

Regenerating conflicted landscapes in post-war El Salvador: livelihoods, land policy, and land use change in the Cinquera Forest

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The dream of the neighboring communities of the forest is nothing less than to conserve, for always, for the present and future generations, our biological and historical riches inherited as a result of the armed conflict in which we were protagonists. (Asociación de Reconstrucción y Desarrollo Municipal de Cinquera 2004: 5)

The expansion of 'peasant' claims from land as an economic asset to land as a component in a total ecosystem amounts to the redefinition of land as a primary economic value to land as but one kind of value within a larger panoply of generalized value. (Kearney 1996: 184)

1. Introduction

In January 1992, El Salvador's twelve-year civil war came to a close through a negotiated settlement between the Salvadoran Government and the leftist guerilla Farabundo Marti Liberation Front (FMLN). But the cessation of armed conflict far from implied an end to the power struggles over access to material and symbolic resources. On the contrary, the Peace Accords and the programs mandated within them— such as the land transfer program (PTT)—became the new theatres of struggle between the FMLN and the Salvadoran government over what livelihood futures might be possible and for whom, and how this would manifest on the landscape. In the Accords, the government agreed to reform the military, accept the participation of ex-guerrillas in the new civilian police force, and open the electoral process to participation by the FMLN as a political party. But the FMLN had made key concessions on one issue of extreme importance to them as well—land. In exchange for gains made towards the democratization of political institutions, the FMLN had agreed to a market economy based on private property (Wood 1995). While not the only driver, the goal of extensive land reform had helped to fuel an armed struggle that intended to transform the old economic order in El Salvador through establishment of new forms of land ownership, production, and social organization. The reality of peace proved starkly different. Land reform outlined through the Peace Accords was limited in terms of scale, extent, and quality. The forms of tenure and ownership dictated by the Peace Accords and administered by international donors as 'Market-Based Land Reform' (MBLR), would effectively individualize land and social life within the newly liberalized Salvadoran economy (Borras 2003). At stake was the very vision of the new society struggled for by the rebels and their supporters for over twelve years. Would the 'negotiated revolution' still work through market mechanisms such as MBLR?

Just as the war had transformed Salvadoran society, it had also transformed its landscapes. Throughout the country, forests now grew in lands once cultivated and then abandoned (Hecht, Rosa and Kandel 2002). Given the land quality class determinations negotiated through the Peace Accords, more marginally rated forest and sloping lands were slated to comprise the majority of the pool of land to be transferred. Not only would land transfer limit collective forms of social organization for production. As implemented, land transfer ran a high risk of reverting newly regenerated forests (regarded nationally and internationally as highly valuable watershed areas and 'biodiversity hotspots') back to subsistence agricultural production (World Bank 1994; Barry and Rosa 1995; Hecht 2004; Hecht *et al.* 2006).

Land issues became the subject of renewed attention within development policy debates in the early 2000s. MBLR in particular commanded much attention as the way to improve agricultural production, manage natural resources, and promote development. In its first public pronouncement on the land issue in 28 years, the World Bank issued a Policy Research Report (PRR) entitled "Land Policies for Growth and Poverty Reduction," outlining the set of land policies of this new generation (Deininger 2003). The report emphasized growth, equity enhancement, and environmental sustainability as the hallmarks of the new policies, noting the criticality of careful attention to the diverse range of socio-economic and political contexts in which specific policies and programs were to be embedded. In many ways the PRR showed promising advances in the Bank's thinking on land issues, and represented a departure from the past. At the same time however,

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throughout the period following the report, implementation of World Bank projects in the land policy portfolio continued to approach the issue of land reform as an ahistorical and apolitical project that could seemingly be remedied through improved technological innovation for the maintenance of private property via updated registry and cadastral systems and market-based land reform (for example in Mexico, Colombia, and South Africa) (Bobrow-Strain 2004; Borras 2005; Borras, Kay and Lahiff 2009). The US Agency for International Development (USAID) aligned with this MBLR framework in implementing their portfolio of land titling and administration support activities throughout the Americas (Seligson *et al.* 1993; USAID 1996, 2011). USAID was active in El Salvador in the postwar period, and while much of the success of the Peace Accords is due to this support, the 'one-size-fits-all' policies carried consequences for any type of land use or form of ownership and social organization falling outside of the guidelines of 'fee-simple' individual title. Land held by communities, families, firms, and other corporate or community institutions were not within the purview of the push for land regularization and administration in this period. Nor, in this massive land use shift embodied in the Land Transfer Program (PTT), were provisions made to protect forest growth that occurred during the war. Though official development policy may have contained appropriate references to the importance of property rights and resource protection, in practice, land and natural resource policies in post-war El Salvador lacked basic harmonization.

In terms of the relationship between development and natural resource management, since the initial unfolding El Salvador's post-war story 20 years ago, the broader development narrative has shifted. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other development actors are increasingly at the forefront of innovative tenurial and resource management arrangements, whereby communities are made legitimate stewards of land and natural resources in ways that support livelihoods and resource protection.

Within the donor realm, USAID has now broadened their conceptual framework for land tenure and property rights (LTPR), expanding the definition of 'formalization' of land rights beyond 'individualization'—land titling, and registration of the sort that constituted the main body of action during the first decade of the 21st century. The newer approach is a more flexible model that recognizes real resource tenure and property rights challenges—political instability, violence, population displacement, famine, and environmental destruction—while defining property rights more broadly and emphasizing the importance of "bringing the state to custom or tradition, rather than forcing the custom into a statutory system" (ARD 2007). If realized, such a shift could permit the establishment of legally recognized property regimes that could support communities, foster biodiversity, bolster food production, and increase access to assets for the most vulnerable populations.

This paper charts events that transpired in the spaces between the larger forces that shaped El Salvador's transition from war to peace throughout the 1990s to the present day. Leaders of both the FMLN and the government set out to influence the post-war social and political landscape, and the donor community generated post-war reconstruction projects. But at the same time, a group of ex-combatants, refugees, and displaced people returning to the community of Cinquera, department of Cabañas, proceeded to take the land deeded to them as part of the Peace Accords, subsequently transforming its use and value in ways never foreseen or intended by government land reform officials, FMLN party organizers, or international aid donors. In the process of linking their history to their future, the people of Cinquera created "spaces of habitation" for themselves and the natural world. To us, they offer a lesson in how a small community's continued struggle to live out their intentions for an alternative society, act by act, may in the end prove the best possible way to negotiate a revolution.

Cinquera is a small municipality in north-central El Salvador that was hard-hit by the conflict. A group of ex-combatants and refugees returned home after 12 years of civil war, and rather than clearing land for agricultural production, protected its forest regrowth. During the 1990s, throughout the land transfer process and, subsequently, the parcelization of the transferred land by the Salvadoran Government and international agencies, people in Cinquera developed local institutions for environmental governance with the goal of sustaining the forest *and* people's livelihoods, even in the face of challenges to such alternative forms of governance that were produced through the PTT and associated programs. The Cinquerans resettling after the war were transformed by it, in the ways that enduring conflicts are known to mark societies (Richards and Helander 2005) but also in ways that are, upon deeper inspection, novel and unexpected. They had lost children, parents, brothers and sisters, and endured atrocities, hunger, and homelessness. Many had got to know the forests by living, hiding, and fighting in them for so many years. But Cinquerans returning after the war were nevertheless armed with new forms of artillery as well. From their service to the guerillas, they had become skilled strategic planners, social organizers, and negotiators. They were acquainted with the politics of development practice, and were skilled at engaging with international donors as well as familiar with donor ideas and areas of interest—notably, their appreciation of Cinquera's forests.

Cinquerans ushered in the post-war period with an alternative vision for their community—rather than returning Cinquera to a subsistence agriculture-based economy, community leaders strove to guide the post-war reconstruction in such a way that Cinquera would be developed as a forested place—where agriculture, rather than serving as the sole source of subsistence, might form part of a diversified livelihood strategy alongside forest stewardship.

The historical processes of landscape making and livelihood production in places like Cinquera show how the path back to peace gets *made* by people and by places, as well as how such new pathways get put to service for continued political struggle towards alternative forms of society and economy. The two very different post-war agrarian visions—that of the government and international donors in creating the PTT, and that of people in the resettling community of Cinquera, and the ways these visions would transform and shape ecological and social landscapes *in situ*—offer us a way to understand how challenges to particular visions of economy and society are forged through everyday practice. The negotiated revolution did not result in national-level social, political, and economic transformation. But the transformation in Cinquera, and in places like it throughout El Salvador, is a continuation of ongoing efforts by people to re-envision and remake their lives, in spite of the reduced menu of options presented nationally (i.e., to make property private, to make people individual farmers, etc.) and in so doing it has transformed the value of landscapes beyond the 'material.'

Land policy: the missing links to livelihoods and ecologies

El Salvador is a land-scarce, heavily settled country with the highest population density in the Central American region. A key issue of the civil war was the inequitable distribution of land. Of the Central American countries, it has been the most plagued by rural landlessness (Thiesenhusen 1995: 139).² But the 'negotiated revolution' interpreted land reform as a political imperative, integral to the demobilization and reinsertion of combatants, rather than being a tool for any systematic resolution of the problems of landlessness or as a key foundation for the establishment of a more equitable and just society. The land transfer process in El Salvador occurred amid the significant shift in World Bank and other international financial institution (IFI) policy towards land policy interventions (Deininger 2003), stressing administration and regularization of land tenure through sale to individuals through market mechanisms. Though IFIs have adopted sustainability mandates more broadly, no mechanisms for policy harmonization between natural resource and land programs existed to assure that the land transferred was employed as best suited. Nor were the transfers coupled with appropriate supports—credit, etc.—to enable appropriate management.

In a country where so much was at stake with regards to equity, land, and the fundamental organization of society, the transfer program proved a sobering reality for its beneficiaries. When the land that was deeded also turned out to be forested an additional conundrum was added. El Salvador is estimated to have lost 85% of its forest cover since the 1960s. But forest regrowth during the war reversed this trend throughout the country (Hecht 2004; Herrador Valencia *et al.* 2011). The potential for deforestation of these newly forested lands were, in MBLR terms, a 'market failure' for which there was no immediate remedy.

In sum, the case of Cinquera sheds light at the nexus of several ongoing debates within the field of international development practice; most notably land tenure and resource rights. By revealing how property rights might be constructed more broadly beyond simple formulas of individual ownership and title agreements and how development support might be oriented in support of alternative livelihood strategies, Cinquera's story pushed the boundaries of conventional development discourse. In practice, this meant that USAID's land policies and projects in El Salvador required reworking. Likewise, with the more recent 2009 changeover of national governance to the FMLN, the nation's nascent Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN) is shifting course in how resource conservation programs are designed and implemented.

Over the six years following the signing of the Accords in 1992, ten percent of the nation's agricultural land (totaling over 103,300 hectares) was transferred to ex-combatants of both sides and to civilian supporters of the FMLN, through the Accord-mandated Land Transfer Program (Foley, Vickers, and Thale 1997).³ By the year 2000, more than 36,000 people had received land through the PTT and an additional program had been created to divide and individually title all PTT lands that were formerly deeded collectively.⁴

In some regions of the country, the PTT lands offered up the potential for agricultural intensification and accelerated accumulation strategies. In others, including the region of this study, access to land fell largely within the 'poor lands' category (as per the USDA Land Classification System) - sloping, rainfed, and largely unsuitable for expanding agricultural production. According to data collected by the Salvadoran government land transfer body (ISTA) as well as the FMLN agrarian commission (the LLC), as much as 60-70% of land deeded through the Accords (in classes V-VIII) were appropriate only for permanent crops, protected forest land, or recreation and tourism, and were of inadequate quality for any type of annual cropping (including the subsistence crops of corn and beans). Agricultural credits were payable to resettled communities across the country for annual cropping (UNDP 1993). Political silence surrounded an important question regarding the relationship between land quality and access. Namely, why were a smaller percentage

² El Salvador scholars differ in their opinions of the relative importance attributed to agrarian inequality as a root cause of civil war.

³ The earlier land reforms of the 1980's transferred approximately one-fifth of the farmland of the country to roughly ten percent of the country's population (Seligson *et al.* 1993; van Heijningen 2000).

⁴ Exact numbers total 27,481 FMLN combatants and *tenedor* supporters and 8,519 government soldiers (Alvarez and Chavez 2001).

of the areas with more productive alluvial floodplain and volcanic soils (Classes I-IV) transferred than those areas with more claylike (known as *talpetate*) soils and sloping rocky terrain, such as those characterizing the landscapes of Cinquera (Classes IV-VIII)? In the 'negotiated' revolution, the best lands remained cordoned off from access by the poor, and the land, together with the limited support received, offered a narrow portfolio of options from which to build a livelihood. A national resettlement process that was technically and financially supported by the international community failed to recognize necessary linkages between land and environmental concerns. In this case, revealing how core development policy remained wedded to classical economic approaches, which continue to see land in terms of its agricultural potential, and rural people as farmers and producers.

2. A new agrarian agenda: neoliberalism and land

Towards the end of the 1990s international and bi-lateral development and lending agencies such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) and USAID embarked on a new phase of analysis and policy on land and agrarian issues in developing countries. Emphasizing the importance of property rights to land policy, this new generation of policies, which combined the tools of land administration with what was variously called 'market-friendly,' 'negotiated,' or market-based land reform (MBLR), were touted as a means to contribute to the reduction of poverty, environmental degradation, and the lack of competitiveness of the agricultural sector (Deininger *et al.* 1999; Deininger and Binswanger 1999).

In the MBLR model, the role of government is to establish administrative frameworks, such as modern land registry systems, in order to improve the efficiency of land and other rural factor markets (Deininger and Binswanger 1999; Deininger *et al.* 1999). From 2000 to 2003, the Bank, in collaboration with USAID, undertook a consultation process with land policy experts from inside the Bank as well as with the academic community to sketch out recommendations for this new generation of policy. In a relatively short time frame, from the launching of the Bank's new generation of land policies in the late 1990s to 2004, the Bank had shifted from a position that largely eschewed the use of land redistribution to one that acknowledged its usefulness in specific circumstances (Deininger 2003).

Debates between MBLR advocates and pro-poor social activists have nevertheless continued to center on issues of asset distribution. Both sides have invested considerable energy debating the merits of redistributive reform or, in a broader sense, the issue of access to the bundled resource assets that are embodied in land. While such discussions of whether the state or the market should serve as the prime allocation mechanism for land—an asset that is an essential component of livelihood strategies for so many millions in the developing world—are undoubtedly important, evidence from Cinquera supports a larger assertion that the focus on *access* has, to some degree, continued to sideline key issues of land *use*. More specifically, if land policies are to be evaluated in terms of their contributions to social and ecological sustainability, they must begin to incorporate a notion of land as an entity with biophysical and agroecological characteristics and properties, and not simply as a commodity. Such conceptualizations should form the basis for future efforts—regardless of whether the allocation mechanism is through state or market.

In terms of current policy formulations for land and their linkages with issues of natural resource use and environmental sustainability, several assumptions with respect to the role of the state, tenure security, and land administration underlie the new land policy and its assumed effectiveness in contributing to sustainable rural livelihoods and effective resource management. More recently, scholars studying land policy and land reform have called for a re-evaluation of the salient issues, as the presence and pace of environmental deterioration refocuses the analysis of the land problem "beyond the issue of land access to questions concerning *resource use*" (Zoomers 2000). This broader view (and one that receives little attention by the Bank) goes beyond the issue of type of property ownership as a key variable in land use decision making, to consider the evidence that shows that land owners' decisions regarding resource use are conditioned by a range of political and economic factors, including market activity, government policy and legislation, and more localized factors related to livelihood reproduction including availability of factors of production (such as land, labor and capital), operating livelihood strategies, and institutional frameworks.

Where the issue of property rights does intersect with such land management practices is in debating which tenure arrangements best promote the public good (in this case, appropriate environmental management). On this question, the neoliberal view of land embodied in recent Bank policy is consistent with the neo-classical economic argument that efficiency is best achieved when property is controlled by independent operators, each of whom attempts to maximize individual returns. By the workings of the 'invisible hand' of the market, the maximum public benefit is achieved. Though the language of recent Bank documents makes space for exceptions to these arguments, overall land privatization, titling and MALR operate under a basic set of assumptions that: 1) individuals are the most efficient users of land for productive purposes and 2) complete rights (to manage, to exclude others and to alienate) via fee-simple individual titles encourage the most efficient use of resources.

In surveying the history of land policy in Latin America over the last quarter century, undoubtedly the most glaring omission in all of the discussions that framed and ultimately influenced the direction of land

policy over that time was that of the place of the natural environment in land policy. Assertions such as Kivell's that "land use and land policy are absolutely central themes in the sustainability debate" are only recently present in the academic literature on land policy, and almost absent from current policy frameworks of international lending institutions (see Redclift 2000). That land constitutes a central ingredient to all human activity as a requirement for production or development is still missed in the majority of the literature, and research devoted to land markets and land policy offers little consideration of the implications of changes to land tenure and distribution for sustainable environmental management. With the signing of the Rio Declaration in 1992 and the inclusion of sustainability (however compromised or misinterpreted) in the formulation of new projects and policies of the World Bank and other international development and financial institutions, the new generation of land policies are slowly beginning to see land as part of nature. Livelihood approaches as proposed by Bebbington (1999) suggest important frames through which to consider how these programs, ecologies, and property rights varyingly contribute to or hinder the economic, as well as political, cultural, and ecological aspects of livelihood construction (de Haan and Zoomers 2003).

Several ideas have been offered as to why the World Bank and other bi- and multilateral organizations – in Latin America's case, USAID and the IADB, have renewed the case for multilateral involvement in land policy. At one level, as Deere and Leon (2000) assert, a new generation of land policies is necessary to make room for neo-liberal economic transactions. Bernstein (2002) advances an even more strident criticism that such policies, with soft language alluding to equity and poverty considerations are really developed in order to make the agencies appear like they are fighting poverty even though they are not. Early results, he said, suggest that market-assisted land reform was not proving to be effective at fighting poverty in the countryside. Calling for a political 'sociology of knowledge' to be applied to analyze the institutions central to the production of doctrines of development, Bernstein is skeptical that the neo-liberal productionist rationality is the whole driving force behind this period of reform; rather, this new wave of titling, privatization, 'decentralization,' etc. is "as much about claiming to be doing something for rural poverty." Along similar lines, Blaikie (2000) suggests that the development industry survives because it is highly flexible and undergoes paradigm shifts. That the Bank has succeeded in updating their land policies and in incorporating many of the insights of land policy scholars and academics—many of whom do not subscribe to strict neo-liberal rationalities—in their current policy documents regarding land issues, suggests that something like this paradigm shift has taken place within the Bank's Land Policy Thematic Group. Whether or not the substantive policies as carried out in particular places represent any real departure remains to be seen. As this article argues for the case of El Salvador—and the results thus far suggest—land reform based on market based models and fully in line with the neoliberal paradigm failed to yield socially and environmentally sustainable development.

3. Cinqera

The town of Cinqera lies nestled in a forested region distributed among five municipalities, with a total extension of approximately 5,300 ha classified as 'Dry Forests of the Pacific in Central America,' forming part an eco-region considered as critically threatened due to its degree of fragmentation (Dinerstein *et al.* 1995) (Figure 1, 2). Land use, land use change, and forestry (LULUCF) analysis conducted for the years 1942, 1978, and 2004 respectively, reveal a reduction in total forest cover from 23% to 18% in the period from 1942 to 1978, with a period of regrowth coinciding with the war and expanding forest cover to 61% of the area (1691 ha) by 2004 (Herrador *et al.* 2011). Another significant trend in the region's forest cover is the reduction in overall fragmentation. Landscape dominance indices showing a reduction in mosaic areas of mixed annual crops, pasture, and trees, and a rise in consolidated patches of crops, pastures, and forest cover – all signs of increased forest health. In a country where total forest coverage is estimated to range between 3-5%, this ecological story of regeneration in Cinqera serves to underline how landscapes are created by the intended and unintended consequences of human action (Scoones 1999).

'Rock mountain range' is the translation of 'Cinqera' from the indigenous Maya Lencan language. In the middle of the 18th century, the immense Spanish colonial Rivera plantation was broken up into three smaller plantations: Hacienda la Escopeta, Hacienda Catumayo, and Hacienda Cinqera. During the 19th century, Cinqera shifted between various territorial protectorates, eventually becoming its own town in 1850. In Spanish, a 'Cinqera' is an antique coin-operated radio that required five, '*cinco*,' cents to play. Finally, in yet another colloquial adaptation, the guerillas took this meaning of the word and replaced it with similar term used for antique radios— '*radiola*,' adopting it as the code name for the region used throughout the war.

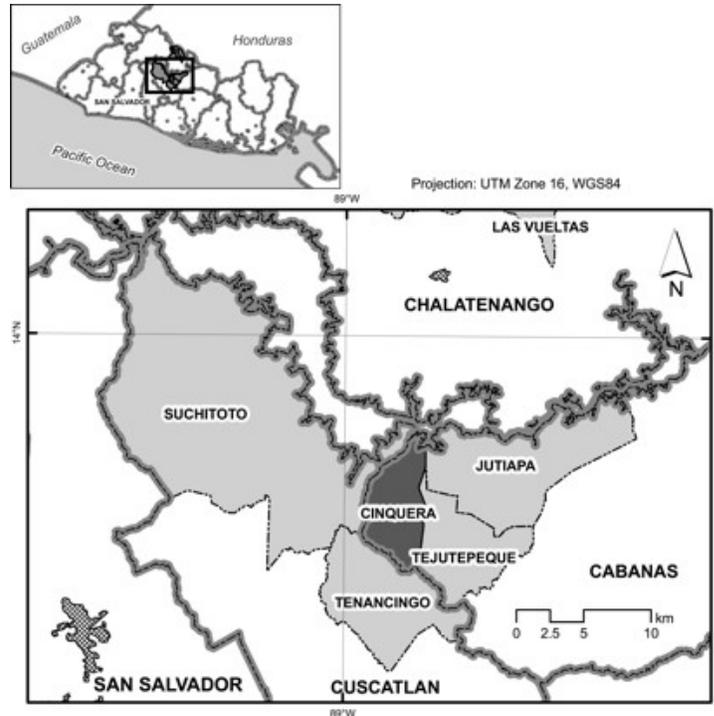


Figure 1: El Salvador and five municipalities spanning the Cinquera forest area.

Though little is known about the region's pre-Hispanic inhabitation, the 1970s land tenure patterns are a legacy of the region's economic history, specifically, the colonial production of *añil*, or indigo, so valued for trade up until the discovery of methods for making synthetic blue dye in Europe in the mid 1800s. Durham (1979) describes the advent of *añil* production in the adjacent municipality of Tenancingo, beginning with the arrangement of marriage between Spanish daughters and local Indian *caciques*, the descendants of whom became the 'prominent citizens' of these newly organized colonial villages. Gradually production of indigo encroached on Indian land, and "the influx of Spanish families into the region contributed directly to the disintegration of what remained of the Indian's protective corporate structure." (Durham 1979: 74).

By the late 1800s, most of the area's residents had been culturally assimilated and turned into landless laborers working on the large indigo and sugar estates in the region. When the *añil* industry collapsed in the early twentieth century, prominent landowning families left the region (as Durham notes, presumably to take up coffee farming elsewhere in the country) leaving the vacated estates to be subdivided and sold to former workers and other local residents. It is from these economic dynamics dating back to the colonial period that the spatial and economic patterns of the 1970s can be traced - extremely small landholdings and subsistence production of corn, beans, and sorghum.

The region was also famous for the production of fine hand-sewn hats and later of *trenzas* (braids) of palm which were then sold to factories to be subsequently factory-stitched into hats. But the shift to the use of synthetic nylon for hat manufacturing, and the creation of larger factories for mechanized hat-assembly led to the decline in demand and subsequent abandonment of hat production as a source of local income by the onset of the war.

How the war displaced people and transformed the landscape

The guerrilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea
~ Chairman Mao Tse-Tung

The guerrillas are the fish; the people are the sea. If you want to catch the fish, you have to drain the sea.

~Guatemalan General Efraín Ríos Montt⁵

"monte": forest, woodland (with tall trees), wilds, wild country, scrub, brushwood.⁶

⁵ (2002 July 6) *Texas Observer*.

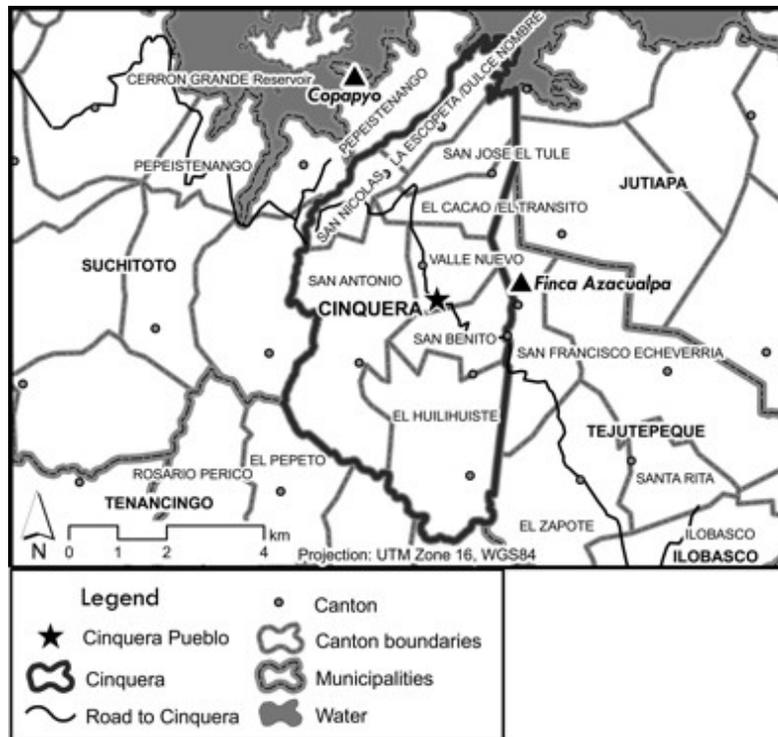


Figure 2: Map of Cinquera

By the mid-1970s, the liberation theology movement that had fundamentally reshaped the Latin American Catholic Church had taken hold throughout north-central El Salvador (Wood 2003). With national mass organizations urging local efforts, the Christian base community in Cinquera began to focus on organizing *colonos*, those who worked as sharecroppers or tenant farmers, on the *latifundios* (estates) of San Francisco and Azacualpa located on a high fertile plateau above the town. The land takeover of Azacualpa was the first mass peoples' action in the zone and marked the beginning of a move towards more drastic state-sponsored violence and repression in Cinquera that would persist for the remainder of the war.

By 1980 everyone was gone, those that stayed in the area joined the guerilla, and those who went over to the other side joined the army. There wasn't pity for anyone here. By 1980 the army and paramilitaries killed women, they killed men, young people, children, babies, and we organized ourselves with FECCAS⁷ to win land to work. It was an injustice that the land belonged to just a few.⁸

Throughout the early eighties the FMLN troops and the Salvadoran military fought for control of Cinquera, but the end of civilian habitation of the municipality came on a day in May, 1983 when FMLN troops stormed the fortified town and overran four small military posts in the hills around it. The force of several hundred guerillas reportedly killed or wounded more than 60 government soldiers in the two day siege, with government troops retaking Cinquera after pounding it with artillery and aircraft fire.⁹

The siege and the virtual annihilation of the town infrastructure by aircraft artillery marked the end of civilian habitation until its repopulation, eight years later, in 1991. What inhabitants were left in the area scattered to church sanctuaries in San Salvador and to the refugee camps over the Honduran border, such as Mesa Grande, or to other regions where the violence was less intense, or they joined the guerilla. Some of the few families that remained helped the guerilla by setting up homesteads known within the *Frente* as '*perifericos*'—strategic points on the peripheries of guerilla controlled areas—where government troop movements could be monitored and the guerilla informed.

⁶ Houghton Mifflin and Diccionario Espasa Concise: Español-Inglés English-Spanish © Espasa-Calpe, S.A., Madrid 2000.

⁷ Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños (FECCAS).

⁸ Interview #13, Cinquera.

⁹ 'Executions' by Rebels in El Salvador (May 8, 1983) *The New York Times*

The forest became a refuge from the violence, as described by Don Nasario, an ex-combatant now living in the canton of El Cacao, Cinquera:

The paramilitaries burned my house, they burned all that we had, and we moved to another *canton* and there they killed my *compañera* and our 8 month old son—my first son. So this itself gives one more anger, more fury, and so, that was when there was no longer a home, it was the *monte* that was our home.¹⁰

Indeed, Cinquera had become a different kind of home. The recuperation of the forest area was important for the guerilla troops as the increasing vegetation cover favored the particular tactics of warfare they employed. Militarily, Cinquera was a key strategic hub for the FMLN's overall strategy. Though the area under control was much smaller than other regions, such as those in Chalatenango and Morazán;

You could walk from one end to the other of the controlled area of *la Radiola* in three or maybe four hours. In Chalate if you heard the enemy was coming you could get two days away from them, not just hours. It was a place you had to move quickly, but the forest cover made that possible.¹¹

The forests of *La Radiola*, as the area became known to the guerilla, were also close to various urban centers, serving as a key hub, or corridor, between the various regions of FMLN control—Chalatenango and Morazán to the north, San Vicente and Usulután to the south, and Guazapa to the west. As one ex-combatant remarked, "the forest provided a place for troops mobilizing between zones to rest and recuperate."¹²

The forests started to grow and grow, and say, at about three years of the war going strong, there were bombings, persecution with big military sweeps on the ground, and there were already these little forests that partially covered us. And for that these forests have value, to have been able to recuperate themselves during the war—that's more or less the amount of time it takes—there are parts that have not been worked for years, since the beginning of the war—we're talking 21 years!¹³

Thus Cinquera remained, throughout the war, an uncultivated place but one that was inhabited by people whose lives depended on it for refuge and cover. It would be some of these same people who would return to repopulate the town and later organize to challenge conventional land reform and conservation modalities. War testimonies recorded during this project evidence that those who returned to Cinquera viewed the forested landscape there as fundamentally changed from the intensively cultivated landscapes they had left behind:

When I was little, in the mid-1970s, I still brought my father his lunch in the fields where he cultivated corn and beans. I walked up in the hills around Cinquera every day and I don't have a memory of a forest, everything was used for planting grains.

Before, the only places where there was forest were owned by the men that had their money. Those that were poor, they would be given those pieces... that were peeled bare...it was so bare that you could see a person coming from far away. Now that it's forest the rivers are abundant.¹⁴

Such comparisons of Cinquera before and after the war were commonplace in my talks with original residents of the region. But what did people think of this 'new' landscape? In what ways did the reversion of the landscape from agricultural production to coverage with trees influence what people envisioned in terms of their own futures?

4. What did Cinquerans want to do after the war?

On April 10, 1991, several days after leaving San Salvador and of being detained by the military at the Las Guaras bridge checkpoint, the first seven families arrived in Cinquera.

The impact of the destruction was sombrous, not only was the town totally destroyed, but all around was forest, there were trees growing up in the middle of the main streets, the town was barely recognizable.¹⁵

¹⁰ Interview #34, Cinquera.

¹¹ Interview #NS-13, Cinquera.

¹² Interview #NS-10, Cinquera.

¹³ Interview #NS-9, Cinquera.

¹⁴ Interview #24, Cinquera.

¹⁵ Interview #NS-14, Cinquera.

The repopulation of marked the beginning of a new stage of land-use, ownership, and management that would continue to shift throughout the 1990s, challenging both state and World Bank views on the ways that reform and resettlement can happen and reshaping the PTT itself.

The returning community was highly organized. A community directive designated plots around the immediate outskirts of town to be used for collective cultivation of crops. Food would then be divided up between the town's residents. Though collective forms of cultivation were adopted in part due to their function in the creation of the 'alternative project' that repopulation symbolized, such land use arrangements were also largely attributed to issues of security in the region as military operatives continued up until the cease-fire. As Pedro Rosa Cruz recounted, "even after the repopulation it was like a war here, we would go out to work the land but they would mortar us anyways; we were always in the middle of the combat."¹⁶

Community leaders' imaginings regarding larger designs for alternative management of the lands began even before the return itself. As one of the community's most active *campesino* leaders prior to the onset of the war and one main initiators of the return explained;

When it came time to return, and the idea of some accords started to spread, I remember that my son-in-law [who served as a guerilla commander in the zone and who later became Cinquera's first mayor] and I would talk when we would see each other at those coordinating meetings. We would say, if we ever get back to Cinquera— both of us—one of the things that we are going to fight for is to conserve the environment. The forest and the war had the same age. That's why when we came back, with the others, now with the civilian population, them over here (the guerrilla army) and us over there we joined together to act, that was one of our main priorities: to not destroy what had grown out of 14 years of abandonment... it had been 14 years. We left here in '78. It was 14 years.¹⁷

For their part, some of the guerilla fighters who had lived in the region for years had similar ideas about what forest futures might be possible in Cinquera after the war:

The truth is that I remember during the last years of the conflict, we would dream, and some of us—you know you could speak to some people about it—that we would find some way to conserve this forest, to conserve this history. And in the last two years, when I moved into what they called the 'expansion tasks' which meant that I would be out talking to people in the towns, people would ask me, 'how is my land, is it safe to come back?' and I would say, lying really, 'no, no, its not safe,' only because I didn't want them to come back to the forest and clear it away again.¹⁸

The peace accords were signed less than a year after the repopulation of Cinquera. Though newly demobilized ex-combatants added to the size of the resettling population, the number of people living in the region remained extremely small in comparison to its pre-war levels in these first years. People had been told that they would be receiving land through the PTT but because of the serious delays in implementation, the practice of cultivating abandoned plots near town continued for several years following the end of the war.

In those first years after resettlement, population remained so low that land supply in the immediate surroundings of town—the better lands for cultivation—remained in keeping with demand.¹⁹ Accounts from the original group of returnees and ex-combatants identify the first real threats to the forest as coming from the 'outside.' People would come from neighboring municipalities and cut and prepare timber for removal from the forest;

We had to take action. There was no police post yet, so we would call the Justice of the Peace to come to intervene and stop people from removing wood. The thieves actually pointed the finger at us and said that we had stolen the wood and we began to quarrel, but it was for a just cause right? It was for the protection of the zone of natural forest. Eventually, the police and others began to understand: these people had no permits and they had no ownership rights that showed they had the right to take the wood, so that's how we really started action to protect the forest.²⁰

The newly resettled group in Cinquera began to enforce what many had expressed as their intentions upon settlement, to keep the forest intact. As ex-combatants accustomed to defending the territory, they had little reservation in confronting outsiders who were poaching animals or wood from the forest. In one instance, the community decommissioned a substantial quantity of lumber from trees felled in the *canton* of San Benito. As

¹⁶ Interview #19, Cinquera.

¹⁷ Interview #28, Cinquera.

¹⁸ Interview #NS-13, Cinquera.

¹⁹ Because the PTT was largely unable to secure purchase of these lands close to town, returnees that initially cultivated them after the war were eventually forced off.

²⁰ Interview #NS-9, Cinquera.

a solution to the problem of what to do with the now-felled timber, the community assembly made the decision to have the wood made into benches for the church. Policies banning forest clearing except for in the areas designated for cultivation by the community directive were decided on in meetings of the community's 'general assembly' – a common form of popular community organization for repopulations in the post-war period. For the time being, the 'new' Cinquera had set their intentions as to what was to be the fate of the forest.

In essence, a narrative about nature that was intended to influence all those returning to the region had begun to be promulgated by the communities' leadership, and was largely adopted by the returnees as a means to secure the protection of forest resources that had been 'created by the war.' It was this 'seeing' of a forest by new residents of Cinquera that served as the seeds for mobilization of development visions and that differentiates Cinquera from so many other repopulations. These perceptions, of Cinquera as a place of forests, are contrasted with the way that the PTT and parcelization programs 'saw' these same landscapes, as subsistence agricultural places to be cultivated by 'peasant' farmers.'

5. What forest? The PTT and national post-war land policy

A land transfer program not completely of the new-generation but neither of the old—a state-market hybrid—was born in El Salvador. The negotiation of the Salvadoran Peace Accords occurred in the window of transition between state and market-led land reform approaches in the policies of international development institutions. Categories of land to be transferred through the PTT included properties belonging to the state, properties exceeding the 1983 constitutional limit of 245 hectares, and private properties in delimited 'conflictive zones' that were offered up voluntarily for sale. Transactions were to take place at market prices in accordance with the 1980s agrarian reform terms of payment (over thirty years with a four year grace period for principal and interest, and at a fixed annual interest rate of 6 percent) through a Land Bank established for that purpose. Eligible beneficiaries included ex-combatants from both the FMLN and the Salvadoran military (FAES) as well as civilian supporters of the FMLN known as *tenedores* (landholders), most of whom resided and farmed land in the conflict zones throughout the war years. Though the accords stipulated that land ownership could be individual or associative, the form that property rights would take would come to constitute one of the fundamental points of contention between the two sides in the post-war years. Though the PTT retained some modes of implementation characteristic of previous state-led efforts, such as the use of a national Land Bank as a financial intermediary, and initially granting associative titles, it was the voluntary, market-price approach to land transfer that defines the PTT as one of the first of the generation of market-assisted land reform (MALR) approaches. By the year 2000, more than 36,000 people²¹ had received land through the PTT and an additional program had been created to parcelize and individually title all PTT lands that were formerly deeded collectively.

For ex-combatants and returned refugees in the former conflict zones, the post war resettlement of agrarian landscapes was a process of transition, with important consequences for present and future livelihoods. The issues that shaped people's access to resources, livelihood options, and patterns of land use in resettled communities were fundamentally directed by agrarian resettlement though the land transfer program, influencing where they would live, what land they would farm, and if they would even farm at all. In most resettlement areas, the PTT resulted in wholesale clearing of regenerated forest lands, but as I have noted, in Cinquera something very different took place.

Organization	Manzanas*	Hectares
ARDM	84	58.8
Municipality of Cinquera	4.5	2.8
Communally-owned	12	7.5
Private-owners (PTT)	40	25
Total	140.5	94.1

Table 1: Core area current holdings by type of owner. * 1 ha= 1.6 mz

The final formula for determining land quality and quantity in the PTT, a UN proposal known as the "October 13th Agreement," set forth specific size limits per beneficiary depending on whether they were demobilizing ex-combatants or *tenedores*, (FMLN supporters) (see Table 1). Lands to be transferred were purchased by the Land Bank though *proindiviso* titles that allowed joint ownership under one title, valid for only five years from the property purchase. Parcelization was therefore built into the land transfer program from the beginning. Throughout the country lands were offered up for purchase by owners, depending on the size of

²¹ Exact numbers total 27,481 FMLN combatants and *tenedor* supporters and 8,519 government soldiers (Alvarez and Chavez 2001).

the properties, the newly established communities ranged from very large—some having several hundred beneficiaries—to quite small—three or four individuals. Owing in part to the regional political economy, places like the nation's coastal lowlands were characterized by large hacienda-sized properties that were transformed, overnight, into new communities (the story of how the occupation of these lands by the FMLN being used as leverage in the negotiation of the peace accords at the end of the war is another story).

6. Place-based transformation of national land policy priorities in Cinquera

There doesn't seem to be a lot of problem with how the land was parcelized through PROSEGUIR. It's more the problem of what land we got in the first place.²²

Land management hasn't changed with parcelization because we weren't really using the land anyways. It's in the middle of the woods and that is the important thing about it.²³

The search for available land for transfer in Cinquera began even before the finalization of the Accords, as noted by one Cinquera resident:

By the end of 1990, the *Frente* had us begin an inventory of all the parcels within the conflict zone—who had land, who were the owners, where they lived, how to find them. It was really hard, at least for me, I was not in the habit of going out to talk with other people that I didn't know, who knows what kind of way of thinking they had. But we made the inventory for Tejutepeque and Cinquera and we had more than 408 properties, small properties.²⁴

Later, once the Peace Accords were signed and the PTT was underway, local FMLN cadre once again called on potential sellers: "we had to make them see how important it was that they sell the land to us. That was also really hard. First, because there were those people who really hated us, and then some others who just simply didn't want to sell."²⁵ Land in Cinquera remained the hardest to find, either because the owners that could be located were resistant to selling, or because they simply could not be found—many of them having migrated to the United States or to the capital. Such difficulties in finding available land for the program were complicated by the administrative inefficiencies of the program itself.²⁶ As a willing-buyer willing-seller program, in many cases the land offered was not the best in the region. Owners could choose to keep their most productive or conveniently located land, and discard the rest. On the other hand, people were not entirely discerning about which lands would be transferred. The municipality contained handful of large haciendas—the most important being Azacualpa, situated on a large plateau above town, and Copapayo, bordering the westernmost portions of the forest area on the alluvial floodplain of the nation's largest reservoir, Cerron Grande. The remaining territory offered for sale was almost entirely forested, smaller parcels owned by well-off families who had either moved to the capital or migrated to the USA. The PTT transferred these to groups of people in the community of Cinquera, with the expectation that beneficiaries would employ their incentives—loans for the purchase of cattle and farm inputs—to clear, plant, and graze livestock.

This is not what happened. Aside from the broader impetus for the PTT to turn over land for agricultural production, it is important to recall the chaos of the post-war context in which the PTT played out. "There wasn't a lot of land available, so we started to look for properties, but we had no idea about the problem that we were putting ourselves in really."²⁷ The issue of why forested land was included in the PTT in Cinquera was also attributed to the insecurity of the process; "If land was rejected because it was forested land, who was to say that we would get another piece instead? Perhaps we'd just lose the opportunity altogether."²⁸ One community leader attributed contemporary conflicts over land use in the Cinquera region to these original contradictions of the land transfer program and the fact that not everyone got agricultural land;

The heart of the problem that we have here is the land. Before the war none of us had a parcel, we were all renters, we rented to cultivate our land. After the war, for the first time, we had the opportunity of having our own parcel as a result of the peace accords. And so what happened is that some of us got land in areas that were assigned for agricultural use. And others only got forest, and then there is all that has been said about having to conserve it. That is the problem.²⁹

²² Interview # 31, Cinquera.

²³ Interview #32, Cinquera.

²⁴ Interview #NS-10, Cinquera.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ For a detailed description of these administrative inefficiencies and political bottlenecks see de Bremond, 2006.

²⁷ Interview NS-NC, Cinquera.

²⁸ Interview #14, Cinquera.

²⁹ Interview #23, Cinquera.

Adding that that whole idea of being able to choose what land they would get was a somewhat unfamiliar concept, he continued:

Perhaps we didn't think of what type of land, we only thought land; land that could be worked because we never had the privilege of choosing quality of land, rather what was rented was the most ruined. So what quality it was never really was in our theme.³⁰

Over the duration of the PTT program in Cinquera 70 properties were transferred to 185 beneficiaries, of whom 36% were ex-combatants and 64% were *tenedores*. Within the ex-combatant pool more than two-thirds (71%) of those who received land were men, and 29% women. The breakdown between men and women receiving land as *tenedores* was slightly more even, with 58% men and 42% women. The holdings were small and most of them were forested. Of the 70 properties, over half of them were located between one and two hours' walk from the urban center of Cinquera, remaining, until very recently, covered with an average of between 15 and 25 years of secondary successional forests (Medina, 2004).

Anecdotal evidence in many of my interviews with national actors who participated in the demobilization and resettlement process suggest that many regions of El Salvador had been abandoned and had regrown during the war. Cinquera's forests and history are achieving national and international acclaim, a product of both material and discursive constitutions of place. Perceptions of Cinquera as a place of forests, are contrasted with the way that the PTT and parcelization programs 'saw' these same landscapes, as subsistence agricultural places to be cultivated by 'peasant' farmers.' In seeing or not seeing the forests in Cinquera, different and contradictory projects were simultaneously being advanced for Cinquera's land and people. Though not all in Cinquera see the role of the forest in the same way, the contradictions and contestations over the land and what should be done with it have also arisen from the blanket application of individual tenure modes to forests, and of the state's vision of what peasants and land should be and of what livelihoods are possible. The state, of course, is made up of actors and institutions that also have multiple and often competing agendas.

7. How, why and with what effect, did the returnees succeed in their efforts?

One of the more difficult challenges in research these issues was coming to understand the identities, interests, and goals wrapped up in efforts to *create* a forest in Cinquera. Efforts to make a *life project* and a *political project* as a forested 'natural' place is, in Polanyian terms, a way to habitate 'the intervenient middle,' and build a life. The Association for Reconstruction and Development (ARDM) is a local association founded by ex-combatants and returnees in order to provide a local-level community-based interlocutor for reconstruction funding after the war, and to a lesser extent with the municipality and the communal directive. It has been at the forefront of local efforts to transform a very difficult post-war land tenure situation towards community-forms of ownership and governance of forest resources.³¹ An agenda, of forest protection and regulation of the Cinquera forest region, that was assigned to the ARDM by the communal directive in the early stages of resettlement. For the ARDM, this task of finding a way to maintain the region's forests forms an integral part of the promotion of development in Cinquera along new, even 'revolutionary,' lines, rooted in the re-conceptualization of traditional ecologies, land use, and livelihood futures. While place has been 'produced' by capital and global forces, local people have also culturally and materially constructed a place of their own making—endowed with meaning, tied to their identities as well as to their livelihoods.

As discussed in the previous section, the physical, successional forest was there when the war came to a close. But the question of what this forest would come to mean to people in the post-war period, and what possible purposes it might have in the lives of its inhabitants remains a contentious issue in local politics. The process of constructing Cinquera *in relation to* its forest as a way of place-making by the municipality's local development organization—the ARDM, the municipality, and, in general, by those who continue to hold leadership positions in the community in the post-war period, continues. From the way the PTT and parcelization program approached the landscapes of Cinquera, to varied and sometimes conflicting livelihood ambitions of those living within the area, the future of 'forested' Cinquera continues to be something in the process being brought into existence even if against sometimes turbulent currents emanating from both within and outside the region.

The account that follows is a view of how Cinquera's 'historic' community leaders, drawn from the ranks of the FMLN and the popular movement and now at the helm of local development institutions, are attempting to devise different ideas of land, community, and livelihood as alternatives to the current order of things. These are ideas that very much embody the continuance of the broader political project for a different future in which they have participated for so many years.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ *Asociación para la Reconstrucción y Desarrollo Municipal de Cinquera* in Spanish.

The beginnings of forest governance and the creation of the ARDM

"It was total disorder," recounted Rene, an ex-combatant and community leader in Cinquera; "...then we won the municipality." During the war, with its buildings destroyed and all of its records burned, the municipality of Cinquera had operated in exile from the departmental capital of Cabañas, Illobasco. "After the peace accords," Rene, recounted, "we implored them to come back but they wouldn't. They said they didn't have a building. We promised to make them a provisional place, but they said 'no'. They were scared and made excuses." When the first post-war elections were held in 1994 the FMLN won Cinquera. With roughly one-fifth of the 262 municipalities won by the FMLN, those first elections served to identify the points of concentration of FMLN strength in the country. Cinquera was one of them.

Soon after, a progressive Danish development organization specializing in community participation in local governance, IBIS-Denmark, approached the municipality offering to provide support for the initial planning process. "The municipal council needed a plan and IBIS helped with that." Rene went on to explain, "but the organized population also needed a new tool—an '*ente rector*' (a governing tool), a way to project future goals."³² Many years later, Guillermo Rivera, the mayor-elect during that initial reconstruction period, explained motivation for the establishment of the ARDM in this way:

We founded the ARDM and then made efforts to legalize it so that we could pressure the state to do things while empowering people in the development process. The problem was that people say that the FMLN had the municipality and it would take care of everything, but we saw that it would be better if the ARDM could have its own plan and own process and get things done. In this sense we are different than other municipalities and we decided that we could do something different, we made a different plan for working and that we would bring development to the municipality. That was how the ARDM got started.³³

After IBIS had helped to facilitate a planning process for the municipal council, they commenced work with a few Cinquerans drawn from the community directive council and the ex-combatant regional leadership. The idea was to form an organization distinct from the Municipality itself that would aid guiding development in the municipality.

The idea for the ARDM came from talking about the problems of reconstruction—health, education, organization, literacy. We needed help with all of these problems—credit, housing, land tenancy etc. And most importantly we had to put forth some rules of the game. Right after the peace accords there were so many NGOs and they were all working on the same thing. It was a big duplication of efforts. People felt that a lot of money was being spent and people weren't getting results so the ARDM worked to get the population what they needed. Later the ARDM would assume, together with the communal directive, all of the [peasant union organizing] relationships with the other municipalities.

As another community leader explained;

That was the first idea, some way to agglutinate or coordinate all these projects. Later it began to profile itself in another panorama. Little by little appeared the necessity to go past simple coordination, to the idea of the forest, and the ARDM began to focus on that.

Spanning over almost a year and a half, from June 1994 to November 1995, a series of consultative meetings were held throughout the municipality—in all of the seven *cantones*, with the goal of collecting ideas from Cinquerans about what role the ARDM should play in the community. "That was the best part," said Rene, of that period of consultation, "it was so interesting to sit down and work through what people wanted to see happen here." Finally, they were ready to invite the NGOs;

We met under a mango tree near the center of town because, you know, at that time we didn't have an office. There were twenty-five institutions there at that first meeting, organizations who said they wanted to help. But the funny thing was that the more we began to express what it was that we wanted to do and how we thought it should be done, the more they started to withdraw, little by little. In the end, the first plan had about six institutions participating. That was the *modus vivendi* of the *cooperación* [international organizations] (remarked Rene).

At first, those participating in the exercise with IBIS thought of creating a municipal development council—called a CDM (*Consejo de Desarrollo Municipal*). But they found that a CDM could not be a legalized as an organization outside of the government hierarchy, or apply for grants and manage funds, so the organizing committee in Cinquera selected the legal organizational framework of an 'Association of Municipal Development.'³⁴ Legally, the ARDM was structured to represent all of the *cantones* in the municipality in issues of municipal development, and a selection of '*Asocios*' or 'associates' were selected

³² Additional translation of '*ente rector*' could be 'governing body.'

³³ Interview #NS-15, Cinquera.

³⁴ In Spanish, *Asociación de Desarrollo Municipal*.

from the seven cantonal divisions of the municipality to make up the general assembly of the ARDM.³⁵ The thirty-five to forty associates participating in the initial assembly were selected from the 'historic' *bases*; that is, those that were selected were chosen based on their history of participation in the social movement more generally, either as combatants or social bases of the FMLN, and their commitment to the maintenance of local organizing. Today the membership in the ARDM has grown to approximately sixty-five. While far short of including the 251 families, or 1,060 people inhabiting the municipality by the mid-1990s (Erazo and Monterrosa 2000), membership in the organization is meant to be 'representative.' Representation is to some extent selective, explained Rene:

We don't have the aspiration of associating everyone from the municipality because not everyone is in accord with the project. Besides, a big group is hard to manage, and really, the thing of having associates is more of a legal requisite rather than a way of participating. We want everyone to participate and we want what we do to benefit everyone in Cinquera. Not just the *asocios*.

And he added: "The mission of the Association is to work for the good of all of the municipality's inhabitants."

In practice, participation in the ARDM has everything to do with political alignment, as the ARDM's more fundamental goal is to foster community organization in Cinquera, as a component in the larger project of maintaining popular support for the FMLN both regionally and nationally. In 2002, with a close election threatening to upset the hold that the FMLN has maintained on the municipality since 1994, one ARDM staff member explained to me that if the FMLN was to lose the municipality to another party, most notably the right-wing ARENA or PCN, the ARDM would remain a locus of FMLN-aligned community action as well as a counterbalance to the municipality. So far, this fear has not borne out. In the most recent 2012 elections, Trine Eugenia Rivera Abrego, of the FMLN, was narrowly elected, with a 39-vote lead, as the first female mayor of Cinquera (TSE, 2012).

Over the 10 years since its founding, the ARDM's broader portfolio of projects and programs in Cinquera has included youth organizing, small rotating agricultural loans, support for communal organization in the *cantones* (either through the ADESCOS or *directivas*), coordination of the sister-city youth scholarship program, and, increasingly, the protection of the region's natural resources as a basis for improving well being and quality of life of actual and future generations of Cinquerans.

At first protecting the forest, stopping people from cutting down the trees was a collective effort—we had a commitment to protect people's land even if we didn't know whose it was; it was the patrimony of all. Later we began to institutionalize this feeling through the ARDM, the ADESCOS, and the municipality, but always against one was the Right. It's a very sensitive situation and since 1999, it's been always alive, always present.³⁶

Since the first families returned to Cinquera, the protection of the region's forests has been an issue of community significance. With the founding of the ARDM in the mid 1990s the organization began to take on some of the administrative tasks involved in protecting the forest, such as forest monitoring, that had been handled previously through more impromptu communal mechanisms. In the early years the ARDM received funds from several smaller progressive aid organizations (mostly European) to secure salaries for local forest rangers. Forest activities during this period were almost exclusively limited to restricting forest clearing through permit monitoring. Rangers made rounds throughout the forested region of the municipality to insure that those who were cutting trees had permits, and they attempted to halt those who were engaging in wholesale clearing for cultivation by evoking the forestry law provisions requiring permits for 'changes in land use.' Eventually, though, as funding dried up forest protection tasks were scaled back.

The search for other sources of support required the ARDM and the municipality to confront their first challenge of defining what *was* —as it was referred to—the 'Bosque de Cinquera.' "They [the government] asked us, 'what are you guys going to protect?'" explained the ARDM's park ranger. Requests for support from state institutions for forest protection were initially countered with explanations from the forestry office, or *Dirección General de Recursos Naturales Renovables* (DGRNR) of the Ministry of Agriculture (MAG) that as the lands that the ARDM and the Municipality were private, their protection could not be funded or supported by the government. The DGRNR did help them to set up what they referred to as 'civic groups for forest protection,' offering training on what to do if someone was caught stealing wood, and on how to lead groups of visitors through the forest. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the ARDM has patched together a string of relatively small projects from different international sources, including small progressive NGOs and larger governmental funding sources, the most significant of these being the Enterprise for the Americas

³⁵ The distinction—as I was repeatedly (and kindly) reminded by my local colleagues—between '*asocios*' as opposed to '*socios*' is an important one. The term *socios* in Spanish refers to partners, or collaborators in an enterprise, such as a cooperative or business. *Asocios* are members of an association, as they explained, but not in the sense that they have ownership over the organizations' goods.

³⁶ Interview, #13, Cinquera.

Initiative Funds (known as FIAES in El Salvador, and created from the debt-for-nature schemes adopted by the US in the early 1990s)—to expand and solidify the forest project.

What is the ARDM trying to protect?

One of the most particular aspects of Cinquera's form of 'community-based natural resource management' is that it falls through the cracks of any neat categorization of management/ownership schemes. The sustainable management of biological systems rests on two pillars: the revitalization of legitimacy of particular natural resource management regimes through national recognition of local management institutions—"external legitimacy" – coupled with presence of "internal authority"— that certain norms of behavior regarding management and use of the resource are respected. In other words, an "authority system that ensures that institutional arrangements central to any particular property regime are adhered to" (Bromley 2002: 342).

Scholarship on forest governance institutions has typically examined management within particular regimes. Within the study of common-property regimes fall a multiplicity of institutional arrangements "for the cooperative (shared, joint, collective) use, management, and sometimes ownership of natural resources" (McKean 2000). Interestingly, when one thinks of common-property, it is often perceived of as something that is not privately owned. In actuality, common-property regimes can also involve joint ownership agreements, just like the ones that evolved in Cinquera when the ARDM began to buy forest land from individual PTT beneficiaries, some of whom are also *asocios* of the ARDM.

When I ask Cinquerans what area the forest encompasses, I was informed that it spans the five municipalities of the region Jutiapa, Tenancingo, Cinquera, Tejutepeque and Suchitoto—covering almost 5,000 hectares. "Even though it's not all in Cinquera" I'm told, "it's all called the Cinquera forest." These 5,000 hectares span an area far larger than the municipality of Cinquera, and more than the land over which the ARDM has any legal rights of control. But recent studies of Cinquera commissioned by the Ministry of Environment suggest that 49.3 percent of the total forested area or 23.2 km² lies within Cinquera's municipality boundaries.

It is the perceived extensions of this forested area, together with the biological diversity that Salvadoran and foreign researchers have begun to document, that the ARDM has used to make the case with potential collaborators for supporting the forest. When the ARDM and the Mayor of Cinquera traveled to San Salvador to the Ministry of Environment, one official in charge of the protected area program, told them, "We are very interested in Cinquera because chaparral systems are not represented in the system yet. But, you'll need to make sure that Cinquera is representative of specific ecosystems and size is a factor. How big is it? You'll need much more than 50 mz—you can't play with that!"³⁷ The official went on to tell the ARDM representatives and the Mayor that they would need to have at least 200 contiguous hectares. "No fragmentation!" he added. "You'll need to develop a Management Plan, following the ministry's guidelines, and you'll be monitored too. The only goal for us is that we preserve these ecosystems. They must be maintained." The ARDM and the municipality maintained their efforts to enlist the Ministry of Environment in the making of an environmental project, dutifully filling in technical sheets to justify the forests' ecological interest. They wrote letters and visited the office of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor Program for El Salvador, enumerating all the reasons that Cinquera should be included. Ten years ago, in 2003, the Ministry included the "Montaña de Cinquera" (the new name given to denote the larger from the smaller 'parque' owned by the ARDM) in the national slate of 13 private areas up for potential inclusion in the National System of Natural Protected Areas, (SANP).³⁸ Despite the fact that the area "Montaña de Cinquera" might become a legally-recognized private protected area, other than the forestry law which prohibits clearing without prior authorization of the Forestry Service, there is at present no legal way to prevent the continued clearance of forestlands. The evolving politics over the protection of this larger area is a key part of the story of how the cultural mobilization of Cinquerans, most notably through the ARDM, worked to convince potentially influential partners outside of the region, such as the Ministry of the Environment, the World Bank, and the Global Environmental Facility of the mere existence of the forest.

Prior to the more recent international and national attention received by Cinquera, the earlier years of construction of the forest project and the establishment of the protected areas within the municipality also provide key insights on the politics of community and forest formation and their intersections with land tenure and land use issues in the post-war period. Of the forested region that spans over the five municipalities in El Salvador's north central region, the municipality of Cinquera is said to be located at the 'heart.' In 1997, it was estimated that 64% of land area of the municipality had been transferred through the PTT. The remaining 36% were private lands belonging to '*antiguos propietarios*'—those who owned the land before the war.

Currently, the ARDM manages a small portion of the land within the municipality as a park, referred to as the 'Parque de Cinquera' that people can visit. The 'Parque Bosque de Cinquera' is equipped with several

³⁷ PO-MARN, Sarmenio, 07/20/01.

³⁸ February 15, 2005

kilometers of maintained trail, signage, and biological and historic points of interest including examples of guerilla field hospital and the 'Vietnam'-style cook stoves used to prepare food for the troops during the war. Archeological points of interest include abandoned 'obrajes' or indigo mills. Of these lands which encompass the 'core' area of the Parque de Cinquera managed by the ARDM there is a small portion that consists of municipal lands and communal lands, lands owned by individual private owners—all ex-combatants and *tenedores*—counted among the members of the ARDM who have committed a total of 25 hectares, and land totaling 58.8 hectares mostly purchased from PTT beneficiaries over the last eight years.

It is these 94 hectares of forestlands located in the watershed of the Paso Hondo River that are considered the core forest area. Though intensively used by visitors, it is also the area that is most strictly dedicated to natural regeneration and conservation. The ARDM's forest guards patrol the larger forested area of the municipality of Cinquera, including those lands which are not owned by the association, but other than permit monitoring for clearing and felling trees, they have little or no enforcement capability over those areas.

Though the Cinquera forest region remains to be ratified as a part of the National System of Protected Areas (SANP), the ARDM has managed to sustain advocacy and forest conservation efforts throughout the last decade. In 2012, the 'Media-Cinquera Basin Territory,' encompassing the Cinquera forest region was identified as a pilot area for El Salvador's National Program for the Restoration of Ecosystems and Landscapes (PREP), a program that constitutes, in large part, the basis of the country's 'Readiness Preparation Proposal' (R-PP) to the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) (FCPF/UN-REDD, 2012).

Heretical dreams: the ARDM's vision for a new Cinquera

We've given great priority to the ecological issues first and we felt like we were swimming against the current. It's a delicate and contradictory topic because thinking about now, most of us came from the war, with reinsertion, with nothing so the one thing we were fighting for was land and a symbolic amount of credit and we would have to pay the credit, and there were no sources of employment and we had a big problem defending natural resources. Many were given forest lands. When you start to analyze the situation it's kind of amazing what we've achieved here—it's hard to explain. It wouldn't have worked if we hadn't worked from '91 until now educating the population. The forest is the biggest result we've had here in the municipality of Cinquera. It's a gift to El Salvador and the world. We were almost anonymous, no one knew where we who we were, or that this forest existed and they [the central government] don't care, just like they don't care about us, but we are convinced about what we are doing.³⁹

The ARDM visioning of the future entails more than the consolidation of land for an ecological park and the effort to halt, as much as possible, the conversion of forest to agriculture in the broader area known as the "Montaña de Cinquera." Though these have been the principal focus of efforts thus far, the broader vision of ARDM's project for Cinquera amounts to a redefinition of local rural economy where local livelihoods are derived from agro-ecological cultivation and the management of Cinquera's forest and agriculture matrix. As the '*directiva*' of the ARDM articulated in a recent visioning effort⁴⁰ in which they defined the medium and long term vision of their future "environmental action plan," their hope is to strengthen community organization; provide education, training, and leadership in natural resource management; promote tourism, rational agroecological use, and forest acquisition; as well as secure a payment for environmental services for the areas that beneficiaries own, but presently do not farm, such as the lands of San Antonio; support and protect the forest; strengthen local ordinances, and achieve full legal recognition as a private protected area. In the vision, as the current director of the ARDM explained to me, people who have sold their land to the ARDM are now working parcels in areas that are more suitable for agriculture, with agroecological techniques that also permit access to certain niche markets, or they have left agriculture all together having found new income streams from trades and enterprises related to tourism, including lodging, restaurants, shops, artisanal crafts, and other forms of local employment that the ARDM hopes the forest's presence might contribute toward Cinquera's development and enrichment;

The ARDM should never cease to exist between us, because it is in this organization that I see the projection, for a better destiny for us, for the unions and for the social sectors (organizations). It is a creative way to find new paths.⁴¹

³⁹ Interview #NS-15, Cinquera.

⁴⁰ Facilitated by two deeply politically-committed Salvadoran biologists with whom I collaborated in El Salvador.

⁴¹ Interview #21, Cinquera.

Governance and community fissures: tensions around keeping a forest project alive

Since the ARDM began to create this vision for Cinquera and its forests over a decade ago, much has changed in the municipality. The initial perception of Cinquera as a war zone kept settlers other than the historic community and ex-combatants away for quite some time, but just a time. In the canton of San Benito, adjacent to the town of Cinquera, dozens of families, seemingly an entire community, have migrated from the even poorer, more marginalized town of Corinto, located in the north-eastern department of Morazán. Those who have come from Corinto are tapped into a stream of payments from migrant sons and daughters that are being used to buy up quantities of land in San Benito. The most forceful cleavages between different inhabitants of the municipality on issues of forest and land governance seem to lie in divisions between 'immigrants', those '*historicos*' who are considered to be 'corrupted,' and other supporters of the right-wing party ARENA party in national power and committed '*historicos*,' those FMLN affiliates who remain loyal to the party and active in the community project.

Though differences in gender and class are also lines of difference in Cinquera's 'community,' I focus on these particular formations of identity-based difference as they have so strongly influenced the struggle over the Cinquera forest project. Here, two things are significant. First, while the categories are useful markers for the points of tensions within Cinquera, they are also to be taken as fluid markers. In classifying the '*historicos*' I am creating this term to refer to all of those who, at one point or another, have participated in the political project of the FMLN and the Christian base communities in the 1970's and 1980's and who were most typically later classified as *tenedores* and ex-combatants. There is keen awareness among the different community members regarding who was considered to have 'participated' or 'sacrificed' more or less, and based on that level of participation, social status, and respect within the community is also ascribed. There is give and take along that spectrum, while the difference in the degree of acceptance of the forest project has become increasingly palpable between these groups.

8. Conclusion

This paper tells the story of one place with entwined histories of forests growth, new land rights born of peace, and livelihoods being imagined and crafted from both. In El Salvador, the land transfer borne from a war *and* a peace process carried with it particular meanings and significations for those who received land: it was not a gift from the state, it was something won, and the reasons for having it were rooted in history while also symbolizing alternative futures. It would surely be much simpler to tell the story of Cinquera as a vanguard ex-combatant and refugee community that has struggled, in the revolutionary spirit they continue to hold, to effectively protect and steward a forest. In the context of a nation which has, according to the prevailing degradation narrative, for the most part been laid to barren waste by over-cultivation wrought by extreme inequities in economic opportunity and in distribution of land. In the context of a deforested El Salvador, Cinquera becomes an oasis. And yet while this story is true, it is also partial. A fuller story of the emergence of forms of governance of forest resources in Cinquera follows (in the spirit of this place) a much more overgrown path, in which several features are noticeable.

Inhabiting the intervenient middle

As changes in tenure to land through land reform alter access to resources through the endowments and entitlements they signify to humans they also altered landscapes (Leach, Mearns, and Scoones 1999). At some point, land reform through the PTT, reinsertion, and parcelization came to an end. But the material and discursive reconfiguring of place continues as global and local social, political, and economic dynamics shape what people decide to cultivate or leave fallow, and make (or not make) a living from. How such dynamic transitions occur through local processes, politics, and practices is a part of land reform that remains mostly out of view in broad-scale analyses of outcomes. The vision of Cinquera—as a subsistence agricultural landscape made evident through the land transfer program—was no different than typically implied by developmentalist visions of land and its social functions. Through the story of Cinquera, we are able to see how people who were seemingly unlikely candidates for becoming 'environmentalists'—returned refugees and ex-combatants—became the main advocates for the forest, while, by contrast, the post-war land transfer program carried on, oblivious to the actual landscapes, livelihoods, and other institutions for governance of resource use within the boundary lines they drew. The ARDM and those inhabitants committed to this forest future for Cinquera are in a constant process of 'representing' the issues—why save the forest? and why trust them to do it?—and in so doing challenging other visions (selling land to outside buyers, clearing it for cultivation) that might counter these intentions. Indeed the post-war resettlement and the PTT, the growth of a forest, and the creation and marketing an environmental 'project' as means for alternative livelihood development becomes a way to make revolutions, however 'negotiated,' about offering livable futures rooted in place.

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Abstract

This paper charts events that transpired in the spaces between the larger forces that shaped El Salvador's transition from war to peace throughout the 1990s to the present day and tells the story of one place with entwined histories of forests growth, new land rights that were born of peace, and livelihoods being imagined and crafted from both. Over the six years following the signing of the peace Accords in 1992, ten percent of the nation's agricultural land (totaling over 103,300 hectares) was transferred to ex-combatants of both sides and to civilian supporters of the FMLN, through the Accord-mandated Land Transfer Program. By the year 2000, more than 36,000 people had received land through the PTT and an additional program had been created to parcelize and individually title all PTT lands that were formerly deeded collectively. While leaders of both the FMLN and the government set out to influence the post-war social and political landscape and the donor community generated post-war reconstruction projects, a group of ex-combatants, refugees, and displaced returning to the community of Cinquera, department of Cabañas, proceeded to take the land deeded to them as part of the Peace Accords. They subsequently transformed its use and value in ways never foreseen or intended by government land reform officials, FMLN party organizers, or international aid donors. In the process of linking their history to their future, the people of Cinquera created spaces of habitation for themselves and the natural world. To us, they offer a lesson in how a small community's continued struggle to live out their intentions for an alternative society, act by act, may in the end prove the best possible way to negotiate a revolution.

Key words: spaces of habitation, El Salvador, livelihoods, land transformation.

Résumé

Cet article interroge les forces en Salvador de la guerre dans les années 1990 à la paix de nos jours. Il raconte aussi l'histoire d'un lieu, avec des histoires entrelacées de la croissance des forêts, des droits fonciers qui sont nés de la paix, et la façon dont les moyens de vie sont imaginées et façonné à partir de ces forces. Au cours des six années qui ont suivi la signature des accords de paix en 1992, dix pour cent des terres agricoles du pays (totalisant plus de 103,300 hectares) a été transféré aux ex-combattants des deux parties et de partisans civils du FMLN (programme PTT). En l'an 2000, plus de 36,000 personnes avaient reçu des terres à travers le PTT et un programme supplémentaire a été créé pour allouer et de fournir les titres de propriété de toutes les terres qui étaient anciennement PTT sous le régime foncier communal. Les dirigeants du FMLN et le gouvernement a fixé pour influencer le paysage d'après-guerre sociale et politique, et les donateurs internationaux ont appuyé des projets de reconstruction d'après-guerre. Dans le même temps, un groupe d'ex-combattants, des réfugiés et des personnes déplacées retournent dans la collectivité de Cinquera, département de Cabañas. Ils ont pris la terre cédée à eux dans le cadre des Accords de paix. Ils ont ensuite transformé son usage et la valeur d'une façon jamais prévu par les responsables gouvernementaux de réforme agraire, par le FMLN, ou par les bailleurs de fonds internationaux. Les habitants de Cinquera créé des «espaces d'habitation» pour eux-mêmes et pour le monde naturel. Ils offrent une leçon sur la poursuite de la lutte d'une petite collectivité de vivre une société alternative, acte par acte. Il peut en fin de compte se révéler la meilleure façon possible de négocier une révolution.

Mots clés: espaces d'habitation, El Salvador, les moyens de subsistance, la transformation des terres.

Resumen

Este artículo ofrece un seguimiento de eventos que tuvieron lugar en los espacios entre las fuerzas más importantes que dieron forma a la transición en El Salvador de la guerra a la paz desde la década de los 90 hasta hoy en día y cuenta la historia de un lugar con historias entrelazadas de crecimiento forestal y nuevos derechos de propiedad de la tierra nacidos de la paz y del sustento imaginado y conseguido como resultado de ambos. En los seis años que siguieron a la firma de los Acuerdos de paz de 1992, se transfirió a excombatientes de ambos bandos y a civiles que apoyaban al FMLN el 10% de la tierra cultivable del país (un total de más de 103.300 hectáreas), a través del Programa de Transferencia de la Tierra (PTT) parte de los Acuerdos. Para el año 2000, más de 36000 personas habían recibido tierras gracias al PTT y se había creado otro programa adicional para parcelar y dar en títulos individuales tierras anteriormente escrituradas colectivamente. Si bien líderes tanto del FMLN como del gobierno trataron de influir en el panorama social y político de la postguerra y la comunidad de donantes generó una serie de proyectos, un grupo de excombatientes, refugiados y desplazados que retornaron a la comunidad de Cinquera, departamento de Cabañas, procedieron a tomar posesión de las tierras que les fueron escrituradas como parte de los Acuerdos de paz, transformando de tal manera su valor y su uso hasta un extremo nunca previsto por los funcionarios encargados de la reforma de la tierra, los cuadros del FMLN o los donantes internacionales. En el proceso de enlazar su historia y su futuro, la gente de Cinquera creó espacios de habitación para ellos mismos y el mundo natural. Para nosotros, esto ofrece una lección de cómo la lucha continuada de una pequeña comunidad por hacer realidad sus deseos de una sociedad alternativa, paso a paso, puede llegar a ser en definitiva la mejor forma de negociar una revolución.

Palabras clave: espacios de habitación, El Salvador, medios de vida, la transformación de la tierra.