it says, the Comunidad will name comuneros as sub-director of MABR and as directors of the Lacantún and Chankin Reserves; it will modify the contract for the Chajul station so that the Comunidad will control its activities and comuneros will be hired to work there; and finally, that if these demands aren’t approved by the heads of SEMARNAP and INE, all employees and agents of those institutions and the MABR, as well as anyone associated with Chajul, will be expelled from Comunidad territory.

Throughout the year (and my time in the Comunidad), these are the refrains I hear over and over from Palestinos, in one form or another: “Here, in the Comunidad, we have the Reserve, but what good is it?” “All this money comes to the Comunidad, but we never see it.”

¹⁰⁴ TAC minutes; TAC institutional member, personal communication, 1999.

¹⁰⁵ “Acta de Inconformidad que se Levanta en el Centro Ecoturístico ‘Escudo Jaguar’ Respecto a la Reunión del Consejo Técnico Asesor de la Reserva de la Biosfera ‘Montes Azules’ del Municipio de Ocosingo, Chiapas”, August 5, 1999.

¹⁰⁶ My copy of the act comes from the TAC minutes archives; the second page of what appears to have been a three-page statement is missing. Unfortunately, as is typically the case, the date only appears on the first page, so it is possible the five demands I am referring to are part of a statement emitted at a different date.

“Lots of money, big bills, from international is sent to the Selva, but who knows where the bastards spend it?” “They (Reserve personnel, SEMARNAP agents, government agents and NGOs) drive new cars, they have a nice house in the city, but what about the poor campesino? We never see the money that comes to the Comunidad, but they, they all eat from the same plate.” “That’s why, here, we’re starting to think again, well, if there are no results in 2000, if God permits us life still, the Reserve, better we should go destroy it. The Reserve, it’s territory of the Comunidad Lacandona.” As one park guard told me, “People think the government promises, but doesn’t deliver. It’s not maintaining us, so people think, we’re not going to obey.” The government’s failure to come through on payments for not burning or using *Mucuna*, or other projects, was constantly characterized as a government *engaño*, a deception or lie. Some comuneros referred to a butterfly commercialization project run by individuals associated with ENDESU, which was running Chajul, and talked about how money was being made through both enterprises from Comunidad resources, while they, the “legitimate owners” of the forest and the Reserve, as they said, were prohibited from such activities. I heard these statements from all kinds of people, some of the m recognized leaders of Palestina, some of the m older and middle-aged men who were part of the process of founding of the two towns, some of them younger men born and raised in the town.

By November, things had gotten to the point that a closed-door meeting was planned in Palenque between representatives of the Comunidad, the federal head of SEMARNAP (Julia Carabias Lillo), INE, and President Zedillo himself¹⁰⁷. The President didn’t show up, but two days of meetings did happen, no media or outside observers were allowed, other government agency representatives were present, and they lasted into the wee hours of the morning.

¹⁰⁷ By chance, I was present in the Palenque SEMARNAP office when a call was received to prepare the meeting with Zedillo’s expected presence.

According to comuneros who attended, the Comunidad presented demands that comuneros be made directors of the Reserves, have a direct role in programming, and that Reserve offices be moved to the Comunidad, threatening that they would not sign off on the Reserves' plans or budgets. They told me that some concessions were made to the Comunidad. One account stated that comuneros would be made sub-directors of the Reserves. As I later heard it from other comuneros, two people from each of Frontera, Palestina, and Lacanja were to be placed in jobs in the Reserves or SEMARNAP, and something like this arrangement was confirmed by later interviews with personnel from those agencies. Pedro Díaz Solís was made sub-director of the Lacantún Reserve. It was also agreed that the Chajul station would make annual payments of rent to the Comunidad, to be divided up between Frontera, Palestina, and Lacanja. PROFEPA committed to hiring more comuneros as guards. Either as a result of these meetings or subsequent ones in February of the following year, the Palenque office of SEMARNAP became dedicated to attending the Comunidad Lacandona.¹⁰⁸ But according to one Palestino who attended, the comuneros still came out with *malas ganas*, angry, to the point, he said, that he wanted to “put it out in the newspapers.” As he described it, what they were looking for, some commitment to support their economic activities, wasn't forthcoming in anything other than a “we'll have to see what can be done” kind of way, while they continued to be told about the importance of biodiversity, and that Reserve resources could be exploited, but through a newly established SEMARNAP process based on careful studies and species management plans. As the member of a group that had invested a lot of its own efforts, unsupported by any MABR, SEMARNAP, or CI. *apoyo*, in trying to start an ecotourism project based in Palestina, this comunero felt abandoned by these institutions, even as tourism projects in Lacanja and Frontera had been getting outside attention and support. “Some of us are working four, five years already,

¹⁰⁸ I only have information from Comunidad participants on developments in these November meetings.

why do they keep us in a bag?” he asked. There are some reverberations in the minutes of the November TAC meeting, which occurred after these encounters: the notes make reference to comments made that “for each restrictive action there should be an alternative” provided, and that locals should be hired for the activities carried out, especially in education and dissemination.

Meanwhile, during '98 and '99 and probably unbeknownst to the Comunidad, the federal head of SEMARNAP had been convening working meetings among its Chiapas units in an attempt to improve intra-agency coordination and effectiveness. According to personnel in the state delegation, the Selva region had been a special priority of the federal heads of SEMARNAP and INE, but the competing philosophies and mandates of different internal units and the lack of cooperation and coordination among them had hindered the development of a consistent conservation program and was contributing to the ongoing problems with the Comunidad. In particular, personnel in both SEMARNAP and PRODERS mentioned the tensions between the more INE-allied, biodiversity preservation philosophies and the integrated, conservation and development philosophies of the PRODERS and applied units. These were tensions that became evident in the internal working meetings. The designation of the Palenque office as the SEMARNAP office to coordinate all interactions with the Comunidad was one result of this internal process. Another was an attempt to develop a Master Plan for the agency's operations in the Selva for what remained of the sexenio, but the promised resources to fund it evidently fell prey to politics, including ongoing frictions between SEMARNAP and the state governor.

The poor reception that comuneros felt they were getting from SEMARNAP and the MABR was in high contrast with the attention they were getting from other quarters during this year. As the change of the sexenio was at hand, the Comunidad was the target of campaigns for

both the gubernatorial and presidential elections to be held in 2000. The Comunidad had been good deliverers of PRI votes, and provided an important counterweight to the resistance and opposition movements on the other side of the Selva. When the PRI gubernatorial candidate came around in June, many promises were made to attend to the Comunidad's needs. In turn, Comunidad speakers made very frank statements about the Comunidad helping the candidate if the candidate would help them.

Meanwhile, as part of the outgoing governor's attempt to leave his mark on the Selva (in the context of the EZLN uprising and the failures of federal and state government responses to the Selva campesinos), a special governor's team had been pitching a project that hit all the right buttons for comuneros starved for some attention to their economic prospects. Called a "Pilot Agricultural Plant" by a SEMARNAP staff person and at least one Palestino knowledgeable about the project, it was part of a private, corporation-funded project to develop three centers in the Selva region to produce milk destined mostly for Nestlé. According to Palestinos I spoke with, all that the governor's team asked of the Comunidad was the use of some 500 hectares of communal land for a period of 30 years, after which the facility would supposedly revert back to the Comunidad. Free of any other cost to the Comunidad, the center was to teach comuneros and local ejidatarios dairy production methods, offering them financial support to attend the center's training, possibly on a short-term residential basis. According to Palestinos who tended to refer to the project as a "Training Center," it was also to offer support in developing other kinds of agricultural technological packages that local campesinos might use. I never saw anything written that documented the project's specifics, and according to the Palestina comisariado, neither had he, even though the Comunidad was being pressed to sign preliminary contracts for use of the land. Moreover, catching a ride with him to Frontera on a day when the joint

comisariados were to discuss the contract, he asked me the meaning of several key legal terms in the contract, including some that were equivalent to “lessor” and “lessee” in English. It was very striking that he was considering signing an agreement in which he wasn’t actually clear on which party was agreeing to which actions.

As the negotiations progressed, comuneros informed me that the Comunidad had problems in deciding what land it could offer and under what conditions, involving, at least in part, familiar recurring quandaries about how to use communal resources without benefiting some segments of the Comunidad over others. There were questions over whose section of the Comunidad it would be in; if it were not on agricultural land, it would have to be in forested land, such as in the communally-designated reserve of La Cojolita, and would imply building access roads through there; some Palestinos offered the use of their own lands, in expectation of getting special compensations or even owning the facilities outright at the end of the 30 years. As initially presented, the project would clearly be beneficial only to those comuneros that had land suitable for cattle. I noted that the longer the comisariados delayed in working the land issue out, the more magnanimous (in my estimation, fanciful) the special team’s offer seemed to become as an inducement to sign off on the contract before the sexenio was over. One Palestino reported that at the end, the governor’s team was virtually promising that whatever the Comunidad wanted the center to deliver them in the way of training or technical assistance, it would. In the end, the project was not endorsed by the Comunidad; but the excitement that Palestinos expressed about the chance to be trained in new ways of working the land that might make them some money seemed very indicative of the lack of attention they felt they had been getting in that regard. The excitement was even strong enough to overcome the campesino’s time-worn mistrust of government and outsider *engaños*. When I asked one of the more excited

Palestinos why he thought a private enterprise would invest so much money to provide a free training center, he told me it was to *levantar el campesino*, to raise up the campesino. The project was also notable because both MABR and SEMARNAP personnel told me that it had been pursued completely outside any channels involving consultation with their agencies or any evaluation of its ecological impact; MABR personnel had never been advised about it.

Over the next couple of years, I hear comuneros express the same line of concerns and take the same positions regarding MABR, SEMARNAP, NGO, and general government investment in the area. I learned indirectly that more meetings took place with SEMARNAP in February of 2000, where some of the issues of the November 1999 meetings were taken up again. During this meeting, it appears the Comunidad agreed to let SEMARNAP establish five more biological research stations on Comunidad land, subject to agreement on the locations. Multi-agency meetings were revived in the format of the CAS, as requested by the Comunidad, and held at the San Javier intersection near Lacanja in 2000. The Comunidad continued to press the issue of the presence of “invaders”, publicly and at TAC meetings. At a TAC meeting I attended as observer, the comisariados pressed the position that the Comunidad wanted jobs and the eviction of the “invaders,” otherwise it will send in its own young people to invade the Reserve. Regarding invasions, it was agreed to hold a special session the following month with representatives of PROFEPA and SRA to get an update on negotiations with the offending settlements. Regarding the demand for “jobs,” the unfortunately terse reply was that the Reserve and SEMARNAP didn’t have enough money to give everybody in the communities jobs. Three committees within the TAC were named to coordinate attention to specific areas: agrarian (i.e., “irregular” settlements); education and dissemination; and academic and scientific. The absence of a committee to address the livelihood concerns of comuneros was notable.

In April, there was another flurry of meetings in close succession: one at the CAS with the gamut of government agencies present; another in Ocosingo with an opposition party's gubernatorial candidate; and a third in Palenque with the head of the state Commission on Forests, organized by members of Frontera. There was also a corresponding flurry of proposal- and petition-writing activity in Palestina, into which my word-processing skills were pressed, as groups and barrios wrote requests for everything they could think to ask for, from sewing machines, to start-up funds for cattle projects, xate projects, and shoe stores, to new classrooms for elementary schools. The intention was to hit all these potential sources of support with one package of petitions from the whole community. The CAS meeting left some comuneros disappointed, as they heard that there wasn't enough money to support all the petitions. One of them told me: "The government's abandoned us. It doesn't pay any attention to us. If the government doesn't get rid of the invaders, we'll just enter and take what we want. There are 500 sons of comuneros who don't have land and who could use it." When I asked the comisariado of Palestina what community members were asking for that they felt they weren't getting, he said without pausing: "One, social works, like streets, sewage, clinics; two, productive projects, and three, agrarian matters."

The May TAC minutes highlight the fact that there were some bad fires again this year (though nothing like 1998), in the Miramar region and in Frontera's section, and that extra attention was being given to the question of "irregular" settlements. However, at a July meeting of Comunidad representatives with SEMARNAP, discontent erupted again. The Palestina comisariado explained to me that the agency had its plans for 2001 already worked out. He said, "They don't take into account what the comuneros think, the owners of the land. They create programs over in Mexico (City), in the U.S., in their own way, but it should come out of the

people here, it should come from their own thinking... They were going to develop corridors, they were going to develop productive projects, but in Mexico, in the U.S.... You can't develop projects in the U.S. or in Mexico, from a desk... but these don't compare with the idea of the Comunidad Lacandona.”

However, according to the comisariado, as a result of this meeting, Palestina got SEMARNAP to agree to send representatives to the town at the beginning of September, to “get the idea of the Comunidad Lacandona”. According to the comisariado, Palestina assembled its council of former comisariados, along with the representatives of all the barrios. They met with a government representative that I knew had long been involved in the Selva region, and who had participated in the somewhat collaborative programming with Selva communities under INI and SEDESOL in previous administrations. “From there,” the comisariado said, “the idea began to change a little,” and he described feeling as if they were finally being listened to.

That same day, September 2, however, Frontera Corozal held a general assembly, in which a PRODERS representative, the director of the Lacantún Reserve, and a member of an NGO that was assisting in the development of its management plan, had come to talk about SEMARNAP projects and present a draft of the Lacantún management plan, respectively. Before the end of the day, they were taken hostage and held in Frontera for nearly a week, while a set of eight demands were presented to SEMARNAP and INE for their liberation. The SEMARNAP representative who had been at Palestina went to Frontera, and was detained as well. Frontera's Act of the Assembly from the day shows that the demands made included that the directors of both Lacantún and MABR be removed; that the offices, equipment, data, and other facilities of the reserves be transferred to locations in the Comunidad; that comuneros be made directors of the reserves and that the administration of all budgets be under the control of

the Comunidad; that existing reserve management plans be suspended, with new ones to be developed by the Comunidad in association with personnel that it would hire directly; that the contract with the Chajul biological station be canceled; that an audit be done of all the funds and resulting projects in the Reserves since 1994; and that SEMARNAP payments to comuneros still outstanding for the maintenance of trees planted by the military in 1999 and 2000, as well as for unspecified productive projects, be delivered immediately¹⁰⁹. The Act notes that discussions became particularly heated around the issue of nonpayment of SEMARNAP moneys, and of the Lacantún director's assertion that certain other funds obtained for starting nurseries had to be administered by the Reserve, not the Comunidad. Copies of a letter to the state governor from the Comunidad exist that explain the demands in very pointed terms. The letter characterizes a small group of people that includes the heads of SEMARNAP and INE, the newly appointed director of Lacantún and the current director of MABR, and the principals of ENDESU, as constituting a kind of cabal of people related by professional and, in one case, kinship ties, that have been in control of funds destined for the Reserve since 1995 and have spent them without benefit of or transparency to the Comunidad (or conservation). As the most recent example of this, the letter claims that the Comunidad only found out through press reports that SEMARNAP had signed a contract with ENDESU to make it the administering organization for some \$23 million pesos provided by the Ford Co. to fund the five planned biological stations. Copies of the letter exist directed towards the state governor and the president of the republic; interestingly, copies of these same letters exist that predate by a week the actual event in Frontera.

The detention of officials and presentation of demands were actions initially taken by Frontera residents at Frontera's assembly. Lacanja and Palestina authorities quickly rallied to the

¹⁰⁹ "Acta de Asamblea General Extraordinaria Celebrada en la Subcomunidad Frontera Corozal, Perteneciente a la Comunidad Lacandona del Municipio de Ocosingo, Chiapas", September 2, 2000.

support of the actions taken, signing off on the demands and the letters written. In Palestina, residents were put on alert to be ready to blockade roads or come to the assistance of the comisariados in Frontera if necessary. However, as the dust settled over the next few days and weeks, the positions of the other “sub-communities” began to change. Within the first couple of days of the detention, government representatives negotiated with the Comunidad, and by the sixth day, the hostages were released in exchange for partial accessions to some of the demands, such as releasing payments owed and removing the director of Lacantún, and agreements to see about some of the others. A very small minority in Frontera, including Pedro Díaz Solís, put up visible resistance to the Comunidad actions taken, claiming that they had been instigated primarily by a block of Frontera business and agricultural groups organized as the Yax Lum Federation, advised by the same outside, mestizo advisor that had been a principal of Lacandonia, A.C., and undertaken in their own self interests in capturing resources for themselves, rather than for the Comunidad. The comisariado of Palestina told me that he had initially signed off on the demands under pressure from fellow authorities to present a united Comunidad front before the government. During the next couple of weeks, the Palestina comisariado and other Palestinos told me, Frontera’s representatives came up with a more extended package of documents that they wanted the other communities to endorse. But by then, both Palestinos and Lacandons had reconsidered. In a Palestina assembly, Díaz Solís squared off publicly with members of the Yax Lum Federation, accusing them of orchestrating the events to secure their own economic, and by extension, political, power in Frontera. Some Palestina comuneros advised the community to review carefully the new documents before signing, to make sure they were not prejudicial to the Comunidad or to Palestina. As the month wore on, Palestina and Lacanja distanced themselves from Frontera’s extreme position of non-cooperation

with SEMARNAP and the reserves, preferring to maintain working relations with the agencies as well as preserve the benefits from projects that were underway or planned. According to Palestinos, Frontera decided to run its own affairs separately from the rest of the Comunidad, and even investigated legally separating itself, a move that requires a majority vote from all comuneros. Although there had been dissent among the sub-communities in the past (most recently in the contest between Frontera and Palestina to serve as cabecera of the proposed new municipio), comuneros, including Díaz Solís, told me there had never before been a rift of this magnitude, such that the very union of the Comunidad seemed threatened.

This event was interpreted in and outside the Comunidad in different ways. One of these, mentioned above and clearly a concern within the communities, was that the members of the Yax Lum Federation instigated it primarily for their own benefit. On-site observers confirm that it was Yax Lum members that mainly directed the events at the time (Tejeda Cruz 2002). This is a perspective that reflects an ongoing ambivalence in the Comunidad about the growing economic and potential political power of some organized groups versus other comuneros. Another perspective, espoused by many people among the Reserves, SEMARNAP, and other observers, is that the mestizo consultant to Yax Lum, the same one who played a key role in the development of Lacandonia, A.C., had a heavy hand in the directions that the events took. Some of these observers see this adviser as having been on a continuous quest to create an influential political space in the region for himself, specifically in opposition to the “cabal” named in the Frontera letters to the President and governor, that Lacandonia, A.C. had earlier briefly achieved. There certainly is a great deal of consistency among the line of arguments and language in the discourse put out by Lacandonia, A.C.¹¹⁰, and that of the September event in Frontera. And the

¹¹⁰ For instance, among a series of graphics retrieved from Lacandonia, A.C. files and evidently used in presentations, appears the following set of statements: “What viable alternatives exist? A proposal of the

instrumentality of this adviser in the relative success of the Yax Lum groups is quite clear: well-versed in Mexican bureaucracy and law, a former SRA employee with connections of his own to institutions and functionaries, and actually residing part- or full-time in the Comunidad, he has filled the great void left by government and NGO inattention to comuneros' economic and welfare needs. Nowhere else in the Comunidad was there a facility like that of Yax Lum in Frontera: when I arrived in 1999, they had their own office, supplied with computers on which group members were being trained, with archives of documents and data out of which to build proposals to take to government or other agencies in application for funding. Although Palestinos would also avail themselves from time to time of this adviser's skills, and some Palestinos were members of one of the businesses under the Federation's wing, comuneros explicitly expressed the need for just that kind of ongoing mentorship and assistance in getting their own projects going.

Nevertheless, regardless of the specifics of the advisor's or the Yax Lum Federation's roles, the September event is consistent with a set of reactions and positions that comuneros had expressed since the mid-1990s, and most evidently to me since the late 1990s, in response to the ways in which conservation interests became implemented and inserted into comuneros' lives.

Developments over these years show an increasing level of frustration for all parties involved, as demands are made or positions taken that seem to lead only to small changes or to impasse. As shown in the outline of events above, comuneros consistently make the complaint that they're not taken into account in Reserve planning or in the programming of resources that come into the region by virtue of the Reserve's existence. They claim to be abandoned by the

Comunidad Lacandona. Eliminate intermediarism, official and private. Create self-managed groups operating by regions... Transfer the resources to the communities themselves for their own administration.... Currently, the campesino has two options (that he's) completely free to choose: Be an alms-seeker from the government or an alms-seeker from an NGO."

government, even though, from the perspective of communities in other parts of the Selva, especially the Cañadas, they have been comparatively favored by government investment. They claim that they are the ones who are preserving the Selva, not the government, and that if they hadn't been doing so, there would be nothing left by now. They repeatedly express the sense that lots of money is coming in to the Reserve and/or the Selva, but that they never see any of it; that it's being diverted by intermediaries, such as NGOs that act as pass-through organizations, the Reserve administration, or government agencies themselves, such as SEMARNAP; and that the ways in which decisions are made about programming, and the goals of programming, exclude them. Claims are made that, as owners of most of the Reserve(s) of the Selva, they should take over complete management and direction of them.

On other hand, Reserve personnel point out that the Comunidad participates in the TAC, and is always given the MABR annual plans and final reports, which the Comunidad endorses. They point out that Comunidad representatives, like other TAC members, had opportunities to review the management plans during its development stages. MABR and other TAC members claim that, rather than using the TAC as a space in which to collaborate, the Comunidad uses it as a political space in which to press demands for things like jobs, money, and the removal of "invaders". In response to such demands, the Reserve explains that the funds it receives directly are only for operative costs and can only be applied to activities within the Reserve boundaries. MABR personnel state that "development" and other social welfare-oriented activities are the responsibilities of other government agencies, which have budgets and personnel for those purposes, in contrast with the MABR. In terms of removing "irregular" settlements, the Reserve has no enforcement capabilities of its own, but must rely on PROFEPA and other agencies of the government. Reserve personnel note that they are working on the problem in conjunction with

the appropriate agencies, but that due to the sensitive nature of the problem, there are no fast solutions. In relation to the Comunidad taking over management of the Reserves or being completely responsible for defining the criteria of management, as one high-up MABR administrator said in interview, “there are some things that aren’t negotiable”.

From the perspective of SEMARNAP, the claim that no resources are directed towards the communities rings hollow, since the activities of PRODERS are specifically for that purpose. PRODERS personnel point out that the delivery of those resources is hindered by institutional constraints out of their control, such as the multiple sources of funding that are cobbled together, the often contradictory policy decisions emitted from central offices of the agencies, and the disconnect of one-size-fits-all policies from actual conditions in the field . They claim that problems in resource delivery also arise from issues within the communities themselves, from the different agreements reached with comuneros for the internal distribution and monitoring of fund use. These have resulted variously in funds being spread so thinly among individuals that they become insignificant for the task and leave groups with projects already underway hanging, or in funds going exclusively to such groups or favored factions, leaving most other comuneros out of the funding loop.

Taking for the moment just the case of Palestina, the institutional actors have a hard time accepting Palestinos’ claims that they are conservers of the Selva. They see Palestina as one of the main “pressure points” on Reserve resources, a perspective that is reinforced by data and maps such as those produced by C.I.’s ecological monitoring program, which uses aerial flights and the interpretation of LANDSAT images to track changes in Selva vegetation cover over the years. They perceive that most Palestinos don’t adopt conservationist techniques of land use without the receipt of payments or other concessions. As agency, NGO, and comuneros’

interactions increasingly revolve around contestations over the transfer of money, resources, and jobs, the institutional actors judge that for the comuneros, the Reserve is mainly significant as a pretext for pressuring the government for such transfers. As one person in the MABR said, “to the Tzeltals, the Reserve is a reserve because the government says it is”. As another in PRODERS put it, the comuneros “have become beggars of the government,”¹¹¹ highlighting widely shared perceptions of an entrenched pattern of paternalistic/clientelistic relations between the government and the Comunidad. These perspectives reinforce already existing ideas that many institutional personnel and outsiders have about Palestinos as having “no value of conservation,” “no idea of planning for the future,”¹¹² or no real knowledge of the Selva environment. A historian, attending a forum on sustainable development in the Selva, posited that the non-Lacandon immigrants to the Selva had “lost their love for the land,” and wondered what it would take for them to regain it. These kinds of perceptions make even the consideration of shared, let alone complete, management of the Reserve by comuneros an even less tenable proposition to government and NGOs alike, than it might be if the Reserve were just dealing with, perhaps, the Lacandons, who are also often perceived as “*limosneros*”, but at least still considered more conservationist.

However, as this section has shown, internal and external contestations over transfers of and control over resources has been a dominant, Comunidad-wide phenomenon during the latter half of the 1990s, not restricted to any one sub-group, and have repeatedly shown up in confrontations with the institutional actors promoting conservation interests in the region, as well as within the communities themselves. As has been mentioned, the Lacandons have received special external attention for many decades and to some extent, had greater access to political

¹¹¹ “Son limosneros del gobierno.”

¹¹² Both of these quotes from C.I. personnel, 1998.

and economic resources because of that. Nevertheless, as they have moved away from dependence on traditional subsistence practices and towards dependence on tourism-related activities, in particular, issues of distribution and control over externally-generated resources have been just as thorny. They have equally been characterized by outsiders as “*limosneros*” or “beggars” of the government, but in this case, not in exchange for conserving the rain forest. Trench (2002) documents many ways in which these currents have been working themselves out among the Lacandons, particularly in relation to the start-up of the Bonampak Natural Monument, which was decreed and operationalized in parallel with Lacantún, and to other productive and cultural heritage-related activities.

Frontera, whose territory lies outside the MABR, has been generally less affected by its operationalization, and, as noted, many of its comuneros have benefited from the help of the outside advisor in capturing resources for local development. However, Frontera’s residents have been equal, if not sometimes greater, partners in the positions that the Comunidad has taken during these years, its comuneros have expressed to me the same complaints as Palestinos regarding government inattention, and Frontera took the lead role in the September 2000 confrontation. Tejada Cruz (2002) looks at how the start-up of the Lacantún Biosphere Reserve, specifically the appointment of its director and the beginning of a process for developing a management plan, may have contributed to that confrontation.

IV. DIFFERENCE: KNOWLEDGE, OBJECTIVES, INTERESTS

Ecological knowledge

Since the colonization of the Selva by indigenous migrants from other parts of the state began in the mid-20th century, and particularly since the effects of that colonization combined

with those of cattle-ranching and timbering to visibly transform the Selva, the ecological practices of these colonists have been variously characterized as “unadapted” to the rain forest environment (Dichtl 1988; Blom 1984), as “irrational” (government planning documents of the 1970s cited in Burguete Cal y Mayor 1980), even as embodying adversarial attitudes of conquest toward the rain forest (De Vos 2002). Such characterizations, particularly that of maladaptation, have even been used by people, such as Dichtl, who have tried to portray the indigenous colonists in a more favorable light by re-directing much of the blame for rain forest loss to policies favoring cattle-ranching and timbering and discouraging land redistribution. Nevertheless, claims that the migrants are destructive of forest cover because they employ poorly adapted ecological practices are centered on ideas that their origins were in different ecological zones, that they have a consequent lack of knowledge of the Selva environment, and that they merely continue to use the land in the ways they had in the old places. In a previous chapter, I questioned these kinds of assumptions by suggesting that the colonists’ exposure to a variety of environments, including places with similar conditions to the those of the Selva, and exposure to different methods of agriculture, is probably much more varied than these generalizations recognize, and by showing that there is ample evidence for learning and adaptation of methods having taken place once the colonists were in the Selva.

Studies in the 70s and 80s describing the indigenous economy of the Selva (e.g., Muench Navarro 1979; Lobato 1979; Mauricio Leguizamo et al 1980) revealed more of the economic and ecological “rationality” of the colonists’ practices, as well as some instances of adaptation to the Selva environment, but tended to describe them generically, as a generalized phenomenon across the region. By contrast, studies of specific indigenous knowledge and practices in the region were directed towards the Lacandons, as if there was nothing novel to be

learned from studying the knowledge of indigenous people who were perhaps seen as just campesinos, a category characterizing a large part of the Mexican population.

More recent versions of this genericizing of non-Lacandon indigenous settlers of the Selva, and of casting their ecological practices as mal-adapted to the region and therefore inherently destructive, are echoed in current statements of people working for the MABR, C.I., and other environmental organizations and agencies in the Selva, and in the policies and plans these institutions have developed. Several examples were mentioned in the previous sections. As I undertook my research, I encountered many other, similar characterizations. In relation to the Comunidad, I found that non-comuneros often invoked consistent patterns for characterizing and comparing the environmental conduct (as well as other practices) of residents of Lacanja, Frontera, and Palestina in relation to each other. Frequently following the modern joke form that contrasts the behavior of three members of different religions, ethnicities, or political persuasions in particular situations (e.g., “a rabbi, a priest, and a Buddhist monk walk into a bar...”) ¹¹³, they typically place Lacandon environmental behavior and thought at the most-conserving, ideal end of the spectrum, Tzeltals at the least-conserving end, and Ch’ols somewhere in between ¹¹⁴. Among those people who make these distinctions, the Tzeltals are typically characterized as the worker ants and the consumers of the Selva: no one doubts their industriousness and dedication to “getting ahead”, nor their capacity for taking up land and converting it to economic uses. They are also frequently characterized as practicing monoculture, even though, in addition to planting the classic trio of corn, beans, and squash, they plant several varieties of food crops in and around milpas and milpa fallows. As one C.I. staff person noted, from the perspective of

¹¹³ In fact, there were some jokes of this sort about Lacandons, Ch’ols, and Tzeltals being good-naturedly circulated among people who work in the Comunidad region. Residents certainly make comments about the other groups from time to time, but it was an infrequent component of the discourse.

¹¹⁴ Despite the substantial presence of Tzotzils from Huixtán and Simojovel in Palestina, this group is usually completely left out of all characterizations of Comunidad residents that rely on ethnicity or language group.

conservationists, Palestina had come to be seen as the “*patito feo*,” or ugly duckling, of the Selva.

However, not surprisingly, those individuals who have more field experience with residents of both Palestina and Frontera tended to express a more nuanced knowledge of their practices. For instance, the C.I. agronomist who worked in Palestina made a point of showing me instances of Palestinos inter-planting other annual and longer-term crops with milpa fallows to extend their usefulness, a practice I also observed independently. Another C.I. staff person noted the Ch’ols’ past association with the lowland municipios of Tila, Tumbalá, and Salto de Agua, and concluded they came to the Selva region with more experience and knowledge of lowland forest zones. Unfortunately, these more nuanced views of field personnel don’t often translate into the formulation of policy that originates at higher institutional levels.

Some of the assertions made about differences between Frontera and Palestina are anecdotal; some are based on observations of the physical evidence of land use patterns. For instance, observers note that when the town of Frontera Corozal was founded, it was agreed that a 1km band of forest would be maintained around the urban area, to be used as a reserve for firewood and other collectable resources, such as xate palms, palms for roofing, fruits, and other items. They also note that Frontera has since designated a few other areas within their territory as communal reserves, to be left for similar purposes, especially xate. And, on C.I.-produced maps showing vegetation cover of the region and derived from LANDSAT images, the area around Palestina converted to milpa, milpa fallows, and pasture has a much larger footprint than does that of Frontera.

However, a lot remains to be done to deepen outsiders’ understandings of the ecological practices of both Frontera and Palestina residents and the forces that shape them. Two recent

studies, the only ones I am aware of that address the question of Ch'ol environmental practices in the Selva region, one in the Lake Miramar area (Zúñiga 2000, cited in Tejeda Cruz 2002) and the other in Frontera (Tejeda Cruz 2002) represent a good start. For instance, Tejeda's interviews suggest that many Frontera residents keep some portion of their family lands in forest, as a private reserve for wood and other collectable resources. My interviews with Palestinos suggest the same thing, for the exact same reasons given by Frontera residents and presented by them in language that is almost identical (discussed below). Zúñiga (again, as summarized by Tejeda 2002) lists up to 59 species that the Ch'ols in the Miramar region he studied continue to use in milpa fallows, and describes some fallows management practices which, in principal, recall some of those used by Lacandons. However, similar studies haven't been done for Palestina or Frontera.

Moreover, as I argue throughout this study, there are many other factors besides ecological knowledge that influence ecological practices. For instance, I can think of four such factors that should be considered in any analysis of differences in land use patterns – e.g., the relative distribution and quantity of surface area in milpa, fallows, pasture, or forest, as well as details of milpa, fallows, and species management – between Palestina and Frontera. The first is obvious and generally recognized by observers: the difference in population size, which has been the case since inception of the two towns. However, even here, the Chiapas coordinator of C.I. presented data at a 1999 meeting suggesting that there has not been a direct relationship between population growth and the area of forest lost to other uses in the Selva region as a whole, and I have suggested this specifically in relation to Palestina in the previous chapter. The second is the fact that when Palestina was formed, its residents kept working, as much as possible, the areas they had already worked that were already dispersed over the landscape. The

fundamental pattern of dispersal of agricultural lands was already established around the former settlements, in which most residents kept small houses or shelters so that they can stay several nights and avoid daily commutes to fields during busy seasons. This pattern was then filled in as comuneros claimed land between the settlements and around the new town after it was developed. By contrast, the residents of Frontera left their established fields and settlements behind. And while there were some areas that were already in pasture in Frontera's new territory, all residents started anew, with a clean slate on which to work and everyone based in the new town, from which they worked outward to claim land. This may have also provided the opportunity of designating certain lands as set-asides for certain uses. As I understand it, those set-asides are not considered good agricultural lands by Frontera residents. A third consideration is the different quality of lands that each town has available. As I suggested in the previous chapter, the lands around Palestina are variable in terms of elevation, microenvironment, and soils, and Palestinos show a drive to diversify the landholdings to which they have access in order to increase crop security and develop more economic options. By contrast, Frontera is located in a more elevationally uniform zone, and much (if not most, I don't have the data) is in the broad floodplain of the Usumacinta River, which typically has deeper, wetter, and more fertile soils than the higher and more sloped parts of the Selva (Figure 7). Many Palestinos have pointed out to me the advantages of having this kind of land to farm, such as the ability to farm the same location over several years, based on their past experiences in other parts of the state. Finally, Frontera was located far from the colonizing fronts on the north and west of the Selva (although the southern parts of the Selva have since been settled), while Palestina lands have always remained vulnerable to competition for land from other settlers. I've suggested in the previous chapter that this pressure, and Palestinos' continuous uncertainty about land tenure, has

been an important drive behind bringing more land into cultivation and thereby establishing present and future claims.

One part of my research was meant to explore Palestinos' ecological knowledge and what it might contribute to environmental practices. My interviews and conversations with Palestinos suggest that they have far more sophisticated understandings of their environment than is suggested by the generic representations of them and the other non-Lacandon, indigenous residents of the Selva. I present here some very preliminary analyses of some of the information I collected on just three themes, as examples: 1) forest knowledge; 2) plant knowledge; and 3) soil knowledge¹¹⁵.

Forest knowledge. Forest succession is an integral part of the swidden agriculture system used by Palestinos, in which most people find that the best results come from using a field for milpa and basic food crops for only one year, and then allowing it go fallow. They may use a site for more than one year, but, depending on the quality of the soil, it usually gives diminishing results after that. Uniformly, the people I interviewed said that the longer you can leave the field fallow, the better, in terms of milpa productivity, and they also sometimes note the different residual effects of some tree species' leaf litter on soil fertility. However, older trees are bigger and more work to cut, and the amount of time that land can be left fallow is limited by how much total land one has available to rotate. So in practice, the amount of time individuals leave land in fallows before re-using it varies, and the age of the forest being cut varies anywhere from three to 10 or more years. In addition to agriculture, most Palestinos have other activities they pursue in different kinds of young and mature forest, such as hunting, the collection of xate palms for sale, and the collection of fruits, construction- and utensil-making materials, ornamentals, and medicinals.

¹¹⁵ I hope to do more in-depth analyses of the data at a later date.

Interviews with five comuneros produced an outline of phases of forest succession and types of forest that these individuals detect¹¹⁶ (see Table 1). Naming conventions and the amount of time assigned to each stage varied somewhat, but each person recognized three to four general stages of succession that precede *yaxal k'in al*, the term used as an equivalent for “selva” or forest “*nunca trabajado*” or “*nunca tumbado*” (never worked or never felled), and that I take as the equivalent to mature forest. Within the category of forest never worked, several of the five recognized at least two kinds of forest, as well as places where vines or herbaceous plants dominate as a natural steady-state, not due to human management in the past or present.

Budowski 1965	Pioneer 1-3 years	Early secondary 5-15 yrs	Late secondary 20-50	Climax >100 yrs
ATS	Uninal 1-3 yrs	Yijil uninal 8-15 yrs	Some yaxal k'in al spp. >15-20	Yaxal k'in al “never worked”
PHD	Uninal 1-3 year	Yijil uninal >4years	Yijil k'in al “similar to yaxal k'in al” >15 yrs	Yaxal k'in al “never worked”
MGS	Uninal 1-3 yrs	Pekel k'in al 3-5 yrs Toyem k'in al 6-10 yrs	Mero toyem >15-20+ yrs	Yaxal k'in al “never worked”

Table 1. Comparison of forest succession terms, Nueva Palestina

From milpa, all recognized an initial stage of three years, typically called in Tzeltal *unin k'in al* or *uninal*. Then, all recognized a middle stage of succession that develops over 15 to 20

¹¹⁶ These five individuals came from four different barrios; have land holdings distributed through a variety of “hot country” and “cold country” locations; their family origins are in Salto de Agua, Chilon, Simojovel, Tila, and Petalcingo; two arrived in Palestina as little children and grew up there; two arrived as young men and one as a young woman..

years. Four of them break this middle stage into two or even three phases, with a couple seeing the first transition at five to six years, and all recognizing a transition around 15 years. In the later part of this overall stage of succession, which some call *yijil k'inal*, at from approximately 15 to 20 years of age, the trees are described as reaching some 20m in height and as beginning to include some species also found in *yaxal k'inal*. Within areas that are considered *yaxal k'inal*, some individuals note that there are areas of “never worked” forest that never grow tall, perhaps, as one suggested, because they grow in relatively dry areas. For one person, the term *yijil k'inal* only applies to this kind of unworked forest, it doesn't represent a stage of succession. Another person wondered if these low forests had been worked by peoples that long preceded them in the forest, such as “the Aztecs”. Individuals also recognized areas with lots of vines or herbaceous plants, in some cases pointing to wild leguminous plants or trees that they believe suppress the growth of other plants¹¹⁷.

As noted in Table 1, this outline of forest succession is very similar to one produced by Budowski in 1965. The distinction of low and tall mature forest types could correspond to what scientists *selva alta*, *selva mediana*, or *selva baja* (high, medium, or low selva, e.g., García-Gil and Lugo Hupb 1992) in the region, but I don't have enough data to explore this proposition.

Plant knowledge. One of the more time-consuming activities of my research involved creating a catalogue of dried and pressed plants, drawn from a variety of local successional stages of vegetation and mature forest, to use as a tool in eliciting Palestino knowledge about plants in their environment. Out of some 350 plants collected, I used a selection of 278 plants taken from frequently disturbed urban areas (house yards, road sides; 53 plants); rural roadsides and edges of agricultural areas (67); fallows from 1 to 9 years of age (54); riparian zones (6); coffee plantations under shade (16); and mature forest (82). At the most basic level of analysis, I

¹¹⁷ *Petumax* (*Mucuna argyrophylla*) is one such legume; *palencano* is one such tree.

take here two sets of complete responses, each from a married couple answering together. These are unrelated Tzeltal-speaking couples from different barrios and different municipios of origin, who came to the Selva as adults. At the most basic level of analysis, without looking at the distribution of knowledge among plant community or succession types, one couple provided names for 260 species and could come up with uses (primarily medicinal, food or food-preparation related, firewood, materials for construction or making tools) for 178 species. The second couple provided 214 names, and suggested uses for 139 species. Both couples made remarks regarding up to 21 additional species related to the plants' use as a source of food for wild or domestic animals, or their interaction with other plant species (e.g., certain trees have negative effects on coffee plants). I by no means think that these represent the totality of plants these couples recognize by name, use, or ecological relationship. Using alternative methods, such as having them locate, provide and/or free-list all the plants they know would certainly have provided references to plants that I and my research assistant did not include in the collection.

Soil knowledge. In interviews and conversations, Palestinos readily make distinctions among soils along several criteria, including color, texture, dryness or wetness, slope, how easily they are washed away by rain, and the effects of past management techniques, such as burning. These characteristics are used in describing soils having different degrees of productiveness and aptness for particular uses, such as milpa, coffee, chile, or xate. Palestinos make choices about how to use their lands based on these estimations, if they can. As mentioned, the land endowments each family has varies, and many have to make do with what they have, whether well-suited to a particular purpose or not. Several Palestinos expressed an interest in having scientific soils studies done so that they could better plan appropriate uses. Table 2 shows some of the categories, with their Tzeltal terms, that were drawn from those conversations to develop a

questionnaire about crop losses experienced by Palestinos who did not burn their milpas in 1999.

I don't consider this to be an exhaustive list of soil characteristics recognized by Palestinos.

SOIL COLORS		SOIL TEXTURES	
Tzeltal	English gloss	Tzeltal	English
<i>tsajalum</i>	red soil	<i>ji'lum</i>	sandy
<i>ijkalum</i>	black soil	<i>tulan</i>	hard
<i>yaxalum</i>	blue/green soil	<i>barroso</i>	clayey
<i>k'analum</i>	yellow soil	<i>grabailtik, tontikil</i>	gravelly, many rocks
<i>café lum</i>	brown soil	<i>chab'ek, xuch'lum</i>	sticky
<i>sakilum</i>	white soil	<i>tsa'ek', tsa' k'anal ton, xixim ton</i>	[small rust-colored pebbles that indicate poor soil]

Table 2. Some common Tzeltal terms for soil color and texture, Nueva Palestina

Soil fertility, in itself, is an intriguing theme that deserves more in-depth exploration.

During my research, I heard two currents of views on the role of burning in preparation for milpa and its effect on fertility. This was an issue that was fresh on Palestinos' minds because of recent government and nongovernmental policies exhorting them not to burn. One line of discourse was that burning is necessary in order to have a good corn crop; if not, "no da", it doesn't produce. Many subtleties of the process are noted by individuals: the corn doesn't grow well where the vegetation wasn't thoroughly burned; one should wait till it has rained on the ash at least once before planting, otherwise the corn will come up yellow; burning has a purging effect on diseases, insects, and weeds that keeps the milpa healthier and easier to maintain. On the other hand, Palestinos note that fire, especially in excess, can make the soil hard and can burn up the "abono" or organic matter that is a good quality in a soil. One Palestino's characterization of why lands with older stands of trees on them produce better milpas is that more leaves have fallen on it and created this "abono". In a similar vein, many recognize the value of the organic matter and soft soil texture that results from using legume cover crops (i.e., frijol abono, *Mucuna* sp.) and not burning. These two understandings were frequently expressed by the same person.

Palestinos also recognize certain plants as indicators of soil quality. One is a particular fern recognized elsewhere in Chiapas, not just the Selva region, as a sign of soil that has been burned too frequently and exhausted: *ts'ib*, in Tzeltal, (*Pteridium aquilinum*). Where this fern grows, it is extremely difficult to get anything else to grow. There are also species of grasses and woody plants that are recognized as either indicators of poor or good soil.

There is much evidence to suggest that Palestinos, and by extension, other indigenous settlers of the Selva, have far more knowledge, brought or acquired, of their environment than they are typically given credit for by both the personnel of agencies and organizations working in the region, as well as by the policies that these generate. My research assistant alone, all of 24 years old at the time and brought to the Selva as a baby, was one of the sources of much ecological knowledge that I studied. His parents are one of the couples from whom I elicited plant names and knowledge. He knows around the same number of plants as they do, but they may have more knowledge of how to actually use them. He recognizes many plants that he understands can be used medicinally, but he says that he knows most of this through his mother, on whom he relies to actually prepare and use them to treat illnesses. He feels comfortable moving through the rain forest; he knows where to go to find xate palms and certain trees that produce fruit or other edibles; he has figured out how to make traps for forest animals and food plants that attract them; he knows plants that can be used to kill fish in rivers; he knows woody vines that can be cut in order to obtain drinking water from their stems, and other vines that are used for tying things; he knows about the different qualities of many woods and what they are best used for. He also knows a lot about soils and planting practices, consistent with the knowledge of other, older Palestinos, insuring that his family of six has enough food for the year. He claims, however, that other people in Palestina know far more than he. His and other

Palestinos' descriptions of forest succession and types are fairly congruent with those of scientists. Palestinos may not have the same knowledge as Lacandons (it's hard to know how much and in what ways they vary, since the comparisons have never been made), but they also are far from the blind, slash-and-burn farming machines that characterizations of them sometimes suggest. It is not convincing to me that lack of ecological knowledge is a primary reason for Palestinos' larger imprint on the Selva than Frontera or even the Lacandons.

Conservation and reserves

In interviews and conversations with Palestinos, I hoped to get some sense of what "conservation" and the Reserves meant for them. This seemed especially important, given that many conservation personnel had come to construct views of Palestina as being constituted by a population having little or "no sense of the future" and little or "no sense of conservation," and as taking what many read as a blatantly mercenary approach to participation in conservation-related programs. Moreover, in public fora, such as the TAC meetings, and privately, Palestinos and their comunero brethren made statements demanding jobs and the delivery of "apoyos" from the government, as well as increasing amounts of control over the Reserves in their territory, to the point of trying to take over complete management and administration responsibilities in September of 2000. Taken at face value, however, these positions don't provide much information about whether and in what ways conservation has significance to Palestinos. And although such positions effectively serve as pressure tactics that gain attention and spur some kind of reaction on the part of the government, they easily result in further distancing the perspectives of comuneros, government, and nongovernmental organizations, rather than providing some basis for building understanding and collaboration.

In my interviews and discussions with Palestinos, several interwoven themes emerged in relation to the topics of the significance of and means for conserving forest. One cluster of themes involves comuneros' descriptions of why it is a good or desirable thing to conserve forest, variously referred to as *selva*, *yaxal k'inal*, *montaña* (mature forest and older forest), and *reservas*, whether in areas set aside within one's own land parcels, or within the larger, non-specific areas of the *la selva*. A second cluster of themes deals more specifically with conservation through the mechanism of the Reserve, that is, MABR, although sometimes in these discussions the speaker conflates the terms of *la reserva*, *la selva*, and *la conservación*, requiring clarification. The main point, though, is that in the first set of themes, comuneros talk about how they see the value of forest conservation in general, while in the second, they talk about the value of conservation in the terms they see it being defined by the MABR, government, NGOs, and "*la internacional*", which funds these.

First, a few more words about language. "*Cuidando*" and "*acabando*" forest are two Spanish terms that Palestina and Frontera residents most frequently use when discussing issues of conservation or loss of the forest. *Cuidando* can literally be translated as "taking care of", and *acabando* as "finishing" or "using up". When comuneros refer to one or several trees that they haven't cut on their lands, or to the forest that hasn't yet been cut in the Comunidad or Reserve at large, they commonly says that the trees are there because "*lo cuidé yo*" or "*lo cuidamos nosotros*", I or we "take care of" them. They may also say "*lo tengo preservado*" or "*lo tengo guardado*", "I have it preserved" or "I have it set side," but the most common language I heard used was this dichotomous framework of taking care of, on one hand, and finishing, on the other. It's an interesting framework, because it seems to imply that where trees still stand, it is not necessarily because the land just wasn't needed yet for some other use, or because no one had

tried to settle there yet, but because of the active intentions on the part of the speaker or the comuneros in general.

The value of conserving forest in general. Palestinos offered several perspectives on the significance of the forest and why it is good to conserve it. One set of reasons I categorize as stemming from a recognition of values inherent in the plants and animals that live there: their beauty; their uniqueness in time and place as something that can't be easily, if ever replaced; the need for animals and plants to have their own "houses" and places to live; the importance of their children and future generations having the chance to know this special phenomenon. Some comuneros invoked a spiritual mandate to conserve the forest, noting that all these things originate from God, and, in a sense, are given to us in trust to use, not abuse. Another set of reasons had to do with what I'll categorize as utilitarian values: the need to ensure, for now and for their descendants' generations, that there will be reserves for obtaining firewood, construction and other materials, medicinals, wild foods, game animals, and xate palms to sell. Another comment mentioned the need to ensure that there will be seed sources for regeneration of forests, and the communal reserve, La Cojolita, was mentioned as being established in part for this reason. Many comuneros told me they had within their landholdings patches of forest that they are *cuidando*, leaving for the reasons mentioned above, utilitarian, inherent value, and spiritual. In interviews about individual land management practices, several comuneros described having parcels of forest of anywhere from a one to 15 ha.

A critical utilitarian value mentioned is that of ensuring that there will be land available for the use of future descendants. Interestingly, many older comuneros, while recognizing the intention of the government from the earliest days of their nucleation that the forest be left

untouched beyond what was already settled, also recall that the government had justified the Reserve to them in terms of it being one day important for their descendants' use and welfare.

Palestinos also talk about the significance of preserving forest in terms of ecological effects. Some of these effects seem to be based on direct observation, while some seem like they may be derived from the conservation/science discourse they have heard in which forests are represented as the "lungs" of the world and play a role in air quality. Thus, in the first category, several comuneros said they believed that the regional climate has changed since there has been less forest cover, saying that they think rainfall patterns have changed, that the climate has become hotter and drier, and the timing of the rains less predictable. Related comments note that it's important to preserve forests because they preserve moisture and coolness, in contrast with pastures, acahuals, and other open areas; this is observable, some noted, in how much hotter and drier the soil becomes in the latter areas. It was observed that the rivers are clearer where there are forests, and muddy where there are pastures. There were comments about the presence of forests as important to human health, usually described as a function of their role in providing clean air and oxygen. One man used the analogy of how, in earlier years, they could grow chile without chemicals, but now they had to use them to combat diseases and insects. Similarly, he thought, as more forest is removed, humans will probably also start to become sick. Finally, some comments returned to the "lungs of the world" image, and connected this to the reasons for national and international interest in sending funding to the Reserve and the government for the Selva region. Several comunero attributed the international interest to the disappearance of forests in other countries. While Palestinos weren't always sure of the reasons for all the international attention, some spoke as if the international importance has some weight in and of itself as a reason for comuneros to conserve forest.

Not all conservation talk centered on forests. As the issue of burning or not burning milpas was particularly pertinent during my time in the community, many comuneros were in the throes of considering the merits of adopting the recommended practices. Some comuneros spoke about it being a good idea to learn to “*cuidar nuestros terrenos, cuidar el abono de la tierra*”, take care of (or conserve) our lands, take care of the fertility/organic matter of the land. They related this proposition directly to the fact of having come to the Selva precisely because of the insufficiency and exhaustion of lands where they lived before, and said that they didn’t want this to happen again. They would recall how lands there had been over-burned, were covered with the invasive fern, and no longer produced corn. Where else would they go, they said, there’s no more free land, and the government prohibits them from taking new lands in the Reserve. Many comuneros expressed the need to learn how to work the land better, so that they or their descendants wouldn’t be caught in the same predicament.

Conservation as promulgated through the Reserve and related agencies. This issue of restrictions imposed by the presence of the MABR provides a pivot point between the above cluster of views, which express ways in which Palestinos see value in maintaining forest and soil fertility, and another set of views which relate to the Reserve. As mentioned, some comuneros expressed an understanding they had that the government had justified the creation of a reserve in terms of its future importance to future generations, and evidently interpreted this in terms of future use of the forest by their descendants. However, once the MABR became operationalized in 1994, the border between the Palestina work zone and protected forest zones demarcated in 1995, and the management plan finalized in 2000, with its rules and norms for use according to specific zones, it became clear to anyone who thought that way that this was not to be the case. From there, regardless of whether they subscribed to this preconception or not, Palestinos

express a fairly coherent set of evaluations of conservation as the Reserve and other environmental agencies have been formulating it.

One of the key evaluations expressed is that comuneros, in accepting the Reserve's restrictions and rules, such as not expanding agricultural areas beyond the defined zone, and not cutting trees or taking other resources from it (with the exception of xate palm collection and hunting for personal consumption), are *cuidando* the Selva. Yet, they see that "irregular" settlements within the Reserve and Comunidad land continue to exist and bring more land into cultivation, while new ones continue to enter. In fact, one park guard explained that the alleyway meant to demarcate Palestina's work zone from the forest preservation zone only got established part of the way, because some members of Rio Colorado barrio found that the line was going to cut them off from some of their long-held fields and acahuals. They were only willing to let the line pass if the government could guarantee that they wouldn't lose these fields to a nearby "irregular" settlement. Comuneros continue to press for government action against these settlements, but, as noted earlier, see no change or see strategies that potentially invite more settlers to enter in place of those that were relocated. The classic Palestinos evaluation of this situation is that "it's the campesino that's *cuidando* the Reserve, not the government... the government never comes to tell them not to cut trees, no, it's the Comunidad that's *cuidando* the selva". Several comuneros talk about how, in earlier years, it usually fell to comuneros themselves to drive out "invader" communities, perhaps with some help from police, but generally with their own resources and risking their own lives – actions taken, according to observer and comunero accounts, with the encouragement of the government and often with the assumption that it was necessary in order to preserve the legal process of finalizing the Comunidad's territory. Once the government focused on conservation, the Reserve became

activated, and they began to see restrictions imposed on them but not on these other communities, they decided that dealing with the “irregulars” was the government’s job, not theirs. In a similar vein, some comuneros talk about having had to fight the fires of 1998 with little government support. Here again, they see themselves as being the ones *cuidando* the Selva, not the government. Some say, “the Reserve is supposed to be ours, the Comunidad’s, but it looks like it’s really the government’s”. This constitutes, in effect, one element of comuneros’ sense that the government has abandoned them.

In the face of this perceived abandonment, however, Palestinos then see that funds to support the Reserve come in from the government and from all over the world. They comment that not only does it seem like the Reserve lands don’t belong to the Comunidad anymore, but it seems that it belongs to “the internationals”, further undermining their sense of unfairness that they are the ones expected to continue to *cuidar* the Reserve. They talk about how funds are provided by “*la internacional*” to support all these agencies’ personnel dedicated to things like administration, biological monitoring, and park guards; they mention Chajul and the other planned biological research stations, and note the NGOs, like ENDESU, that seem always to be directly in the finance stream. As noted earlier, a comunero commented that all these people “eat from the same plate,” a plate from which the comuneros feel excluded.

Palestinos contrast all the activity in these areas with the lack of attention they see to things that are most important to them: securing their livelihoods in the present and future. Yet the funds dedicated to the campesino, as one Palestino says, are for things like environmental education. “Where is the support for the campesino, where are the productive projects?” he asked. Another said, “the internationals, they give out money to the government, maybe a quarter of it gets to the Comunidad, the rest, who knows where it goes?... It’s only the biologist

and engineers that benefit... It seems like the U.N. is the patron of the government, but the government needs to be the patron of its indigenous people". He recalled having a conversation with a well-known Mexican biologist once, who talked about establishing a system of biological corridors through the area. He remembers telling the man, "What about the animals with two legs? Why don't we find a patron for them first, then we'll do corridors. If there's no one to look after the people, the government, or some program, if there's not this, then it doesn't work, because there's no development". Comuneros frequently contrasted the kinds of projects that were being funded, to which they had no inherent objections because they could see that not cutting trees or maintaining soil fertility were ultimately good things, with their needs to earn money to support their families now, and their children's need to do so in the future. As one Palestino said, "It's okay, I won't touch the trees, but is the government going to maintain my family?" Another said, "People are saying, maybe it's okay not to burn, but how am I going to make money?"

The issue of securing present and future livelihoods is a critical one in Palestinos' evaluation of conservation measures as they are being carried out in the current institutional and policy environment. As conveyed in an earlier chapter, Palestinos spoke of migrating to the Selva not only to escape impoverished and insufficient lands, but to escape being *mozos*, to work for their own families' gain, to offer their children a chance at a life better than the ones they had led. In current times, the plight of the younger generations is very present in comuneros' minds. Normally, taking over new land would be the first option to support the new families. But if this isn't to be an option because of the Reserve's restrictions and because land reform is over, many Palestinos say, we have to "*cambiar nuestro trabajo*," change our work. Many talk about finding new and better ways to work their lands that will earn them money: "We old folks, we

work only with machete, we'll be dying soon, but probably, the young ones, they need to learn how to work well; if they keep working like us, with machete, they'll end up like us; maybe they'll work with a plow, with machinery, make better use of the land, so as not to finish it." This hope was why some Palestinos were so exhilarated at the prospect of the Pilot Agricultural Plant being established in the Comunidad. To this purpose, also, some of the better-funded families in town, as well as the organized groups working with cattle, have set their sights on a variety of techniques for more intensively managed and higher-output cattle production. At least one group had received funding from SEMARNAP for trying out a method that is considered appropriate for the humid tropics, but other groups and individuals seeking to develop income-producing activities are left wide-open to any kind of input and funding they can get, well-founded or otherwise.

But for many Palestinos, "changing our work" also means not having to be campesinos anymore. Many talk about wanting their children to study, so that they can work in offices and stores. Palestinos talked about the lack of government attention to their economic and welfare needs, often decrying that the biologists and technicians that did show up never stayed long enough to truly help or provide follow-through, had little understanding of local people and local conditions, and brought technological "packages" that often didn't work locally. Some contrasted this with their hope that one day, it would be their own children, who do know the local context, who would come as biologists, agronomists, veterinarians, lawyers, and doctors to attend these needs. However, as one man noted, there's a catch that circles back to the initial complaint of little support for productive projects: for this to happen, families have to have money to support their children's educations, which involves both the costs of sending them to school and the costs of removing them from the family labor pool.

During my time in the community, there was much evidence of Palestinos trying to “change our work” however they could. While I suggest earlier Palestino attention, before the 90s emphasis on conservation, was directed towards the expansion of land holdings to secure land claims and towards diversification of the kinds and quality of family lands, now two more directions seemed to be getting attention: 1) intensification of agricultural methods, and 2) small business development. The former is exemplified by Palestino interests in intensely managed cattle and mechanized agricultural methods, but also by interests in managed xate and pita plantations. Xate production has received ongoing and intermittent support since the middle 90s. Pita and organic coffee and chile production, as well as intensive cattle management, as alternative methods of boosting agricultural income, have received relatively recent support on a small scale. Otherwise, this drive for intensification and commercialization of agricultural activities was basically unattended by the Reserve, SEMARNAP, and C.I..

Small business development was equally unattended by the existing conservation-oriented institutions in the Comunidad. As mentioned earlier, C.I., had initially supported an ecotourism venture and a women’s embroidery business in Palestina, but abandoned these, and did initially support ecotourism in Frontera. By the end of the 90s, C.I. turned more towards taking a facilitation role in the Selva region, aimed at supporting the funding and development of a coordinated approach to institutional action in the Selva, and less towards direct project implementation. Some degree of commerce had always been present in Palestina: Burguete Cal y Mayor (1980) noted the early dominance in that regard of a couple of barrios in town, due to their earlier appropriation of good lands nearer to transport and consequent ability to develop economic capital. The further development of this sector was probably always limited by the lack of capital to start up businesses or to enable buying goods and services, as well as by the

relatively poor state of transportation. However, beginning in the early to middle 1990s, cash began to flow into the local economy from a variety of sources: direct government payments to individuals through such programs as PROCAMPO and PROGRESA¹¹⁸; an increase in sources of wage work, most temporary and some long term, as a result of the bilingual teacher program, the road and other infrastructure construction projects, the hiring of park guards, promoters, and temporary fire-fighters, and the payment of labor to maintain trees planted in the 1999 and 2000 reforestation program; government financing of a few small business through the Solidaridad and other programs; the feeding and housing of contractors and outside workers for infrastructure projects, school teachers for the higher-level schools, and visitors related to all the remunicipalization, political campaigns, and other government activity during this period; and, of course, the cash from PRODERS projects. Moreover, with the vast improvements in internal and external roads, as well as transport options, individuals could more easily go to Palenque (the nearest commercial center) to obtain supplies for a local business, as well as more easily take produce to internal and external markets. During my time in the community, there was a small florescence of commercial and house construction activity evident, which I relate to this cash influx, and as noted, many Palestinos were inspired to think of trades, small enterprises, and agricultural commercialization as viable and desirable options.

However, many of these cash sources are temporary or are only available to registered comuneros with certified land rights (as opposed to the majority of offspring and newer residents without formal landholding rights). And success in receiving start-up funds from outside sources for any kind of economic activity is more likely for those individuals who can spare the time and

¹¹⁸ PROCAMPO, as mentioned earlier, is the program which, since 1993, makes twice-yearly cash payments to farmers as a compensation for the lifting of price supports and market liberalization due to the signing of NAFTA. PROGRESA is a federal program that gives cash payments and food supplements every two months to mothers who participate in sponsored home health activities, supported by local female community promoters.

money to walk the halls of agencies, and those with greater literacy, command of Spanish, experience in dealing with bureaucracy, contacts and political support within and outside of the community, and a past record of receiving funds. The majority of Palestinos do not fall within these categories. I observed one group of young men trying to start a shoe store diligently jump through the constantly changing bureaucratic hoops presented them for two years, make many trips outside the community, and finally give up when yet another surprise requirement asked of them exhausted their faith and financial resources. They were, in a sense, political “nobodies” within the community and outside, operating independently and without benefit of influential contacts or inside knowledge. On the other hand, some of Palestina’s better-connected and more experienced members, some of them former comisariados, have been able to acquire vehicles and start up a much-needed taxi service with a boost from their association with the Yax Lum Federation and its resources in Frontera.

Thus, with the activation of the Reserve and related conservation policies, Palestinos describe finding themselves in a situation where they are being asked to give up land in the Reserve as a present or future economic option, but are not being offered support for developing alternative economic options. While they can appreciate the value of some of the agroecological techniques being supported by current institutions, most Palestinos I spoke with don’t feel that these activities address their real and more pressing needs. At the same time, they see that other communities have not been forced to leave the Reserve, and that there is a substantial flow of resources into the Reserve, none of which seems destined for compensating them for the loss of options involved in *cuidando* the Reserve. As one Palestino said, echoing many others: “What good is the Reserve to us? There is no benefit for us,” even as comuneros feel they are being asked to give up a lot for its existence. Integral to this sense of their welfare not being

addressed, is the sense of being discounted: of their voices being denied in the decision-making processes taking place, and of their claims as owners of much of the Reserve territory being given little importance.

Given this evaluation of the situation, the strategies that comuneros have used to increase their control over political and economic resources is not surprising. One of these has been the great importance given to payments from the government in exchange for adopting many of the promoted conservation methods. Financial support may indeed be necessary to the implementation of these activities, but at the same time, some people undertake some of the activities, such as establishing xate plantations, unpaid and on their own, albeit at a slower pace, and others evidently don't use the money for the intended purpose. It seems to me that the payments gain extra importance as they are used politically by the Comunidad to enforce some recognition of the exchange that comuneros feel the government should honor if it expects them to give up the use of part of the Comunidad's territory and the options it represents for them. To the extent that project implementation isn't verified by SEMARNAP or other agencies, reported to me as a frequent problem, the payments also gain importance as a source of cash that can be used by comuneros to meet their other unmet needs. That is, if they're not going to get support for investing in alternative economic options, they'll take whatever sources of cash they can get a hold of to invest as they see fit.

Two other strategies have employed the few sources of leverage that comuneros evidently feel they have. One is to threaten to send the Comunidad's youth into the Reserve to settle land, or, another variation, to just go in and burn the whole rain forest. This was a threat that was repeatedly voiced by comuneros, including in at least one TAC meeting I attended. The

other was to hold government agents hostage in a bid to take over management of the Reserves, a tactic that has served the Comunidad well many times over the years.

A fourth strategy has been to go independent. By this I mean that comuneros, seeing their interests poorly served through the actions of the predominant institutions and through the interface of the Comunidad with them, once again diversify their options by forming small cooperatives and other legally-recognized groups to seek funding directly, on their own. This strategy has brought with it its own set of pros and cons, including the creation of tensions within the Comunidad and the individual communities.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

In undertaking this study, I've tried to weave together many threads. I've taken the case of the Comunidad Lacandona, an indigenous communal territory in Chiapas, Mexico, and the Montes Azules Biosphere Reserve, an internationally-recognized rain forest reserve established over much of the Comunidad's land, and explored the responses of both Maya comuneros and conservation institutions to this "marriage". As suggested in the beginning of the text, I framed this exploration in terms of wanting to look at how the three elements of indigenous communities, common property, and ecosystem conservation interact, and how these interactions support the self-determination or other objectives of community members as well as the preservation of the natural systems in question. In approaching this task, I've tried to take an historical perspective, paying attention to ecological, cognitive, social, political, and economic factors that may have contributed to important dynamics over the years and into the present. In exploring the objectives and actions of Comunidad members and Palestinos in particular, I considered that these are negotiated and pursued through interactions within the community, such as among households, factions, or barrios, as well as through interactions among the main communities of the Comunidad Lacandona and with other settlements of the Selva. In a similar vein, I tried to look at the contributions of institutional action within the region at more than one level: in terms of the policies, resource flows, and interventions generated; but also in terms of

how these flows and interventions are shaped by other interests, e.g. regional elites, or by the actions and understandings of local personnel, who also work within many frameworks, e.g. family, professional culture, institutional structure, etc. Some of the latter perspectives, however, are perhaps underrepresented in the text, which is rather heavily slanted towards exploring the perspectives and experiences informing Palestino and Comunidad responses.

Indeed, I found that to try to undertake this kind of research, what I consider a kind of new-fashioned, old-fashioned ethnography, turned out to be an ambitious and formidable task, both methodologically and in the subsequent acts of weaving together a useful and representative narrative. I consider this a first pass at the task, one which I hope to flesh out with more meat and possibly new bones as time goes by. Of those readers who know intimately the contexts and actors described here, and perhaps even shared their time and knowledge with me, I ask that they point out or remind me of the important things I have missed, and forgive me for the equally important elements I wasn't able to weave into this version of an account.

In what follows, I first summarize some of the major findings or interpretations I make out of the research, and then present some reflections on them.

II. SUMMARY

In Chapters Two and Three, I explored the origins of the settlers that came to be residents of Nueva Palestina and Frontera Corozal, and considered where they had come from, why they had migrated, and the kinds of ecological, political, and organizational experiences they brought with them or went through in the process of migration and colonization.

The settlers that ultimately became residents of Palestina and Frontera were part of the same social fabric and driven by the same phenomena that resulted in the settlement of the

northern and western regions of the Selva, with some differences. Among the characteristics they shared were a set of relationships to land and the regional political economy. Many were landless, a condition that came about as shifts in the political economy meant their labor was no longer needed on the large, cattle- and coffee- producing landholdings (latifundios, fincas, or ranchos) where they had worked for generations in conditions of debt servitude and other exchanges of labor for access to land. This appears to be the dominant case for most of the migrants that settled the Cañadas region of the western Selva, who came predominantly from the fincas of the Ocosingo and Margaritas regions, what Leyva Solano and Ascencio Franco (1996) call the “finca belt”. Many migrants had also been living off of indigenous-owned, rented, or share-cropped minifundios, small parcels of land which, because of the historic possession of the best farming lands by large landholders, had become overworked, easily exhausted, and insufficient to support growing populations. Some minifundios were family parcels in the few indigenous communal landholdings in this zone, but which were hemmed in by other minifundios or large landholdings. The migrants that later formed Palestina and Frontera came from both these kinds of situations – non-indigenous latifundios and indigenous minifundios – but appear to have come mostly from a series of municipios to the north and northwest of the current Selva, from Simojovel eastward and southward through the Bachajón region, to the municipios of Tila, Tumbalá, and Salto de Agua around Palenque. While settlement of the Cañadas and northern parts of the Selva had begun earlier, the area around current-day Palestina was an active colonization zone or frontier in 1971, when the Comunidad Lacandona was formed. Although the settlers in this eastern region arrived later than in the earlier-settled areas of the north and west, many of them had started their migrations several years earlier before landing there. Several had used the Cañadas and northern settlements as way-stations in their

migration, or were formed by populations that had outgrown earlier communities in these regions. In addition, many future residents of Palestina came as late as 1976 and 1977 to the region, in flight from violent conflicts between large landholders and indigenous groups organizing for land reform in Simojovel.

The experience of the Cañadas colonies echoed the conditions that the indigenous minifundistas who settled the eastern region were fleeing: as long as the technologies used and the terms of engagement with the political economy didn't change, more land was the only way to sustain both current and growing populations. In the Cañadas, because of the constrained, mountain topography, arable soils and water sources were limited, and new generations were forced to find more land in the Selva in order to survive. This constant pressure to expand the amount of land brought into cultivation became an enduring characteristic of the indigenous campesino economy that developed throughout the Selva.

Among many Palestina residents, there is a strong awareness of the potential for the cycle to repeat itself of outgrowing and exhausting land due to the economic, political, and ecological constraints under which they had worked. Several described this as a cycle that had been repeated for generations in the histories of their ancestors, not just in the mid-1900s. In their descriptions of their reasons for migrating to the Selva, this consciousness weighs heavily. Many talked about wanting to escape the poverty and hunger they experienced due to these conditions, or the mistreatment of large landholders where they had been workers for these. But they also talked about larger goals: wanting to create a new life, free of the servitude to the regional elites; to create wealth for themselves and not just for someone else; and to leave the opportunity for a better and different life to their children. Migration to the Selva was not just to escape a harsh life, but also to establish a land base that would help create a new one. Palestinos talk about

finding ways to “change our work,” which encompasses both ideas of developing new techniques for working and preserving the land, but also ideas about changing their relations to the regional political economy, i.e., having greater control over and benefit from economic processes, and being able to go beyond roles as primary producers to having roles in commerce, services, and skilled professions.

During the migration period, religious discourses from both Catholic and Protestant sources reinforced ideas that migration to the Selva would be an act of liberation and would offer the opportunity to build a new life in a “promised land”. Religious agents encouraged this migration and provided moral, informational, and in some cases, legal and logistical support for it.

In these chapters, I also explored the notion that the people who settled Nueva Palestina came from ecological zones very different from those of the Selva, had no knowledge of their new environments, or merely transferred techniques used in their places of origin to their new locations. Although I make propositions that need further exploration, I show that the zone from which most of the eastern Selva settlers appear to have come, what I call an “intermediate zone” between the Central Highlands/Plateau of Chiapas and the currently designated Selva Lacandona region, share several points of past and present ecological continuity. That is, there is much similarity in terms of the elevations represented; they were once part of a continuous zone of lowland tropical rain forest; and many settlers describe similar rain fall patterns and temperatures. The areas of this zone from which most of the Ch’ol settlers came also had many original and current similarities to the lower elevation areas of the eastern Selva. While the places of origin were much transformed by both latifundios’ and minifundios’ land use practices, settlers’ descriptions of these areas suggest the possibility that such transformation could have

been patchy, incomplete, and changing in extent over the years. It would be interesting to explore this further through contemporaneous records or accounts of vegetation cover in these regions during the last century.

I also find substantial evidence of a great deal of migrant movement before and during the migrations to the Selva, suggesting that the settlers that landed in the eastern Selva had greater exposure to ecological conditions and work techniques than many perspectives assume. That is, as part of their participation in the finca economies, as well as of their experiences in transitioning away from the fincas or indigenous minifundios to find independent sources of work or land, many recount much movement and exposure to different qualities and locations of land, including, sometimes, in nearby lowland states, and to different techniques for working these lands. Thus, the movement to the Selva was not, for many, a sharp transition from one place of origin in one “zone” to one location within the Selva. Rather there is a lot of evidence of individuals moving in and out of and within the Selva over several years, with much contact and critical exchanges of labor, plant material, and knowledge among older and newer settlements.

In Chapters Four and Five, I looked at how the Comunidad Lacandona communal territory came to be formed in this context and how Nueva Palestina was incorporated into it. I explored political, social, and ecological consequences of these processes on the Selva communities in general, on the Comunidad and Palestina in particular, and on the relations that formed among the Selva communities and the government. I also explored the consequences of these processes on the environmental practices of Palestinos.

One of the many consequences of the way in which the Comunidad was formed was that it contributed to the development of different political identities and methods of organization, as

well as adversarial relations, between the settlements of the western Selva, or Cañadas region, and those in the eastern Selva. The establishment of the Comunidad at first dispossessed many of the Selva colonists, west and east, of claims to the land that they had already settled, and in some cases received title to, for many years. On the western and northwestern flanks of the new Comunidad's boundaries, the settlements organized to reject and resist their imminent dispossession, and to have individual tenure legally recognized or respected. On the eastern side, most of the settlements organized to be included in the Comunidad and achieve tenure that way. Settlements in both regions took part in early pan-indigenous organizational processes stimulated by the Catholic Church. However, the western settlements' actions continued to be nourished by the ideological and methodological influences of both liberation theology and leftist organizers from the 1970s onward, which reinforced ideas of indigenous identity, autonomy, and ultimately, resistance to existing political economic structures, while many of the eastern settlements followed a less ideologically-informed, politically pragmatic path that sought to work within the system. The ways in which federal and local governments reacted to these developments and to competing land claims generated by the creation of the Comunidad, helped to foster and perpetuate adversarial relations and an extended sense of insecurity over land tenure among the settlements in both regions.

Delayed achievement of legal tenure rights, the ambiguous nature for several years of the nature of these rights, and continued contestations over Comunidad territory created long-term insecurity over land and livelihood among Palestinos. During the years of organizing to stay in the Comunidad, the creation of the new towns of Palestina and Frontera, and the period immediately following, the nature of Palestino rights to land remained ambiguous. It wasn't clear if they would end up having rights as ejidatarios or comuneros, each of which implied

different amounts and locations of land, and different degrees of control over their own affairs. There was ambiguity over how urban or how rural the new town was to be, as the government failed to deliver on urban infrastructure but also failed to define the land allotted to agricultural zones. Legalization of rights as comuneros was delayed until 1979. During the rest of the 70s and 80s, northern and western settlements continued to contest Comunidad land. The government avoided finding political solutions, held up formalization of the Comunidad's borders, and then began to make concessions of Comunidad land as a solution. The Montes Azules Reserve was laid over much of Comunidad land, incorporating over half of Palestinos' agricultural zone and the edge of its urban zone. Changing government actions meant that the "ground rules" affecting land tenure continued to be uncertain. Even after the Comunidad decree was finally executed in 1989, the inability of the government and the Cañadas rebellion movements to develop political solutions meant that Comunidad land continued to be contested by old and new settlements.

During these decades, little effort was realized by either local or federal government, or any other institutions, to alleviate the marginalization of the Selva settlers, nor to preserve rain forest, let alone to develop frameworks for meshing the two objectives. Forestry was reserved for government, first federal, then state. Government resources and attention were diverted to the pursuit of other, frequently competing, regional and national objectives, such as protecting extractive and national security interests in the Selva region, and supplying domestic markets with beef and international markets with coffee. For Palestinos, as for other Selva settlers, previous agricultural experience, local ecological conditions, existing market and commercialization channels, and the few government programs reaching out to them, e.g., INI, perpetuated an economy based on a handful of low-technology, low-output, but sometimes land-

extensive, cash-producing activities. For Palestinos, this was coffee, cattle-raising, and wild xate palm collection, with chile production entering the picture as a fortuitous innovation of migrant farmers. Palestinos and the other Selva settlements continued to suffer from poor terms of engagement with the economic process: poor economy of scale, little influence over market prices and costs, dependence on external intermediaries, little value-added left in the communities, difficult access to credit and technical innovation. The consequences of this were particularly acute for the Cañadas settlements, where ecological constraints and limited possibilities for expansion of land led quickly to overworked soils, lack of tenure prevented access to credit and other public services, and the only avenues for expansion were in the Comunidad and Reserve. This situation was another critical impetus to Cañadas organizing processes. In Palestina, the consequences were less acute due to the more open, less ecologically constrained landscape of the eastern Selva, continued possibilities for expansion within Comunidad territory, and having legal tenure.

At the same time that the collective structure of the Comunidad provided legal tenure, it also provided challenges to the internal governance of the newly joined comuneros, representing different language groups, religions, economic capacities, histories, and experiences, and a greater population size. During the first years of the incorporation of Palestina and Frontera into the Comunidad, there were some early experiments with organizing collective economic ventures that might improve comuneros' economic positions. One of the most notable was a Comunidad cooperative to gain more control over chicle and xate commercialization. However, these attempts appear to have run into tensions that persist through the present, over the distribution of benefits derived from collective resources. There are strong values of collective equity expressed (e.g., "we all benefit or none benefit"), accompanied by strong impulses to

mistrust whomever is administering the resources in question. This tendency is quite common throughout the region, but the larger number of people involved (compared to a normal ejido), the greater degree of social differentiation within the communities, and the absence of a shared religious base, a prevalent civic and social “glue” among indigenous communities in the region, perhaps only exacerbated this tendency. Moreover, unlike the settlements in the Cañadas, there were no religious or political organizers dedicated to developing a common ideological framework and methodological approach for working across differences, and probably less urgency for doing so. As a result, there is little evidence that the collective structure of the Comunidad provided Palestinos a framework for developing new kinds or terms of work.

In addition, the Comunidad territory was divided into three sections, in large part to avoid conflicts over each sub-community’s access to land, and each sub-community managed its section independently. This appears to have provided little support to developing a strategy for Comunidad-wide management of its common-pool resources in the forest. Moreover, that forest, particularly in Palestina and Lacanjá’s sections, continued to be contested by other settlements and used by them as a source of wild resources. While the communal territory of the Comunidad was created by the government, it wasn’t fully supported by it, and exclusion of non-comuneros would have required comuneros to constantly employ militaristic measures. A contemporary case in point is the example of wild xate collection. During the time of my research, Palestina (and, I believe, the whole Comunidad) briefly considered suspending xate collection to let the plants recover and because of issues related to agreements with intermediaries. Xate remains an important source of cash for many Palestinos, so a suspension was difficult to carry out without there being an alternative source of cash for these people. Moreover, Palestinos knew that while

they refrained from collection, the residents of other settlements would continue to harvest the same plants.

If the collective structure wasn't used as a framework for developing new ways of working or for collectively managing forest, it does seem to have been used by comuneros as a source of political leverage vis-à-vis the government, as it is today. Acting as a united front, the Comunidad has derived a strength in numbers, which it has frequently used to apply pressure on the government, for instance by blockading roads and sequestering equipment and people. These numbers also provide leverage as an important Selva voting bloc which politicians court in exchange for promises of resources or services, and which has taken on more importance in recent years in light of the presence of opposition movements and the increased viability of alternative political parties. In the 1990s, when conservation of the rain forest became more of a national and regional priority, the comuneros have also tried to use their technical ownership of much of Reserve land, and the threat of sending their numbers into it to destroy rain forest, as leverage against the financial resources that conservation initiatives generate.

Given that neither institutional action nor the Comunidad provided frameworks for developing alternative ways of working during these years, Palestinos put all their efforts into ensuring the success of the few economic activities they had available, as carried out through households and extended kin networks. I suggest that in the context of the extended state of uncertainty over land tenure and the concerns for present and future livelihoods, Palestinos placed great importance on securing present and future land claims within their section of Comunidad territory. I suggest that this acted as a drive behind Palestino expansion of their agricultural lands, as they ensured claims to land around their old settlements and Nueva Palestina, and occupied areas left by the Ch'ols that went to Frontera. This expansion process

departed from the existing pattern of dispersed settlements and fields that Palestinos already had established, and proceeded to filling in lands around them. I suggest that in this process, pasture creation may have had added importance as one of least labor-intensive ways to establish and maintain land claims, a frequent use of pasture throughout the Selva that is mentioned by observers, and that this importance was augmented by the fact that a lack of actual cattle needn't be an economic disincentive to creating it. Moreover, during this time, cattle-raising was one of the few activities for which there was credit available, and for which there were consistent marketing channels and prices.

I also note that each of the relatively few economic activities that had proven themselves viable has pros and cons in terms of profitability and different site requirements. Price fluctuations, in particular, remain beyond the control of Palestinos. I suggest that Palestinos have been motivated to diversify the range of these activities they engage in to order to increase their chances of economic gain, and that, in the variable terrain of Palestina's territory, this has implied diversifying their land holdings throughout their section. I suggest that both trends of expansion and diversification of land holdings, generated by the lack of alternatives and the enduring uncertainty over land tenure, constitute critical forces behind Palestina's greater imprint on Selva land.

By contrast, I argue that these pressures were not present to the same extent in Frontera. The early years of ambiguity over rights and over how much Comunidad land would be lost to other settlements were experienced by Frontera, and there is evidence of consequent expansions of each comunero's land holdings. However, Frontera started out with a nucleated pattern of residence and no pre-existing patterns of dispersed land claims among members, its territory was far from the contested frontiers with other settlements, and its land is generally more uniform in

terms of microenvironments. I suggest this may account for some of the differences between Frontera and Palestina land use patterns, beyond the obvious differences in population size.

In Chapter Six, I focused on events in the present, particularly the 1990s and the period of my research at the turn of that decade. Beginning in the late 1980s, there were shifts in the political and economic environments which, after decades of relative neglect, began to redirect flows of resources and institutional interventions toward the campesino economy of the Selva. Some of these resources were supposed to mitigate the extreme marginalization of the region, others to finally address conservation of the remaining areas of rain forest. The emergence of the EZLN as an armed movement for indigenous autonomy also generated investment in the Selva region as a way of increasing government presence and preventing the further spread of opposition movements. At the same time, the national land reform program, as an option for meeting future land needs, was formally ended.

Palestinos' desire to change their work, to secure and improve livelihood now and in the future, at first seems to have been served by this new influx of resources. In the early 1990s, under the lead of SEDESOL, resources become more easily available for social, economic, and environmental welfare activities, e.g., schools, roads, water systems, health facilities, small businesses, xate cultivation and aquaculture projects. During this period, more institutional programs took on the discourse of community participation, and made attempts at consultative processes with varying degrees of depth or agency commitment. Except for some positive experiences in the Márques de Comillas and Cañadas regions, this tendency seems mainly to have circulated the discourse and expectations of participation, but not the reality, adding to the history of indigenous mistrust of government intentions.

During a couple of these years, the Comunidad was briefly able to insert itself into this flow of resources and direct them towards the projects described above, by creating the non-profit entity of Lacandonia, A.C. Unlike the early xate/chicle Cooperative of the late 1970s, this organization acted not as a business in its own right, but to gain more control over funding flows and direct them towards infrastructure, services, and economic projects within the Comunidad. However, despite its relative success in this, like the earlier cooperative, the initiative ran into problems of mistrust over how funds were being administered and how much control comuneros truly had over its activities, concerns exacerbated by the fact that one of its key principals was a mestizo, non-comunero. Nevertheless, the initiative expressed comuneros' desires for more control over the kinds and directions of investments in the Comunidad, and for help with developing new kinds of work.

In mid-1990s, this situation changed yet again. Institutional action in the Comunidad became dominated by agencies with conservation as their focus, and the flow of resources became directed at a more narrow set of conservation objectives. The Montes Azules Reserve got funded and became operational. A new environmental agency, SEMARNAP was created, and became the lead government institution in the Comunidad. PRODERS, another government program under SEMARNAP's wing, took charge of promoting what are meant to be integrated conservation and development projects. Conservation International became an influential NGO actor in the region, playing an important role in bringing outside funding and technical capabilities to the MABR, and for a few years the two were run by the same person. C.I. started up a tourism project and women's embroidery business, in addition to agroecology demonstration projects, in Palestina. These were later abandoned and CI moved more into a role

of facilitating collaboration and funding of conservation activities in the Selva region as a whole. Most of this activity has been supported by infusions of international and corporation funds.

As a result of this institutional re-orientation, the resource flow into the Comunidad during these years was mainly directed towards activities supporting rain forest study and protection, such as biological monitoring and research, environmental education, and the definition of Reserve zones of exclusion and inclusion, and their management rules. The ways in which the presence of the Reserve would restrict Palestino activities become more evident and began to be implemented. The forest protection strategies adopted revolved heavily around seeing Palestina and other communities as “pressure points” on the Reserve. The “conservation and development” interventions supported were directed primarily at containing Palestino activities on the land, through agroecological and agroforestry techniques for lengthening the amount of time that fields are used as milpa, and at reducing the amount of land in agricultural use through various forms of reforestation. With few exceptions, Palestinos judged that most of the resources being invested did not address their interests in dealing with the impending issue of future livelihoods and in finding new ways of working, even if they might help ameliorate the situation by maintaining soil productivity. The investment strategies of these agencies, again with a few exceptions, almost completely ignored the economic activities that Palestinos already used or sought to develop in order to make money. And while the Reserve rules asked them to keep out of land they technically own as Comunidad, the Reserve administration and supporting agencies was unable to remove other settlements without legal tenure or prevent new ones from entering. From Palestinos’ perspective, if land expansion wasn’t going to be an option, then “other ways of working” needed to be.

Moreover, existing programs seemed largely to be promoting pre-determined technical “packages,” based on what is known to work in similar humid tropical environments, but weren’t supported with technical assistance and support for problems encountered in local applications. Financial support for adopting these techniques was held up by bureaucratic problems and sometimes didn’t materialize. These experiences fed Palestinos’ long-standing mistrust of the usefulness and intentions of government interventions.

The conservation strategies adopted also seemed to be based on a narrow set of ideas about what constitute appropriate ways for living compatibly with rain forest. Lacandon environmental practices continued to be recognized and studied as potential models in this regard, while Palestino practices and ways of living (e.g., cattle-raising, urbanization, commerce), were ignored. These ideas were reinforced by what personnel see in the field: the bigger imprints on forest of Palestinos and the lesser imprint of Lacandons, and by common interpretations of these differences in terms of Palestinos’ lack of local ecological knowledge and mal-adapted ecological practices. But real studies of Palestino knowledge, practices, and objectives have never been done, nor have policy or projects been built around understanding or addressing them. My research suggests that Palestinos have substantive knowledge of local forest succession and forest types; that they distinguish different local soil types and their aptness for different uses; that particular local plant species and associations are used as indicators of soil quality or of past ecological events, natural or human-induced; and that they have knowledge of and names for substantial numbers of local plants in both disturbed and undisturbed plant communities. As noted earlier, my historical work suggests that they probably came with more knowledge of and exposure to similar environments than has usually been assumed, and that there is ample evidence of knowledge acquisition and adaptation during the colonization stages.

The research also suggests that Palestinos do find value in preserving rain forest, with some of these values having some characteristics in common with those of biodiversity and ecosystem preservation perspectives, others emphasizing the utilitarian benefits of rain forest, and yet others having a spiritual aspect, mostly framed in Christian terms (although spiritual perspectives were not fully explored). Similarly, while I found that Palestinos tend to give great importance to the burning of vegetation cover in order to get good corn production, they also value organic matter in the soil and recognize the benefits of the agroecological techniques being promoted, such as green manure crops, in this regard.

Thus, I found that Palestinos lack neither detailed knowledge of their physical environment nor conservation values, even if these understandings are not necessarily coterminous with those of Lacandons or scientists, and I point to other reasons for Palestinos' larger imprint on the Selva. Particularly, given the political, social, economic, and ecological contexts of the Selva region, the Comunidad, and the Reserve, and the continuing marginalization of indigenous people within prevailing political economies, land expansion has had more significance for achieving critical Palestino aims than has rain forest preservation. Thus, much of existing conservation policy seems to be missing the more significant interests shaping Palestinos' ecological practices, and indeed, of most of the non-Lacandon settlers of the Selva.

In effect, I suggest that Palestinos find themselves being asked to give up land expansion as an option, while the agencies that dominate resource flows to the region offer no real alternatives, no help in developing "new ways of working". They also find themselves being asked to modify proven ways of doing subsistence work, even when they feel that isn't their primary need, yet are given little technical support for problems that come up with these

modifications, for adapting techniques to local situations, nor even, in the case of the few more commercially oriented projects, for making them viable. On top of this, they see what appears to them to be a double standard being applied with regard to land expansion in the Reserve, as settlements without tenure continue to expand in area and number, while they, themselves, are asked to stay out of what is technically their land. In their estimations, they are asked to take the risks of losing future livelihood options, and of modifying existing ways of work, without seeing any substantive support for creating alternatives, nor substantive willingness to share the risks. In effect, the conservation strategies being promoted are based on Selva residents remaining poor campesinos, with low-input and low-output productive methods.

In this context, Palestinos make a distinction between the rain forest, the natural formation that has potentially inherent and useful value to them, on the one hand, and the Reserve, a political formation, which seems to have little value to them as it's being implemented, on the other. That is, they may find many things of value in the preservation of rain forest, and may be willing to support it, all other things being equal. But the Reserve, and the projects and organizations meant to support it, become seen as a complex that ignores their rights to self-determination over land and livelihood, leverages resources away from them and their futures, and yet provides little in return. As a result, during these years, Comunidad members have tried various ways to assert some control over the resource flow dominated by this complex and to assert their political presence, using the few sources of leverage they recognize. The creation of Lacandonia, A.C. in the mid-90s was one such attempt. After that, at the level of the Comunidad, the means used became increasingly confrontational: demanding jobs for Comunidad members; demanding the removal of "irregulars," even when it's known this is a delicate and difficult problem to solve; using time-tested pressure tactics; trying to take over

the administration and control of all the reserves on Comunidad territory; and threatening to enter the Reserve and burn or settle it. Similarly, much importance has been put on receiving payments to adopt the techniques being promoted. These may be important to subsidizing households' time and energy put into adopting them, but also seem to be ways of extracting some amount of financial resources from the flow, and of asserting some political recognition of their rights vis-à-vis all these competing interests.

Given the difficulties of diverting the resource flow managed by the Reserve/conservation complex towards “new ways of working”, as well as the difficulties of using the communal structure for that purpose, Palestinos and fellow Comunidad members have developed other strategies. Beginning in the mid-1990s, but particularly later in the decade, there began to be a proliferation of small, independent organizations of Palestina residents created, taking a variety of forms recognized by law (such as co-ops and S.S.S.s) and thus allowing the groups to receive grants and loans directly from government agencies, banks, and other sources. Thus, Palestinos begin to pursue their objectives independently of either Reserve or Comunidad frameworks, although the community's leaders sometimes needed to endorse the groups' proposals and receipt of funds. These groups have dedicated themselves to finding start-up funds and technical assistance for a variety of economic activities, including cattle-raising, tourism, transport services, and other small businesses. In Frontera, this process developed earlier and faster, in large part due to the support of the mestizo, non-comunero who was active in Lacandonia, A.C., and some Palestinos have benefited. In both places, the smaller groups have associated into larger groups in order to potentially leverage more funds and spread the costs of their efforts. For the Palestino groups, however, without the help of a savvy, resident mentor, and lacking the environmental and cultural allure of the Lacandons, the process of

finding funding has pitted them against the usual problems of bureaucratic hoops and inertia, and has yielded few and fitful results. In a time-worn sequence, those groups with the greatest abilities in maneuvering the system end up being those who repeatedly get funding, and this disparity of results adds to internal community tensions. These tensions then inform the Comunidad's dealings with government agencies, for instance, to use PRODERS funds as way of more widely distributing resources among unorganized residents. At the same time, during this period, a variety of other projects vie for comuneros' attention and seem to offer potential frameworks for gaining access to resources, for instance the politically-motivated projects of incoming and outgoing politicians, and the potential creation of a new municipio. In effect, the void of support that exists for addressing Palestinos' livelihood security needs leads them to look wherever they can for resources. This leaves them vulnerable both to the development of tensions within communities, as some residnets have better success than others, and to tensions within the Comunidad, as the three communities vie for control, for instance, over benefits from the location of the municipio administrative center or from the Pilot Agricultural Plant. It also leaves them vulnerable to accepting resources for activities that are of dubious environmental and economic sustainability, with potentially disastrous implications for both humans and ecosystems alike.

Meanwhile, towards the end of my stay, comuneros began to hear about, be invited to meetings on, and asked to respond to, a proliferation of other projects or plans : a World Bank-funded biological corridors project in the area, and a separate, transboundary Usumacinta River watershed protection project. State agencies rolled out a new plan for the development of micro-regional councils throughout the Selva, through which communities were supposed to plan and coordinate their requests for government services. The MABR, completely independently,

presented a similar plan of forming regional Technical Advisory Councils around the Selva to improve community-Reserve coordination. On top of this, the federal government began promoting its Plan Puebla-Panamá, a Mexican/Central American plan to develop the economic infrastructure of the region which, in the eyes of both conservationists and pro-indigenous movements, threatens to turn the whole region into a southern version of Mexico's northern *maquiladora* districts, with all their attendant social and environmental problems. Virtually all of these purport to be planning frameworks for actions regarding development or conservation, and each is promulgated independently of the other.

III. ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS

In the case explored here, as well as in many attempts to develop common approaches to using and protecting natural systems, much importance has been put on the question of ecological knowledge and ecological values, as in the distinctions made between Lacandons and other indigenous settlers of the Selva. Yet this comes in part from ahistorical perspectives that only focus on present evidence of environmental practices, on the positions that people take, or the means they use to pursue their objectives. Differences in ecological knowledge are as much a given as are our different histories of social and environmental experiences, and the important questions are not about whose knowledge is "better", more like that of scientists', or based on longer-term associations with particular places, even though such differences may have more or less utility for predicting and responding to particular environmental problems. Rather, the more weighty questions are about what is important to people about particular landscapes, how they interact with the natural systems in question, and what are the significant issues or concerns that affect peoples' willingness or ability to work towards common ends. In a sense, these

questions lead to a broader definition of what constitutes the relevant *environmental* knowledge with which to work - the understandings of the workings of an environment that is social as well as natural.

But finding ways to work towards common ends implies the sharing of this knowledge among the different parties involved, rather than the imposition of one set of understandings on another. This is tricky, because it implies a willingness, and an ability, to examine and reveal the assumptions and goals that underlie knowledge and actions, as well as to participate in a process of negotiation among the different perspective involved. Such a process raises questions about power, and the relative willingness and freedom of different parties to be revealing, on one hand, and to give up some measure of control over outcomes, on the other. The people that work in government and other institutions, and the people that live in rural, indigenous communities, historically work against many internal and external disincentives for engaging in such a process.

I have often asked myself how different this situation might look if, instead of separating itself from “development” issues, the Montes Azules Reserve defined itself as a partner to and advocate for the people living in and around its boundaries, worked to ensure that resources get directed toward helping its partners achieve what they need, and worked with them as partners to come up with solutions to keep the rain forest intact. For instance, by departing from the kinds of questions mentioned above, and working from there to imagine what should be done, what could be done, and how it might be achieved. This was, in a sense, what the ARIC communities took the initiative for doing in 1986, when they went to the heads of the government agency SEDUE and said, “look, this is what we need in order to be able to help preserve rain forest”. Their proposals included things like finding ways to extend milpa productivity, but they also very much included attending to critical social and economic issues, such as finding ways to

better commercialize and develop markets for their products, improving education and health, getting credit, and so on.

This position of advocacy needn't imply that MABR personnel engage in implementing development projects for which they feel they are neither funded nor mandated, nor giving up their commitment to preserving biodiversity. What I imagine is an advocacy for both people and biodiversity, an advocacy for the *system* to work in mustering the resources and developing the ways to meet both sets of objectives. As one simple example, during my time in Chiapas, there was ample institutional support for establishing biological research stations around the Reserve, but there was no institutional advocate for establishing a farming/development research and training center. The MABR seems like one of the most appropriate locations for this kind of advocacy, which is very consonant with the original intentions of UNESCO-type biosphere reserves as I understand them.

Of course, there are long histories that make partnering sorts of collaborations between government agencies and indigenous communities problematic, let alone collaborations that include scientists and other academics, nongovernmental organizations, and so on. To attempt such collaborations implies making commitments to processes that allow new ways of working together, that help bridge the differences in such things as knowledge, language, access to and control over information, communication processes, and other resources. Developing new ways of working present challenges to both institutions and communities.

For instance, in addition to the issues of internal community mistrust mentioned earlier, I had ample opportunity to observe the challenges presented by the combined dynamics of Palestina's governance structure, the size of its population, the high level of illiteracy, the low level of Spanish proficiency, and the increasing sophistication of the decision-making and

external representation demands being made on the community's leaders. Written documents are usually slowly and incompletely processed, even by the more literate members of the community, and even less processed when they have scientific, legal, or bureaucratic jargon. Urban, spoken Spanish is also frequently incompletely understood, as are Technical Advisory Council presentations in which slides with graphs and tables are thrown up. Comunero evaluations of proposals that come from the outside rely on the communication of elected leaders' or their helpers' interpretations through two or three layers of oral transmission: from the leaders to the barrio representatives (often half- or fully asleep by the usual evening meeting time), to the barrio meetings of family heads, to the other members of the community. Community-wide decisions are made in huge meetings of the 850 voting comuneros. Meanwhile, the demands placed on the unsalaried comisariados for representing the community externally have become increasingly burdensome and politically sophisticated, such that the individuals almost never want to stay beyond their appointed year, undercutting continuity in both internal and external affairs. In many respects, the collective governance structure that exists seems inadequate to the increasingly sophisticated internal and external tasks being required of it.

Such difficulties add to imbalances of power when Palestina or the Comunidad engage with external agents about programs, resources, and plans that could have serious implications for their economic or ecological fortunes, be they the MABR Management Plan or a Pilot Agricultural Plant, and hinder their ability to fully participate in negotiations that produce favorable community outcomes. Meanwhile, alternative power bases develop around individuals like the outside advisor in Frontera or savvy community members who are better able to negotiate in that outside world. Given the proliferation of both internal, community

organizations and competing, external development or conservation “plans”, there are many tendencies leading toward fragmented approaches to livelihood and conservation in the Comunidad area, and few tendencies supporting the Comunidad in achieving both ecosystem conservation and equitable development.

However the MABR’s role remains defined, a more mutually satisfying relationship between it and the Comunidad needs to pay attention to these power imbalances, at minimum in relation to the information, communication, and deliberative processes, in order to have more mutually satisfying outcomes. If anything, this study has made it clear that the communities of the Selva, including those of the Comunidad, have sought and will continue to seek ways to redress the power imbalances to which they have been subject as indigenous people. Palestinos and Comunidad members will pursue their interests by one means or another, whether the government or the MABR or other organizations support them or not. If my interpretations have any validity, Palestinos didn’t wait for the government to kick them out of the newly formed Comunidad, but organized in order to be allowed to stay. They didn’t wait for the government to ensure their land tenure, but found other ways to secure claims to land for the present and the near future. Similarly they’ll pursue ways to “change their work” and become more prosperous, and some of the ways they find to do this could well have negative effects on the forest ecosystem. But if that doesn’t work, they and the newer generations of families will do what they need to do to support themselves, and expanding into Reserve land is never fully out of the question. Palestinos told me of individual families, who, as recently as the late 90s, explored the southern Reserve with the idea of finding new and better lands to settle.

If the MABR and other conservation organizations want to see the rain forest preserved, they can’t afford to wear blinders in relation to the aims of the Selva communities, can’t afford to

absent themselves from the development process. The strategies they pursued through to the time of my research largely counted – whether consciously or not - on the Selva communities being either Lacandons or remaining poor, low-consumption campesinos, as if no other models for combining livelihood and conservation could be imagined. In order for this model to work, however, the Selva communities have also to be poor, docile campesinos who don't assert their rights and futures. This will not happen, as the communities throughout the Selva, including those of the Comunidad, have shown. A far better outcome is likely if conservation organizations work in partnership with the Selva communities, become advocates for approaches that support both people and rain forest, and work to leverage resources – including for research, urban environmental services, education, skills building, and other kinds of training - for the communities that help them to achieve the security and self-determination they seek.

REFERENCES CITED

- Agrawal, Arun and C.C. Gibson
 1999 Enchantment and Disenchantment: The Role of Community in Natural Resource Management. *World Development* 27(4):629-49.
- Alejos García, José
 1998 Los choles en el siglo del café: Estructura agraria y etnicidad en la cuenca del Río Tulijá. *In Chiapas; Los rumbos de otra historia*. Juan Pedro Viqueira and Humberto Ruz, eds. Pp. 319-328. México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Aley, Jennifer, William R. Burch, Beth Conover, and Donald Field, eds.
 1999 *Ecosystem Management: Adaptive Strategies for Natural Resources Organizations in the Twenty-First Century*. Philadelphia, Pa.: Taylor & Francis.
- Anderson, Terry L. and Alexander James, eds.
 2001 *The Politics and Economics of Park Management*. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Andrews, Joann M., Rodrigo Migota Von Bertrab, Susana Rojas, Armando Sastré Méndez, and Debra A. Rose
 1998 Mexico: Ría Celestún and Ría Lagartos Special Biosphere Reserves. In *Parks in Peril; People, Politics, and Protected Areas*. Katrina Brandon, Kent H. Redford, and Steven E. Sanderson, eds. Pp. 79'106. Washington, D.C.: The Nature Conservancy and Island Press.
- Barzetti, V. ed.
 1993 *Parks and Progress: Protected Areas and Economic Development in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Washington, D.C.: IUCN (The World Conservation Union).
- Benjamin, Thomas
 1996 *A Rich Land, A Poor People; Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Berkes, Fikret, ed.
 1989 *Common Property Resources; Ecology and Community-Based Sustainable Development*. London: Bellhaven Press.
- Berlin, Brent, Dennis E. Breedlove and Peter H. Raven

1974 *Principles of Tzeltal Plant Classification; An Introduction to the Botanical Ethnography of a Mayan-Speaking People of Highland Chiapas*. New York: Academic Press.

Blaikie, Piers and Harold Brookfield

1987 Common property resources and degradation worldwide. *In Land Degradation and Society*. P. Blaikie and H. Brookfield, eds. Pp. 186-207. New York: Methuen.

Bodley, John H.

1996 *Anthropology and Contemporary Human Problems*. 3rd edition. Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Bolling, David M.

1994 *How to Save A River; A Handbook for Citizen Action*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Brandon, Katrina

1998a Comparing Cases: A Review of Findings. *In Parks in Peril; People, Politics, and Protected Areas*. Katrina Brandon, Kent H. Redford, and Steven E. Sanderson, eds. Pp. 375-414. Washington, D.C.: The Nature Conservancy and Island Press.

1998b Perils to Parks: The Social Context of Threats. *In Parks in Peril; People, Politics, and Protected Areas*. Katrina Brandon, Kent H. Redford, and Steven E. Sanderson, eds. Pp. 415-439. Washington, D.C.: The Nature Conservancy and Island Press.

Brandon, Katrina, Kent H. Redford, and Steven E. Sanderson, eds.

1998a. *Parks in Peril; People, Politics, and Protected Areas*. Washington, D.C.: The Nature Conservancy and Island Press.

Brandon, Katrina, Kent H. Redford, and Steven E. Sanderson

1998b Introduction. *In Parks in Peril; People, Politics, and Protected Areas*. Katrina Brandon, Kent H. Redford, and Steven E. Sanderson, eds. Pp 1-23. Washington, D.C.: The Nature Conservancy and Island Press.

Bray, David Barton

1997 Forest and Protected Area Policies in the Lacandon Rainforest, Chiapas. Paper prepared for the panel on "Conservación y desarrollo de las reservas de la biosfera y bosques comunitarios en México" at the XX International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico, April 17.

Brechin, Steven R., Patrick C. West, David Harmon, and Kurt Kutay

1991 Resident Peoples and Protected Areas: A Framework for Inquiry. *In Resident Peoples and National Parks; Social Dilemmas and Strategies in International Conservation*. Patrick C. West and Steven R. Brechin, eds. Pp.5-28. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Brechin, Seven R., Peter R. Wilshusen, Crystal L. Fortwangler, and Patrick C. West

2003 *Contested Nature; Promoting International Biodiversity with Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Breedlove, Dennis E.

1981 Introduction. Vol 1. *In Flora of Chiapas*. Dennis E. Breedlove, ed. Pp. 1-35. San Francisco, CA: California Academy of Sciences.

Brockington, Dan

2002 *Fortress Conservation; The Preservation of the Mkomazi Game Reserve Tanzania*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Brogden, Mette J. and James B. Greenberg

2005 *The Fight for the West: A Political Ecology of Land-Use Conflicts in Arizona*. *In Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups*. Susan Paulson and Lisa L. Gezon, eds. Pp. 41-60. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Bromley, Daniel, W. et al, eds.

1992 *Making the Commons Work: Theory, Practice, and Policy*. San Francisco: ICS Press.

Bromley, Daniel W. and Michael M. Cernea

1989 *The Management of Common Property Natural Resources; Some Conceptual and Operational Fallacies*. World Bank Discussion Paper #57. World Bank: Washington, D.C.

Brosius, J.P.

2003 *Seeing Communities: Technologies of Visualization in Conservation*. (Unpublished manuscript).

Brosius, J.P. and D. Russell

2003 *Conservation from Above: An Anthropological Perspective on Transboundary Protected Areas and Ecoregional Planning*. *Journal of Sustainable Forestry* 17(1/2):39-65.

Brosius, J.P., A. Tsing and C. Zerner

1998 *Representing Communities: Histories and Politics of Community-Based Natural Resource Management*. *Society and Natural Resources* 11(2):157-168.

Brosius, J.P., A. Tsing and C.Zerner

2005 *Community and Conservation; Histories and Politics of Community-Based Natural Resource Management*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira.

Brown, Bennett A.

1991 *Landscape Protection and The Nature Conservancy*. *In Landscape Linkages and Biodiversity*. Wendy E. Hudson, ed. Pp. 66-71. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Bruce, J.W.

1999 Legal Bases for the Management of Forest Resources as Common Property. Community Forestry Note 14. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Burger, J.

1990 The Gaia Atlas of First Peoples – A Future for the Indigenous World. London: Penguin Books.

Burguete Cal y Mayor, Aracely

1978 Efectos de los programas gubernamentales en la Selva Lacandona. Paper presented at Annual Conference of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico.

1980 La Selva Lacandona: Riqueza sin Desarrollo. Tesis profesional para obtener el Título de Licenciada en Sociología. Universidad Autónoma de México, México, D.F.

Calhoun, John B.

1991 Plight of the Ik. In Resident Peoples and National Parks; Social Dilemmas and Strategies in International Conservation. Patrick C. West and Steven R. Brechin, eds. Pp.55-60. Tucson: University of Arizona Press

Callicott, J. Baird

1997 Conservation Values and Ethics. In Principles of Conservation Biology. Gary K. Meffe and C. Ronald Carroll, eds. 2nd edition. Pp. 29-56. Sunderland, Mass.: Sinauer Associates, Inc.

Calvo, Angelino, Anna María Garza, María Fernanda Paz, and Juana María Ruiz

1989 Voces de la Historia. Nuevo San Juan Chamula, Nuevo Huixtán, Nuevo Matzam. San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, Mexico: Desarrollo Social de los Mexicanos Indígenas, A.C.; y Centro de Estudios Indígenas, Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas.

Carroll, C. Ronald and Gary K. Meffe

1997 Management to Meet Conservation Goals: General Principles. In Principles of Conservation Biology. Gary K. Meffe and C. Ronald Carroll, eds. 2nd edition. Pp. 347-384. Sunderland, Mass.: Sinauer Associates, Inc.

Cawley, R.M. and J. Freemuth

1993 Tree Farms, Mother Earth and Other Dilemmas: The Politics of Ecosystem Management in Greater Yellowstone. Society and Natural Resources 6:41-53.

CAS (Centro de Atención Social)

2000 Resultados de los Talleres de la Comunidad Lacandona. Coordinación Interinstitucional y Autoridades Comunales, Centro de Atención Social. Frontera Corozal, Marzo.

CECODES (Centro de Ecodesarrollo, A.C.)

1977 Memoria del “Primer Laboratorio Experimental para la Formación de Cuadros Organizadores de Empresas” Dentro del Programa del Fideicomiso par el Estudio Integral de la Selva Lacandona. CECODES, México, D.F.

Centeno, Julio César and Christopher Elliott

1993 Forest Home: The Place Where One Belongs. In *The Law of the Mother; Protecting Indigenous Peoples in Protected Areas*. Elizabeth Kemf, ed. Pp. 95-103. San Francisco, California: Sierra Club Books.

Clay, Jason

1988 *Indigenous Peoples and Tropical Forests: Models of Land Use and Management from Latin America*. Cultural Survival Report No. 27. Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival.

Cleaver, Frances

2000 Moral Ecological Rationality, Institutions, and the Management of Common Property Resources. *Development and Change* 31(2):361-83.

Colby, Michael E.

1989 *The Evolution of Paradigms of Environmental Management in Development*. Policy, Planning, and Research Working Paper WPS 313. World Bank: Washington, D.C.

Colchester, M.

1994 *Salvaging Nature. Indigenous Peoples, Protected Areas and Biodiversity Conservation*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Discussion Paper No. 55. Geneva: UN Research Institute for Social Development.

Conklin, Harold C.

1954 *An Ethnoecological Approach to Shifting Agriculture*. *Transactions of the New York Academy of Science* 17:133-42.

Conservation International

2000 Annual Report. Washington, D.C.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

2002 *Convention on Biological Diversity*. Electronic document.
<http://www.biodiv.org/convention>

Cortner, Hanna and Margaret Shannon

1993 *Embedding Public Participation in its Political Context*. *Journal of Forestry*. July 91:14-16.

Croll, E. and D. Parkin, eds.

1992 *Bush Base: Forest Farm*. London: Routledge.

Cuello, César, Katrina Brandon and Richard Margoluis

1998 Costa Rica: Corcovado National Park. In *Parks in Peril; People, Politics, and Protected Areas*. Katrina Brandon, Kent Redford, and Steven E. Sanderson, eds. Pp. 143-193. Washington, D.C.: The Nature Conservancy and Island Press.

Daily, G.C., ed.

1997 *Nature's Services*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Dasmann, R.

1976 *Life-Styles and Nature Conservation*. *Oryx* 13:281-6.

Davis, Shelton H.

1988 *Land Rights and Indigenous Peoples; The Role of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights*. Cambridge, Mass: Cultural Survival, Inc.

1993 *Indigenous Views of Land and the Environment*. World Bank Discussion Paper No. 188. Washington, D.C: The World Bank.

Davis, S.H. and A. Wall

1993 *Indigenous Territories and Tropical Forest Management in Latin America*. World Bank Working Paper. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

Descola, Philippe

1994 *In the Society of Nature: A Native Ecology in Amazonia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Descola, Philippe and Gísli Pálsson, eds.

1996 *Nature and Society; Anthropological Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.

DeWitt, John

1994 *Civic Environmentalism: Alternatives to Regulation in States and Communities*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

De Vos, Jan

1992 *Una selva herida de muerte, historia reciente de la selva lacandon*. In *Reserva de la Biosfera Montes Azules, Selva Lacandona: Investigación para su Conservación*. Miguel Angel Vásquez Sánchez y Mario A. Ramos Olmos, eds. Publicaciones Especiales ECOSFERA No. 1. Pp. 267-86. San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, México: Centro de Estudios para la Conservación de los Recursos Naturales, A.C.

2002 *Una tierra para sembrar sueños. Historia reciente de la Selva Lacandona, 1950-2000*. México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica and Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social.

Diario Oficial de la Federación

1972 "Resolución sobre reconocimiento y titulación a favor del núcleo de población zona Lacandona, municipio de Ocosingo, Chiapas, en una superficie de seiscientos catorce mil trescientas veintiuna hectáreas de terrenos comunales. March 6, 1972, pp. 10-13.

DGDF (Dirección General para el Desarrollo Forestal), Subsecretaría Forestal y de la Fauna

1980a Perspectivas de la Coordinación Ejecutiva del Programa Ecológico de la Selva Lacandona. Palenque, otoño. (Unpublished report).

1980b Caracterización de organismos federales y estatales (Selva Lacandona). Palenque, otoño. (Unpublished report).

1980c Hacia un mejor funcionamiento del Aserradero "Palestina". Análisis de funcionamiento de la empresa, de sus fallas y algunas alternativas de solución. Palenque, otoño. (Unpublished report).

1980d Sociedad Cooperativa de Producción de la Comunidad Lacandona, S.C.L. Breve análisis. Palenque, otoño. (Unpublished report).

Dichtl, Sigrid

1988 Cae una estrella; Desarrollo y destrucción de la Selva Lacandona. México, D.F.: Secretaría de Educación Pública.

Dinerstein, E., D.M. Olson, D.J. Graham, A.L. Webster, S.A. Primm, M.P. Bookbinder, and G. Ledec

1995 A Conservation Assessment of the Terrestrial Ecoregions of Latin America and the Caribbean. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

Dolsak, Nives and Elinor Ostrom, eds.

2003 The Commons in the New Millenium; Challenges and Adaptation. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Doppelt, Bob, Mary Scurlock, Chris Frissell, and James Karr

1993 Entering the Watershed; A New Approach to Save America's River Ecosystems. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Dove, Michael R.

1996 Center, Periphery, and Biodiversity: A Paradox of Governance and a Developmental Challenge. *In Valuing Local Knowledge; Indigenous People and Intellectual Property Rights.* Stephen B. Brush and Doreen Stabinsky, eds. Pp. 41-67. WashIngtón, D.C.: Island Press

Duby Blom, Gertrude

1984 The Jungle is Burning. In Gertrude Blom; Bearing Witness. Alex Harris and Margaret Sartor, eds. Pp.145-148. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Durán Fernández, Alejandro

1999 Estructura y etnobotánica de la selva alta perennifolia de Nahá, Chiapas. Tesis de Maestría en Ciencias (Biología Vegetal). Universidad nacional Autónoma de México, México, D.F.

Erni, Christian

1997 Indigenous Peoples, Environment and Development: Approaching the Issue. *In Indigenous Peoples, Environment and Development.* Proceedings of conference Zurich

May 15-18, 1995. IWGIA Document No. 85. Silvia Büchi, Christian Erni, Luzia Jurt, and Christoph Rüegg, eds. Pp. 19-38. Copenhagen, Denmark: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.

Fisher, Larry

1996 Seeking Common Cause in the Commons: Opportunities and Challenges in Resolving Environmental Conflicts. *The Common Property Resource Digest*. October 39:3-5.

Fortwangler, Crystal L.

2003 The Winding Road; Incorporating Social Justice and Human Rights into Protected Areas. *In Contested Nature; Promoting International Biodiversity Conservation with Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century*. Steven R. Brechin, Peter R. Wilshusen, Crystal L. Fortwangler, and Patrick C. West, eds. Pp. 25-40. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press

Furze, Brian, Terry de Lacy, and Jim Birckhead

1996 Culture, Conservation and Biodiversity. *The Social Dimension of Linking Local Level Development and Conservation Through Protected Areas*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

García Hierro, Pedro

1997 Reflections on Indigenous Self-Development. *In Indigenous Peoples, Environment and Development*. Proceedings of conference Zurich May 15-18, 1995. IWGIA Document No. 85. Silvia Büchi, Christian Erni, Luzia Jurt, and Christoph Rüegg, eds. Pp. 269-286. Copenhagen, Denmark: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.

García-Gil, José Gerardo and José Lugo Hupb

1992 Las Formas del Relieve y los Tipos de Vegetación en la Selva Lacandona. *In Reserva de la Biosfera Montes Azules, Selva Lacandona: Investigación para su Conservación*. Publicaciones Especiales ECOSFERA No 1. M.A. Vásquez Sánchez and M.A. Ramos Olmos, eds. Pp. 39-49. Centro de Estudios para la Conservación de los Recursos Naturales, A.C. San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, México.

García Méndez, José Andrés

2000 La Colonización Chol de la Selva; La Fundación de Frontera Corozal. *In Anuario 1999 del Centro de Estudios Superiores de México y Centroamérica*. Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas: UNICACH.

Gezon, Lisa L.

2003 The Regional Approach in Northern Madagascar. *In Contested Nature; Promoting International Biodiversity Conservation with Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century*. Steven R. Brechin, Peter R. Wilshusen, Crystal L. Fortwangler, and Patrick C. West, eds. Pp. 183-194. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Gezon, Lisa L., and Susan Paulson

2005 Place, Power, Difference: Multiscale Research at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century. *In* Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups. Susan Paulson and Lisa L. Gezon, eds. Pp. 1-16. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Ghimire, K.B. and M.P Pimbert, eds.

1997 Social Change and Conservation: Environmental Politics and Impacts of National Parks and Protected Areas. London: Earthscan Press.

Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas

1988 Plan Chiapas 1982-1988. Informe de Ejecución 1983-1987.

Gobierno del Estado de Chiapas, Equipo Técnico Planificador, Coordinación de Programas Especiales

1990 Propuesta de Plan de Manejo para la Reserva de la Biosfera Montes Azules, Selva Lacandona, Chiapas, México.

Goodland, Robert

1991 Prerequisites for Ethnic Identity and Survival. *In* Resident Peoples and National Parks; Social Dilemmas and Strategies International Conservation. Patrick C. West and Steven R. Brechin eds. Pp 301-310. Tucson: University of Arizona Press

Gray, Andrew

1997a Development Practice and Indigenous Peoples. *In* Indigenous Peoples, Environment and Development. Proceedings of conference Zurich May 15-18, 1995. IWGIA Document No. 85. Silvia Büchi, Christian Erni, Luzia Jurt, and Christoph Rüegg, eds. Pp. 287-305. Copenhagen, Denmark: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs

1997b Who Are Indigenous Peoples? *In* Indigenous Peoples, Environment and Development. Proceedings of conference Zurich May 15-18, 1995. IWGIA Document No. 85. Silvia Büchi, Christian Erni, Luzia Jurt, and Christoph Rüegg, eds. Pp. 15-18. Copenhagen, Denmark: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.

Gray, Andrew, Alejandro Parellada and Helln Newing, eds.

1998 From Principles to Practice: Indigenous Peoples and Biodiversity Conservation in Latin America. Proceedings of the Pucallpa Conference, Pucallpa, Peru, 17-20 March 1997. IWGIA Document No. 87. Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.

Groves, C., L. Valutis, D. Vosick, B. Neely, K. Wheaton, J. Touval, B. Runnels

2000 Designing a Geography of Hope: A Practitioner's Handbook for Ecoregional Conservation Planning. Arlington, VA: The Nature Conservancy.

Grumbine, R.E.

1994 What is Ecosystem Management? *Conservation Biology* 8:27-38.

Grupo Técnico de Apoyo, Subcomité Especial del COPLADE para la Selva Lacandona

1994 Programa de Conservación y Desarrollo de la Selva Lacandona. Evaluación 1991-1994 Informe.

Harmon, David

1991 National Park Residency in Developed Countries: The Example of Great Britain. In Resident Peoples and National Parks; Social Dilemmas and Strategies in International Conservation. Patrick C. West and Steven R. Brechin, eds. Pp 33-39. Tucson: University of Arizona Press

Harvey, Neil

2000 La rebelión de Chiapas; La lucha por la tierra y la democracia. México, D.F.: Ediciones Era.

Henriksen, Georg

1997 Indigenous Peoples, International Conventions and Declarations and the State. *In* Indigenous Peoples, Environment and Development. Proceedings of conference Zurich May 15-18, 1995. IWGIA Document No. 85. Silvia Büchi, Christian Erni, Luzia Jurt, and Christoph Rüegg, eds. Pp. 309-18. Copenhagen, Denmark: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs

Hudson, Wendy E., ed.

1991 Landscape Linkages and Biodiversity. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Inglis, J.T., ed.

1993 Traditional Ecological Knowledge: Concepts and Cases. Ottawa: Center for Traditional Knowledge, Canadian Museum of Nature.

Instituto Nacional de Ecología

2000 Programa de Manejo Reserva de la Biosfera Montes Azules. México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional de Ecología, SEMARNAP

Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones sobre Recursos Bióticos (INIREB)

1984 Resumen Global del Programa Técnico de la Reserva de la Biosfera Montes Azules. INIREB, Apdo. Postal 63, Xalapa, Veracruz, México.

IUCN (The World Conservation Union)

1993 Parks for Life: Report of the IVth World Congress on National Parks and Protected Areas. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

2003 The Durban Action Plan. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

Kempf, Elizabeth, ed.

1993 The Law of the Mother; Protecting Indigenous Peoples in Protected Areas. San Francisco, California: Sierra Club Books.

Kleymeyer, Charles D.

1994 Cultural Traditions and Community-Based Conservation. *In* Natural Connections; Perspectives in Community-Based Conservation. David Western and R. Michael Wright, eds. Pp. 323-346. Washington, D.C.: Island Press

Lacandonia, A.C.

1994 Comunidad Zona Lacandona. September. (Unpublished report).

1995 Notas de información para el Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo (BID). Preparadas por Lacandonia A.C. Octubre 2. (Unpublished report).

Larson, P., M. Freudenberger, and B. Wyckoff-Baird.

1997 Lessons from the Field: A Review of World Wildlife Fund's Experience with Integrated Conservation and Development Projects 1985-1996. Washington, D.C.: World Wildlife Fund.

Lee, Kai

1993 Compass and Gyroscope: Integrating Science and the Environment. Covelo, Ca.: Island Press.

Legorreta Díaz, Ma. Del Carmen

1998 Religión, política y guerrilla en Las Cañadas de la Selva Lacandona. México, D.F.: Cal y Arena.

Levy Tacher, Samuel I.

2000 Sucesión causada por roza-tumba-quema en las selvas de Lacanhá, Chiapas. Tesis presentada como requisito parcial para obtener el grado de Doctor en Ciencias. Colegio de Posgraduados, Montecillo, Texcoco, Edo. de México.

Leyva Solano, Xochitil

1998 Catequistas, misioneros y tradiciones en las Cañadas. *In* Chiapas; Los rumbos de otra historia. Juan Pedro Viqueira and Mario Humberto Ruz, eds. Pp. 375-406. México, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

Leyva Solano, Xochitl y Gabriel Ascencio Franco

1996 Lacandonia al filo de agua. Fondo de Cultura Económica. México, D.F., México.

Lewis, Connie

1993 Nature in the Crossfire. *In* The Law of the Mother; Protecting Indigenous Peoples in Protected Areas. Elizabeth Kemf, ed. Pp. 123-130. San Francisco, California: Sierra Club Books

Lobato, Rodolfo

1979 Qu'ixín Qu'inal; La colonización tzeltal en la selva lacandona. México, D.F.: Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, INAH-SEP.

Lynch, Owen J. and Janis B. Alcorn

- 1994 Tenurial Rights and Community-Based Conservation. *In* *Natural Connections; Perspectives in Community-Based Conservation*. David Western and R. Michael Wright, eds. Pp. 373-392. Washington, D.C.: Island Press
- Mackenzie, A. Fiona D.
2005 Land Tenure and Biodiversity; An Exploration in the Political Ecology of Murang'a District, Kenya. *In* *Political Ecology Across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups*. Susan Paulson and Lisa L. Gezon, eds. Pp. 94-112, New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Mahanty, Sango and Diane Russell
2002 High Stakes: Lessons from Stakeholder Groups in the Biodiversity Conservation Network. *Society and Natural Resources* 15:179-188.
- Marion, Marie-Odile
1994 Proyecto para el fomento participativo de la cultura y de los recursos naturales Lacandons. (Unpublished manuscript).
- Marks, Stuart
1984 *The Imperial Lion: Human Dimensions of Wildlife Management in Central Africa*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.
- Márquez Rosano, Conrado
1994 Políticas y programas recientes para el desarrollo rural y la conservación de la Selva Lacandona. *In* *Política Agraria y Programas de Gobierno en la Selva Lacandona y Los Altos de Chiapas*. Cuadernos de Centros Regionales No. 7. Pp. 28-33. México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo.
- Mauricio Leguizamo, Juan M., Rubén Valladares Arjona y Hectór García Juárez
1984 Lacandona. Una incorporación anárquica al desarrollo nacional. San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, México: Centro de Investigaciones Ecológicas del Sureste.
- McCay, Bonnie J.
2002 Emergence of Institutions for the Commons: Contexts, Situations, Events. *In* *The Drama of the Commons*. Elinor Ostrom, Thomas Dietz, Nives Dolsak, Paul C. Stern, Susan Stonich, and Elke U. Weber, eds. Pp.361-402. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.
- McCay, Bonnie J. and James M. Acheson
1987 *The Question of the Commons; The Cultura and Economy of Communal Resources*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- McNeely, Jeffrey A.
1993 Afterword; People and Protected Areas: Partners in Prosperity. *In* *The Law of the Mother; Protecting Indigenous Peoples in Protected Areas*. Elizabeth Kempf, ed. Pp. 249-257. San Francisco, California: Sierra Club Books.

- 1994 Protected Areas for the 21st Century: Working to Provide Benefits to Society. *Biodiversity and Conservation* 3:390-405.
- 1997 Interaction Between Biological Diversity and Cultural Diversity *In* Indigenous Peoples, Environment and Development. Proceedings of conference Zurich May 15-18, 1995. IWGIA Document No. 85. Silvia Büchi, Christian Erni, Luzia Jurt, and Christoph Rüegg, eds. Pp. 173-196. Copenhagen, Denmark: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs.
- Meffe, Gary K. and C. Ronald Carroll, eds.
 1997a Principles of Conservation Biology. Gary K. Meffe and C. Ronald Carroll, eds. 2nd edition. Sunderland, Mass.: Sinauer Associates, Inc.
- Meffe, Gary K. and C. Ronald Carroll
 1997b What is Conservation Biology? *In* Principles of Conservation Biology. Gary K. Meffe and C. Ronald Carroll, eds. 2nd edition. Pp. 3-28. Sunderland, Mass.: Sinauer Associates, Inc.
- Meffe, Gary K., Larry A. Nielsen, Richard L. Knight, and Dennis A. Schenborn
 2002 Ecosystem Management; Adaptive, Community-Based Conservation. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Mittermeier, R., N. Myers, C.G. Mittermeier, and P.R. Gill
 1999 Hotspots: Earth's Biologically Richest and Most Endangered Terrestrial Ecoregions. Mexico, D.F.: CEMEX, S.A.
- Montagu, Roberta
 n.d. Three Finca Villages in the Municipio of Ocosingo, Chiapas. (Unpublished manuscript).
 1970 Autoridad, control y sanción social en las fincas tzeltales. *In* Ensayos de antropología en la zona central de Chiapas. N. McQuown and J. Pitt-Rivers, eds. Pp. 345-369. México: INI y CONACULTA.
- Muench Navarro, Pablo E.
 1978 Los sistemas de producción agrícola en la Región Lacandona. (Estudio agronómico preliminar). Tesis profesional. Universidad Autónoma Chapingo, México.
- Mulongoy, K.J. and S.P. Chape, eds.
 2004 Protected Areas and Biodiversity: An Overview of Key Issues. Convention on Biological Diversity Secretariat, Canada, and United Nations Environmental Program World Conservation Monitoring Centre, Cambridge, U.K.
- Nations, James D.
 1979 Population Ecology of the Lacandon Maya. PhD Dissertation. Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.
 1984 The Lacandons, Gertrude Blom, and the Selva Lacandona. *In* Gertrude Blom; Bearing Witness. Alex Harris and Margaret Sartor, eds. Pp. 27-41. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Netting, Robert

1976 What Alpine Peasants Have in Common: Observations on Communal Tenure in a Swiss Village. *Human Ecology* 4(2):135-46.

Nietschmann, B.

1992: *The Interdependence of Biological and Cultural Diversity*. Kenmore, Washington: Center for World Indigenous Studies.

Nigh, Ronald and Nemesio J. Rodríguez

1995 *Territorios violados. Indios, medio ambiente y desarrollo en América Latina*. México, D.F.: Instituto Nacional Indigenista; Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes.

O'Brien, Karen L.

1998 *Sacrificing the Forest; Environmental and Social Struggles in Chiapas*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.

Olson, D.M. and E. Dinerstein

1998 The Global 2000: A Representation Approach to Conserving the Earth's Most Biologically Valuable Ecoregions. *Conservation Biology* 12:502-515.

Olson, D.M., et al

2001 Terrestrial Ecoregions of the World: A New Map of Life on Earth. *BioScience* 51(11):933-38.

Ostrom, Elinor

1990 *Governing the Commons; The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ostrom, Elinor, Thomas Dietz, Nives Dolsak, Paul C. Stern, Susan Stonich, and Elke U. Weber, eds.

2002 *The Drama of the Commons*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Peluso, N.

1993 Coercing Conservation: The Politics of State Resource Control. *In The State and Social Power in Global Environmental Politics*. R. Lipschutz and K. Conca, eds. Pp. 46-70. New York: Columbia University Press.

Pendzich, D., G. Thomas, and T. Wohigenant, eds.

1994 *The Role of Alternative Conflict Management in Community Forestry*. Forests, Trees and People Working Paper No. 1. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Pimbert, M.P. and J.N. Pretty

1995 *Parks, People and Professionals. Putting "Participation" into Protected Area Management*. Discussion Paper. World Wide Fund for Nature, WWF-International.

Posey, Darrell A.

1997 Biodiversity Conservation, Traditional Resource Rights & Indigenous Peoples. *In* Indigenous Peoples, Environment and Development. Proceedings of the Conference; Zurich, May 15-18, 1995. IWGIA Document No. 85. Silvia Büchi, Christian Erni, Luzia Jurt, and Christoph Rüegg, eds. Pp. 219-40. Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs

Posey, D.A. and W. Balee, eds.

1989 Resource Management in Amazonia: Indigenous and Folk Strategie. *Advances in Economic Botany* 7. New York: New York Botanical Gardens.

Psacharopoulous, George and Harry Anthony Patrinos, eds.

1994 Indigenous People and Poverty in Latin America; An Empirical Analysis. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

Ramos, Alcida Rita

1993 Paradise Gained or Lost? The Law of the Mother; Protecting Indigenous Peoples in Protected Areas. Elizabeth Kemf, ed. Pp. 89-94. San Francisco, California: Sierra Club Books

Redford, Kent H. and Christine Padoch, eds.

1992 Conservation of Neotropical Forests; Working from Traditional Resource Use. New York: Columbia University Press.

Redford, Kent H. and Jane A Mansour, eds.

1996 Traditional Peoples and Biodiversity Conservation in Large Tropical Landscapes. Arlington, Virginia: America Verde Publications, The Nature Conservancy, Latin America and Caribbean Division.

Redford, Kent, Katrina Brandon, and Steven Sanderson

1998 Holding Ground. *In* Parks in Peril; People, Politics, and Protected Areas. Katrina Brandon, Kent H. Redford, and Steven E. Sanderson, eds. Pp. 455-463. Washington, D.C.: The Nature Conservancy and Island Press.

RIBMA (Reserva de la Biosfera Montes Azules=

1997 Talleres de capacitación a promotores comunitarios en el Programa de Manejo de la Reserva Integral de la Biosfera Montes Azules. Relatoría, Modulo 2 : Estrategias y acciones para la conservación y el manejo de las Areas Naturales Protegidas. 3, 4, y 5 de julio, 1997, Nueva Palestina, Ocosingo, Chiapas, México.

RIBMA (Reserva de la Biosfera Montes Azules), Consejo Técnico Asesor

1999 Reglamento Interno. February 1999. (Internal document)

Reyes Arriola, Edmundo

- 1995 Diagnóstico Socioeconomico, Subcomunidad Nueva Palestina, Selva Lacandona. Conservación Internacional México, A.C.
- Roca, R., L. Adkins, M.C. Wurschy, and K. Skerl
1997 Transboundary Conservation: An Ecoregional Approach to Protect Neotropical Migratory Birds in South America. *Environmental Management* 21:477-481.
- Rocheleau, Dianne
1997 Shared Spaces and Sub-Divided Interests in the Uncommons: Gendered Forests, Tree Farms, and Gardens in the Agroforests of Zambrana-Chacuey. *The Common Property Resource Digest*. January 40:1-6.
- Russell, Diane and Camilla Harshbarger
2003 *Groundwork for Community-Based Conservation; Strategies for Social Research*. New York: AltaMira Press.
- Salafsky, Nick and Richard Margolius
2002 Breaking the Cycle: Developing Guiding Principles for Using Protected Area Conservation Strategies. *In Making Parks Work; Strategies for Preserving Tropical Nature*. John Terborgh, Carel Van Schaik, Lisa Davenport, and Madhu Rao, eds. Pp. 409-423. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Salwasser, Hal
1991 Roles and Approaches of the USDA Forest Service. *In Linkages and Biodiversity*. Pp. 54-65. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Sanderson, Steven with Shawn Bird
1998 The New Politics of Protected Areas. *In Parks in Peril; People, Politics, and Protected Areas*. Katrina Brandon, Kent H. Redford, and Steven E. Sanderson, eds. Pp. 441-454. Washington, D.C.: The Nature Conservancy and Island Press.
- Sanderson, J., K. Alger, G.A.B. da Fonseca, C. Galindo-Leal, V.H. Inchausti and K. Morrison
2001 *Biodiversity Conservation Corridors: Planning, Implementing and Monitoring Sustainable Landscapes*. Washington, D.C.: Conservation International.
- Sandwith, T., C. Shine, L. Hamilton and D. Sheppard
2001 *Transboundary Protected Areas for Peace and Cooperation*. Cambridge, U.K.: IUCN and Cambridge University.
- SEDESOL (Secretaría de Desarrollo Social), Delegación Estatal
1993 Diagnóstico de Nueva Palestina, Municipio de Ocosingo, Chiapas, Selva Lacandona.
- Selsky, J.W. and P.A. Memon
2000 Emergent Commons: Local Responses in Complex Common-Pool Resources Systems. Paper presented at the 8th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Common Property, Bloomington, Indiana, June 1-4.

SEMARNAP

1996 Programa de Áreas Naturales Protegidas de México 1995-2000. México, D.F.: SEMARNAP.

SEMARNAP/Secretaría de Planeación/INE

1996 Programa de Desarrollo de Pueblos Indígenas para la Reserva Integral de la Biosfera Montes Azules. (Unpublished report).

Sheridan, Thomas E.

1988 Where the Dove Calls; The Political Ecology of a Peasant Corporate Community in Northwestern Mexico. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Sherpa, Mingma Norbu

1993 Grass Roots in a Himalayan Kingdom. In *The Law of the Mother; Protecting Indigenous Peoples in Protected Areas*. Elizabeth Kempf, ed. Pp. 45-51. San Francisco, California: Sierra Club Books.

Sirmon, Jeff, William E. Shands, and Chris Leggett

1993 Communities of Interest and Open Decisionmaking. *Journal of Forestry* 91(7):17-21.

Slavin, Ferry

1993 Survival in a Vertical Desert. In *The Law of the Mother; Protecting Indigenous Peoples in Protected Areas*. Elizabeth Kempf, ed. Pp. 141-7. San Francisco, California: Sierra Club Books.

Soulé, M. and J. Terborgh, eds

1999 *Continental Conservation: Scientific Foundations of Regional Reserve Networks*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

SRA (Secretaría de la Reforma Agraria)

1977 Convenio sobre los derechos de grupos choles y tzeltales en la zona lacandona. 20 marzo 1977.

1998 *La Transformación agraria: origen, evolución, retos, testimonios*. México, D.F.: Centro de Diseño y Artes Gráficas.

Steins, Nathalie E.

1999 *All Hands on Deck*. Den Haag, Netherlands: CIP-DATA Koninklijke Bibliotheek.

Stevens, Stan, ed.

1997 *Conservation Through Cultural Survival; Indigenous Peoples and Protected Areas*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Tejeda Cruz, Carlos

2002 *Apropiación social del territorio y política ambiental en la Selva Lacandona, Chiapas. El caso de Frontera Corozal, Comunidad Lacandona*. Tesis para la Maestría en Ciencias en

Desarrollo Rural Regional. Universidad Autónoma Chapingo, San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, México.

Terborgh, John and Carel Van Schaik

2002 Why the World Needs Parks. In *Making Parks Work; Strategies for Preserving Tropical Nature*. John Terborgh, Carel Van Schaik, Lisa Davenport, and Madhu Rao, eds. Pp. 3-14. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Terborgh, John, Carel Van Schaik, Lisa Davenport, and Madhu Rao

2002 *Making Parks Work; Strategies for Preserving Tropical Nature*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Thompson, M., M. Warburton, and T. Hatley

1986 *Uncertainty on a Himalayan Scale: An Institutional Theory of Environmental Perception and a Strategic Framework for the Sustainable Development of the Himalaya*. London: Milton Ash Editions.

Toledo Tello, Sonia

1996 *Historia del movimiento indígena de Simojovel 1970-1989*. Serie Monografías 6. Tuxtla Gutiérrez: Instituto de Estudios Indígenas, Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas, México.

2002 *Fincas, poder y cultura en Simojovel, Chiapas*. Científica 4. México, D.F.: Programa de Investigaciones Multidisciplinarias sobre Mesoamérica y el Sureste, Universidad Autónoma de México and Tuxtla Gutierrez, Chiapas: Instituto de Estudios Indígenas, Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas.

Toledo, V.M.

2000 *La Paz en Chiapas. Ecología, luchas indígenas y modernidad alternativa*. 1ª edición. México: Ediciones Quinto Sol-UNAM.

Trench, Tim

2002 *Conservation, Tourism and Heritage; Continuing Interventions in Lacanjá Chansayab, Chiapas, Mexico*. Thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law. Department of Anthropology, University of Manchester, England.

UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development)

1992 *Agenda 21: Programme of Action for Sustainable Development*. Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. New York: United Nations.

UNESCO

1974 *Task Force on Criteria and Guidelines for the Choice and Establishment for Biosphere Reserves*. MAB Report Series No. 22. Paris: UNESCO.

1987 *A Practical Guide to MAB*. Paris: UNESCO

1995 *Biosphere Reserves: The Vision From Seville for the 21st Century*. Paris: UNESCO.

- Unión de Uniones Ejidales y grupos campesinos solidarios de Chiapas
1983 Nuestra Lucha por la Tierra en la Selva Lacandona; Balance de una Acción Campesina con Apoyo Obrero. *Textual* 4(13):151-163.
- Vásquez Sánchez, Miguel Angel y Mario A. Ramos Olmos, eds.
1992 Reserva de la Biosfera Montes Azules, Selva Lacandona: Investigación para su Conservación. Publicaciones Especiales ECOSFERA No 1. Centro de Estudios para la Conservación de los Recursos Naturales, A.C. San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, México.
- Waller, Donald M.
1991 Introduction. In *Landscape Linkages and Biodiversity*. Wendy E. Hudson, ed. Pp. 3-14. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- West, Patrick C.
1991 Introduction. In *Resident Peoples and National Parks; Social Dilemmas and Strategies in International Conservation*. Patrick C. West and Steven R. Brechin, eds. Pp. xv-xxiv. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- West, Patrick C. and Steven R. Brechin, eds.
1991 *Resident Peoples and National Parks; Social Dilemmas and Strategies in International Conservation*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- West, Patrick C., Crystal L. Fortwangler, Valentin Agbo, Michael Simsik, and Nestor Sokpon
2003 The Political Economy of Ecotourism; Pendjari National Park and Ecotourism Concentration in Northern Benin. In *Contested Nature; Promoting International Biodiversity Conservation with Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century*. Steven R. Brechin, Peter R. Wilshusen, Crystal L. Fortwangler, and Patrick C. West, eds. Pp. 103-115. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Western, David and R. Michael Wright, eds.
1994 *Natural Connections; Perspectives in Community-Based Conservation*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Wilcox, B.A. and K.N. Duin
1995 Indigenous Cultural and Biological Diversity: Overlapping Values of Latin American Ecoregions. *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 18(4):49-53.
- Wilmer, F.
1993 *The Indigenous Voice in World Politics*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Wilshusen, Peter R., Steven R. Brechin, Crystal L. Fortwangler, and Patrick C. West
2003 *Contested Nature; Conservation and Development at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*. In *Contested Nature; Promoting International Biodiversity Conservation with Social Justice in the Twenty-first Century*. Steven R. Brechin, Peter R. Wilshusen, Crystal

L. Fortwangler, and Patrick C. West, eds. Pp. 1-22. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Wolfe, Eric

1957 Closed Corporate Peasant Communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13(1):1-18.

1986 The Vicissitudes of the Closed Corporate Peasant Community. *American Ethnologist* 13(2):325-329.

World Resources Institute (WRI), The World Conservation Union (IUCN), and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

1992 *Global Biodiversity Strategy; Guidelines for Action to Save, Study, and Use Earth's Biotic Wealth Sustainably and Equitably*. No publisher listed.

World Wildlife Fund International (WWF)

1996 *Indigenous Peoples and Conservation: WWF Statement of Principles*. Gland, Switzerland: WWF International.

Yaffee, Steven L.

2002 *Ecosystem Management in Policy and Practice*. In *Ecosystem Management; Adaptive, Community-Based Conservation*. Gary K. Meffe, Larry A. Nielsen, Richard L. Knight, and Dennis A. Schenborn, eds. Pp.89-93. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.

Zerner, Charles

1996 *Telling Stories About Biological Diversity*. In *Valuing Local Knowledge; Indigenous People and Intellectual Property Rights*. Stephen B. Brush and Doreen Stabinsky, eds. Pp. 68-101. Washington, D.C.: Island Press

Zúñiga M., J.A.

2000 *Agroecosistemas choles y tojolabales en las Cañadas de la Selva Lacandona, Chiapas*. Tesis de Maestría. Maestría en Ciencias en Desarrollo Rural Regional. Universidad Autónoma Chapingo.