CENTRO Journal

Volume xviii Number 1
spring 2006

The battle for Vieques' future

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes power dynamics in Vieques, Puerto Rico in the immediate aftermath of the U.S. Navy's closure of its live fire range on the island. The essay examines several aspects of Vieques' continuing struggle in a post-Navy world. It considers residents' hopes and views of different kinds of development; the ramifications of former Navy-occupied land being classified as "environmentally protected"; and finally, potential organizing principles for directing Vieques' development, looking at the challenges and opportunities facing activists. The essay considers how cultural nationalism not only offers potential building blocks for collective action and opposition to privatization, but an egalitarian vision of the future where all residents would be able to access and enjoy resources considered collective patrimony. [Key words: Vieques Island, Puerto Rico, socio-economic development, civil-military relations, environmental justice, cultural nationalism]

Imágen anti-bélica (Antiwar image). Rafael Trelles. Reprinted, by permission, from Rafael Trelles.

This article analyzes power dynamics in Vieques, Puerto Rico, in the immediate aftermath of the U.S. Navy's closure of its live-fire range on the island. A grassroots movement to halt live bombing exercises on this inhabited island built unprecedented political unity in Puerto Rico and international solidarity. In May 2003, the Navy withdrew from the island it once heralded as the "crown jewel" of its operations in the Western Hemisphere.

The essay examines several aspects of Vieques' continuing struggle in a post-Navy world. First, it examines residents' hopes and views of different kinds of development. Second, it investigates the ramifications of former Navy-occupied land being classified as "environmentally protected." Finally, it discusses potential organizing principles for directing Vieques' development, looking at the challenges and potential opportunities facing activists.

Since the Navy's exit, Vieques' struggle has become complex and multifaceted. While the military abandoned its facilities in Vieques, base land is extensively polluted with unexploded ordnance and military contaminants, and the Navy controls the cleanup of the land. The large majority of former military territory has been transferred to the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife and declared a national wildlife refuge, a status with significant implications for cleanup. Land use designation determines the level of cleanup required of the Navy. Identifying the land for conservation purposes not only continues to estrange islanders from the majority of the land, but avoids military responsibility for environmental remediation. Under federal law, land designated for "conservation use" requires only a superficial cleanup, since presumably no humans would inhabit it. Grassroots activists argue that without sufficient cleanup, the military is still very much present on the island, its toxic legacy threatening community health, impeding the socioeconomic development of Vieques, and denying a true return of land to civilian use.[1]

While the status and future of former base land remain highly contested, significant changes are currently unfolding in the former civilian sector and in western Vieques, where the municipality stands poised to assume control over 4,000 acres of former base land. The Navy's departure has removed transportation restrictions that long crippled the island's economy. For nearly sixty years, the Navy imposed a danger zone around the coast of Vieques, and forced passenger and cargo ferries to shuttle a circuitous 21-mile route across the rough waters of the Vieques Passage to Fajardo, Puerto Rico. New access to a six-mile short route from Western Vieques to Ceiba, Puerto Rico, may fundamentally transform the residential and economic patterns on the island, possibly shifting the transportation hub from the island capital of Isabel Segunda to western Vieques. In addition, the new transportation route may not only strengthen social and economic ties between Vieques and eastern Puerto Rico, but it would also shift Vieques' pattern of socioeconomic relationships from the Puerto Rican municipality of Fajardo to neighboring Ceiba. Thus Vieques' development has significant implications not only for the current 10,000 residents of the island, but for all of eastern Puerto Rico.

These political shifts, the end to live bombing practices, and the designation of the former military base as a wildlife refuge have triggered rampant real estate speculation in the former civilian sector. Housing prices in Vieques's beachfront neighborhoods have skyrocketed, threatening to squeeze working class residents out of an already tight housing market.[2] A New York-based development consortium is planning a huge upscale resort on the grounds of a former sugar plantation that would carve up undeveloped land and privatize sugar white beaches. In short, Vieques could look like many other Caribbean resorts, shaped by towering hotels, casinos, and high walls that exclude the impoverished local population from access to wealth and power.[3]

The Navy's departure thus has had a paradoxical effect on Vieques, freeing the island's economy and society from some of the most blatant dangers and constraints imposed by military occupation, yet also making the island vulnerable to the unfettered movement of global capital and the appropriation of public goods for corporate profit. In a situation of uncertainty and in the absence of an identifiable antagonist, the main issue confronting island residents is their economic future. As Vieques residents struggle for the sustainable development of the local economy, they confront broader questions of political authority, control over natural resources, definitions of common property rights-in sum, the rights and privileges of citizenship that are at the heart of state power and national identity. The island's struggle remains fundamentally an expression of the more general asymmetrical power relations between the United States and Puerto Rico-relations that govern social interactions and the control of land and natural resources.

How Vieques Island develops will depend upon the balance of power between two opposing types of development—private, market-oriented growth versus grassroots-led sustainable development. The Navy's exit has created a power vacuum in which top-down economic growth is taking shape almost by default. Grassroots forces, however, have the potential to constrain market forces and achieve a more equitable vision of development. By activating broader sociopolitical alliances in Puerto Rico, the United States, and internationally, grassroots organizations seek to advance an alternate view of development based on communitarian values such as affordable housing, health care, and public access to the shoreline. They look to the Puerto Rican government to act as an intermediary, containing market forces and advancing policies that favor small-scale enterprises and development.

Puerto Rico's colonial status and consequent lack of a strong, representative state that might impose a solution makes collective action the primary vehicle for asserting alternatives to top-down development schemes. The dilemma facing grassroots activists is to choose the most effective strategy to rally public support and promote a more just vision of Vieques' economic future.

Cultural nationalism historically has been an important resource for social movements in Vieques. Rural imagery, the quality and distinctiveness of the natural environment, and Puerto Rico's peasant culture are sources of contemporary pride and identity in Puerto Rico (Dávila 1997; Duany 2002; Morris 1995). Residents have mobilized this cultural legacy in Vieques, rallying behind fishermen in confrontations with the Navy in the 1970s, and supporting *rescatadores*, who in 1999 built a traditional wood-framed *casita* at ground zero of the Navy's live impact range (McCaffrey 2002).

Ethnographic research in the summer of 2004 suggests that cultural nationalism remains a powerful unifying force in Vieques and a source of alternative vision for the future. Residents continue to refer to the past and draw upon elements of peasant, *agregado* culture to construct an identity appropriate to contemporary needs. Key elements of that identity are access rights to island land and resources. Vieques' social movement was originally fueled by the goal of reclaiming the island from the Navy. Research on Vieques Island in 2004 suggests that concerns of access couched in cultural nationalist terms remain a driving force for collective action.

This essay first surveys the island's historical underdevelopment and agregado relations that inform contemporary cultural nationalist sentiment. It presents the

Vieques Wildlife Refuge as the new obstacle to local visions of development and examines some of the problematic theoretical assumptions inherent to the park. Then I present data from interviews conducted during the summer of 2004, and interpret them within the context of long-term ethnographic and historical research on social protest in Vieques (McCaffrey 1998, 1999, 2002). In interviews, residents revealed attitudes toward the future that were marked with considerable ambivalence. "Agregado consciousness," however, continues to inform local ideology and constitutes an important component of the cultural nationalist argument in favor of the state appropriation of resources against their control by global capital. Significantly, this cultural nationalist vision not only offers building blocks for collective action and opposition to privatization, but an egalitarian vision of the future, in which all residents would be able to access and enjoy resources considered collective patrimony.

Historical underdevelopment[4]

For five hundred years Vieques' development has been shaped primarily by military concerns. These interests have kept the island underdeveloped in comparison to neighboring islands of Puerto Rico, St. Thomas, and St. Croix.[5] Competing European military powers viewed Vieques as a buffer to more profitable and strategically important colonies and razed rival colonial settlements on the island. For three hundred and fifty years after indigenous settlements were destroyed, Vieques was inhabited largely by pirates, smugglers, escaped slaves, and feral cattle. Vieques was not formally settled and incorporated into Puerto Rico until the mid-nineteenth century, when a sugar cane industry was established. In the early twentieth century, under U.S. tutelage, the island remained peripheral.

The outbreak of World War II encouraged U.S. military thinkers to envision Vieques in strategic terms. Sugar cane land was expropriated in the 1940s as part of a plan to build a massive naval installation off the coast of eastern Puerto Rico. The devastating destruction of Pearl Harbor challenged the wisdom of this plan, and base construction in Vieques was abandoned. During the Cold War, however, the Navy reevaluated Vieques and expropriated more land to convert the island into a training ground for amphibious maneuvers, artillery fire, and live bombing exercises. A power struggle between the Navy, which wanted the entire island of Vieques, and the Puerto Rican government, which resisted military imposition, created a surreal scenario where a civilian population of approximately 10,000 American citizens lived in an international theater of war. For sixty years, conflict brewed in Vieques over the island's contradictory position as a civilian residential community and a naval training site.

The U.S. naval presence stunted the island's socioeconomic development. The military liquidated the sugar cane industry, consumed the majority of land and water resources, and squeezed the civilian population between a live fire training ground and an ammunition depot. The Navy restricted water and air transport to the island, effectively distancing Vieques from Puerto Rico. The Navy maintained an adversarial stance toward residents whom it regarded as an encumbrance to unfettered access to the island. Concerned that a strong local economy and growing population might impede military training exercises, the Navy actively blocked development plans in the civilian sector. In 1961 the Navy secretly planned to remove the entire civilian population from the island, an objective blocked only by Presidential intervention (Fernández 1996; Meléndez 1989). Again in 1964, the Navy sought to squeeze out the civilian population by expropriating land on the island's

south coast. This effort inspired the formation of one of Vieques' earliest citizen opposition groups, the Citizen's Committee for the Defense of Vieques, which lobbied effectively to block this plan. In sum, the Navy effectively strangled the local economy, establishing Vieques as the poorest municipality in Puerto Rico.

Though Cold War politics frequently depicted Vieques' struggle as ideologically driven, at heart it was based on issues of land use and subsistence (McCaffrey 2002: 36–42, 67–97). Historically, social struggle on a local level has emerged over usufruct rights. The Navy's total control over island land challenged customary land use practices established during the sugar cane era. As agregados, most *viequenses* survived on a combination of wage labor and non-wage subsistence activity.[6] The Navy, however, blocked entry to land where residents collected coconuts, fruit, and wood for charcoal making. The Navy also barred access to the coast, where residents fished from nets in shallow water off shore and in lagoons, and collected snails and crabs. Thus, during the military occupation of Vieques, resentment did not focus specifically on the Navy's *legal ownership* of the land. During the sugar cane era, few residents owned land, so the passing of land title from the plantation owner to the military in and of itself did not fundamentally change their lives.[7] Rather, residents resented the military's *absolute control of the land*, the squelching of a viable economy, and the denial of historic usufruct access to the land. The words of one elderly Vieques resident convey a sense of moral outrage over the changing nature of land ownership under the Navy: "We had to ask permission to enter [the land]. They made us prisoners in our own land. *We were made prisoners in our own land*."

The military's squelching of a viable economy in the civilian sector and efforts to remove the resident population heightened the importance of peasant-based subsistence activities as both a form of cultural resistance and economic survival. Fishing, in particular, emerged as an important survival strategy and form of cultural assertion. Clashes and resentment crystallized around these use rights, most dramatically in the fishermen's protest of 1978–1983. In the 1970s, local fishermen led a grassroots campaign to halt Navy maneuvers, focusing grievances on restricted access to fishing waters. Significantly, it was the Navy's restrictions on fishing waters that sparked protest in the 1970s, not the live bombing practices that inspired the restrictions. This campaign pointed to the material grievances and access rights that were at the heart of local discontent.

Though the fishermen's struggle collapsed in the early 1980s, tension between the Navy and residents continued. In 1999, the accidental death of a civilian base employee catalyzed renewed protest. For over a year, dozens of protestors occupied a military target range littered with life ordnance and built a casita on a hill pierced with missiles. They ferried food back and forth in small, weathered fishing boats and staked Puerto Rican flags in muddy craters left by bombs. A mass mobilization converged to support these grassroots efforts and eventually shut down the base (McCaffrey 2002).

The current struggle for sustainable development in Vieques thus connects to a much longer struggle with the Navy for access to land and control over common property resources, especially the beach and coastal environment. The point here is not to romanticize the customary relationship to the environment as primordial or necessarily superior. The peasant strategies people adopted in Vieques were part of a survival package that subsidized and benefited sugar cane plantations that were brutal and exploitative.[8] Rather, the intent is to highlight the fact that contemporary

conceptions of the environment and land use practices are rooted in these older understandings of land use. These understandings clash with both market-based efforts to privatize the beach, and conceptions of the environment that are promoted by the new wildlife refuge.

Fortress Vieques

By understanding the centrality of access to land that informed the struggle with the Navy, one understands why the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife has emerged as the new lightning rod and locus of residents' discontent. Fish and Wildlife gained control of the majority of former base land when the Navy withdrew first from western Vieques in 2001, and then from eastern Vieques in 2003. In the west, where the Navy maintained an ammunition depot, Fish and Wildlife controls about half of formerly military property, an area of 3,100 acres.[9] The western area encompasses coastal lagoons, mangrove wetlands, and beaches where endangered pelicans and sea turtles nest. While land in the west has not suffered the severe ecological destruction of constant bombing, the Navy used multiple sites there as dumping grounds for a variety of hazardous materials. Nearly two million pounds of military and industrial waste—oil, solvents, lubricants, lead paint, acid, and 55-gallon drums—were disposed of in different sites in mangroves and sensitive wetland areas. A portion of this waste contained extremely hazardous chemicals. The extent to which this waste has leeched into the ground water and coastal water is unknown (Márquez and Fernández 2000; UMET et al. 2000). In 2005, the Navy was investigating 17 potentially contaminated sites.[10]

In the east, which was the naval bombing and maneuver area, Fish and Wildlife has taken control of the entire parcel of 14,573 acres of land, or almost one half of Vieques Island. The eastern area has been used for naval bombing exercises and maneuvers since the 1940s. According to the Navy, Vieques was bombed an average of 180 days per year. In 1998, the last year before protests interrupted maneuvers, the Navy dropped 23,000 bombs on the island, the majority of which contained live explosives (U.S. Navy 1999). The focal point of the most intense destruction was the live impact range, which constitutes 980 acres on the island's eastern tip, an area roughly the size of New York City's Central Park. In 2005, the EPA formally listed the Vieques bombing range (Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Area) on the National Priority List of the most hazardous waste sites in the United States. Yet all 14,000 acres and surrounding waters in eastern Vieques have been used since the 1940s for a variety of military purposes, such as shooting ranges, amphibious landing sites, and toxic waste dumps. Coral reefs and sea grass beds have sustained significant damage from bombing, sedimentation, and chemical contamination (Márquez and Fernández 2000; Rogers, Cintrón and Goenaga 1978). The ground water has been contaminated by nitrates and explosives (Márquez and Fernández 2000).

Fish and Wildlife proudly proclaims the new Vieques National Wildlife Refugee as the largest, most ecologically diverse refuge in the Caribbean. It defines the refuge's mission as maintaining "rare local sub-tropical dry forest habitat and wetlands ecosystem for resident and migratory birds and rare and endangered species." In addition, the refuge strives to "protect historical and archeological resource sites," and finally "to provide a safe environment for people to enjoy wildlife-oriented public use." There are obvious contradictions between this mission and the fact that large parts of the refuge have simultaneously been declared by the EPA as a Superfund

site, a designation reserved for the most contaminated, high priority toxic waste sites in the United States.[11] "Wildlife-oriented public use" is limited by the presence of thousands of unexploded bombs, a reason why only "certain areas of the refuge are open" for public use (http://www.fws.gov/southeast/Vieques).

The Vieques Wildlife refuge is based on several problematic ideological premises. First, it draws on a fortress model of conservation, which regards humans as a threat to the environment. According to this model, access to nature must be restricted by a paternalistic state, and the environment should be preserved and protected from human influence, which is inherently negative. These ideas of ecology are rooted in a dichotomous and artificial separation of nature and culture (Haraway 1989). European colonial expansion advanced this modernist vision of the landscape as European states appropriated land and claimed resources that were "misused" by less "civilized" peoples (Neumann 2004). Colonial powers both expropriated common property resources that were not used according to European standards and interests, and later mobilized to "rescue" and protect land and resources that were degraded by Western-style economic development (Grove 1996).

Second, the fortress model assumes that the environment is static and ignores historic relations of people and the environment. Yet for thousands of years people have lived on Vieques Island and interacted with the ecology. Archaeological evidence suggests that several different cultural groups inhabited Vieques for at least 4,000 years before the Spanish conquest. Spanish and English colonists were attracted to the island because of its tropical forests and water supply. The land that is now under federal authority was dramatically transformed by human culture. Spain used Vieques as a hunting preserve until danger from Carib raids caused authorities to ban access to the island (Rouse 1952: 555). Sugar cane monoculture deforested land, and cattle grazing programs initiated by the Navy contributed to soil erosion and the unchecked growth of mesquite. Navy construction of roads along the coast and interior of the island closed channels between lagoons and the sea, altering salination levels and leading to the slow destruction of lagoons (García Martínez 1979). Live bombing exercises blew away topsoil, contributing to the sedimentation of coral reefs. Human activity thus has fundamentally altered the pre-Columbian landscape. The Department of Fish and Wildlife is constructing as pristine a landscape that has already been fundamentally altered by centuries of human activity.

Third, the wildlife refuge presents the premise that land needs to be protected from local intrusion, and implies that local use practices are responsible for ecological degradation. Instead, it is the state itself that has been responsible for overwhelming destruction of the environment. The "wildlife refuge" is the same land that was bombed 180 days a year, that is littered with both spent shells and live bombs, that is pock-marked with bomb craters. The most devastated terrain, the 980-acre live impact area, is officially designated as a "wilderness preserve," the most protected environmental status, and blocked from public access. By enshrining this troubled landscape as a "refuge" the state institutionalizes its degradation. As long as land is designated for turtle and pelican inhabitation, the Navy is not responsible for cleanup compatible with human habitation.

The status of this land remains a fundamental obstacle to local visions of socioeconomic development, which are hinged on access rights to the island's land and coastal resources.

Research rationale

One year after the Navy officially shut down its live fire range and withdrew from Vieques, I interviewed Vieques residents about their understanding of the current state of the island and their aspirations for the future. What do people in Vieques want for the future? How do they want to see the island develop? Is there a true mandate for sustainable development? What are residents' understandings of processes currently unfolding? Studies suggest that there is often a significant disparity between the ideology and formal representation of development projects and the way development occurs in practice (Crehan and von Oppen 1988; Leeuwis 2000, Long and Van der Ploeg 1989). "Community" is often conflated with the interests of a dominant group within a particular context, with the interests of minority and disadvantaged populations unrepresented (Grant 2001: 978).

I conducted a series of informal and semistructured interviews. One set of interviews focused on ten community leaders, activists, and government officials who were actively involved in the development process. These residents included the mayor, the president of the community planning board, the editor of the oldest local newspaper, five activists affiliated with the Committee to Rescue and Develop Vieques (CPRDV), the most influential grassroots organization, and two activists not formally affiliated with the CPRDV. I was interested in what these leaders' goals and aspirations were for Vieques' future. In order to approach these questions in concrete terms, I asked questions both about particular project and committee work these individuals were engaged in, and more general questions about their perceptions of change and hopes for the future. I sought to use these interviews as a knowledge base and point of reference to later interviews I planned to conduct within a single barrio. This second set of interviews, I hoped, would indicate the extent to which the social movement—its ideology, its goals, its energy—remained active in the citizenry. The vibrancy of the movement might indicate directions for future organizing strategies and the shape of future struggles over sustainable development. At the same time, significant differences in goals, ideology, and perceptions between leaders and average citizens might point to areas of contestation in efforts to organize collectively.

Thus, in my second set of interviews, I was interested in how residents not formally involved in the development process perceived change and how thinking and planning from the top filtered down. I interviewed residents in nine households in the working class barrio of Tortuguero.[12] Tortuguero is one of Vieques' most stable neighborhoods, originally established as a resettlement community after the second wave of naval expropriations in 1947. The barrio incorporates three streets and approximately 75 houses. It is bounded by a major road to the north, another planned neighborhood to the south, a public housing project to the east, and private land to the west. Boxy concrete homes are squeezed together on small plots of land; in the 1940s, residents complained that the cramped neighborhood left them no room to cultivate subsistence crops and raise animals that were key parts of the survival skills of working class families. Today residents squeeze refrigerators, washing machines, and couches onto the front porch to create more living room for families inside. Unlike the larger resettlement communities of Santa María and Montesanto, established during the first wave of naval expropriations, families in Tortuguero were given government-constructed homes and title to the land. These factors have contributed to the neighborhood's development as a very stable, planned community, with tightly connected kin networks and land tenure often extending back to the 1940s.

Also shaping the neighborhood's character is its proximity to a General Electric plant. Tortuguero is situated directly opposite the street from a small GE factory that until recently was the largest private employer in Vieques. The lack of public transportation in Vieques coupled with Tortuguero's close proximity to GE has turned the neighborhood into virtually a company town. GE, a major defense contractor, has historically been influenced by the Navy. In the 1970s, Vieques residents were threatened with dismissal from GE if they were involved in anti-Navy protests. In the 1980s, when rumors circulated about a possible shut down of the Vieques plant, a Navy admiral paid a special visit to GE headquarters in Connecticut to stress the importance of keeping the factory opened. The factory remained open. As one of the few sources of stable employment in Vieques and with comparatively high wages, the GE plant has served as an economic lever that has often effectively squelched political participation. A leading activist commented that consequently grassroots organizations devoted little organizing efforts to Tortugero. Nonetheless, I discovered in this barrio both residents who initially seemed indifferent and oblivious to the mass mobilization that had captured the hearts of the Puerto Rican diaspora and residents who were active and/or supportive of the struggle. What emerged in these interviews was the importance of access to land as a priority in the development of the island. This was expressed in both a desire to stop privatization of beaches in the civilian sector, and to remove Fish and Wildlife to gain access to former base land. These concerns about access, I will suggest, are the driving force of opposition to the exclusionary impulses of global capitalism and a potential point of unity in constructing a shared vision of development.

The battle against privatization: The case of Martineau Bay

My field research ten years earlier in Tortugero and throughout Vieques indicated widespread ambivalence about the island's future without the Navy. Few residents were enthusiastic about the continued military presence, but many were concerned about the future of the island in the event of the military withdrawal. Residents were concerned that without the Navy, large developers would build up Vieques and residents would be estranged from the beaches and coastline. They were concerned that the slow, "tranquil" pace of life would change, and that crime would tear at the fabric of life. Many residents were concerned about drugs and the plague of drug-related violence that was highly publicized in the Puerto Rican media.[13] The Navy's strongest source of support was thus fear and uncertainty. Few residents supported the military for reasons of patriotism, or because they believed the Navy boosted the island's economy.

The mass mobilization altered perceptions of risk and benefit, however, by focusing significant attention to the dangers of the military presence, thus tilting many conservative residents in favor of social change.[14] Today, with the military gone, however, many residents remain cautious about the future. When asked if Vieques would be better off without the Navy, 64-year-old Gabriel Carambot Monell was shrewd in his assessment: "On one hand it's good that they left," he noted. "On the other hand, it depends on politics. How will the land be used? What will become of the land? Will it benefit the islanders, or the people with money?" Gabriel echoed widespread sentiment that Vieques is exploited and politically subjugated to Puerto Rico. "Here everything is based on politics," he commented. "If Vieques falls into the hands of *la palma* (NPP, statehood party) again, no aid will come to Vieques. Because the Navy used to help a lot. But then, from 1982 on, when the intense bombing started, the Navy rented the land. The money didn't come here; it went to the government

of Puerto Rico over there, to improve the highways over there. We got nothing." Gabriel quoted a local politician: "Vieques is the cow that gives Puerto Rico milk."

I found that questions about sustainable development met with blank stares.[15] While activists, public officials, and community planners talked extensively about sustainable development, little of this language seemed meaningful on the grassroots level. In order to understand residents' ideas of development and aspirations for the future, I focused questions on their perceptions of a recently opened resort, Wyndham Martineau Bay Resort and Spa. After more than ten years of planning and troubled construction, it was Vieques' first and only major hotel launched by a San Juan-based developer and financed by international capital.[16]

With 150 private sector jobs, Martineau Bay is currently the largest private sector employer in Vieques. Martineau Bay has widespread support in Vieques on the most practical level: it fills an immediate, desperate need for local employment. Apparent support for jobs, however, co-existed with deeper ambivalence about a resort with gates that exclude and alienate the public, and high walls that effectively (and illegally) privatize the beach. This ambivalence was expressed in the way that all interviewed residents who supported the existence of the resort also strongly rejected the idea of working there.

Damaris Solís Davis, a 37-year-old single mother and an enthusiastic supporter of Martineau Bay, exemplified these sentiments. Damaris lives in her childhood home with her mother, a retired GE worker, and her two children, a 17-year-old boy and 14-year-old girl. For the past two years, Damaris has worked part time at a small hotel owned by a North American resident of Vieques. She works 25 hours a week making continental breakfasts for guests. Damaris has moved through a variety of jobs over the past ten years. Previously, she worked as a teacher's helper at a pre-school, and as a classroom aide at an elementary school. Damaris felt that Martineau Bay was great for Vieques, that it had brought a lot of work. I asked her if she would like to see more resorts like Martineau Bay open in Vieques, "Of course!" she responded without hesitation, "Because it would generate more employment in Vieques. There's still a lot of unemployment in Vieques," she noted.

In general, Damaris felt that big hotels and the American tourists who frequented them were the panacea for Vieques' woes. In twenty years, I asked her, what would you like to see in Vieques? "American people!" she responded enthusiastically. "A lot of American people. A lot of tourists. And more hotels." She preferred to work for American people, she said. The Puerto Rican guests who came to the hotel she worked at were cheap and left no tips, she noted. "They have no shame." In contrast, American tourists, she felt, were good people: they were "cool and nice" and left good tips. (The American tourists, she noted were different from the Americans who lived in Vieques, who were just as stingy as the Puerto Ricans).

Despite her enthusiasm for Americans, when I queried Damaris to see if she herself would be interested in working at Martineau Bay, a hot spot for North American tourists, she became reticent. She felt that Martineau Bay probably offered more opportunity for advancement and better wages than the small hotel where she was currently working. She seemed intimidated, however, by the upscale resort. Even though she was working part-time, she felt that she was getting by, living in her mother's house and receiving child support payments from her children's father. She had no interest in working at Martineau Bay.

Luis Cepeda, a 56-year-old retired public works employee, had little to say about Vieques and its future. He lived in an unpainted, one-room concrete house with

his wife, 54-year-old Rosamaría Ponce, a former restaurant cook, out of work with a disability. The couple, reticent in conversation and reluctant to voice opinions, became most animated in discussion about Martineau Bay. They felt that the hotel was clearly an asset to Vieques. Unemployment was a real problem in Vieques, and development in Martineau Bay brought work. When asked if they thought Vieques needed more hotels like Martineau Bay or more factories like GE, however, they quickly chose factories. GE stands as the model of Vieques' most stable, long-term private employment. Living in the shadow of the GE factory with its long-term stability and comparatively high wages, there was no dispute in their opinions as to which model of development was best for offering Vieques' working class stability and wages.

María Angélica Voulogne, a 54-year-old laid-off GE factory worker, also supported Martineau Bay and the jobs it provided—for someone else. María lived with her husband and two of her four children, ages 17 and 22. Since María had been downsized from GE after fifteen years of employment she was making ends meet by sporadically cleaning "gringo" houses, and cooking for a beachside café. Her husband owned a *público* (taxi), and their combined incomes were sufficient to get by. María thought Martineau Bay was good for Vieques since it brought jobs. "There are a lot of people looking for work," she noted, "a lot of unemployment and many people who depend on food stamps." She disdained the idea of working there, however. At GE, her wages were "eight something an hour," at Martineau Bay wages were "five something." If she couldn't work at GE, María preferred her sporadic, more autonomous work cooking and cleaning to the uniform and comparatively low wages offered at Martineau Bay.

Juan Antonio Santiago, 35 years old, also expressed disdain for the concept of working at Martineau Bay. Juan, originally from mainland Puerto Rico, lived in a bare concrete house with his 9-year-old daughter. Over the past seven years in Vieques, he eked together a living acting as a house sitter and cleaning yards. Juan was less certain than Damaris and María as to whether Martineau Bay was good for Vieques. Vieques needed more tourism, he felt, but he was not convinced Martineau Bay was the best model for development. When I asked him if he were interested in getting a job at the resort, he looked at me with barely disguised horror. "No!" he answered with vehemence. "I have my work. I don't want to look for work there. I have no interest. I'm happy with my work. I prefer working alone, doing my own thing. I don't want to get involved over there."

This discomfort with Martineau Bay needs to be situated within the broader social context of Vieques, an overwhelmingly poor, working class island. Martineau Bay, with its high walls and secure gates, stands in sharp contrast to the rhythm of everyday life in Vieques. The wealth and exclusion that distance Martineau Bay from the general population are unmatched on the island. Martineau Bay was built for wealthy tourists to enter Vieques as an artificial world of thick lawns, sweeping ocean views, and palm-framed swimming pools. Vieques residents could only enter this world as maids pushing laundry carts and gardeners shearing hedges.

In Tortuguero few residents thought Martineau Bay was a positive model for Vieques' development. Even among those who supported Martineau Bay, the resort seemed to be good for other people, but certainly not their first choice for employment. Gabriel Carambot was skeptical about hotels as a source of economic development for Vieques. Gabriel lived most of his life in Vieques, except for a ten-year stint in Chicago in the 1960s, when he worked in a Florsheim shoe factory. Like many viequenses, Gabriel has shifted through a variety of jobs, including road construction,

factory work, and employment in a hotel. While he thought that tourism could bring some benefits to an island like Vieques, Gabriel pointed to Martineau Bay as an example of what was wrong with that model of development. "It's a kind of racism," he assessed, "If a hotel comes to the island, it should benefit [the owners] and the citizens who live here. It should not separate the owners from the citizens."

Lucy Carambot Sánchez, 78 years old, was most vocal in her opposition to large hotels as a source of economic development. Lucy has lived in Tortugero for over forty years, for many years running a bar, restaurant and dance club with her husband out of their home. Her husband recently died of cancer, and her two sons now live in the United States. Lucy and her family have been active for decades in the struggle to evict the Navy, and Lucy was quite forthright in her opposition to the resort. Martineau Bay, in Lucy's opinion, was the worst-case scenario of what might happen to Vieques. "We want progress, but not through hotels," she stressed. Lucy's opposition was framed in terms of opposition to privatization of Vieques' coastline. "They shouldn't sell the beaches to anyone. We don't want it like St. Thomas and St. Croix here. We don't want the beaches to go to strangers' hands. Then they'll do what they did with Martineau Bay. This is a hotel for the rich... It's for millionaires."

Martineau Bay captures the double bind that working class residents find themselves in as they yearn for work that will allow them to stay on Vieques while they oppose development that will impede their access to the land. In Vieques, in general, there is a high degree of consciousness about privatization of the beaches. Most residents who opposed Martineau Bay expressed their opposition in terms of privatization. Informing this consciousness is a form of cultural nationalism that posits beaches as an essential part of the cultural patrimony of the Puerto Rican people, as well as a class-based sense of entitlement to the land rooted in older agrarian relations on the island. These two strands of opposition are apparent in residents' discourse surrounding the hotel. Lucy, for example, in declaring her opposition to Martineau Bay, commented, "We want everyone to enjoy the beach. Because this beach belongs to us, and the people of Puerto Rico." Lucy supported tourism as a source of development for Vieques, but stressed that it needed to be controlled by the Puerto Rican government, and geared towards less affluent, Puerto Rican vacationers. "We need to have tourism where the poor can enjoy themselves," she argued, "Families need hotels too. [Coastal] resources also need to go to poor people so that they can enjoy themselves."

Fifty-three-year-old Felícita Solís Solís voiced similar sentiment about accessibility as she assessed that Martineau Bay was "too expensive." Felícita has lived in Tortugero her whole life and worked for 34 years at General Electric. She is a single mother and lives with her 21-year-old daughter and a 9-year-old foster daughter in a two-storey concrete home. Felícita wanted to see small-scale *paradores* (inns) as the model of Vieques' development, "because they would be cheaper and more people could go." Both Felícita and Lucy saw the Puerto Rican government as a potential foil to powerful outside forces coming in and taking over Vieques. "If the government does as it should," commented Felícita, "in ten years Vieques will be paradise." Residents' comments about development were couched in terms of access to resources, rather than ownership of capital. Reflecting their class position, they were less concerned with the ownership of wealth than the denial of access.

This conflict echoes earlier disputes in Puerto Rico as a whole regarding tourism as a model of economic development. On the main island, fierce battles were fought in the late 1960s against privatization of the beaches by powerful hotel chains.

These battles evoked nationalist sentiment and heralded the beaches as part of the patrimony of the Puerto Rican people (Nieves Falcón, García Rodríguez, and Ojeda Reyes 1971). This kind of sentiment also appears in Vieques. As we see above, Lucy asserts that Vieques' beaches "belong to us and the people of Puerto Rico." At the same time, conceptions of access are also rooted in more class-based, usufructuary conceptualizations of the land. Beaches are not merely sites of passive recreation, but historically part of a peasant-based subsistence complex that allowed people to survive during the sugar cane era. Struggles with the Navy over access to land have reinforced this class-based sense of entitlement, which now finds expression in clashes over private control of coastal resources. Residents often emphasized that Martineau Bay was interfering with fishing and collecting activities, and took umbrage when they felt their access, which they perceived as a natural right, was restricted. For example, when Felícita Solís started talking about Martineau Bay she revealed these sentiments: "I used to walk on the beaches with my brothers when we were kids, collecting snails. Now you can't go there. But it doesn't belong to them: the beaches are free. If you want to know who the owner is it's me. If they put up a fence, it belongs to me." With a wry smile she added, "They haven't put up a fence in the water in there, but that's good, because the sharks can get in!" (laughs).

Gabriel Carambot voiced similar sentiment. He recounted an incident when he was fishing off the shore near Martineau Bay and hotel management tried to stop him. "I was born here. It bothers me to be kicked off of the land I was born on. Martineau Bay blocks access to the beach. It's a violation of the law. The rivers, the sea belong to no one. They have privatized the beach."

These comments echo historical grievances held against the Navy. Residents long complained that the military barred access to the coast where they collected snails and crabs and to the lagoons where they fished with nets in shallow water. Frequently, residents lamented the destruction of coconut groves on land the Navy used for battle maneuvers. Residents complained that the small plots they were issued when they were evicted by the Navy were not large enough to cultivate subsistence crops and raise animals, as was the practice on the sugar plantations. The prevalence of comments about access thus reflects not only cultural nationalist sentiment, but a class-based sense of entitlement that was explicitly mobilized by the struggle against the Navy. The prevalence of this entitlement in discourse suggests the way that the social movement has been internalized and remains very much alive in the hearts of the citizens and can potentially be tapped for future collective action.

Vieques National Wildlife Refuge

Residents widely perceive Fish and Wildlife as the handmaiden to the Navy, the gatekeeper blocking access to land for which they have fought for decades. Grassroots organizations have organized demonstrations against Fish and Wildlife and have replaced slogans that once demanded "Fuera la Marina" with "*Fuera* Fish and Wildlife." As community groups clash with Fish and Wildlife over access, they mobilize a deep sense of entitlement to the land, fostered over sixty years of struggle with the Navy. They articulate visions of land use that emanate from customary practices established during the sugar cane era and that clash with a U.S. conservationist ethic.

Vieques residents, rather than appreciating Fish and Wildlife's "protection" of the environment, resent the agency as the island's most recent usurper. They see the mandate to protect former base land as an extension of restrictions and absolute

control over the land established by the Navy. "Fish and Wildlife has everything in Vieques," declared 39-year-old Pito Delarme, a construction worker building a house in Tortuguero. "Now you can't collect coconuts and crabs, you can't fish, you can't collect anything!" he exclaimed in exasperation. Pito lives in a rental house in Santa María, owned by a viequense who resides in St. Croix. Pito lives with his wife and two small children in a state of insecurity, never knowing if the house will be sold, like so many others in his neighborhood and throughout the island. Although his father was a civilian employee of the Navy base, Pito said that he himself had always been active in the struggle to evict the Navy, participating in picket lines throughout the four-year movement. Pito was indignant at Fish and Wildlife's control of former base land, and highlighted the hypocrisy that he felt underscored the agency's mandate: "When the Navy was here, where were these laws? The Navy destroyed the coral, they killed the turtles, the fish, the crabs, contaminated the land-all of this destruction and [Fish and Wildlife] never stopped them for 68 years. And now we want to develop this part of Vieques, and we're not permitted."

Pito argued that enforcement of land use restrictions had been intensified under Fish and Wildlife, while the Navy had been more laissez-faire. Lucy Carambot emphatically supported this view: "Since the Navy left we have had problems with Fish and Wildlife. We want liberty, and they are making life impossible for us! They are worse than the Navy! They won't let us collect shells off the beach, we who have been raised here and lived our whole lives here!"

Underlying Lucy's opposition was a conception of customary land rights that clashed with Fish and Wildlife's fortress-like control of the land. "They have gated off half the world over there!" she exclaimed. "We kicked the Navy out so that we could be free and have progress. All of our lives we have used the natural resources. Here there was wood, cattle; here we made charcoal. They are pressuring us. They don't want us to do anything! Everyone wants to go the beach and enjoy it. They are making life miserable."

Lucy's vehemence and exasperation pointed to the deep frustration many residents expressed concerning the turnover of land from the military to Fish and Wildlife. Fish and Wildlife's custody of land was an obstacle to the cleanup that residents wanted. Vieques' social movement had succeeded in part because it mobilized concerns about health and high cancer rates. Military contamination behind the barbed wire fences of the refuge was left unaddressed as long as land use was designated for endangered birds and turtles, rather than humans.

Thus, wresting land from Fish and Wildlife is part of a broader struggle over the four goals of development, devolution, demilitarization, and decontamination. Olga and Luis (pseudonyms), a couple in their sixties, also expressed these ideas. Olga and Luis are retired from General Electric, where she worked in the factory and he worked as a security guard for more than 20 years. Luis has cancer, and the couple spends much of their time engaged in arduous travel back and forth to mainland Puerto Rico where Luis receives his cancer treatment. Olga felt she had seen few changes in Vieques since the Navy left last year, but when asked what kind of changes she'd like to see, she emphasized the decontamination of the land as a top priority. Luis agreed, "They gave up the land, but they haven't cleaned it. Why kick out the Navy? They haven't done anything. We haven't achieved anything yet. The land needs to be cleaned up. Why did we kick out the Navy—for nothing? The land has to be cleaned up if we are to enjoy it." These comments reflected not only the couple's personal experience but also the campaign of the CPRDV. While Olga shied away

from politics, Luis had attended demonstrations and participated in picket lines. In the media, public fora, and demonstrations activists have stressed that Vieques' struggle is not over, but will continue until Vieques' land is returned, decontaminated, demilitarized, and developed. Luis's comments clearly echoed these ideas: "The priority is the decontamination of the land of Vieques. And access to the land, to the beaches. For pleasure. We want to go to all of the beaches. Right now we are restricted... We want the land free for the development of Vieques. If we don't see this, we're in the same boat."

Understanding the present, envisioning the future

Vieques' current mobilization for sustainable development is an extension of a much longer social movement to end live bombing exercises and wrest control of island land from the military. This mobilization demonstrated the strength of civil society in "refusing to accept" (Holloway 2002) injustices of state power. The goals of that movement, to stop the bombing and force the Navy off the island, were concrete, pragmatic, and achievable. The struggle coalesced around a clear, identifiable antagonist, the U.S. Navy, and unified a heterogeneous community.

The constant struggle to keep Vieques' social movement alive and to reclaim the land is made more difficult in the absence of the unifying focus the Navy provided. Residents I interviewed were divided over the state of Vieques since the base closed and the military pulled out on May 1, 2003. A number of Tortuguero residents were indifferent. Unaffected by the rapid gentrification that convulsed other beachfront neighborhoods, the rhythm of their lives relatively unchanged, at least in the short term, a number of residents seemed uninterested in the Navy's departure. When asked if she thought Vieques had changed since the Navy left, María Voulogne shrugged and said it seemed the same to her. When asked if she thought the island would be better, worse, or the same without the Navy, she said it did not matter to her. "Probably the same," she surmised. Luis Cepeda and Rosa María Ponce said they had seen little change in the past year and did not know whether the island would improve or decline without the Navy. They hoped the future would bring more Martineau Bays or factories like GE. Rosa María added that she would like a McDonald's to open on Vieques, and laughed delightedly at the mention of Walmart.

Other residents felt that Vieques was unquestionably better since the Navy left a year ago. "Of course [it's better]" exclaimed Felícita Solís, "The bombing has stopped! There are no more planes flying overhead, dropping bombs, cracking the foundations of homes. It's great! I'll tell you something," she added. "I was always afraid during maneuvers. I was always afraid that they would make a mistake, miss their target, and drop a bomb on the people. That would be the end of us. I always used to worry about this." Vieques now, Felícita felt, had the opportunity to become a real paradise.

The kind of optimism Felícita expressed, connects to the cessation of the bombing, concerned activists still struggling for the conversion and decontamination of the land. One of the movement's most popular slogans was "*Ni Una Bomba Más*" (not one more bomb). The grassroots movement had halted the bombing and forced the military to retreat, thus making many residents like Felícita feel that Vieques was victorious. While buoyed by this achievement, many activists were concerned that a pullout without a conversion would signify a false victory, draining momentum from the movement one step short of reclaiming the land. In response, the CPRDV launched a new campaign and bumper sticker declaring "La paz es más que el cese

del bombardeo: en Vieques la lucha continúa" (Peace is more than the end of bombing: in Vieques, the struggle continues).

Grassroots activists now face the more abstract but equally potent power of the market and the lumbering bureaucracy of the federal government that stands in the way of cleanup. The movement now clearly demands continued commitment that is difficult to muster after five years of constant struggle. Vieques' grassroots struggle drew tremendous energy from relatively few people. Vieques as a whole has only a population of about 10,000, and thus the pool of potential activists is relatively small. It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of activists expressed exhaustion and pessimism over the struggle that still lies ahead.

Seventy-eight-year-old Severina Guadalupe, a retired school teacher and owner of a local gas station, was on the front lines of pickets and was arrested in May 2000 when the Navy dismantled civil disobedience encampments on the base. She was sober in her assessment of the future. "Vieques has been destroyed. Totally destroyed. We have lost our land. We have lost everything. The Navy committed irreparable damage. It affects a lot of people mentally. Many people are crazy. Exhausted. No psychologist can fix this," she added with an ironic laugh. "I don't think Vieques will develop much," she surmised, "because the land is still occupied. We have no access to the land. They have kept it. The Navy didn't give land back. Fish and Wildlife has it now. Whatever land is not occupied is being bought up."

Severina expressed bitterness about her fellow citizens, and concern about military intentions and Puerto Rican politics. "Most people in Vieques have betrayed the struggle. We're very divided. My line of thinking is one way and theirs is another. People have struggled and stopped the maneuvers for now. But [the Navy] will return. It depends on the party that wins the election. The politicians here are very underhanded. I don't have much hope for this town's future. From the day I was born, Vieques has been looking to the future for change. Nothing has changed."

Fifty-eight-year-old Manuel Silva, a life-long *independentista* who has moved back and forth between Vieques, St. Croix, and Puerto Rico, described Vieques' struggle with the Navy as a "shy victory." Life without the Navy will be better in Vieques, he concluded, and already was better in the year since the Navy left. "But not much better with the governmental system we have in place in Puerto Rico. If we were a country like Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Chile, or Spain, then our leaders could make laws that functioned, that were effective. Not only Vieques, but all of Puerto Rico would be better. Because the government has no power. Not even minimal power to do things. The things that it does in the interest of the United States are not power." Manuel saw that Vieques had several challenges as it faced the future: "Vieques has two problems. The Navy and all they did, and the occupation of the land. Each is as important as the other. They not only bombed us and contaminated us: they also deprived us of using the land as we wanted to. In terms of the land, the challenges are big. Because the land they gave us is contaminated and has restrictions on development. And they haven't returned most of the land. They turned it over to another federal agency: Fish and Wildlife."

Manuel, like many viequenses, considered Vieques' prospects by looking to the neighboring Puerto Rican island of Culebra, itself a former residential island and Naval firing range that struggled against and evicted the Navy in the early 1970s. "The story could be like what you see in Culebra-for over thirty years nothing has happened to the land. The same could happen here—that all this land that was rescued, with all their different excuses, they could leave the land for thirty or fifty

years." And Manuel, like Severina and Gabriel, was concerned with how Puerto Rican politics might interfere with Vieques' future. "The other problem that Vieques still faces is the government of Puerto Rico. It's colonial capitalist. Because we have to deal with a colonial capitalist government, there will be a lot of problems to overcome before the land is returned. Because the Puerto Rican government is a government with no real power."

These comments clearly demonstrate the difficulty of sustaining a social movement over time. The current phase of social struggle is much more complicated as grassroots activists seek alternatives to top-down development schemes.
As Manuel notes, it is a great challenge to establish a participatory, economically just development process within the current colonial capitalist framework. While the Vieques activists have repeatedly pressed the Puerto Rican government to advocate their cause, and have inspired even U.S.-based politicians to fight for Vieques, grassroots-based collective action remains crucial to advance Vieques' interests.

My interviews in Tortuguero suggested that the Vieques social movement was clearly alive in the present, even in this barrio where little effort had been expended mobilizing the residents. In Tortugero, people's comments reflected remarkable changes in consciousness formed in the past ten years of grassroots organizing and resistance. Residents expressed overwhelming concern about health, contamination, and bombing that was not widely articulated ten years ago. Ten years earlier few Vieques residents focused on the naval bombing exercises in discussing their opposition to the military, and no one I interviewed expressed a concern with military contaminants in the environment.[17]

As the discussion has indicated, consciousness about access and concern with privatization were of foremost concern to residents I interviewed. The challenge facing activists today is how to continue to mobilize these feelings of entitlement, collective identity, and destiny to achieve an alternative vision of development.

Moreno (2005) argues that well-organized and well-supported local communities can build sustainable economies around tourism, currently the main model of development under consideration in Vieques. He suggests that local communities can derive benefits from foreign investment and avoid the capital flight, cultural subversion, and environmental degradation that frequently accompany more traditional, top-down tourist models. What is essential to success is a strong, unified, local voice, and the ability of a community to engender political support and governmental direction.

Historically, local activists have had experience and success in organizing not around class, but cultural nationalist sentiment. This seems to be a key strategy to halt the privatization of the island. In the summer of 2004, the CPRDV organized a demonstration in front of the Casa del Francés (The Frenchman's House), a hundred-year-old Creole-style estate built by one of the island's French plantation owners, and emblematic of Vieques' sugar era. The Casa is owned by the SunBay Consortium, an international group based in New York, and is currently abandoned and neglected. The consortium has visions of using the Casa as a reception house in a large resort that would attract international tourism. The CPRDV wants to block this project. Activists are currently pushing the Puerto Rican government to expropriate the Casa, renovate it, and use the estate as an anchor for locally controlled, heritage tourism, in the process impeding the development of the resort.

By mobilizing residents' deeply felt attachment to the land and nostalgia for the rural past, activists seem to be successful in building support for the expropriation

of the Casa del Francés. The success of this strategy was apparent in my interviews in Tortugero. All residents I interviewed supported the expropriation of the Casa del Francés. When I pointed out that expropriating the Casa could derail a large-scale resort that might bring in hundreds of jobs, they did not waver. The Casa was universally seen as the patrimony of the Puerto Rican people, belonging in government hands.[18]

The CPRDV's strategy of relying on government intervention to block private development highlights the ambiguous role of the Puerto Rican government in potentially constraining market forces. The Puerto Rican government has not taken a position in support of or in opposition to large-scale development in Vieques. In fact, it was the Puerto Rican government that allowed the construction of the Martineau Bay on public land on Vieques' north coast. With its high walls and high-priced rooms, Wyndam Martineau Bay is an emblem of the kind of development that could disenfranchise the local population. The Puerto Rican government acted to facilitate this process.

Yet on the other side of the island, Puerto Rican government policy appears to clash with the Sunbay Consortium's vision of building an 80-acre mega complex that would attract international tourists. The Puerto Rican government is promoting two small-scale projects: cabins in Sun Bay Beach Park, catering to the Puerto Rican middle and working class families on weekend trips to Vieques, and a fish house in Esperanza that would benefit local fishers. The Sunbay Consortium and its proponents have fiercely opposed the cabins, arguing that they might become "havens for noisy parties and drug dealing." The fishermen's wharf, they argue, would bring "stench and pollution" that would blight Esperanza.[19] In different ways these government projects challenge the exclusivity envisioned by the resort planners. The Sun Bay cabins project an entirely different view of leisure and recreation from the golf-spa-polo club model promoted by the consortium. The fish house directly challenges resort plans for beachfront development. To build the fish house, the Puerto Rican government would expropriate land currently owned by the consortium that is essential for beach access for the mega resort. Without beach access, the resort is seriously compromised. The Puerto Rican government plan, therefore, may ultimately check the power of global capital.

Residents in Tortuguero repeatedly stressed their desire for access to the land and for small-scale development that would bring work and allow residents to stay in Vieques. While there did not exist strong class consciousness opposed to market forces or capitalist development in principle, there was a strong sense of connection and right to the land. This "agregado" consciousness, this strong sense of local, rural identity, has long acted as the fuel sustaining social protest in Vieques. Johnson (2001: 952) notes that 'images of community' can provide an important vehicle through which individuals articulate and legitimate the right to defend a particular form of property." The continued presence of cultural nationalist ideology suggests that activities that draw on this sentiment—notions of the beaches as national patrimony, emphases of historic links to the island—may successfully rally people in the struggle to resist privatization. Strong enthusiasm for the government expropriation of the Casa del Francés seems to support this strategy.

"We want a tranquil and free Vieques," commented Luis. "We don't want to privatize all of Vieques. We all want to enjoy it." The next phase of struggle will

involve formulating the strategies and harnessing the energy to achieve this vision. An emphasis on culturally based unity, entitlement, and belonging may prove successful, at least in the short term, in glossing over internal socioeconomic stratification and building a unified collectivity that can leverage the power of the Puerto Rican state to block free market capitalism. While discourse of community and nation is often used to limit or exclude participation, Nash (2005) argues that in the early stages of mobilization, some degree of essentializing ideology is often necessary to unite distinct groups around common elements of group consciousness and constructed emblems of identity. Cultural nationalist ideology, therefore, may provide Vieques residents with a sense of common identity and destiny necessary to counter the exclusionary impulses of the market.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
Thanks first and foremost to Mario Solís Solís for all of his help and patience, and to the Vieques residents who took time to talk to me during the summer of 2004. I am grateful to my colleagues, Esperanza Brizuela García and Neeraj Vedwan, and my husband, Howard Fischer, for providing invaluable feedback on various drafts of this essay. Thanks also to two anonymous reviewers for their comments.

NOTES

1 A recent study contracted by the Puerto Rican Health Department documents significant uranium contamination in sea grass beds from the eastern firing range all the way along the south coast of the island, including the public beach of Esperanza (*Vieques Times*, Summer 2004). This study points to the complexity of the clean-up process, and the way contamination on the former base has spread into the civilian sector.

2 A recent article analyzed housing sales in the Esperanza neighborhood of Vieques. The article detailed frenzied buying in an 18-month period between 2003 and the first 6 months of 2004. Thirty-six properties were sold during this period, twenty-two to buyers from the U.S., eight to buyers from the Puerto Rican mainland and only two to buyers from Vieques (other buyers could not be classified). During this same 18-month period, housing prices in the neighborhood rose by 50 percent (*Claridad*, July 8–14, 2004).

3 Perhaps the most striking indicator of the rapid gentrification of the island was an ad in the *New York Times* "Escape" section, offering a three-bedroom house with guesthouse for sale in Vieques for $2.5 million. The owner was quoted as saying: "We love the beach, we love the Caribbean. Vieques, though, is very different from many of the other islands. Two-thirds of the island is a wild preserve, and there are a lot of beautiful beaches with no development—that's what is special to us" (*New York Times*, 5/20/05).

4 Data in this section are drawn from McCaffrey (2002) and are the product of ethnographic, documentary, and archival research.

5 St. Thomas, for example, which is 32 square miles, is roughly half the area of 51-square-mile Vieques, yet boasts a population of 51,000, more than five times that of Vieques's population of just under 10,000.

6 Bergad describes agregados as "service tenants who exchanged usufruct rights to small parcels of land for various labor obligations" (1983: 88). Agregados have traditionally been regarded as the most exploited sector of the Puerto Rican working class, because they had no formal rights to the land and lived at the whim of the landowner. But Bergad argues that among the landless laborers, the use rights agregados staked to the land were central to their survival and autonomy. Giusti (1996) argues that these peasant-like subsistence activities were central to both workers' survival and the social autonomy of laborers.

7 In the 1930s, 95 percent of the rural population, or two-thirds of Vieques' total population of 10,582, was landless, while two sugar corporations consumed 71 percent of island land. Only two other Puerto Rican municipalities, Santa Isabel, dominated by the Aguirre Sugar Company, and Guánica, dominated by the South Puerto Rico Sugar company, had sharper inequalities of land ownership (Ayala 2001).

8 In the 1920s, the Brookings Institution documented conditions of appalling poverty throughout Puerto Rico. As much as 90 percent of the rural population suffered from hookworm, due to a lack of shoes and poor sanitation (Clark 1930: 57–67). Vieques stood as one of the most severe expressions of Puerto Rico's plight. According to the 1935 Special Agricultural Census, Vieques had the most dramatic rate of male unemployment in all of Puerto Rico, with 64.4 percent of its male labor force officially unemployed. The island hemorrhaged its population to St. Croix. Those who remained in Vieques lived on the brink of starvation. A 1933 study estimated that the island's population subsisted on less than seven cents per day per person (Wagenheim and Jiménez de Wagenheim 1994:

167). Subsistence activities such as fishing, coconut gathering, and charcoal making were not sustaining the population or adequately compensating for low wages.

9 An additional 1,000 acres of former base land in the west was transferred to the Puerto Rican Conservation Trust.

10 www.epa.gov/region02/vieques/sectors.htm#west.

11 According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency: "Extensive amounts of unexploded ordnance and remnants of exploded ordnance have been identified in the range areas of Vieques, and in the surrounding waters. Hazardous substances associated with ordnance use may include mercury, lead, copper, magnesium, lithium, perchlorate, TNT, napalm, and depleted uranium among others. At Camp García, and in the NASD, the hazardous substances present may also include a range of chemicals such as PCBs, solvents, and pesticides" (www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/nar1719.htm). A 1998 EPA survey cited by the Military Toxics Project noted that most former firing ranges have significant contamination. The survey discussed widespread health dangers at 206 closed, transferred, and transferring (CTT) and inactive military ranges. The report concluded that "contamination resulting from used or fired munitions including UXO [unexploded ordnance] is found on almost all ranges.... UXO has been found on 85 percent of the ranges and chemical or biological weapons are known to exist or are suspected at over 50 percent of the ranges. The risks from contamination resulting from ordnance use are widespread. Ranges in this report potentially pose significant risks to human health and safety because of their proximity to growing surrounding populations" (www.miltoxproj.org/CM%20Fact%20Sheet.htm).

12 In addition, I have included the comments of one resident, Pito Delarme, who was working in Tortuguero, but turned out to live in Santa María, another resettlement tract. I decided to include his comments in the article because he was so articulate, although he is not formally part of the Tortugero sample.

13 In the early 1990s, the Puerto Rican media kept a sensationalist chronicle of the daily carnage of the drug wars, broadcasting gruesome images of cadavers on the evening news. The headlines of the tabloid *El Vocero* blared a daily tally of rising murder rates (see Rodríguez Beruff 1999).

14 The Catholic diocese of Caguas, Puerto Rico, conducted its own door-to-door survey in June 2000, determining that 88.5 percent of the population favored the immediate exit of the Navy.

15 Only two residents ventured to guess what sustainable development meant to them. They both answered "development that stays," reflecting Vieques' troubled economic history. The island is home to dozens of abandoned factories and hotels, the legacies of decades of failed development schemes (see Grusky 1992). General Electric, once the largest private source of employment was scaling down and residents expected it to close soon. A sustainable economy thus was understood not as development that would balance economic and environmental priorities, but rather development that would secure a reliable source of work that might sustain the human population.

16 There were earlier efforts to bring international tourism to Vieques. In the 1960s, the Puerto Rican government secured a commitment from Frederick Woolworth's Woolnor Corporation to build a multimillion-dollar resort on Commonwealth lands on the south coast of Vieques. The Navy blocked this project by refusing to allow civilian flights access to its airport in Vieques, and by refusing to cede air rights over Vieques. A Navy spokesman succinctly summarized the military's position: "The U.S. government has spent more than $100 million in developing Vieques and Roosevelt Roads. We're not going to throw away such an investment so that Vieques should be converted into a Mecca for tourism" (*San Juan Review*, June 1964).

17 When bombing was mentioned it was not connected to health concerns, but complaints about the cracked foundations of houses. Fishermen were the most likely of all residents to address bombing as a problem, but their concern was not the effect on human health, but rather the destruction of the marine environment. From the

fishermen's perspective, bombing was problematic because it created economic hardship: fish were smaller in size, and fishermen had to spend more time and resources traveling further out to sea to net a decent catch.

[18] In August 2005, shortly before this article went to press, the Casa del Francés was burned to the ground by arsonists. Struggle over the landmark structure had intensified in the months prior to the crime. Activists successfully lobbied the municipal assembly to approve a resolution in favor of expropriating the Casa. Supporters and opponents of the resort had increasingly hinged the future of the resort on the status of the Casa—as a reception hall for wealthy tourists, or a heritage site for locally based tourism. Burning the plantation house to the ground apparently removed any encumbrances the landmarked monument might have presented to unfettered development of the resort. At this writing, the case remains under criminal investigation.

[19] *New York Times*, July 26, 2003.

[20] The Sunbay Resort Development project description (January 1999) describes the complex as "a first class resort on the Southern shore of Vieques ... a quasi-deserted Caribbean island .... The Sun Bay Resort will include both real estate and hotel development ventures ... acquiring approximately 500 acres of land bordering a spectacular natural reserve near the village of Esperanza; building and marketing a wide spectrum of residential condos, from artist studios to ranch houses ... a 200-room, beach front hotel; a 75-cabin, ecological village; a 45-room hilltop inn; and a 40-room golf club hotel ... several restaurants, bars and clubs, an 18 hole golf course, marina facilities, river pools, health and beauty spas, sailing, scuba and equestrian schools, a botanical garden, riding paths and polo fields" (cited by the Committee to Rescue and Develop Vieques, "No to the Speculators," 8/30/03).

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