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## “Only the Rivers Do Not Come Back”: Conservation Displacement and Rural Responses in Costa Rica

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### Abstract

Costa Rica’s environmental regime is world renowned, and since the mid-twentieth century, the country has protected its inestimable natural resources via land conservation expropriation. Through conservation Costa Rica ended the historical plague of deforestation, and its national parks and nature reserves buttress an ecotourism industry that is an important source of foreign revenue. But with every act of conservation, a human toll was also paid. As rural lands became protected areas, rural people lost access to places they depended on for survival. They hence became “victims” or, to some, “enemies” of conservation, and in nearly every setting, they resisted by carrying out land invasions; squatting; unauthorized ranching, farming, and mining; and even environmental banditry (as with the burning of La Casona in Santa Rosa National Park in 2001). Focusing on a handful of celebrated cases of land conservation, this analysis demonstrates how the creation of natural havens such as Corcovado National Park in 1975 displaced rural people and the various ways those people responded.

**Keywords:** conservation; displacement; squatting; Santa Rosa National Park; Corcovado National Park

### Resumen

El régimen ambiental de Costa Rica es de renombre mundial, y el país desde mediados del siglo XX ha protegido sus inestimables recursos naturales a través de la expropiación de tierras. A través de la conservación Costa Rica puso fin a la histórica plaga de la deforestación, y sus parques nacionales y reservas naturales respaldan una industria de ecoturismo que es una importante fuente de ingresos extranjeros. Pero con cada acto de conservación también se pagó un peaje humano. A medida que las tierras rurales se convirtieron en áreas protegidas, la población rural perdió el acceso a los lugares de los que dependía para sobrevivir. Por lo tanto se convirtieron en “víctimas” o, para algunos, “enemigos” de la conservación, y en casi todos los entornos en los que fueron desplazados resistieron realizando invasiones de tierras, ocupaciones ilegales, actividades no autorizadas de ganadería, agricultura y minería, e incluso bandolerismo ambiental (como se vio con la quema de La Casona en el Parque Nacional Santa Rosa en 2001). Este análisis se centra en un puñado de casos célebres de conservación de tierra y demuestra cómo la creación de refugios naturales como el Parque Nacional Corcovado en 1975 desalojó a la población rural y las diversas formas en que esas personas respondieron.

**Palabras clave:** conservación; desalojo de tierras; precarismo; Parque Nacional Santa Rosa; Parque Nacional Corcovado

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## May 2001, Santa Rosa National Park, Province of Guanacaste

Park ranger Ricardo Ponce was making his rounds in the forests of Guanacaste when he heard a thunderous boom. It was early dawn on May 9, 2001, and Ponce ran toward the sound, some five hundred yards along a moonlit path before reaching an old hacienda house known simply as La Casona (“the big house”). Ponce found the structure in flames, and after briefly trying to fight them with an extinguisher, he radioed the ranger station in nearby Pocosal for assistance. He then put in a call to the fire station in Liberia that, at a distance of thirty-eight miles, was at least forty minutes away by car. Geologists and rangers that were stationed in the park hurried to help, and they fought furiously but futilely to combat the blaze. By the time firefighters from Liberia arrived the facade of the building, its roof, and most of the museum it housed were lost. The structure’s thick beams of guanacaste wood, dry adobe, and bamboo acted as accelerants for the flames, and the big house that had withstood habitation, weather, and war for 338 years was consumed in less than an hour (Centeno Mena 2001b; Kussalanant 2001).

The following day, May 10, the front page of Costa Rica’s largest newspaper, *La Nación*, gravely announced, “The principle historical monument of the nation no longer exists” (Loaiza and Zeledón 2001). This was not hyperbole; the early-dawn fire that attacked La Casona ravaged 80 percent of it. Built in 1663, La Casona was the center of life on the ranching hacienda Santa Rosa and a major driver of the regional economy for nearly two centuries before it achieved mythical status in 1856. On March 20 of that year the house hosted the most famous battle in the history of Costa Rica after it was overrun by an estimated thousand men who fought in the army of William Walker, the infamous North American filibuster who invaded Nicaragua, Honduras, and, last, Costa Rica in an attempt to carve away its northern province of Guanacaste. A makeshift army of five hundred local men, however, outfitted with only old muskets, machetes, and rocks, and nestled in behind the stone walls of the surrounding corral, waged a furious attack on the house and the occupying force there. Legend has it that the battle lasted just fourteen minutes, and the patriots were victorious. The Costa Rican victory at the Battle of Santa Rosa contributed to the demise of Walker’s regional schemes and the eventual victory of Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Honduras in the National Campaign of 1856–1857. La Casona, hence, became a preeminent historical site, and because it was situated in one of the hemisphere’s largest tropical dry forests, the Guanacaste Conservation Area (of which Santa Rosa is a part) was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2000, just months before the fire (Loaiza and Zeledón 2001; Centeno Mena 2001b; Kussalanant 2001; Mora 2001).

Scant facts were known the following day, but most who assembled at the scene suspected a “criminal hand” was at play. To Environmental Minister Elizabeth Odio Benito, it was clear that the burning of La Casona was intentional. Park rangers, she related, had clashed on previous occasions with poachers, arsonists, and tree fellers who practiced illegal hunting, burning, and logging in the forest. Thus, it was likely that one of those offenders had sought revenge, since they were prohibited from hunting deer and other species and punished heavily for their infractions. The investigation began in earnest the following day, and several developments endorsed what officials speculated. News broke a few weeks later that two suspects had been named in connection to the La Casona fire. The men were residents of Liberia, and one of them was already in custody after having reported to prison six days after the fire to begin serving a sentence for illegal hunting (Arguedas 2001b).

After being interrogated, the two suspects were formally charged with arson on May 25 and their identities were revealed. They were Geovanni Mora Cruz, forty-one years old, and Roy Calvo Barquero, twenty-two years old, both of Liberia. Both men had records of illegal hunting within the confines of Santa Rosa National Park, and Mora, as mentioned earlier, had been previously convicted of assaulting a park ranger and violating the Law of

Wildlife Conservation. In that trial his codefendant was a man named Calvo, the father of the young man named as the second suspect in the La Casona fire. Mora and the younger Calvo were arraigned and ordered to be detained, pending trial, for the crime of arson, which according to Article 246 of the Penal Code was punished more harshly if the fire damaged structures of “scientific, artistic, historical, or religious value” (Arguedas 2001d). La Casona certainly satisfied these parameters, and the purported arson of Mora and Calvo appeared a clear-cut act of “vengeance.”

The investigation continued with Mora and Calvo both detained. Anonymous calls placed to the Liberia police gave clues that brought the facts to light. Mora had on several occasions threatened to set fire to La Casona to exact revenge on the national park and the rangers whom he despised for having arrested him for poaching (Centeno Mena 2001a). Thirteen witnesses were called in the trial of Mora and Calvo that convened later that year, in October 2001 (Arguedas 2001a). The wheels of justice move relatively swiftly in Costa Rica, and on October 29, at 1:30 p.m., the judges read their verdict to the media and onlookers inside the courtroom. Geovanni Mora Cruz and Roy Calvo Barquero were found guilty of arson, and each was sentenced to twenty years in prison for the crime of burning La Casona of Santa Rosa. Liliana Zamora, the prosecuting attorney for the government, had successfully linked the men to the crime and argued compellingly that their motive was revenge. As for the convicted men of Guanacaste, they were silent. Neither Mora nor his accomplice Calvo gave a statement, and the hearing concluded at 1:45 p.m. They humbly accepted the judgment of the state and were ushered off to begin the next stage of their lives behind bars (*La Nación* 2001; Arguedas 2001c; *Tico Times* 2001).

### Central questions and theoretical underpinnings of study

Given the oversized significance of La Casona in the national narrative, this tale of conflict, revenge, and, as some might see it, retributive justice, seems a strange example to highlight the larger plight of rural people in modern Costa Rica. Yet the story of Mora and Calvo and their conflict with the government is an exemplary microhistory of land conservation displacement. The men, like other rural hunters, earned income by extracting deer and other native fauna from nearby forests. Undoubtedly their ancestors (the elder Calvo, for instance) did the same thing, and they believed that they were hunting on lands they had a right to access as men of Guanacaste.

To be clear, hunting had been restricted on rural lands in Guanacaste long before Mora and Calvo ran afoul of conservation authorities, and even before the designation of the surrounding forest as a protected area in the 1960s. The emergence of the latifundio (a large, largely uncultivated private estate) dated to the late nineteenth century, and with widespread privatization, lands and forests that lay untouched became prime targets for unauthorized activities, including hunting and habitation. Regarding the latter phenomenon, the extent of peasant occupation in Guanacaste in the early twentieth century was vast, as evidenced by a 1907 census that counted 10,262 people in informal villages and isolated settlements within the boundaries of just eleven latifundio estates. Given Guanacaste’s total population of 29,093, this meant that at least 35 percent of the province’s total population lived on occupied lands to which someone else had legal title (Edelman 1992, 125).

Guanacaste’s geographic isolation, harsh environment, low population, and economic situation afforded peon laborers and even squatters remarkable bargaining power vis-à-vis their employers and forced landowners to tolerate unauthorized hunting and long-term peasant occupations. Economic calamity in the 1930s, however, deteriorated the rural poor’s position and precluded landowners’ having to tolerate poaching and squatting on their lands. Increased repression and hostility between the social classes

ensued, and landowners stopped permitting hunting and fishing on their properties (Edelman 1992, 120, 119). Thus, it was land concentration via *latifundismo* that had historically restricted rural peoples' access to forest lands and resources.

With this established, this article asks whether the advent of the conservationist cause and the establishment of protected areas in Costa Rica beginning in the 1950s further restricted, or outright prevented, rural people's access to these places. Clearly, the lands that Mora and Calvo accessed had been restricted for generations, and on those lands their predecessors maintained a relatively peaceful stasis, albeit one defined by irregularity and precarity. Did rural people like Mora and Calvo hence become "outlaws" upon the creation of national parks and other protected areas? Were they somehow victims of the cause of conservation—a cause that many associate Costa Rica with today? How, moreover, did conservation expropriation exacerbate the historical problem of displacement in the countryside? And how did rural people respond to conservation displacement? Let us first consider these questions broadly, before entering the Costa Rican theater.

Environmental historians who have studied this phenomenon in the United States during its early conservationist period offer lessons applicable to this analysis. The history of conservation in the United States, according to Karl Jacoby (2001, 2), revolves around two twin axes: "law and its antithesis—lawlessness." To achieve its vision of a rational, state-managed landscape, state proponents of conservation created a new body of rules governing the use of the environment. And with these new rules, naturally, came the creation of new crimes. For many rural communities, the most notable feature of conservation was the transformation of previously acceptable practices into illegal acts. Hunting or fishing was "redefined as poaching; foraging as trespassing, the setting of fires as arson, and the cutting of trees as timber theft." In many cases, country people reacted to this criminalization of their customary activities with hostility, and in some regions affected by conservation there arose a phenomenon Jacoby (2001) calls "environmental banditry," in which violations of environmental regulations were tolerated, and sometimes even supported, by members of the local society. Within this rubric, Mora and Calvo fit the bill as environmental bandits because of their unsanctioned hunting and logging and—after their torching of La Casona—their brazen attempt to punish law and authority.

Another analytical framework worth considering, and one with more geographical and chronological overlap, is that of the "nature state," introduced in an eponymously titled 2017 volume. Collectively the book's essays demonstrate the worldwide ubiquity of national attempts to protect nature in the twentieth century and the near-universal understanding that some effort to protect the natural world was something to be expected of modern states. Importantly, contributors also point out that while conservation efforts were sometimes genuine attempts to preserve nature, they were at other times useful facades for policies directed at social control or geopolitical imperatives. Unquestionably the paradigm of the nature state is imposable onto the story of conservation in twentieth-century Costa Rica, and the latter-referenced paradox seems apropos in a national context where not just local hunters were adversely affected by classifying forest resources as public goods; anyone whose activities were deemed adverse to animal or plant habitats ostensibly became an enemy of conservation (Kelly et al. 2017).

Mora and Calvo were hunters and wood collectors, but in the eyes of the authorities they were poachers (*cazadores furtivos*) and illegal tree fellers (*taladores de arboles*). They were not squatters (*precaristas*), but the most common way rural people in twentieth-century Costa Rica resisted the conservationist regime was by occupying protected areas, including national parks and nature reserves, without permission. Here, again, the US environmental history literature is informative, as it understands squatting as counter to the positivist state and its pretensions to rationally exploit forest resources for the public good. But as has been shown, the displacement of rural people via the expansion of the latifundio in Costa Rica predated the state's conservation-motivated expropriation

of land, and it was driven by forces—also environmental in nature—that had been gaining steam for more than a century prior.

### Land degradation and rural displacement as an impetus for conservation

Land concentration and population growth were the primary causes of rural out-migration in the mid- and late twentieth century, but a less obvious factor is also pivotal to this story: land degradation. Deforestation as a product of logging, farming, ranching, and settlement was a relative nonissue in the colonial and early republican periods, as Costa Rica was a poor, isolated, and thinly populated corner of the Spanish Empire. This situation changed with the introduction of coffee cultivation in the *meseta central* (central highlands) in the 1830s and accelerated rapidly thereafter (Carrière 1991, 14). The consolidation of large holdings caused by the rise of coffee as a major export crop also paved the way for the rise of extensive cattle ranching, an industry that has historically devastated the landscape. Ranching also generated few jobs vis-à-vis farming or other rural industries—a trend that continues to this day (Evans 1999, 47). So not only did the expansion of ranching reduce the area available for subsistence agriculture; it also failed to absorb the displaced peasantry through generating employment on any significant scale.

The bleak social and environmental conditions throughout the Costa Rican countryside caught the eye of midcentury legislators, and with the arrival of the Junta Fundadora de Segunda República in 1948, truly explicit conservationist legislation was passed that created the Department of Conservation and Fishing and the Section of Soil and Forest Conservation within the Ministry of Agriculture. This cause was continued the following year, and the year 1949 saw the enactment of laws to protect maritime game and fish and the creation of the Forestry Council, which managed the national forests, created new forest reserves, oversaw fire control, and cooperated with civic organization, rural communities, and farmers in the management of forest resources.

Thus, while Costa Rica under the leadership of José Figueres Ferrer and the National Liberation Party lagged on the creation of laws to address landlessness and land settlement in the countryside, it did not hesitate to establish control over biological and natural resources. The Costa Rican nature state that many admire today was born in 1955 with the creation of the Costa Rican Institute of Tourism (Instituto Costarricense del Turismo, ICT), a dependency that married two nascent industries—conservationism and tourism—and followed a mandate to establish and maintain national parks and provide protection around volcanoes (Hopkins 1995, 43). The country's first protected area surrounded Poás Volcano, with an approximate land area of 139 square miles and was quickly followed by the protection of Irazú Volcano in the same mountain chain. In 1958 the ICT named a commission to study additional sites that ought to be national parks and included nonvolcanic sites of biological and cultural importance worthy of federal protection.

Still, as the 1950s progressed, it was not land conservation that primarily forced peasants' displacement. Traditional culprits remained in place, and namely, land concentration and the steady expansion of the ranching industry. Nonetheless the issue of public land was deemed central to the problem of landlessness and the peasantry, as is evident in the text of the 1942 Squatters' Law, and more overtly, in the 1961 Law of Lands and Land Settlement. In fact, the conservationist cause is instilled into the core mission of the latter law, which listed in Article 1 its objective: "Contribute to the proper conservation and use of the reserves of the renewable natural resources of the Nation."<sup>1</sup> Article 11 of the law

<sup>1</sup> Ley de Tierras y Colonización de 1961, Article 1: Sistema Costarricense del Información Jurídica, [http://www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm\\_texto\\_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=32840&nValor3=90654&strTipM=TC](http://www.pgrweb.go.cr/scij/Busqueda/Normativa/Normas/nrm_texto_completo.aspx?param1=NRTC&nValor1=1&nValor2=32840&nValor3=90654&strTipM=TC).

expounded upon this extraordinary concept by clarifying that state agricultural property, “until proven otherwise,” belonged to the state as “national reserves.” Its clauses decreed the following lands property of the nation:

- a. All the lands within the limits of the Republic that are not registered as private property or [property of] the Municipalities or the Autonomous institutions;
- b. those that are not protected by ten-year possession;
- c. those that, by special laws, have not been assigned to the formation of agricultural colonies; and,
- d. those that . . . are not employed in public services.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we see in the national blueprint for land use the central role that public land already played, and was to play in the future, in addressing the question of the landless. Article 11(b) of the 1961 law affirmed the legality of title for land possessors who had ten or more years on the property—a guarantee that applied to possession on public as much as private land.

One may also derive in the law’s language an implicit desire to expand the nation’s system of protected areas so as to preserve the nation’s rapidly dwindling forests and its renowned biological diversity.<sup>3</sup> As late as 1950, 90 percent of the country remained under forest cover. That decade, however, saw an unprecedented assault on the nation’s forests, and a widespread conversion of its rural land from farms to pastures. The 1961 law aspired to halt this destruction and laid important groundwork for eventual eco-protection, although gratification would be delayed. Nature’s obliteration continued unabated, and by 1970, only about half the Costa Rican landscape (approximately ten thousand square miles) was still forested; by 1990, a mere 25 percent of the republic’s natural canopy remained untouched.

Apart from cutting down the trees themselves, timber companies compounded the problem of deforestation by constructing roads through previously inaccessible areas. Along these roads came migrants looking for a way to feed their families in newly deforested areas. Land degradation made the movement of *precaristas* onto unauthorized lands inevitable, despite the government’s best efforts to control their movements. The story of *precarismo* in Costa Rica, it should be noted, is in line with the story of land invasion and squatting in most parts of Latin America; a 1991 study of the 184 national parks in South America revealed that 86 percent of parks dealt with issues of human occupancy or use of their resources, on either a permanent or a temporary basis (Amend and Amend 1995, 455). Yet Costa Rica stood out because of the staggering degree of *precarismo* on its public lands. Twenty-five percent of all protected areas had been occupied at one time or another by the 1980s, a survey revealed, making Costa Rica a case study worthy of special attention (Evans 1999, 41–42).

There is a common adage among environmentalists and politicians in Costa Rica that *solo los ríos no se devuelven*, or “only the rivers do not come back.” This is a utilitarian philosophy that accepts that land conservation, though severe in its minimizing of rural peoples’ survival needs, is an important and necessary mission that preserves the country’s natural assets and bolsters an economic basis for its future: ecotourism. Tourism, in general, has been a crucial economic sector in the country since the establishment of the Costa Rican

<sup>2</sup> Ley de Tierras y Colonización de 1961, Article 11.

<sup>3</sup> The great richness of species in Costa Rica was appreciated long before the idea of biodiversity as a source of economic wealth took flight in the 1980s. As Megan Raby (2017, 2–4) explains, US and Costa Rican scientists had interacted with Costa Rica’s biozones for much of the previous century and the field sites they established were crucial in understanding the biological differences of the tropics and, ultimately, establishing its potential as a resource.

Institute of Tourism in the 1950s, a fact attributed to the following factors: the country's large middle class, its excellent public health and public education systems that produced a healthy and literate populace, its highly developed infrastructure (e.g., paved roads, telephones, electricity), its functioning democracy, its political stability and social peace, its pleasant climate, and its easy accessibility from the United States. All this enabled tourism to become Costa Rica's number-one foreign exchange earner by 1993, surpassing coffee, bananas, and all other sectors in the nation's increasingly diversified economy. And the sector continued to grow. By 2012, tourism accounted for about 22 percent of the nation's foreign exchange and 8 percent of its gross domestic product.

Why, then, the emphasis on ecotourism? The answer lies in the geographical and natural idiosyncrasies of Costa Rica, a country that occupies just 0.035 percent of the earth's surface but contains about 5 percent of its biodiversity. Similarly, human agency deserves credit as well, and the foresight of the government to prioritize *pizote* (coati) habitats over cattle ranches, scarlet macaw nests over tropical timber, and sea turtle hatcheries over beach hotels, among other choices, would produce great rewards for the nation. And with the regular expansion of its national park and natural reserve systems, ecotourism as a distinct kind of travel expanded concurrently, bringing ever-increasing numbers of foreign travelers into the country's hinterland. From just 450 "nature tourists" in 1974 to 50,000 in 1993 and over 200,000 in 2005, tiny Costa Rica, with its twelve different ecosystems, would become the number-one destination in the world for ecotourism by the turn of the century (Honey 1998, 163–164, 161, 4).

Certainly it was a conservationist dream that inspired an immigrant couple to pressure the government to protect a small section of their new homeland from the ravages of uncontrolled settlement and farming (Evans 1999, 60–63; Tjäder 2014, 38–43). Husband and wife Olof Wessberg and Karen Mogensen desired to leave behind their urban existence when they departed Sweden in 1954, and for almost a year they reconnoitered the Pacific Coast of Central America until they found their little slice of heaven on the Nicoya Peninsula of northwestern Costa Rica. For the next several years, they raised organic fruit and lived in symbiosis with nature, thus finding the intentional simplicity that they longed for. But as the 1950s advanced, the couple watched as the trees that clothed the nearby peninsula of Cabo Blanco rapidly disappeared, removed stand by stand by hundreds of migrants who had moved into the area to farm.

Fearing the permanent loss of their adopted habitat, Wessberg and Mogensen began an international fundraising campaign for the preservation of the peninsula through the creation of a national park. Conservation organizations in the United States, England, Switzerland, and Austria pitched in to save the endangered jungle, and during the course of the next several years, Wessberg made twenty-three trips to San José to petition the government to expropriate the land. With money and international support behind him, he was successful. On October 7, 1963, the couple's dream came true and Cabo Blanco Absolute Natural Reserve was established by executive decree, consisting of 1,172 hectares of tropical dry forest and becoming Costa Rica's first nature reserve.

### **Rural responses to conservation displacement**

The success of Cabo Blanco invigorated the conservationist cause, and the ensuing decade produced a spate of new parks and nature reserves. In 1966 Hacienda Santa Rosa was established as Costa Rica's first national monument, for its biological value and its centrality in commemorating the nation's most important historical site—the hacienda house La Casona. But as with Cabo Blanco, the creation and development of this public landscape sparked conflicts with locals who relied on resources or resided on lands that would be henceforth controlled by the government. Squatters had been present on the

public and private lands that composed Hacienda Santa Rosa since before its inception in 1966, and in 1969, when the monument was still under the administration of the ICT, it was deemed an increasing problem. Twenty-five *poseedores en precario*, it was reported, had established themselves during the previous year near the beach of Bahía Naranjo, which was still partly privately controlled, prompting Hermes González Herrera, a volunteer ranger at the monument, to complain to authorities. It was likely that González was personally connected to the land affected by the invasions, and the subsequent letter addressed to the ICT demanded that the institute assist the property owner in obtaining an injunction or an administrative eviction order, since only the courts had the power to expel the squatters.<sup>4</sup>

Archival records reveal the extent of other conflicts instigated by the conservation of the landscape. Later that year, on August 14, Walter J. Hine, head of promotion for the ICT, wrote Hernán Echandi, president of the Shooting and Hunting Club, politely asking him to instruct his members that it was “strictly prohibited to hunt in areas or sections of the national territory that are declared national parks.” Respect for the law on the part of the club’s members, Hine hoped, would allow the club’s members and all sportsmen to collaborate with the ICT in its mission to exercise “permanent vigilance so that the fauna of the country” be protected inside natural refuges, which, among other things, was the “function of the national parks.”<sup>5</sup>

The problems of squatting and illegal hunting, presumably, increased in the coming months. By late summer, about forty families of squatters moved onto the beach of Bahía Naranjo and began to clear forest to establish farms. Recall that there was no formal staff except for a single workman and a handful of volunteer rangers. One of the volunteers, however, would make a permanent mark on the history of Santa Rosa and on the story of conservation in Costa Rica writ large. Álvaro Ugalde was an outdoor enthusiast and biology student at the University of Costa Rica in 1969 when the emerging crisis at Hacienda Santa Rosa caught his attention. Spurred by such newspaper headlines as “Santa Rosa in Flames; National Park Being Burned,” Ugalde relocated to Guanacaste and with government authorization worked hard to create good relations with the *precaristas* residing around Bahía Naranjo. He advised them of their rights as afforded them under the 1961 Law of Lands and Land Settlement, including that they be compensated for their improvements to the land, and guided them in their dealings with the Instituto de Tierras y Colonización (Institute of Lands and Land Settlement, ITCO) and their relocations to other lands.

However, the troubles at Santa Rosa did not cease when the government issued bonds to buy out and relocate the peasant farmers of Bahía Naranjo. Better-heeled and more audacious foes remained in place to impede the realization of the park: neighboring ranchers—one of whom simply stole sixty hectares (approximately 150 acres) of land by moving his fences into the park. The park had but one workman at the time and he turned a blind eye to the damage, prompting Ugalde, who was then acting as volunteer administrator of the park, into action. He decried the situation in the press, and capitalized on the environmentalist agenda of Karen Olsen de Figueres, the first lady of the nation who turned conservation into a major focus of her husband’s government. While in office she vigorously supported the introduction of new legislation to create a system of sixteen national parks, in addition to serving on and leading various environmental groups and conservation commissions.

Olson de Figueres was the “fairy godmother” of Costa Rican conservationism, said Mario Boza, an agronomist and US-trained park administrator who was named the first director

<sup>4</sup> Manual Antonio Zamorra Ch., May 6, 1969, Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica (hereafter ANCR), Archivo Histórico (hereafter AH), Ministerio de Hacienda (hereafter MH), Collection 033638, 2408.

<sup>5</sup> Walter J. Hine, August 14, 1969, ANCR, AH, MH, Collection 033638, 2092/500.



of the Servicio de Parques Nacionales (National Park Service) upon its creation in 1970. And her intervention likely saved Santa Rosa from ecological ruin. For just as squatters were leaving Bahía Naranjo in early 1971, a bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly to take the monument away from the newly created parks department and return it to the ICT. This was a positive development for the park, argued the bill's author, Daniel Oduber, for the ICT had a large budget and powerful backers. The newly established parks department, in contrast, had almost no budget and a skeleton staff heavily reliant on volunteers. Oduber, incidentally, happened to be from Guanacaste and was a friend of the neighboring rancher who had moved his fences into the park to graze cattle. His purported magnanimity, thus, did not fool the first lady, and she proceeded to lobby members of the assembly against the administrative move (Evans 1999, 77–78). Her efforts, coupled with Ugalde's campaign in the press, succeeded in killing the bill and forced the government to expel the unauthorized ranchers and their livestock from the park.

Increased government control over protected areas opened the door for such areas' ascension to national park status. In January 1971, Poás Volcano National Park was established, the nation's first, followed quickly by Santa Rosa National Park in March of that year. Still, Santa Rosa remained vulnerable to unauthorized grazing by ranchers. Just a few months after Santa Rosa was designated a national park, it was discovered that the minister of agriculture was running cattle on its grassland savannas. Squatting would not be permanently extinguished in Santa Rosa or in other national parks, and not even in the "jewel in the crown" of Costa Rica's conservation regime, Corcovado National Park.

It was in 1968 that the ecological significance of the Osa Peninsula, occupying Costa Rica's extreme southwestern corner, caught the attention of the world's scientific community. Biologists from several countries carried out an expedition to survey the biodiversity of the region's only coastal rain forest, cataloging and studying hundreds of species they determined to be nearly extinct. This made apparent the Osa Peninsula's immense ecological importance and pressured the Costa Rican government to protect the resources found there and, specifically, those in the basin of Corcovado, an area of roughly 140 square miles on the western side of the peninsula.<sup>6</sup> For years the conservationists' efforts were to no avail, but that changed in 1974, when Daniel Oduber—the Guanacaste politician who had previously threatened the existence of Santa Rosa National Park—assumed the presidency and decreed the protection of the Corcovado basin. Oduber, it was said, had a personal passion for the project, and also driving his actions was the recent murder of Olof Wessberg, who had spearheaded the creation of Cabo Blanco Absolute Natural Reserve in 1963.

The details of Wessberg's death are essential to this story. After success at Cabo Blanco, Wessberg set his sights on protecting the big rain forest to the south on the Osa Peninsula and again procured support and funding from international organizations. He traveled to the Osa Peninsula in July 1975 to write a report, and there hired a young man to guide him through the jungle. Only the guide returned from their expedition, although he quickly departed for San José and could not be located. It was soon learned that Wessberg was murdered by the young man at the behest of locals who did not want the area expropriated and converted into a national park. Instead, they wanted to clear-cut the forest to plant banana and dig for gold. As for the young pathfinder who committed the crime—the "environmental bandit" who ostensibly served the retributive justice of his rural compatriots—he was apprehended, convicted, sent to prison, and in due time himself murdered by a fellow inmate.

Reacting to the murder of Wessberg, President Oduber announced on television that, because "the Swede [had] given his life to protect our rainforests," it was "Costa Rica's duty

<sup>6</sup> "Declaraciones del Ministro de Gobernación Lic. Edgar Arroyo Cordero, Encargado del Ministerio de la Presidencia," May 21, 1976, ANCR, AH, Ministerio de Gobernación (hereafter MG), Collection 056944, 8.

to realize his dream of a national park in Corcovado” (Tjäder 2014). A presidential decree on October 31, 1975, established Corcovado National Park, cobbling together the entity through the expropriation of public land and via a land swap with a timber company that owned vast tracts inside the designated area. The establishment of Corcovado garnered the government praise from environmentalists the world over, many of whom sent notes to the president thanking him for the initiative. However, as seen before, difficulties arose as the presidential decree pitted biological and tourism imperatives against basic human needs. The action, of course, did not erase the presence of people who had trickled into the area since the 1930s, and who had since then coexisted with timber companies and land speculators to the great detriment of nature. Fast-forward several decades, to the mid-1970s, and most of those settlers felt legitimated in their holdings—a feeling they could very well justify given Costa Rica’s liberal land tenancy laws. When forced to leave their homesteads, many aggressively resisted eviction, creating a violent “frontier atmosphere” on the Osa Peninsula that could prove deadly (Evans 1999, 97). Faced with this tinderbox, the government endeavored to repeat at Corcovado the negotiation and eviction and relocation processes it had carried out, peacefully, at Cabo Blanco and Santa Rosa.

Minister of Government Edgar Arroyo Cordero, speaking just a few months after the creation of Corcovado, reiterated an idea well known by ecologists that tropical forests, though lush on the surface, usually made poor farms. In his words: “The conditions of the zone for ranching, agriculture and other types of use are too poor.” It was thus not cows or bananas, the minister opined, but “conservation, toward the ends of research, conservation of soils, education, waters, flora and fauna, recreation, scientific and other kinds of tourism” that were the best uses of the land.<sup>7</sup> President Oduber agreed, and he conceded in writing that the global scientific value of Corcovado’s resources surpassed the needs of its local inhabitants. “I am aware that many people are affected [by the park’s creation],” he wrote Hernan Garrón, then minister of agriculture and ranching. “Several of them have come to the offices of some ministers and the Presidential House to request that this project be discontinued.” Yet the president was resolute in the park’s purpose. He requested that his government use all resources at its disposal to consolidate the lands inside its boundaries and carry out the project as quickly as possible.<sup>8</sup>

Even with visible popular opposition to the park’s creation Oduber underestimated the extent of the *precarista* problem inside the limits of the park. So did Álvaro Ugalde, the former volunteer ranger at Santa Rosa who by 1976 had risen to the top of the Servicio de Parques Nacionales. Ugalde estimated that there were just forty-five families within Corcovado that would have to be removed—an estimate that proved significantly low when 166 families (possibly 1,500 people) and hundreds of heads of livestock were counted in May of that year (Honey 1998, 173). Regardless of the number, moving settlers was particularly difficult in a location that lacked roads and required the removal of people and their animals by boat or airplane. Nonetheless, Oduber was committed to the realization of the park and the protection of its lands and resources from settler degradation. He ordered that ITCO ready for the “responsible relocation of all the occupants within the park and the payment of their improvements,” and he requested the park service be “fully committed, justifiably but firmly, to enforce the Executive Decree” that created the park.<sup>9</sup> Evicting individuals from their homes would not be the exclusive responsibility of the park service, however. Later that year the Guardia de Asistencia Rural (Rural Assistance Guard, GAR) was established as an armed force to remove squatters at the government’s

<sup>7</sup> “Declaraciones del Ministro de Gobernacion Lic. Edgar Arroyo Cordero,” 9.

<sup>8</sup> President Daniel Oduber to Hernan Garrón, Minister of Agricultura y Ganaderia, January 22, 1976, ANCR, MG, Collection 035635, 21–22.

<sup>9</sup> Oduber to Garrón, 21–22.

command. The GAR would henceforth be the primary agent of *precarista* evictions in Costa Rica, and the subsequent story of state-squatter relations in that nation cannot be told without discussing the role this paramilitary played in the destinies of rural and urban informal communities.

A meeting convened on February 2, 1976, brought together the primary government, business, and residential players affected by the establishment of Corcovado National Park. The series of accords, produced by the meeting and finalized and signed on May 21, were pleasing to all parties and granted a total of 6.5 million colones to indemnify the eighty-some evicted families for the improvements they had made to their properties and provide them with capital to purchase new farms elsewhere. As for those few families that had refused eviction and relocation, Arroyo explained, the government would continue negotiating with them on “minor problems,” including the size of their parcels, the purchase price of their cattle, and payment for some of the materials they possessed. In all, the minister was satisfied: “Today we sign a definitive agreement by means of the occupants and the government to resolve the small problems that subsist and definitively consolidate the protection of this national park. We appreciate the help and the collaboration of the peasants and their leaders to make the dream of the president a reality.”<sup>10</sup>

The text of the agreement better portrays the complexity of the agreement than does the minister’s tidy assessment. Fifty-four families, not the “few” claimed by Arroyo, had resisted eviction, and there were additional families that would have to be compensated for having their lands divided by the boundaries of the newly established park. Moreover, there were “uncounted” people who remained in the park, and they would have to be heard from and relocated as well. As for the specifics of relocation, the evicted were to receive ITCO benefits including a three-month food subsidy and be awarded new parcels based on a number of criteria, including size of their family, number and quality of their cattle, and remaining quantities of unused grains, seeds, gasoline, lubricants, zinc, cement, wire, and other farm materials. Upon signing the agreement, all named parties were obliged to comply with its terms and vacate the park immediately.<sup>11</sup>

With the agreement of May 21, 1976, Corcovado National Park was largely rid of the farmers and ranchers that threatened the preservation of perhaps Costa Rica’s most important biological haven. But the bounty of the Osa Peninsula deeply penetrated its soils, and future conflicts at Corcovado would center on gold and not trees, cattle, or farmland. In the early 1980s, large, well-financed mining companies consolidated control outside the park, driving hundreds of small gold miners (*oreros*) into the park, where they killed fish and wild animals for food and silted and poisoned the rivers with the mercury they used in panning. Periodically the GAR and park authorities acted to expel the fortune seekers, only to see them return on their release. These conflicts caused scientists to abandon research sites and tourism camps to close. *Oberos*, like all squatters, were driven by economic necessity, and despite the fact that tourism in Corcovado in the late 1970s and early 1980s generated at least twice as much revenue as did placer mining—approximately US\$500,000 to US\$1 million—the perception among the region’s poor was that gold work was more lucrative.

And thus it persisted. Waves and waves of new *oreros* settled and searched for gold in Corcovado in the coming years. By February 1983, the situation reached a breaking point, and as former president Daniel Oduber watched his legacy quite literally degrade on a daily basis, he wrote his successor, Luis Alberto Monge (president of Costa Rica, 1982–1986) with urgency. He began: “There is a great worry at the national and international level about the deterioration that Corcovado National Park is suffering due to the uncontrolled

<sup>10</sup> “Declaraciones del Ministro de Gobernación Lic. Edgar Arroyo Cordero,” 9–10.

<sup>11</sup> “Acuerdo Definitivo entre el Gobierno de la República y los Ocupantes del Parque Nacional de Corcovado,” May 21, 1976, ANCR, AH, MG, Collection 056944, 4–5.

activities that hundreds or thousands of *oreros* are conducting inside the park's limits." This was intolerable, he believed, for "Corcovado, along with the other national parks that we have established during the last twelve years allow Costa Rica today to occupy the highest place of prestige in the community of nations as a world leader in conservation." As before, Oduber recognized that basic necessities undergirded the actions of the landless, and he explained, "I am conscious of the grave economic situation that we are going through, but I agree with the ideas expressed by you [previously] . . . that we must at all cost avoid losing the long-term perspective of the Costa Rica that we are going to leave to future generations." For as much, the former president and then honorary president of the Fundación de Parques Nacionales (National Parks Foundation) asked his colleague to take the necessary measures to prevent "irreversible damages" to the park.<sup>12</sup>

Oduber's letter to Monge did not explicitly demand the eviction of the *oreros*, although the sentiment was implicit. Not unknown to the former president were the eviction operations already underway by the GAR, which briefed him on a regular basis.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, and despite Oduber's particular interest in Corcovado, the influx of *oreros* and squatters into the park continued unabated. By 1985, some 1,400 *oreros* and hangers-on could be counted living in it, to the effect that game animals had been practically eliminated and rivers had become canals—sterile and full of sediment (Honey 1998, 174). Park service officials speaking to *La Nación* in 1985 did not varnish their opinions about the "massive invasion" of Corcovado by *oreros*, and they attributed it to several factors, including the opening of the Pan-American Highway and the Latin American debt crisis that had caused the price of gold to spike and had turned the national park into a "kind of workplace" that was robbing it of its flora and fauna. In the roughly one-third of the park dominated by *oreros*, they elaborated, the hydraulic system was "dead," and the *oreros*, like "termites," had destroyed one of the most distinctive parts of Costa Rica's national patrimony before the world (McDermott, Viales Hurtado, and Chavarría Camacho 2019, 118).

Harsh condemnation aside, *oreros* showed little fear of arrest, as Costa Rica had traditionally tolerated peasant land invasions. And other rural people felt the same—some even promising land invasions in writing, as a certified letter to Álvaro Ugalde on March 14, 1985, attests. The twenty-three signatories were men and women, all presumably farmers of the area who had been displaced by the establishment of the park in 1975. The text of the letter is worthy of considering in detail:

Mr. Alvaro Ugalde, Director of National Parks

CC: Mr. President of the Republic; . . .

After a cordial greeting we are forced to inform you that we listened to you on Channel 7 news where you said that *oreros* have invaded Corcovado Park, [and] we must tell you that we who lived in San Pefrillo [*sic*] Llorona and the Bajuras de Sirena and Las Cabeceras de Corcovado, must also invade it, as you well remember that on February 12, 1976, we negotiated with representatives of the Government . . .

You as Director of National Parks, Roger Morales Coordinator of Parks, and Gerardo Jimenez representing ITCO made agreements that we be paid for improvements, and that we receive a salary of 20 colones a day or 480 colones a month, a subsidy of 10 colones a day for each member of [our] families, materials for school, a health clinic, sewage, electricity, lands [in exchange for those we gave up] of three sizes: 25 hectares to families of 4 or more; 20 to families of less than 4; 15 to those alone or without a family; and there [was] no attention paid to the elderly, to the

<sup>12</sup> Daniel Oduber to Luis Alberto Monge Álvarez, February 17, 1983, ANCR, AH, MG, Collection 035531, 195–196.

<sup>13</sup> Alfonso Carro Z. to Daniel Oduber Quirós, April 27, 1983, ANCR, AH, MG, Collection 035531, 194.

unmarried, to those without identification, or to minors with rights. But as it turns out many of these accords were changed, and as you may have noticed the salary was taken away before the term of the commitment [had expired] . . . . We had to go on strike because the deal was that until we received the land we would receive the monthly salary, which they took away in August 1976, and then another three months after we received the land. [Ultimately] they took the salary away in December 1976 and they delivered the land on March 28, 1977.

Nothing more needs to be seen than how they robbed us of the piping that we put in, or how they acted to electrify nothing. Better said this half-measure is meant to rob land from those who still have not been granted an identification and those who have sold parcels or pieces of their parcels and whom they now title as swindlers and cite anomalies.

We want to tell you that if the Institute of Agrarian Development does not fix the situation for us in the short term we will be forced to recover the land we had in those places and that you should not say that we are invading the Corcovado Park. We want you to find us a good solution to this case or grant us a hearing with you . . . because everything that they are doing goes against Human Rights.<sup>14</sup>

This letter is remarkable for a number of reasons, most important of which is that it provides rare access to the *precarista* voice of the era. The farmers all signed the letter, and each provided a national identification number. Providing their names and identification numbers proved they did not fear reprisals for pledging to commit what was technically a criminal act. And despite being poor and ostensibly uneducated, the letter revealed a group of rural people with a nuanced understanding of an agreement they reached with their government nine years earlier. As they saw it, the government's continued abrogation of its responsibilities was intolerable, and constituted nothing less a violation of their "human rights." Such a letter voiced a position very commonly heard in contemporary Costa Rica—that the displaced had rights, and that the invasion of land by those driven from their lands was a legally justified recourse to compel the state to do what was right.

Squatters in Corcovado and elsewhere sometimes faced eviction (legal or otherwise) by force—although some succeeded to hold their ground. This was due to the structural weaknesses of the GAR, which operated on a shoestring budget and often, it claimed, without the weaponry it needed to carry out its duties in the countryside. But even while the GAR evicted *precaristas* by force, the government continued to seek a peaceful solution to problem of squatting in Corcovado. A presidential commission examined the deterioration of the park caused by gold mining in concert with simultaneous challenges that were afflicting the region, including an ongoing drought, recent earthquakes, and severe social and economic fallout from the departure of the Compañía Bananera de Costa Rica, the national affiliate of the former United Fruit Company that ceased operations in all of Costa Rica in 1984 after the banana crop was destroyed by the black sigatoka fungus.<sup>15</sup> In light of such significant and overlapping problems, the commission empowered the president to declare a state of emergency for the whole of the Osa Peninsula and called for an expanded commission comprising officials from several federal ministries and the Costa Rican Institute of Tourism to "identify, study, implement, and execute measures and actions tending to the solution of integral problems on the Osa Peninsula, and particularly those regarding the safeguarding of Corcovado National Park as much as the resettlement

<sup>14</sup> Julio Vargas et al. to Álvaro Ugalde, March 14, 1985, ANCR, AH, MG, Collection 035531, 1–2.

<sup>15</sup> Decree No. 16876, February 24, 1986, ANCR, AH, Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Comercio (hereafter MEIC), Collection 004115, 8.

of those who occupy lands within it and who merit resettlement in the judgment of the commission” (*Prensa Libre* 1986).

After weeks of private deliberation, the commission entered into talks with the Negotiating Commission for the Evicted *Oros* of Corcovado that focused on the pressing issues of gold mining and land possession in the national park. Their accord reached on May 3, 1986, was far reaching and resolved the government to provide parcels of land to *oros* who wished to take up farming and to assist those individuals with technical assistance and access to credit. For those who wished to continue the practice of gold extraction, the government was sympathetic, granting that, although *oros* could no longer operate inside the park, they were hence legally allowed to search for gold in areas adjacent to it and known to contain gold deposits.<sup>16</sup>

Still, this newest agreement did not allay the concerns that some harbored about the social problems that had long threatened the natural bounties of the Osa Peninsula. And their concerns would prove prescient. Evictions were so routinely carried out by the GAR in the late 1980s that some were given cause to question the legality of the paramilitary GAR’s activities in a country that had ostensibly abolished its army in 1948.<sup>17</sup> As before, squatters occasionally resisted evictions and succeeded to stay on the land—making the problem of squatting in Corcovado so intractable that the government had to resort to a broad policy of cash compensation to entice a large group of *oros* to leave in the 1990s. Actually, the symbiotic problems of gold mining and squatting inside Corcovado National Park have yet to be resolved, and spurts of *orero* activity, followed by spurts of state repression, have been commonplace there since then.

## Conclusions

It is indisputable that the conscious embrace of conservationism in Costa Rica since the mid-twentieth century has produced impressive fiscal and environmental returns. As ecotourism grew, forested land in tourist areas became far more valuable than cleared land—an astonishing change in a nation with a long history of agricultural export-driven development. Until the 1950s, Costa Rica had no national parks or protected areas; barely two decades later, it was held up by the United Nations as a model on how to create systems to protect flora and fauna. This achievement was, without exaggeration, the salvation of natural Costa Rica, and it was the articulation of the quintessential nature state—with its world-renowned national parks and ecotourism industry—and not the government’s myriad forestry or reforestation laws that halted two centuries of environmental onslaught.

It cannot be denied, though, that the emergence of the conservation regime negatively affected rural people, as the creation of Corcovado National Park in 1975 (like Cabo Blanco Absolute Natural Reserve in 1963 and Santa Rosa National Park in 1971) exacted a human toll paid by poor Costa Rican families who lost access to lands they depended on for survival. Rural people resisted conservation displacement in nearly every setting as the creation of protected areas, to quote three noted environmental historians, “displaced entire human settlements . . . and uprooted individuals and families that inhabited the area for decades but were hence slandered as ‘occupiers’ and ‘invaders’ due to their residential status on the newly conserved spaces” (McDermott, Viales Hurtado, and Chavarría Camacho 2019, 124).

The problem of displacement and illegal occupation in the Costa Rican countryside, as has been shown, was not created by the cause of conservation, although these practices did ramp up with the advent of the public park system in the 1950s. Many of these narratives, let us remember, were echoed in other parts of the region, and most anywhere in mid- and

<sup>16</sup> Acuerdo No. 16876, May 3, 1986, ANCR, AH, MEIC, Collection 004115, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Actas del Consejo de Gobierno, Sesión Ordinaria No. 4, May 30, 1986, ANCR, Ministerio de Presidencia, Collection 000028, 19.

late-twentieth-century Latin America where one observed national park creation or expansion, one also saw state-squatter conflict. A prime example is the removal of squatters from Iguaçu National Park in Brazil during the period 1966–1978—a process that similarly displaced hundreds of settlers, albeit with far more violence than that witnessed in Costa Rica. In Brazil, as in Costa Rica, uncertainty in public land tenure and a general lack of enforcement made the occupation of undeveloped lands seem feasible and attractive (Freitas 2017, 158–159). Such tenuous periods of stasis, however, were broken via the establishment of conservation areas or by means of regime change—something Brazil dramatically experienced in 1964. The Iguaçu case study, which according to historian Frederico Freitas (2017, 160), was a “costly and protracted process of eviction that had no parallel in other Latin American parks of the time” thus seems a far cry from the contemporaneous and typically nonviolent processes effectuated by the Costa Rican state against—but often in partnership with—farmers and gold miners who inhabited national parks after their inception.

This analysis demonstrates that although Costa Rica’s governments aggressively addressed the crises of land degradation and deforestation through the expropriation of rural lands, these historical problems were not solved. Forest reserves, which should have enjoyed complete legal protection, endured constant invasions by rural families who occupied and worked their lands for farming, pasture, gold mining, and other activities. And at an extraordinary rate! The estimated 25 percent of public land occupied by rural *precaristas* in the 1980s represents yet another particularity of the land expropriation conservation story in Costa Rica (Carrière 1991, 10). The persistence of land invasion despite conservation seemed to confirm the Manichean conclusion that, although people come back, rivers do not. And because wealthy foreign tourists flocked to Costa Rica to see sloths, macaws, and howler monkeys, and not eroded rural farms, it was thus rivers (i.e., nature) that the government valued over people.

By the same token, Costa Rican officials appeared to privilege nature over culture as a whole, or at least according to one editorialist who wrote in the days after the destruction of La Casona. He questioned in an editorial published in *La Prensa Libre* on May 11, 2001, why the historic site suffered such a stunning lack of protection. And the answer, he speculated, had to do with conservation: “More attention has been given the conservation of our forests, which deserve it, but . . . to the detriment of the property, which, even if it is rebuilt, will never be the same.” Such a feeling likely spoke to ordinary Costa Ricans but was a low-level priority in the thinking of the state. Policy makers in Costa Rica more than almost anywhere else pursued an agenda that conserved via expropriation environmental resources, although the ongoing crisis of squatting forced them to occasionally prioritize the needs of human beings.

One such divergence coincided with the tragedy of La Casona, and the government resolved just days before the fire to build public housing in a previously protected area of the *meseta central*. The decree sparked opposition in the media, and a comic intermingled with the coverage of the La Casona fire in *La Nación* on May 11, 2001, conveyed a clear position. Three trees, with terrified looks on their faces and beads of sweat pouring off their trunks, looked in the direction of a sign that read “Protected Areas.” The dialogue was simple yet spoke volumes. One tree warned his arboreal comrades: “We will have neighbors . . . Humans!” (Arcadio 2001).

Environmentalists were in clear agreement. Some rejected the measure on the grounds that the designated areas were too dangerous for habitation given the high risk of flooding and mudslides. Others disseminated a more default position. Housing, as a rule, should never be built in protected areas, and one columnist worried that if the government sought short-term solutions to housing problems by developing in protected areas, it would inflict long-term and “severe harm to the citizenry in general.” “Only the rivers do not come back,” he reminded his readers; the human needs for land and housing had to be subordinate to the preservation of finite natural resources (*Prensa Libre* 2001b).

The supply of landless individuals, however—not one of whom it seemed could afford the luxury of an environmental consciousness—appeared infinite.

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