

**STORYTELLING SEASONALLY DRY NEOTROPICAL FOREST:
THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF SPACE AND NATURE IN PEASANT COMMUNITIES
OF A COSTA RICAN DRY FOREST**

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Abstract

In the state-created settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana in the province of Guanacaste, Costa Rica, spatialized social relations are co-constituted with processes of production and reproduction. This dissertation illustrates the ways in which socially-produced space and spatialized social relations unfold in rural and peasant contexts in these two peasant settlements created in the 1980s by ITCO –the Costa Rican state land and settlement institute. In theoretical terms, the dissertation puts into conversation Henri Lefebvre’s social production of space with reflections on the traditional Marxist agrarian question concerning the disappearance of peasantry under capitalist social relations of production. It argues that spatial dynamics structure the extent to which the communities under study and many other peasant towns are able to prolong a partially subsistence-oriented livelihood over generations. The design of these two peasant settlements produced advantageous conditions for monocrop and industrial agriculture, requiring a hired labour force, intensive use of machinery and a controlled water supply. Based on field work over four years, entailing a series of workshops, life story interviews, visits to farms and observations of the everyday life of the settlements, as well as more than fifteen years of researching the region, the dissertation illustrates how agrarian families in Bagatzí and Falconiana strike a balance between labour and consumption, drudgery and utility –important aspects of the agrarian question as theorized by Chayanov. The dissertation reveals that an imbalance occurs in part due because land-use prescribed by the state shifts the available labour force, decreases the consumption of products of the farm, and reproduces ongoing gender disparities in the community. The result is that current forms of land use take a heavy toll on male workers in the community, and women continue to be excluded from both decision-making and on-farm work. Yet despite adverse conditions and a capitalist environment, these settlements have persisted and survived through the adaptation and production of peasant spaces, including through women’s use of varied portions of the available space for subsistence purposes. The settlements have been unable, however, to assure generational replacement via their sons and daughters, many of whom migrate elsewhere for employment.

To the peasant families around the world -but specially in Central America-, and to their daughters and sons with which I identify my own path to find a better place. To them, but especially the women, for persisting and resisting, and sometimes giving up and going out of town pursuing dreams of a better life. Because all of you are me, and I am one with you.

We must create the necessary conditions for them to come back.

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I acknowledge that my success is the product of a system that produces inequality, excludes and blocks the access to many women, LGBTQIA+ community, people of colour and indigenous peoples of the Americas. I will work to dismantle the oppression and structural exclusion that support this very system that today allows me to be where I am as an exemplary exception.

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Echoing the great Toni Morrison, may the power and position I achieve today allow me to empower and support so many more people like me in the times to come!

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List of Acronyms

CONARROZ	Consejo Nacional de Arroceros (National Council of rice producers)
INDER	2012, Instituto Nacional de Desarrollo Rural (Rural Development Institute)
INEC	Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos. National Institute of Statistic and Census
IDA	1982-2012, Instituto de Desarrollo Agrario (Agrarian Development Institute, now Rural Development Institute)
ITCO	1961-1982, Instituto de Tierras y Colonización (Lands and settlement Institute, now Rural Development Institute)
LB-BR	Lomas de Barbudal Biological Reserve
OTS	Organization for Tropical Studies
PV-NP	Palo Verde National Park
SENARA	Servicio Nacional de Riego y Avenamiento (National Irrigation Service)
SDNtF	Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forest

List of participants by community and others

Falconiana

- Don Lucas** One of the original members of the first set of settlers of Falconiana. Interview.
- Don Juan** One of the late members of Falconiana community, cousin of Don Lucas. Interview.
- Dona Flory** One of the original members of the first set of settlers of Falconiana, Don Lucas's wife. Interview and participant of the quilting workshops.
- Doña Joaquina** Late settler of Falconiana, she does not possess a parcel or working land, only the house at the town. Participant of the quilting workshops.
- Melina** Joaquina's daughter, married to one of the few second generation Falconiana young peasants still living at the town. Participant of the quilting workshops.
- Nidia** Owner of the Butterfly convenience store in Falconiana, participant of the quilting workshops.
- Don Olíder** One of the original members of the first settlement of Falconiana, mentioned in Don Lucas and Doña Flory's interviews
- Estefanía** Don Olíder's daughter, participant in his father's interview.

Bagatzí

- Don Manuel** One of the original members of the first set of settlers of Bagatzí
- Don Luis** One of the original members of the first settlement of Bagatzí
- Don Gerardo** Late settler of Bagatzí, whose brothers were in the second wave of settlers who bought land from the original founders of the town. Interview.
- Doña Marlen** Don Gerardo's wife. Bagatzí. Interview.
- Doña Blanca** One of the women that came with the first men to settle Bagatzí and remains living there. Participant of the quilting workshops.

Cándida Sotela Sole women between the first twenty men that originally came to establish Bagatzí settlement. Mentioned in the files at INDER and in Luz's interviews.

Doña Luz One of the women that came with the first men to settle Bagatzí and still remains living there. Interview and participant of the quilting workshops.

Daniel Worker as the OTS-Palo Verde Field Station, Doña Luz's elder son. Interview

Alexander Worker as the OTS-Palo Verde Field Station. Doña Blanca's only son. Interview

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Chapter 1

An Introduction to the Social Production of Space and Nature in Bagatzí and Falconiana

“When I got married, I brought my chickens with me. I can't live without my plants and my animals. And you see, here in my yard I have everything!” (Doña Flory, Falconiana. 2016)

“Here, all that remains is the hope that tomorrow the children will return, but here we are. The plan is to stay here.” (Don Gerardo, Bagatzí, 2016)

This is a dissertation about hope, and sometimes, the loss of hope.

Despite the pessimism of many academics and external actors, there is reason for hope for peasants in the province of Guanacaste, Costa Rica. This hope not only resides there; it spreads further: throughout Central America, the Americas and globally. There *is* a future for peasants. That future is rooted in their resistance to the imposition of industrial agricultural models and the capitalist-driven social production of space.

This dissertation explores the historic and environmental transformations of the seasonally dry Neotropical forest (SDNtF) of Guanacaste and the communities that have been settled there for centuries. These later became the peasant settlements of Bagatzí and

Falconiana. Through transdisciplinary and participatory research, we will explore their histories and the mechanisms by which they produce peasant spaces and perpetuate their small-scale economies. Peasants persist in their way of life in the face of capitalist states and capitalist societies that neither create nor sustain other forms of social and material space. The histories of human settlements, ancient pollen, young trees, shattered families, and absent daughters and sons speak to the transformations and persistence of peasant spaces, nature and hope within the contradictions of both capitalist and peasant spheres of the social production of space.

Picture 1



Tempisque tree flowers, *Sideroxylon capiri*. Image: Silvia Vasquez Olguin, Palo Verde OTS Field Station, 2017. Identification: Dr. Gerardo Avalos, personal communication, 2020.

The central argument that drives this dissertation is that the Costa Rican government, through institutions in the agricultural sector, shaped the physical/social and reproductive space in Bagatzí and Falconiana peasant settlements in a form that appeared most beneficial to, and productive for, a capitalist market. The two peasant settlements have an arrangement of land for cultivation separated from land for habitation. This arrangement was advantageous for monocrop and industrial agriculture, and it required a hired labour force, intensive machinery use, and controlled water supply. This new array of land produced a discrepancy in the two most important balances of the peasant family that Chayanov (1986) studied: the balance of labour and consumption and the balance of drudgery and utility. In these cases, the imbalances I studied were apparent in the fact that more hired labour was necessary, and less family labour was

integrated to provide for the needs of rice cultivation for the market. The imbalances are equally visible in the incorporation of more labour, less consumption of products from the farm, heavy workload for the men of the family, and the exclusion of women from the labour of cultivation on the plot.

An introduction to Costa Rican agrarian and institutional context

The Costa Rican Land and Colonization Institute (ITCO by its original name in Spanish) was created in 1961 as a part of the state social democratic policies to strengthen Costa Rican society. Among the areas that received attention were urban industrial workers' rights, access to affordable housing, public education, healthcare, public transportation, and, of course, the agricultural production that was the leading economic sector of the time. Costa Rica implemented a state-led agrarian reform, while other countries of the region, impelled by revolutionary movements of the 1960s and 70s, undertook deep social and political transformations throughout the last century. The case of the Costa Rican peasantry is shaped by the characteristics of an agrarian capitalism based on coffee/banana plantations, and recently, sugarcane and pineapple plantations, as well as cattle farming. Such agrarian mainstays did not foster the development of small family-owned orchards or diversified farms. Costa Rican peasants were, and remained, mostly coffee and livestock farmers.

Table 1

Quantity and size of the farms	Total of farms		Main activity by group					
			Agriculture ^{1/}		Livestock ^{2/}		Other ^{3/}	
	Quantity	Extension	Quantity	Extension	Quantity	Extension	Quantity	Extension
Costa Rica	93,017	2,406,418.4	60,626	976,083.3	30,248	1,271,766.9	2,143	158,568.2

^{1/} It includes the main activities related to annual, permanent, forestry and ornamental crops.

^{2/} It includes the main activities of aquaculture, poultry, swine and cattle, minor species and other livestock activities.

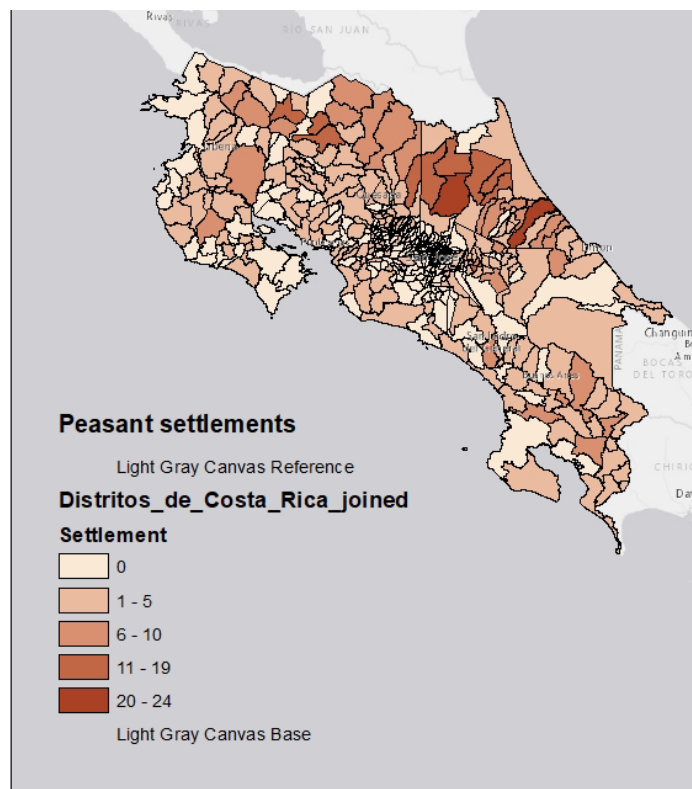
^{3/} It groups rural tourism, management and protection of natural forests and other main activities.

Source: VI Censo Nacional Agropecuario, 2014. Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos

The more significant urban areas of the country are located in the Central Valley of the capital, surrounded by the small farms of the peripheral south and west belt of the valley (see

Map 1). Outside the valley, the countryside revolves around a plantation model of medium-scale agricultural production. According to the 2014 Costa Rican Agricultural Census, as shown in Table 1, 22,500 farms out of a total of more than 60,000 agricultural farms are dedicated to coffee, followed by 9,000 fruit farms (mostly pineapple and banana), as well as 4,500 farms dedicated to produce basic grains like rice, beans, and corn. Another 30,000 farms are devoted to cattle-ranching activities (Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos, 2014.)

Map 1
Concentrations of state-made peasant settlements by District. Costa Rica, 2016.



INDER, Government of Costa Rica. Silvia Vasquez Olguin, 2019.

When the Costa Rican government initiated the program of peasant settlements in 1961, the primary beneficiaries were families from the belt of small coffee towns of the Central Valley: San Ramon, Tilarán, Acosta (Edelman, 1987, 1992; Gudmundson, 1984; Rodríguez Solera, 1988; Rosero-Bixby et al., 1997). Those participating in the program were not necessarily pursuing a peasant livelihood themselves when they joined the ITCO settlement project, but they were descendants of coffee farmers and small-orchard farmers. Others were former urban workers

such as shoemakers, small merchants, or unemployed agricultural workers from the sugarcane industry and vast cattle ranches.

The Costa Rican government wanted “to create peasants” and transform them into small to medium-sized agricultural entrepreneurs through technical assistance, credit programs and land tenure programs. Much has been written about Costa Rican “peasant transformation” policies. One wonders what goal was envisioned by the state as the outcome of such a transformation. These are among the central questions I investigate through this research: (1) in what form did the Costa Rican government put in motion a huge program to create peasant settlements throughout the province of Guanacaste? And (2) how did these settlements influence and accelerate peasant transformation, otherwise known as the modernization of the agricultural sector?

Through modernization, the Costa Rican government wanted to create a new class of agricultural entrepreneurs and small farmers oriented to the market production and even to export their products. From 1961 to the present, the Costa Rican government acquired huge farms from private owners and transformed them into small family-owned farms and towns in all provinces. This transformation of landscape and land tenure regimes moved quickly at the beginning in the 1970s, but it slowed in later years from the 1990s onward. The much-desired transformation of the peasants never arrived. The 880 settlements created since 1961 still exist, but few agricultural enterprises have arisen from them in over sixty years. Those that are enterprises are mostly cooperatives.

The particularities of the peasant economy encompass various complex elements of lives rooted in, and dependent upon, land in the countryside and the meaning of work therein. Among these elements, the close link with more-than-human nature and a sense of place and time connected to productive practices shape the rhythm of social transformations even when agricultural practices undergo modernization. Drawing connections with Soja’s work discussed below, this dissertation illustrates how socially-produced space and spatialized social relations unfold in rural and peasant contexts—within the specific characteristics of the state-led peasant

settlements created by ITCO since 1961—in the province of Guanacaste and the settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana.

The contribution of this dissertation is to put into discussions of spatiality pursued by such thinkers as Edward Soja, with a reflection on the traditional Marxist agrarian question concerning the disappearance of the peasantry under capitalism and capitalist social relations of production. If the peasantry was doomed to disappear more than one hundred years ago, why does it persist into the present? Why is it even thriving, reconfiguring, and challenging well-established structures of exploitation and power? According to the scholarship of thinkers such as Van Der Ploeg, Bernstein, Bryceson and others, peasantry is very much alive. As I conducted my fieldwork, I felt the pulse of life and resistance to disappearance in the towns I visited and the people I talked with. What allows these peasants and their productive and social practices to survive and remain meaningful? The so-called transformation of the peasantry into new agrarian entrepreneurs or industrial workers does occur, but what grabbed my attention was their connection to material space, the social practices embedded in that space, and the persistence of the agrarian question.

My study of peasants' persistence focuses on the spatial dimension of such and the role of spatiality in the social reproduction of peasant communities and rural spaces (Lefebvre 2013). Over two years (2016 to 2017), I conducted ethnographic research in the communities of Bagatzí and Falconiana, state-made peasant settlements of Guanacaste, Costa Rica. I paid particular attention to the experiences of place and the ways social production of space took shape through social and spatial practices of agriculture and social reproduction. My goal through this fieldwork was to connect the spatial elements of rural life to classical peasant studies to better inform the current understanding of the agrarian question (Bernstein, 2010; Kautsky, 1988). I examine how the 'agrarian question' (discussed later in this chapter and Chapter 2) is articulated through its subjects' lifeworlds (Halbwachs, 1980; Kings & Ilbery, 2015) in state-created peasant settlements in Costa Rica and how it is expressed through spatial configurations and spatial practices.

When ITCO established the peasant program of settlements in 1961, its openly declared purpose was to modernize impoverished and deskilled urban and peri-urban families. The

strategy implemented was to give them land to work on, relocating them in far-from-the-capital areas, and improving industrial and technologically enhanced agricultural production. Its less publicly voiced purpose, however, was to contain and restrict future social conflicts arising from possible claims for land access and struggles stemming from urban poverty and lack of work opportunities. Secondly, my dissertation holds that a key feature of ITCO's peasant modernization project was the separation of land for cultivation from the area for habitation. In contrast, in the case of all spontaneous (I employ the term 'spontaneous' to refer to the rural towns originating from the individual settlement without state direct intervention in the relocation of their inhabitants) peasant and rural towns, the land the family owns is where they built their home. There is no documentation to demonstrate that ITCO's separation of these spaces was an intentional policy choice. Still, the consistency of the design speaks about a will to emulate the classical urban distribution and separation of living space and working space. This feature of the ITCO settlement illustrates how a Capitalist state imposes its logic over a part of its population through the social production of social space. From my perspective, this separation of living and working space contradicts the peasant logic of space production and use: home and agricultural plots co-exist in shared space in all other Costa Rican peasant towns except for the ITCO settlements. This separation of home and workspaces produces profound changes and struggles in the peasant family unit.

For some of us working in rural contexts and with peasant groups, it is important to incorporate a material dimension into our research and reflections about the present and the possibilities of the countryside, its people, and the exchanges between the city and the countryside, challenging traditional perspectives and acknowledging the fact that space and place, nature and culture, are socially-produced in rural and peasant contexts as much as in the cities.

This dissertation's structure (further detailed later in this introduction) is organized via particular empirical chapters where specific theories and methodologies are presented that are most pertinent, as opposed to a more conventional dissertation structure separated into sections such as theory, methodology and results. This dissertation undertakes a narrative ethnography,

further discussed in this chapter and Chapter 5. It incorporates the stories and experiences of the people who first arrived in the settlements, as well as my own experiences in order to tell, collect, and make sense of memories and experiences. The social production of space and nature is in the memories and practices of those who form part of this research, and it is in the array of spaces in the settlements and the protected areas. This first chapter serves as a general introduction and establishes the bases for the theory, context, and methodology for the rest of the dissertation. The chapter proceeds as follows: first, I examine the Costa Rican historical context with an emphasis on the Bagatzí and Falconiana settlements' history. The subsequent four sections discuss theory and theoretical coordinates, the agrarian question in its contemporary manifestations, methodology including a subsection on the lifeworld of peasants, and finally, a brief overview of the ensuing chapters in this dissertation.

Costa Rican historical context

Costa Rica is my country by adoption. I was born in Argentina, but very early in my childhood, my family migrated to Costa Rica, escaping a repressive dictatorship in Argentina. I feel mostly Costa Rican now, but my personal experience was a journey of self-discovery, recognizing my context, and my sources of meanings. Costa Rica was a clear choice for conducting my research for many practical and personal reasons. I studied the area of Bagatzí and Falconiana for more than ten years before my Ph.D. research as a professor at the Sociology department in the University of Costa Ricaduring my Master's degree,and I researched these areas even before that as an undergraduate student of rural and environmental sociology.

Working in Palo Verde National Park for the Organization of Tropical Studies was one of the most important roles I have undertaken in my personal and professional life. It impacted the way I understand nature and space and the interactions between people from these peasant settlements, their places of residence and ways of living. In my constant travels to OTS-Palo Verde, I observed the presence of social structures in the physical surroundings, the pulse of social life and natural history in each turn of the road, under layers of soil, water, and sediments

from the forest. I wondered why these towns were so isolated, or who decided to put them there without a regular public transportation service or highschool. I noticed the towns surrounded by rice monocrop plantations, long extensions of sugarcane, but nothing else; and people cannot live on rice and sugarcane alone. Fifteen years ago, I became interested in the colonization process behind these towns and the very existence of an isolated National Park at the end of a road that passed them by.

Map 2.



Fieldwork locations. Silvia Vasquez Olguin, 2019.

The Costa Rican agrarian colonization case, historically, is similar to other countries of Latin America categorized as “undeveloped.” Its process of colonization and agricultural expansion followed a pattern in which a peasant fraction or a subaltern class was created through the expulsion and genocide of native groups, replaced by settler colonizers and “criollos,” a term that refers to European descendants born in Latin American territories. As Jeffrey Jones describes (Jones, 1990, pp. 8–15), Central American landscapes were made through the colonization and transformation of forest lands after the displacement of Indigenous populations. Successive waves of deforestation and reforestation followed the Spanish conquest of Central American region in late sixteenth century. In Costa Rica the first market-oriented farms produced cacao in

the Caribbean lowlands one hundred years later than the first families in the Central Valley started growing corn, beans and vegetables for the local market and for small exports to the neighbour cities in Nicaragua (Jones, 1990; Rosero-Bixby et al., 1997; Torres-Rivas, 1994).

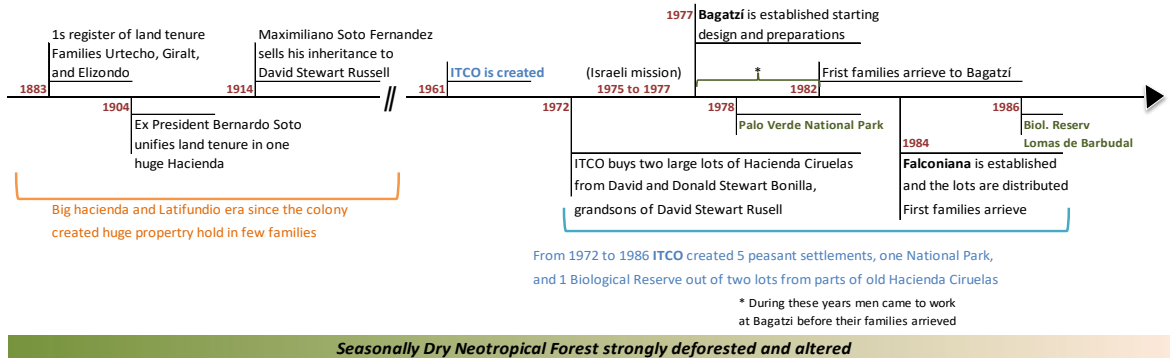
Prehistoric and more recent human settlements shaped cultivation areas for successive productive models, like the agricultural export of cacao, dyes, wood, coffee, sugar, and bananas, through the early colonies, and later through the newly independent countries. In Costa Rica, like the rest of Central America, landscapes of thick forest and tree-covered mountains slowly receded through the advance of new settlers. The demand for new products created both profound landscape changes and commercial opportunities in areas like the province of Guanacaste in Costa Rica (Arroyo-Mora et al., 2005; DeClerck et al., 2010; Edelman & León, 2014; Frankie et al., 2004; Janzen, 1986; Jones, 1990). The peasants of the original Chayanovian agrarian question were European, and they became the model for further colonial endeavours in the New World. Answering the agrarian question in Latin American terms requires the answer to be situated in the processes of colonization that created peasants as a category in the American colonies. The creation of peasants in the new continent followed the annihilation of the Indigenous population in large numbers. The Indigenous population experienced displacement and profound changes in their lifestyles after the Spanish conquest and colonization through new arrays of land use, market-oriented production, and intensive family work on private lands. The production of diverse forms of social spaces oriented around the state drove the history of the continent: via the *encomienda system* (land and population granted by the Spanish Crown to a crown subject newcomer in America conferring the right to demand tribute and forced labor from the Indian inhabitants of that said area) and *pueblos de indios or reducciones* (Spanish reducciones, also called 'congregaciones' settlements where the Spanish rulers in the new colonies relocated, forcibly in many cases, indigenous inhabitants into new settlements modeled following the Spanish traditional towns and villages design), from *haciendas* and *latifundios* to *ejidos* (land use arrangements from individually owned large pieces of land to collective ownership in the last case), and more recent settlements and towns like Bagatzi and Falconiana. In the last century, the “development project”—encompassing modernization of rural spaces, urbanization, and industrialization of agrarian production—alongside the opening of national

markets to international investments, created new social and productive arrangements that shape the present-day Latin American peasantry.

The peasantry in Latin America served as one starting point for accumulation. The colonization and exploitation of the new colonies worked as a siphon of resources cementing the European capitalist takeoff (Cueva, 1980) via the process of peasant dispossession in Europe and peasant creation in the American colonies. From the Latin American perspective, this was solely a period of destruction and extinction. The continent experienced a new economic and political system of colonialism and extraction that continually transformed landscapes and civilizations. The social production of social space occurred under colonization and its aftermath, just as it occurs in the contemporary period. Under this consideration, I argue that capitalist agricultural production at the regional and national levels—defined by Agustin Cueva as “heterogeneous capitalism that deepened inequalities” (Cueva, 2002, p. 101)—is an expression of *the social production of spaces* whereby initial colonial rule, markets, and the logic of social and economical production and reproduction, capitalism interlocked and unfolded in Costa Rican countryside. However, the achievements of capitalism and development followed some diverging routes in the continent under the same laws that ruled capitalist development.

Costa Rica implemented a type of Agrarian Capitalism from the second half of the 19th century on top of an already existent peasantry, which resulted in the peasantry’s partial dissolution. As explained by one of the most renowned Costa Rican historians, Vladimir De la Cruz, before the second half of the 19th century, a peasant economy existed, and the process of fully-developed capitalist relations entailed the slow dissolution of the peasant economy and the proletarianization of peasants. Proletarianization followed the familiar path of expropriation of land and means of production. This process allowed the formation of masses of daily labourers and farmers’ peons (Cruz, 1980; Gudmundson, 1984, 1990; Pérez Brignoli & Samper, 1994; Torres-Rivas, 1994). According to De la Cruz, Costa Rican agrarian capitalism started by “eating its producers” (1980) through processes of expropriation and land-grabbing.

Figure 1
Bagatzí and Falconiana history timeline



Silvia Vasquez Olguin drawing on historical records, and Edelman 1984; Pizarro, 2009; Rodriguez 1991

Costa Rican coffee production and its particular dynamic facilitated the process of land concentration and peasant expropriation. The product of small coffee parcels had to be processed in costly semi-industrialized and mechanized facilities. These facilities called “*beneficios*” (benefits) received the fresh coffee cherry to crush and extract the bean. The bean is the coffee seed, and it is washed, dried and finally toasted into the morning coffee routine we love, heavenly-smelling coffee grains ready for commercialization. This crucial value-added part of the production chain remained in the hands of a few families, contributing to wealth concentration and the economic and social polarization of Costa Rican society (Cruz, 1980; Edelman, 1999; González Casanova, 1984; Pérez Brignoli & Samper, 1994; Seligson, 1980; Sojo, 2013). The pursuit of new lands for expanding agricultural coffee production drove many families out of the Central Valley during the second half of the 19th century.

This process of dispossession consolidated both the Central Valley coffee plantation system and the banana enclave on the Caribbean coast, as much as it fed the new towns in the Northern lowlands. Many of Bagatzí’s and Falconiana’s original families settled via this migration pattern. De la Cruz’s analysis explains how the coffee production process, through displacement, created the necessary mass of workers that would subsequently, in the late 19th century, propel the sugarcane industry. The strong presence of sugarcane and rice monocrop industries is currently the case in Guanacaste; the province remains a stronghold of the sugarcane and rice

industry. Bagatzí and Falconiana experienced the power of these corporations since the beginning in their incorporation into the sugarcane and rice complex.

A polarized society was engendered this way since the colonial period (Edelman, 1992; Gudmundson, 1990; Pérez Brignoli & Samper, 1994; Sojo, 2013). From late 19th century to mid-20th-century, colonization efforts in Costa Rica were a result of migrations from the Central Valley to the northern plains and eastern lowlands of the Caribbean, and to the southern chain of small valleys closer to Panama's frontier (Gudmundson, 1984; Rodríguez Solera, 1988; Rosero-Bixby et al., 1997) (see Figure 1). Later, in the second half of the 20th century, the successive progressive Costa Rican government created the peasant settlements, like Bagatzí and Falconiana—the settlements that are the focus of this study—envisioning they would feed the growing cities and the agricultural export economy. The state-promoted agrarian expansion is a crucial element for informing the agrarian question in Costa Rica, and a critical component is the social production of space and nature, or the material expression it engendered.

Theory and theoretical coordinates

This dissertation examines the significant weight that spatialized social relations have on (local) social transformation in peasant communities, understanding space/place dynamics to be equally important as ties to a (global) capitalist economy for social reproduction in these sites. Through an in-depth study of the history and contemporary social relations in the state-implemented peasant settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana of Guanacaste, Costa Rica, this dissertation examines **the complex, and frequently contradictory, spatial dynamics shaping peasant and capitalist spaces in Costa Rica in the 20th and 21st century.**

The theoretical framework of this dissertation explores the links between two traditional questions in social science via a transdisciplinary perspective. These questions are the classic Chayanovian agrarian question regarding the persistence of the peasantry under current capitalist conditions of production and the Lefebvrian question concerning how the social

production of social space is expressed. In this study of the social production of a non-peasant space by a capitalist state, I locate social relations of production and reproduction in spatial theory. The traditional agrarian question proposed by Chayanov does not consider space and its role in sustaining, perpetuating, or disrupting social relations. I aim to demonstrate that projections of the outcome from the intrusion of capitalism in peasant relations of production must consider the factors of time and space. The transformation of the peasantry into waged industrial workers, entrepreneurs or cooperatives is necessarily linked to the transformation of space through time. Peasant economies and non-capitalist lifestyles subsist and endure, and they are essential for continuing the debate about alternatives to capitalism (Ploeg, 2008, 2010, 2013.) If these kinds of debates are seen as closed when they are not, capitalism is naturalized and assumed as the only way forward and the future for humanity. This leaves little chance to improve the conditions of living for most of the human population and the environment—trapping us all in the rules of the market economy.

I propose that certain relations to space can sustain and nurture social relations. Space can allow social relations and productive practices to persist or weaken through, for example, good environmental conditions for agricultural practices, access to roads and means of communication, ecosystem services like pollinators (Arroyo-Mora et al., 2005; Janzen, 1986) can help to strengthen a community as much as any other social service like education access, credit, or political engagement. The social production of social space does not happen before social relations exist but is mutually constituted with prior social relations and the residents of that space. In the case of the state-implemented settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana, space was produced via specific social relations of production with ideas about uses of space and ways of living that preceded the social relations of the new settlers and conditioned them. To explain this correlation, I dialogue with relevant authors of my field, as much as with the people from these settlements. It feels outdated these days to cite Agustin Cueva alongside Armando Bartra or Eric Wolf¹ when discussing the contemporary peasantry. However, they all help us to understand how

¹ Eric Wolf's work on the conceptualization of peasants and peasantry is key to my research (Wolf, 1966), as much as the works of Armando Bartra about capitalism and peasantry "El Capital en su Laberinto" (A. Bartra, 2006), and over all his beautiful work "De Moluscos, Discontinuidades y Politopias" (A. Bartra, 2001) that speaks about time and space of peasants communities, and Bartra's latter collaboration in Julio Boltvinik and Susan Mann's book

the Costa Rican capitalist and subaltern state imposes its dynamic and rhythm on peasants' lifestyles by creating specific spatial configurations that are not intended to sustain peasant production and livelihoods. The insights of Agustín Cueva (1980, 2002), Armando Bartra (2006), Tilman Evers (1989) and even James Scott (1999, 2017) are crucial. In Costa Rica, as in many other Latin American countries, the transformation of rural spaces via the creation of new peasant settlements formed part of a national program of rural modernization. From the 1960s onward, these programs sought to reduce urban and rural poverty (A. Bartra, 2006; Cueva, 1980; Evers, 1989; Jansen & Roquas, 2002; Mora, 1984; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2002; Seligson, 1980; Smith, 2010).

Capitalism produces its distinctive space form. Henri Lefebvre clearly states that each mode of production produces its space (Lefebvre, 1991, 2013) and, as such, a capitalist state that produces peasant spaces will do so in a form adjusted to its capitalist interests. Peasant economies are embedded in capitalist economies, integrated as parts of capitalist societies. Herein a peasant economy is made up of small-scale mercantile production inserted in a capitalist economy to which it is connected through the circulation of merchandise and credit. As discussed further below, the peasant economy is also frequently characterized by the family unit's ability to act as an autonomous decision-maker. However, the selection of products and use of the land to sustain production for subsistence is greatly influenced by market prices and market demands, and thus a broader, regional, national and global political economy.

In some cases, the peasant economy is complemented with off-farm wages and a seasonally hired workforce in a steady balance of the elements of labour and consumption, drudgery and utility. A peasant economy produces a peasant space in an array of non-commoditized land, labour and products that coexists and resists the capitalist economy and its logic of the production of space. However, peasant spaces cannot remain isolated from capitalist markets in the contemporary Costa Rican context, and these settlements were indeed established to produce agricultural commodities for national and potentially global markets. As

(Boltvinik & Mann, 2016). Agustín Cueva by his side provides one of the most complete analyses about unequal development and economic disparities in the development of capitalism that he calls "peripheral economies" (Cueva, 1980, 2002) like ours in Latin America.

such, Bagatzí and Falconiana are peasant settlements with an orientation to partial subsistence but whose economic logic is increasingly incorporated into capitalist spaces of agricultural production. Nevertheless, at the current moment, peasant communities like Bagatzí and Falconiana remain as pockets of agrarian persistence and resistance in the face of a highly commoditized market and profit-oriented economic system that continually separates workers from their means of production—in this case, land from peasants (Edelman, 2013; Mann & Dickinson, 1978; Ploeg, 2010; Wolf, 1966). This dissertation examines history and stories, ecologies, and socially-produced geographies to understand why state-implemented peasant settlements seem to fail. The capitalist mode of production adapts spaces to its purposes. Under its conditions and characteristics, ecologies, landscapes, and human settlements tend to succumb to the plan that better sustains capitalist production and market supply, undermining the foundations of peasant societies.

Peasant studies and the social production of space are the two major theoretical areas in which I situate this research. Peasant studies provided a question to my research about the social production of social space and helped demark my field research in which I follow the elusive trace of social structures in place, inscribed in bricks and mortar, as Maurice Halbwachs puts it (1980). What my research intends to do is to revitalize peasant studies in the late capitalist era by way of the incorporation of a Marxist spatial analysis tradition that centers attention upon the social production of space. The latter I understand as a process that studies the dialectics that engage identity with belonging to a place, as well as the social implications of the inhabited space, the determinants of production, consumption, freedom of movement and sense of place.

I understand “peasantry” as a historical process, which, in Latin American case was introduced the same way that early colonizers introduced crops such as grasses for livestock and other changes in the environment. The peasant identity was also “introduced” to Latin America as discussed by many authors (DeClerck et al., 2010; Jansen & Roquas, 2002; Mariátegui et al., 2007; Palerm et al., 2008; Parsons, 1965, 1970, 1976; Petras & Veltmeyer, 2002; Seligson, 1980; Sojo, 2013).

The agrarian question: contemporary manifestations and attributes

Thus, the central question of this research is: **what social, political, and material dynamics configured the socially produced spaces of the Costa Rican state-made peasant settlements Bagatzí and Falconiana over the last four decades?** To situate the question, it is important to examine the working concepts and how the research addressed these concepts.

The lingering transformation of peasant social relations follows the rhythm imposed by spatialized social relations. These elements of my research question, and my approach to the study, give rise to the following definition and approach: defining subjects of the agrarian question is essential so as not to confuse these subjects with the category “peasant” that is also significant for my research.

The peasantry is defined by its relationship to the land, in a parallel form to how the relationship with the means of production defines proletarians or bourgeoisie. This relationship with land and agricultural inputs to work the land is what opens the definition of the peasantry. Autonomy is a second equally important factor in understanding the peasantry. Autonomy in decisions about the land (as a central resource) is of key importance. Ownership of the land and resources is not requisite because peasants are those who work the land in an autonomous way, reproducing themselves and producing agricultural commodities for their subsistence and for the market. However, one of the limits to peasant autonomy concerns the market economy. It demands or impels peasants to produce for the market in order to increase the income of the family unit. What is equally important is that the peasant does not receive a fixed income like a worker. The third important characteristic of the peasant is the limitation of their time and effort on the plot lies in the balance between exhaustion and the demands for survival of the family. For the peasant, the limitation of their time and effort on the plot lies in the balance between exhaustion and the demands for survival of the family. To ensure family survival and offset exhaustion, peasants may limit the expansion of the size of the farm, hire seasonal workers to help with the harvest, or work until sunset. An autonomous peasant family may have all its members participate in such work without the mediation of salary or wages for their common well-being and subsistence in connection with others through the market. In my approach to

defining the concept of a peasant, the market plays a social role that connects peasants with other peasants and consumers. Peasants do not understand themselves as producing for the market per se; they produce to feed other people. There is purpose in their work that motivates the cultivation of the land to provide to others beyond the immediate needs of the family. At stake in the traditional agrarian question is how much of this balance of motivations and autonomy is disrupted by capitalist production and social relations.

To me, the agrarian question offers two possible entry points: **(i)** how does and how much capitalism is required to transform peasant production (non-capitalist agricultural production), and **(ii)** how do peasant forms of production persist and resist this intrusion and for how long? The agrarian question, as explained by Kautsky (Kautsky, 1988, p. 12), is critical to my research question given that its resolution has lingered over time. The persistence of the peasantry appears to contradict capitalist relations that intrude and transform peasant economies. If the agrarian question has possible outcomes, they are contrary to the peasant's very existence. The question consists of studying *whether and how capital is seizing hold of agriculture, revolutionizing it, making old forms of production and property untenable and creating the necessity for new ones*. Capital seizes hold of agriculture by revolutionizing peasant agricultural production in various ways. These include: destabilizing old forms of production by exerting pressure over peasants to increase the volume of production dedicated to the market, and less to self-consumption; replacing the production of other products consumed by the peasant family with commodities sold in the market; destabilizing old forms of property, like communal use of passages between farms and communal access roads, which tend to be formalized and replaced by formal property relations and regular roads maintained by the state; decreasing the intensity and amount of non-monetary exchanges between peasants; replacing solidarity in work and production; replacing the exchange of goods and services with paid labour and monetary interchanges; and creating new forms of production and property that increase monetary costs (Ploeg, 2006, 2010). These dynamics disincentivise crop diversification, creating economic and environmental risks and limiting and blocking cooperative relations that would otherwise provide an alternative to monetary relations and market exchange.

The methodology used in this research

To answer the question about resistance and permanence of peasant communities under capitalist conditions, I consider the experiences of people in space, the social productions of peasant spaces, and the struggle of peasant communities to subsist in spaces created for capitalist agricultural production, as in the case of Bagatzí and Falconiana. These two communities were created by the Costa Rican government in the late 1970s and 1990s as a part of a long effort to distribute land between impoverished peri-urban and urban families that extends until the present day. Still, the Costa Rican government did not want to challenge or change the power structure of land access and control. Under these conditions, land distribution led by the state was not a *substantive* agrarian reform in that it did not empower the peasantry.

My methodology integrates statistical, historical, and demographic analysis of the composition of Bagatzí and Falconiana's communities, the Guanacaste region, and Mesoamerica. I used geo-data analysis via maps and geographical visualization, along with traditional qualitative methods such as interviews, and interpretation of the space through talks and visits to the parcels, to show how peasants' practices and lifestyle persist in spite of the logic imposed by the capitalisteconomy . I hold, along with many authors more prominent than myself (Bryceson et al., 2000; Ploeg, 2010, 2013; Wolf, 1966), that the peasantry is embedded and connected with capitalism in a dialectical relationship. Peasantry and capitalism do not coexist in harmony, and they do not work well together. Nevertheless, capitalism extracts functional work and value from peasants and their products, and peasants receive funds from the sale of their products on the market.

The fieldwork also covered 32 interviews and email exchanges with institutional representatives and academics from the field of peasant studies, rural sociology, biology and ecology that worked on Bagatzí and Falconiana. Table 2 shows they come from different fields and parts of the world, thus deepening the richness of the research.

Table 2

Institution	Method	32 Participants
University of Costa Rica	Interview	4
	Email exchange	1
University of Tel Aviv	Email exchange	1
Hebrew University of Jerusalem	Email exchange	2
International Cooperation - Gov Israel & Israel Embassy in Costa Rica	Interview	1
	Email exchange	2
University of Valladolid	Email exchange	2
OTS	Interview	6
INDER	Interview	4
	Email exchange	6
SENARA	Interview	1
	Email exchange	1
INEC	Email exchange	1

Next, I continue with a list of the methodologies I used to collect information from the participants in my research. They are linked to the considerations they had at the moment to define themselves as peasants with the following characteristics:

- 1) Through individual, long, open-ended interviews, I looked at individuals who self-identify as “peasants” and want to develop agricultural productive practices following the peasant’s uses of space: diversified small to medium-scale farms and orchards. They can be producers for self-consumption and small-scale, market-oriented remnants of their production, or they can be others who decide to work huge paddies of rice monocrop for the regional rice industry or the large-scale sugarcane monopoly.
- 2) Through the same interviews and quilting workshops, where women of Bagatzí and Falconiana sew their stories with the history of the towns (see Chapters 5 and 6), I found strong gender-oriented roles and practices, reinforced by the distribution of space in these towns.

Participatory research and phenomenology revealed contradictions that were crucial to answer the main questions of this research. These methods helped to identify strong connections between physical surroundings—understood as the research subjects’ lifeworld (the immediate sum of physical surroundings and routine patterns of everyday experiences)—with how these peasant communities persist in Costa Rica.

Table 3 shows the participants by community and gender who were involved in the different activities employed to collect the data. The quilting workshops increased the numbers of women; the information from the quilting workshops provided data about their lives in the towns. Interviews with their spouses added information about the productive practices and uses of space in the parcels outside the towns. These approaches complemented one other and allowed me to build up a better picture of everyday lives in the settlements.

Table 3

Community	Methodology	Age group	Participants by gender	
			Female (22)	Male (12)
Bagatzí	Walking talks	<i>Elders & founders</i>	1	3
	Quilting workshops	<i>Women only</i>	6	
	Life histories	<i>Elders</i>	1	2
		<i>Youngs</i>	1	2
	Informal communications	<i>Elders</i>		2
		<i>Youngs</i>	2	1
Falconiana	Walking talks	<i>Elders & founders</i>	0	3
	Quilting workshops	<i>Women only</i>	7	
	Life histories	<i>Elders</i>	1	2
		<i>Youngs</i>	1	0
	Informal communications	<i>Elders</i>		2
		<i>Youngs</i>	2	1

Among the central factors contributing to the social production of space are collectively created and individually preserved memories. These arise from the experiences of populated and significant shared places (Halbwachs, 1980). Memories in this sense are socio-spatial practices that contribute to the social (re)production of social space (Lefebvre, 2013). Moreover, these

offer a critical perspective on the Costa Rican government's role in the creation of peasant settlements (Scott, 1999). Using a qualitative approach and an ethnographic perspective, I have compiled memories and socio-spatial connections shaping the lifeworld of peasants and agricultural workers.

My relationship with Bagatzí and Falconiana began more than 15 years ago. I first visited these towns when I was part of the Professors of a Field course organized by the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS) in 2002. I was familiar with the province of Guanacaste before that time, but a trip to Palo Verde National Park was unique. One does not choose to get lost in these roads and end up in these towns; one must *want* to go there. I wanted to go to Palo Verde, and the field course provided my opportunity. The director of the OTS-Palo Verde Field Station and coordinator of their field courses was good friend and mentor. That was the way I entered into the world of peasants, researchers, students, agricultural workers and thousands of living beings in the Tempisque river basin and Palo Verde National Park.

This dissertation is a local, spatial and materially-oriented ethnography of people in places. Victoria Reyes (Reyes, 2018), in her discussion of ethnographic research, suggests a model that makes ethnographies transparent, which includes naming places, naming people, and sharing data and the varied decisions ethnographers make concerning these issues. There are difficult and crucial decisions in determining whether to name a region, city or specific neighbourhood, name primary participants or public officials, and whether to share interview guides, transcripts or various kinds of field notes. Reyes's work highlights how decisions regarding transparency are part of an ethnographer's methodological toolkit and should be made on a case-by-case basis. Herein I choose to identify regions, cities and neighbourhoods in my research: the province of Guanacaste in the Northern region of Costa Rican Pacific coast, where the two settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana are located. For my purpose in this research, naming regions, cities and towns offers historical and spatial context. This allows me to connect with the strong tradition of research on this region and its culture (Arroyo-Mora et al., 2005; Edelman, 1987, 1992; Fowler, 1985; Gudmundson, 1984; Janzen, 1986; Reyes Paniagua, 2010; Rodríguez Solera, 1988) with my own research.

Reyes is also clear that including names or pseudonyms does not equate to anonymity, but for this research, I decided to use primarily pseudonyms and only use names when the person openly advised me to do so. I agree with Reyes on the implications of using real names for future research. I appreciate the way some people expressed their desire to me to appear under their real names to make them part of something bigger and more important, a part of history. For others, their decision to not formally record their names may reflect how they perceive there is no place for them, especially for women.

Therefore, like terminology, "place-identity" may be relevant if it is seen as a part of other identity categories that are manifest on many levels. Hauge (2007) writes:

Places are not only contexts or backdrops but also an integral part of identity. Even small architectural changes affect how a place facilitates different uses or attributes, such as social interaction, which thereby can also alter the meaning of a place (2007, p. 50)

The connection of places and identity processes is relevant to my ethnography, given their co-constitution. While the spatial dimension of identities has not been examined in-depth in the study of the peasantry, it has been incorporated into rural studies and rural sociology. However, analysis concerning the connection between a sense of place, place attachment and the agrarian question is rare. Two studies to make this connection are: Charney and Palgi, who examine the repopulation of rural communities in Israel (Charney & Palgi, 2014), and Das (2001), who argues understanding social processes, such as economic development, class conflict, reproduction of caste and kinship relations, and performance of public policies can be better understood alongside the spatiality of these processes (Das, 2001). The connection with space, with the place that peasants inhabit and work, the land they claim and seek to return to, the way in which space and identity are mutually shaped, contributes to strengthening and answering the agrarian question, especially concerning peasants' persistence. Plural identities reflect specific and divergent life experiences, which are mutable for everyone, whether a peasant or not (Aitken, 1992; Bellal, 2004; Bonaiuto et al., 1996; Carter et al., 2007).

I reclaim my part of the history written with bricks and mortar, as Halbwachs says (Halbwachs, 1980), even when I know that as a woman, my role may be downplayed. I was unintentionally propelled toward autoethnography in this research because I am part of the results. There has been a rising acceptance of autoethnography in the past 15 years. Instead of studying social phenomena, Sara Delamont (Delamont, 2009) suggests some scholars have taken to research themselves in an appropriately reflexive way. Her work, "The only honest thing: Autoethnography, reflexivity and small crises in fieldwork," was a pleasant reading when trying to explain why I am here in these letters. Anthony Harrison also remarks on how "women researchers could draw on their own gendered experiences to help understand the perspectives of those they conducted research among" (cited in Delamont, 2009). To me, this claim challenges the notion of ethnographic objectivity by including biographical information about researchers within ethnographic texts. Instead of accepting an omniscient voice from above, continues Harrison, readers of ethnography would want to know who the researcher was and how they came to know what they know (Harrison, 2018). A gendered interpretation of the sense of place is necessary because the recognition of my positionality as a Latin-American woman forces me toward understanding the world in a way differentiated from men. If a sense of place in the everyday life of people is a social construction of their experience, then place is gendered.

Lifeworld of peasants and my fieldwork praxis

Thus, this research takes a phenomenological approach to the experience and consciousness of place by using a **lifeworld** approach to examine the experiences of a place for both peasants and non-peasants. In this way, as King and Ilberry recommend, the researcher abandons all previous judgments about what is objective, factual, natural or scientific in people's experience. Instead, the researcher embraces, through a series of techniques, what is subjective, historical, cultural or religious in order to understand people's specific social constructions of space, nature, or landscape (Kings & Ilbery, 2015). Following these authors, the most important

aspect of work on experiences relies on the person-centered perspective of the **lifeworld** wherein constructing place is co-constituted with space. As such, agrarian subjects shape and are reshaped by their physical surroundings. Kings and Ilbery defined the lifeworld (Kings & Ilbery, 2015) for the individual who experiences it as the taken-for-granted immediate sum of the totality of physical surroundings and routine patterns of everyday experiences that make up their world. These descriptions help to understand better how physical surroundings are produced or consumed.

Physical surroundings (Halbwachs, 1980; Lefebvre, 1991, 2013) or spatiality (Soja, 1985) are linked to Lefebvre's work on the social construction of social space and are characterized by three dimensions: **material space** (space that is possible because individuals experience it); the **representation of material spaces** (conceived spaces in the minds of elites); and **spaces of representation** (the space that is lived/consumed by the individual). **Material space** takes shape in the places where practices are deployed, where the trace of peasants' practices can be found, like crop distributions, crop diversity, and agricultural practices in place, and patterns of urbanization. Through the **representation of material space**, the elites, technicians and urban planners *conceive* the design and ways space will be used. In rural spaces, these representations can be found in the agricultural practices promoted by state technicians. In towns like Bagatzí and Falconiana, these can be seen in access to services such as transportation, education, health, and in the location of roads and housing. **Spaces of representation** are places like the state-created settlements destined to be used or consumed by their inhabitants. Settlements are the spaces where peasants live their lives in ways inherited from the past. They are spaces created by the powerful elites through the capitalistic social relations in which they are embedded. Spaces of representation are visible through the presence of churches, schools, parks and monuments, the memories of their history linked to place and material institutions.

The everyday experiences of physical surroundings (Bennett, 2014; Duff, 2010; Gray, 1999; Halbwachs, 1980; Harvey, 2000; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003; Smith, 2010) can be traced in expressions of belonging, attachment to a place and sense of place. These experiences of place have a close relationship with the emergence of individual spatial identities and collective

memories. “Belonging” (Bennett, 2014) is a deep relationship between personal and collective history, the people that inhabit and experience, produce and consume the place, and the place itself. Belonging is an articulated relation of these multiple social relationships, stretching between past, present, and future generations and places. “Place attachment” (Altman & Low, 1992; Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2013) emphasizes affect to the “place” and focuses on the environmental settings to which people are emotionally and culturally attached. The term refers to the affective bonding of people in their environmental setting. “Sense of place” (Relph, 1976) is the faculty by which we grasp the inherent quality of a place and allows us to appreciate differences and similarities among places. This intrinsic quality of a place can be expressed as “spirit of a place,” and it exists primarily outside us (but is experienced through memory and intention), while the sense of place lies primarily inside us (but is aroused by the landscapes we encounter).

In my research, the individual experiences are relevant, and I must honour those experiences, feelings and attachments of people linked to places that are broadly called “nature” or “the environment.” A key value of phenomenology is that it provides investigators with a rich source of ideas about how to examine and understand lived experience. I take a phenomenological approach to my research subjects because I privilege the perception of their particular experiences over my interpretation.

My first access to the participants of this research was through a group of first settlers who possess various attributes. Land tenure defines the individual as a peasant, but self-perception does this as well. In some cases, the current settlers sold their land but retained the property where the house and small subsistence plot exist, continuing to define themselves as peasants. Participants were inhabitants of Bagatzí and Falconiana who still own a piece of land that produced some or part of their subsistence agricultural products for self-consumption (not excluding commercialization), who self-identified as part of a lineage of “peasants” independently of the land tenure regime.

To select the participants, I used the technique of chained sampling. In this sampling technique, the link between people is the most crucial element to follow. The links were between

people that share spaces, practices, or membership in an organization, family bonds, friendship or neighbourhood closeness. People that knew each other, people that conducted the same kind of activity or shared similar perspectives that experience the peasant economy at some level or shared a similar experience of working the land or had been raised in similar conditions were the focus. This sampling method allowed me to better understand the population selected as the universe for the research. A heterogeneous sample, or maximum variation sampling, as defined in Ritchie, is a deliberate strategy to include cases that vary widely from each other because the aim is to identify central themes that cut across the selected populations (Ritchie, 2014.)

A meaningful way to collect experiences from participants is to let them lead the path through the conversation. Departing from this standpoint, I interviewed people that defined themselves, or could be identified, as peasants. This approach allowed them to share their “behavioural environment”: that space where they develop their everyday practices as peasants, the meaningful places of their errands and the itineraries of their days. As a researcher, I thus accompanied individuals in what could be called “talked walks” based on what King and Ilberry (2015) employ in their research with organic farmers in the UK.

For collecting experiences of space from women or age differentiated groups, I employed map-making techniques that involved quilting and craftsmanship. Discussed further in Chapter 5, two groups of women, one in each town, made a map of their community as the material representations of the uses of space, interpretations of different spaces, and freedom of movement. I conducted two sessions of four hours of work with each of these groups of women, which produced two beautiful maps that represent the particular cartographies of their communities. To explore the personal perspective of experienced space, I employed focus groups to discuss the implications of space and the meanings of a place for communities and individual inhabitants while we worked on these maps.

Semi-structured interviews were applied to reflect humanistic lifeworld issues encompassed in the conceptual framework of peasantry and peasant studies. Through such conversations, I enabled an entry-point to the participants' lifeworld, and it allowed me to explore the role and weight of the spatial dimension of peasants' lifeworlds, as well as

understand the role that place plays in the construction of my interviewees' self-identification as peasants. This approach recognizes the value of the personal experience as the source of meaning and material over which interpretations can be made.

Picture 2

In Doña Flory's kitchen. Quilting workshop with Falconiana women. Guanacaste, 2016



Photography by Marta Vazquez Olguin

The structure of chapters

This dissertation employs two sections that organize the presentation of the results, first, from theory, and second, from personal experiences. Each chapter offers specific theories pertinent to their foci. The first section of the dissertation is more theoretically oriented and provides a necessary geographical and historical context. The second part of the dissertation focuses on the experiences of space, as expressed through the personal and collective viewpoints of those who I met in the field. In this first chapter, I have provided an introductory discussion on the theory and methodology employed in this research. I indicate the central questions driving the research and the historical context of the Costa Rican case and the communities of Bagatzí and Falconiana, upon which I expand in Chapter 2. Chapter 2 introduces the problem of how the

Costa Rican government-produced Bagatzí and Falconiana settlements are part of a wider and ambitious project of rural economic modernization toward national agrarian production. In Chapter 3, I expand upon the theoretical framework I described in this introduction to explore the spatial models and configurations implemented at Bagatzí and Falconiana settlements in particular. The Costa Rican agrarian policy of peasant settlement had a capitalist aim and produced a capitalist space where peasants persist and confront agrarian modernization in rural areas.

Chapter 4 opens the second part of this dissertation with the historical ecology of the Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forest (SDNtF) and the human-made savannah of the province of Guanacaste. This chapter discusses the idea that nature and society are artificially separated, and what we conceptualize as “nature” is also a human-made product. The Guanacastean and Central American SDNtF were spaces where human populations and forests co-created each other. This chapter challenges the dominant idea that human populations produce their space and that nature is an untouched remnant of that process; rather, it demonstrates that early human settlements in the region were co-constituted alongside what we know as SDNtF in the present.

Chapter 5 and 6 demonstrate how experiences of space vary with each generation and between genders. The methodology I discussed above is further fleshed out in Chapter 5, where I offer a feminist methodological perspective. Historical economic, material and social conditions differ from one generation of settlers to the next one and between women and men in these two towns. In the end, structures of land tenure, gender roles, and lack of institutional support end up working against the survival of Bagatzí, with less intensity in Falconiana as well. The lack of generational renewal and strong unquestioned gender roles, reinforced by the particular distribution of space in these settlements, undermines the persistence and resistance of peasant settlements. The separation between living and working spaces has unintentionally perpetuated oppressive and unjust gender roles expressed in gendered spatial practices, reinforcing gendered reproductive work and women’s exclusion from agricultural practices and land tenure. Although these factors have persisted over time, altogether, they work against the permanence of peasant communities, as seen in the lived experiences of the second generation in Chapter 6.

Since peasants' ways of life are strongly linked to space through the social production and reproduction of their particular places, their very existence under capitalist conditions of production becomes more and more difficult. People's life experiences are rooted in material spaces that condense social relations to create the spatial dimensions of memory. I want to add that these social relations and institutions slowly, but inexorably, permeate and transform spaces, producing new arrays of places and people. Thus, the concluding Chapter 7 discusses the shape and weight of spatialized social relations in the origins and development of the state-made peasant communities of Bagatzí and Falconiana. Over time, these fomented the (local) social transformation of these peasant communities in two ways. First, their gender divisions of labour, property and social roles were strengthened, limiting the access to land for new generations of peasants. And second, the spatial configuration of these towns ultimately facilitated that monocrop and corporate agriculture could take advantage of their lands in part by discouraging inter-generational connection to the land. I argue that spatial configurations impacted social relations and favoured ties to the capitalist corporate economy that did not work for the peasants and their families, but for the rice monocrop industry of the region. Space transforms gradually, at a slower rate than social relations, and its slowness to transform affects these social relations.

We now proceed to Chapter 2, which offers an overview of the cultural, geographical, and historical context of the agrarian programs implemented by the Costa Rican government since the 1960s. It discusses the implications of these programs by historically and theoretically positioning them in the Latin American agrarian reform tradition. Over time, the peasant settlement program reinforced elements of the traditional agrarian structure and land tenure regimes in regions where new peasant settlements were created. The incorporation of Bagatzí lands into the rice monocrop industry relied on the old structures of commercialization, technical expertise and machinery that emerged from haciendas, which hired workers from the towns where many of the Bagatzí and Falconiana settlers were born. Chapter 2 thus provides the history of "Hacienda Ciruelas" and the creation of Bagatzí and Falconiana alongside Palo Verde national park. Through archival research, literature review, and interviews with residents of the area, I offer insight into the role that spatialized social relations played in the past and for the future of these state-made peasant settlements.

Chapter 2

First were the people, and then came the water

The history of people, places, water and rice in

Bagatzí and Falconiana

This chapter engages the narratives shared by some Bagatzí and Falconiana inhabitants, interwoven with accounts of planners and scientists concerning the history of haciendas in the area. It is the story of these that came before the promised water was running through the canals. The chapter begins with an examination of the meaning of the peasantry and how peasants identify themselves, drawing on some of Peasant Studies' most prominent authors. I discuss Costa Rican agricultural and rural development policies in order to bring context to the towns' histories. I also offer direct insights from those I met in the field concerning the creation Bagatzí and Falconiana. The stories narrated in the chapter reveal the process of social production of a *peasant* social space. I add the “peasant” qualifier to highlight that this is not any space and an abstract analysis that can be indiscriminately applicable to any location. Based on Lefebvre’s (1991) idea that social relations produce social spaces, I ask how social relations in capitalist states produce social spaces for peasants. Unfolding capitalist processes have shaped the history of Bagatzí and its people.

Social production of a peasant space

In Bagatzí and Falconiana settlements –as much as in the other 880 peasant settlements of the country- the agents involved in the social production process of peasant spaces are the governmental institutions of Costa Rica agrarian policy; the peasant newcomers of Bagatzí and

Falconiana discussed in this chapter; as well as the owners of haciendas and big agricultural producers of sugarcane and rice in the area (examined in chapter seven). This is a process that started 40 years ago and continues to the present and will continue because of the continued interaction of human beings with their surrounding environment under social, political, cultural and economic conditions.

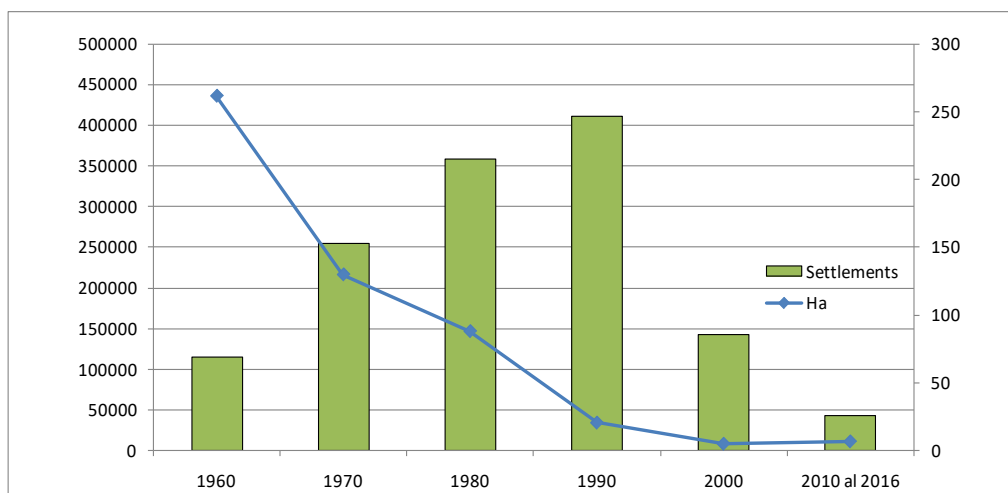
Costa Rican Agrarian policy of peasant settlements

As the central institution of agrarian policy in Costa Rica, the Institute of Lands and Colonization (ITCO was its first name/acronym in Spanish) centralized and organized the process of adjudication of land to peasant settlements. This process began in 1962 as part of a series of social reforms introduced by the social democratic party in power. Since that time, more settlements were built in the 1980s and '90s. Throughout that time the average size of the settlements decreased, although there has been a recent increase over the last decade. The average size of state-centralized land and the number of settlements per year indicate two distinct trajectories of agrarian policy over time. Initially, the size of the settlements was bigger because they were intended as poles of development. Later, in the 1990s, the government reduced the size of the land parcels as they increased the number of beneficiaries per settlement. The increased number of families per settlement might have worked as political tokens to disenfranchised voters during the last decades of the past century.

The Costa Rican government created policies on colonization and expansion of the agricultural frontier since its independence. From 1920-1950 Costa Rica implemented a series of public policies that allowed and facilitated the process of appropriation of public lands. In 1934 a new law called the Families' Heads Law permitted colonization and legalization of property rights in public lands, which remained in place until the first Forestry Law was enacted in 1969; the latter was oriented to protect the remnants of public land and forestry resources that had been severely affected by these colonization practices. By the middle of the 20th century, these

policies were consolidated into one central institution for the colonization and control of agricultural expansion, the National Institute for Lands and Colonization – ITCO.

Figure 2.
Number of settlements by decade versus average size of the settlement in hectares



From data collected at National Institute of Rural Development (INDER) Costa Rica.

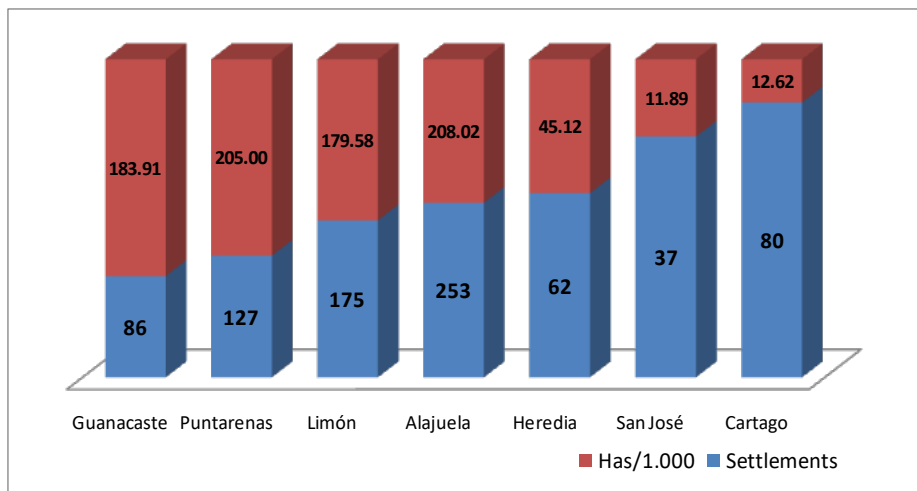
Figure 2 shows the size of settlements and indicates that consistently during the first three decades the main tendency of Costa Rican agrarian policy was to push the expansion of the agrarian frontier into the lowlands of the Caribbean (province of Limon), the Northern Plains (provinces of Alajuela and Heredia), and the lowlands of the Tempisque basin in Guanacaste. The province of Limon has seen a reduction in its number of settlements per decade, differing from the rest of the country. Limon is characteristically the poorest and forgotten province of the country in terms of development policies. Its social and developmental indicators are the lowest compared with the rest of the provinces. One important statistic shows this imbalance: 27 out of 29 counties in province of Limon didn't satisfy between 25% - 50% of their basic needs² ITCO's policy of land allotment does not seem to improve this situation. The chart that follows shows

² Unsatisfied Basic Need (UBN) is the method used to identify households that have some basic lack in four dimensions or macro needs: access to decent shelter, access to a healthy life, access to knowledge and access to other goods and services. The methodology constructed to estimate the UBN was developed by Floribel Méndez and Odilia Bravo in their paper *Poverty maps with census data* (Mendez & Bravo, 2013) presented at the 2013 Costa Rican Symposium In the Light of the 2011 Census.

the number of settlements by decade since the opening of the ITCO, as well as the number of hectares adjudicated and the average hectares per decade.

Two questions arise from the data on settlements and their size seen in the above map and figure 3: is the creation of settlements a response to population displacement into the Central Valley, or is it due to the organization of local residents? These questions arise from the objectives that organized the ITCO activities over more than three decades, which pursued the reduction of poverty and the curtailing of rural migration to both the capital and industrialized areas of the Central Valley via the relocation of families into peasant settlements. Each one of the seven provinces of Costa Rica (San Jose, Cartago, Heredia, Alajuela, Puntarenas, Limon and Guanacaste) hosted peasant settlements of varying size and number. The smallest settlements are in Cartago, San Jose capital's closest city and province to the East, as demonstrated in the next chart (Figure 3).

Figure 3
Total number of hectares and of the settlement per province, Costa Rica



From data collected at National Institute of Rural Development (INDER) Costa Rica.

Largest land tenures are found in the provinces of Guanacaste and Alajuela, followed by Puntarenas. The peasant settlements established in the 1960s and early 1970s in the three provinces were intended to be poles of growth and rural development. After the 1970s, ITCO implemented colonization policies that were more focused on a greater number of beneficiaries and a smaller land parcel per family.

The relation between the size of the settlement and the number of settlements seen in Table 4 speaks to the concentration of significant portions of land in fewer settlements, like in the province of Guanacaste. In contrast, Cartago's settlements contained the smallest pieces of land in the country and dedicated them to coffee plantations (Gudmundson, 1990) and small vegetable farms. On the other hand, Guanacaste settlements follow the historical trend of land-grabbing (Edelman, 1987, 1992; Rodríguez Solera, 1988; Villalta, 1992, 1993). Guanacaste's settlements were created to function as big quasi-industrial farms. Figure 3 shows that the 86 settlements of the province of Guanacaste add up 183,912.71 HA given to each settlement at an average of over 2000 hectares each. The province of Cartago with 80 settlements—almost the same number of settlements than Guanacaste—does not have even 10% of the size of Guanacaste's land allotment. It can, however, be argued that the size of each province dictated the availability of land.

Table 4
Settlements by size in hectares, 1960-2016

	Settlements	Percentage	Area Hectares
Area in Hectares	784	100%	846136.93
Up to 2.500	750	95%	239362.47
More than 2.500	34	5%	606774.47

From data collected at National Institute of Rural Development (INDER) Costa Rica, 2019.

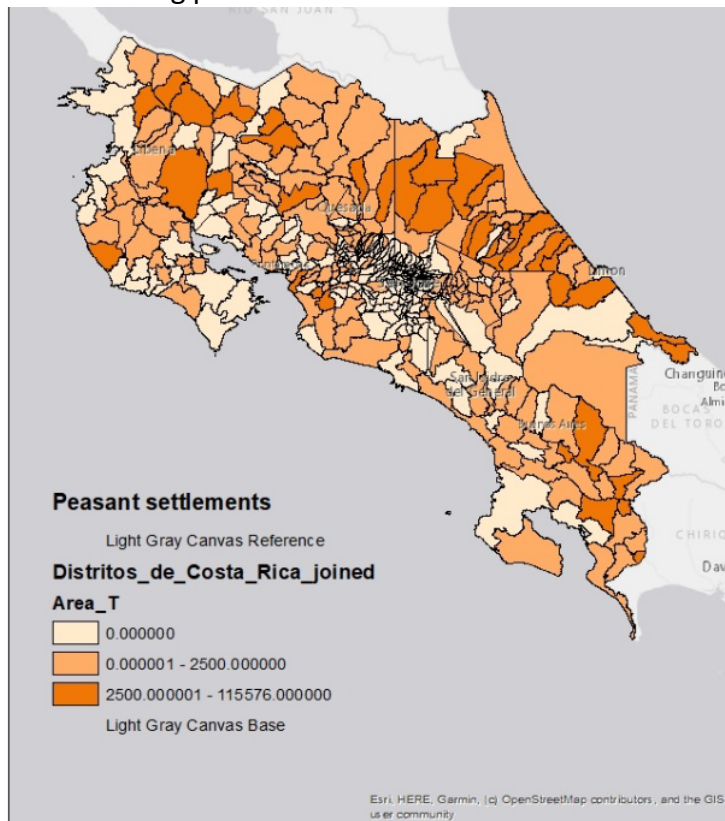
The concentration of settlements with fewer than 2,500 Ha, as shown in Table 4, is evidence of the policy to distribute land to peasant family units in this region for mixed subsistence and commercial uses. Settlements over 2,500 hectares are located out of the Central Valley in the Northern region of the country, the Caribbean province of Limon, and the Southern region of Puntarenas.

The social production of space through state intervention followed traditional paths of land concentration and use of space. Land used to raise cattle and monocrop for large haciendas was the model for the peasant settlements of Guanacaste, Northern Alajuela and Heredia, and the Caribbean lowlands. Small orchards for self-sustenance were the model for small peasant

settlements of the Central Valley, Cartago, and Puntarenas (Brockett, 1988; Edelman, 1992; Gudmundson, 1984, 1990; Pérez Brignoli & Samper, 1994; Rodríguez Solera, 1988)

The distribution of settlements by sizes in Map 3 shows that 95% of all settlements are small properties (light orange) dedicated to self-sustaining the family economy scattered around the country. Just 5% of the settlements (orange) are large properties located mostly in lowlands of Northern Costa Rican Provinces of Heredia and Alajuela and Caribbean flatlands of the province of Limon (where old banana plantations are situated), as well as the Tempisque lowlands in Guanacaste (traditionally dedicated to cattle ranches). There are a few minor administrative divisions -districts- without settlements (very light orange). This shows a landscape of land distribution that does not contradict the historical arrangement of Costa Rican land tenure.

Map 3
Concentration of small and big peasant settlements



INDER, Government of Costa Rica. Silvia Vasquez Olguin

Internal migrations and the Costa Rican policy of peasant settlements

Since the beginning back in 1960's the Costa Rican state was not innovative in the production of settlement spaces, as space was already arranged and organized to supply demands of the economy at the local scale of the orchard, and the large scale of the plantation, from the outset of the independent nation. The settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana were part of the effort to expand the Agrarian frontier of the Costa Rican state during the 1970s to the 2010's. During five decades, Costa Rica, through state institutions, created 780 currently existing settlements. The expansion of the agricultural frontier (Bryceson et al., 2000; Groot & Ruben, 1997; Hidalgo et al., 2014; Rodríguez Solera, 1988) was a clear policy of the Costa Rican state, which followed the path to the open plains at the northern region of the country, and to the southern valleys of Talamanca region and San Isidro (Rosero-Bixby, Pebley, & Bermúdez Méndez, 1997, pp. 136–138). Patterns of internal migration and migration from neighbouring Nicaragua configured the shape into a landscape of colonized agricultural lands extending to the mountains.

Newcomers from the Central Valley of San Jose settled in the southern chain of valleys of San Isidro del General in a process that took close to one hundred years of the last century. Uli Locher in, his collaboration on the book *From the Mayans to Family Planning* (Rosero-Bixby et al., 1997), a compilation of research about the demography of Central America, discusses the dramatic environmental transformation of the Costa Rican landscape. The Costa Rican state promulgated laws that allowed claiming federal lands as long as they were transformed into agricultural zones, which required removing trees and all original coverage. The verb "to cultivate" means to make a place a cultured one, by removing all the wild and savage elements, taming the landscape. This process was necessary in order to claim Costa Rican federal land in the past century. Locher's work shows the stream of newcomers to the Central Valley and the lowlands of the Caribbean coast came from Nicaragua, the province of Guanacaste (where they likely to have originated in Nicaragua), and the Northern Plains of Guatuso and San Carlos. A small stream of migrant families from the Capital went north to Tilarán based on the Costa Rican Institute of Census and Statistics (INEC) census data from 1927. The small towns opened the gate

for the colonization of the lowlands of the Tempisque River a quarter of a century later. Census data from the middle of the last century shows that the pattern of migration inverted. While still being fed with a steady stream of migrants from Nicaragua, movement of newcomers seeking land to cultivate followed an erratic path out from the Central Valley to the southern valleys of Talamanca, and back to the Northern Plains of Guatuso in Alajuela, and Nicoya in Guanacaste. He notes that the Costa Rican government created new administrative divisions in both areas of the country, first, due to demographic expansion, but also because of the development of coffee and banana plantations (Rosero-Bixby et al., 1997, pp. 139–140). Initially, these plantations were in the hands of a few local wealthy families and later incorporated into huge plantations of international agribusiness. The settlers of Bagatzí and Falconiana originated from the second stream of migrant families from Tilarán and Guatuso.

Since the beginning of the 20th Century, families from Nicaragua and Northern Plains of Alajuela followed a migratory/colonizer's path that led them to the towns of Tilarán, Cañas, and Bagaces in Guanacaste. Talking with Don Manuel (one of the first settlers of Bagatzí and one of the founders of the settlement project), you hear the old stories from the storyteller of the town he is. Sitting and listening, I was amazed at his prodigious memory and that he is more than happy to tell histories if you want to hear them. He grew up in the small town of Tilarán, far away from Bagaces at the East. But he is clear when he insists that his family came from San Jose, not like the "other Nicas" ("Nicas" is derived from "Nicaraguan," and it is used, as in this case, derogatory), differentiating himself from the Nicaraguan migrants. Like many other peasants of that time, he was young when he first travelled with his family in a long migration to find new lands to settle. This movement started the previous generation when his parents moved from the Central Valley of San José to the northern flatlands of San Carlos, where Tilarán was subsequently founded and continued with him coming to Bagaces to find a place to settle with his family.

Vladimir De la Cruz (Cruz, 1980) insists that the movement of dispossessed peasant families during the last half of the 20th Century was from the Central Valley to colonize the lowlands, as well as the small valley adjacent to the capital of Costa Rica. De la Cruz's assessment also corresponds with the data of Locher. Along with De la Cruz, other authors have discussed

the needs of Costa Rican nascent capitalism for labour, including Gudmunson and Pérez Brignoli in relation to coffee, and Bourgois who discusses banana plantations in Central America (Bourgois, 1994; Gudmundson, 1984, 1990; Pérez Brignoli & Samper, 1994).

Don Manuel came to Bagaces when it was a workers' settlement for the large Hacienda Ciruelas of the Stewart Family. According to Don Manuel, "Bagaces wasn't even a town; it was a settlement of workers of Wilson's Farm. They were trapped in that place". He was young when he came to these places to labour as an agricultural worker, a pawn. "Wilson's Farm" –known under this name and not "Ciruelas"– was the name given to one of many pieces of that immense Wilson's family property that the ITCO bought in the 1970s. One of these pieces would become the Bagatzí peasant settlement, and another was for Falconiana almost ten years later, along with three other settlements one national park, and one biological reserve. Finca Wilson had initially been three different farms that ended up reunited at the end of the 19th Century by the hazards of politics and family favours or disgraces.

"This was a land of huge *latifundio*," said Don Manuel, "from here were those of last name Stewart. They have properties all around here. They sold just one small part of all they have. This small part was huge because Bagatzí, Palo Verde National Park and the Lomas de Barbudal reserve come from it. Wilson's Farm was so big that it went from Pijije and Bebedero... to Bagaces. All that big territory was theirs, foreign? that were with the last name of Stewart."

Two brothers shared the big inheritance of the Stewart family that extended from one side of the highway to the margin of Tempisque River in the north.

Hacienda Ciruelas and the history of the settlements

The history of this hacienda arose from three families, the Giralt's, Urtecho's, and Elizondo's. This history included many engagements, sales, and inheritances that ended linking

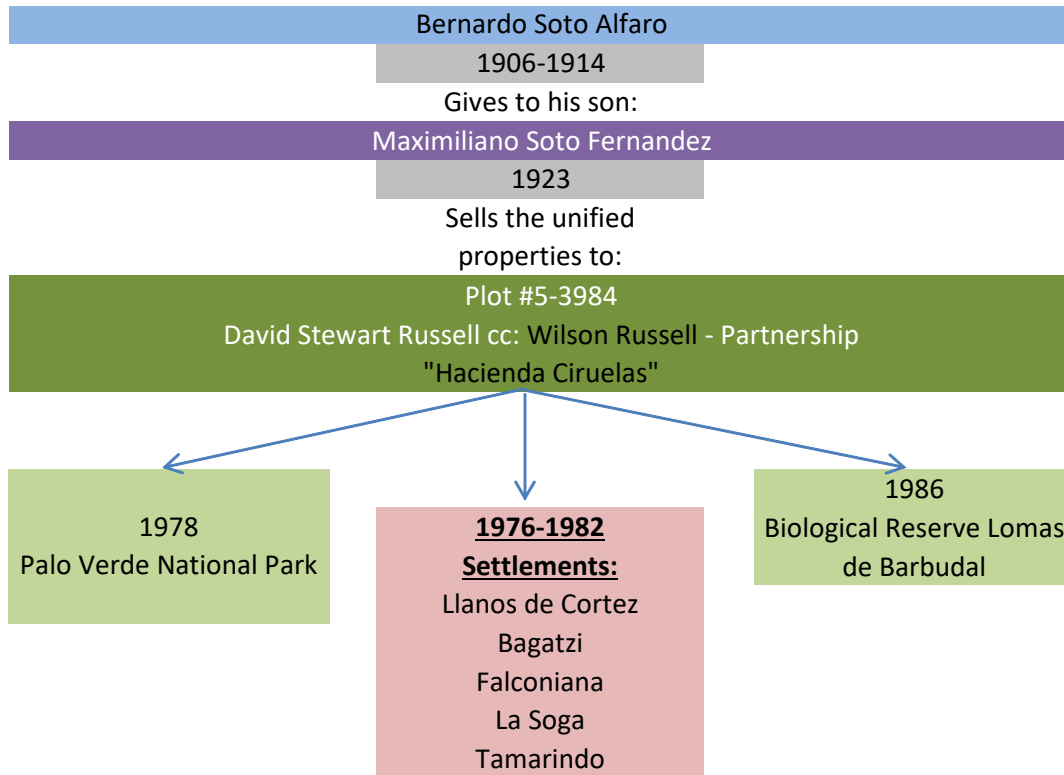
them to each other. In the archival research³ I noted that at some point in 1880, the archives are incomplete. The properties appear again under new names as a product of marriages and inheritances. The names of the different haciendas are lost in time too. Rafael Barroeta y Vaca bought and sold two of the three farms that constituted the origin of what is now Bagatzi, Falconiana, Palo Verde, Lomas de Barbudal, and the other settlements, one to the ex-President Prospero Fernandez, and the other to Remigio Saborio. The third hacienda belonging to the Urtecho family passed through inheritance until it ended up in the hands of Miguel Madriz. At this point at the beginning of the 20th Century, a society of three men appears: Narciso Blanco, Remigio Saborio, and Bernardo Soto -the latter was president of Costa Rica in 1892. Soto ends up purchasing all rights to the three haciendas from Saborio and Blanco and buying the last piece of this puzzle from Prospero Fernandez.

Thus, as Figure 4 shows, at the end of the ninetieth century, Bernardo Soto possessed three haciendas that were later consolidated in one huge hacienda under the name "Ciruelas" ("Prunes' Farm" if the literal translation gives justice to the name in Spanish). In 1916 he gave the properties as an inheritance to his son, Maximiliano Soto Fernandez, who later sold the properties in 1923. The sale was to a man from the United States, David Stewart Russell, who appeared under a different name, Wilson Russell, in all the documents⁴ that followed this trade. Russell renamed the three haciendas under a new name, *Hacienda Ciruelas*. I never saw a plum in the province of Guanacaste, and a plum tree never sunk its roots in Guanacaste soil. We do not know why David Stewart chose that name. What we do know is that to those connected to the history and memory of this story, the hacienda "Ciruelas" was known as "Finca Wilson".

³, Tenure history was retrieved from the archives of the National Property Register and National Cadastre in San Jose, Costa Rica. January to July 2016, thanks to the invaluable collaboration of Milagro Carvajal –sociologist from the University of Costa Rica-

⁴ Research about the real name of Wilson Russell was retrieved from the archives of the National Property Register and National Cadastre in San Jose, Costa Rica between January and July 2016, thanks to the invaluable collaboration of Milagro Carvajal –sociologist from the University of Costa Rica-

Figure 4
 Land tenure history of the properties that will constitute Palo Verde National Park (PVNP) and Bagatzí and Falconiana settlements



From data collected at National Register of the Property, Costa Rica.

Three generations of Stewarts passed until the last owner sold the huge "Hacienda Ciruelas/Wilson's Farm" to ITCO. From that big farm, three projects developed: Palo Verde National Park, the Biological Reserve Lomas de Barbudal, and the peasants settlements of the Bagaces area. Bagatzí history begins at this point. ITCO bought the land in a very clever maneuver involving exemption from overdue taxes. Don Manuel told me the story of that epic meeting between David Stewart and the two ITCO engineers that got lost on their way to find the main house of the Hacienda Ciruelas, back circa 1976.

At the time, Don Manuel was working as foreman on another hacienda when on a hot April evening, a small green jeep came to its gates. The two men asked directions to get to the Hacienda Ciruelas. Don Manuel corrected them: "Wilson's Farm is where you want to go. It's totally opposite of where you are heading to. The farm is on the other side of the hills". "Can you

come with us?" asked the engineers to don Manuel, "as our guide, we can pay for your services." "You know what? Yes! I'll go with you. I know David and Aldo, the Stewart brothers." Don Manuel showed these people the lands for sale, the different parcels and properties, and the pieces of the old Wilson Farm now ready for sale: Palo Verde, Barbudal, Llanos de Cortez. The next week the engineers and Don Manuel drove to Wilson's Farm. Following the presentations, a meeting started with the question with which the engineers opened the bargaining: "are you selling these parcels?"

- *"Yes, I am,"* said David Stewart. *"Are you, ITCO guys interested? This is good land to work on. The price is 1,000 colones per hectare close to the highway, and 800 colones here."*
- *"Well, yes we are, but the price is high"* said the engineers.
- *"It's a good land"* seemed to be the final option David Stewart offered.

The ITCO engineers came prepared, said Don Manuel. They did their research, came with a map of the territory and information about the Hacienda Ciruelas' land taxes overdue, and that was the final card they played.

- *"You know what, Mr. Stewart,"* said one of the engineers passing a sheet of paper to David Stewart, *"this is how much the Stewart family owes to the government in overdue land taxes. Do you want to reconsider the price?"*

"Those gringos didn't wave to anyone; they were like chief and owners of us" said Don Manuel. "But I knew them" he continued "they were raised here, speaking Spanish like anybody else". When David Stewart saw the numbers on the paper, the confident smile fell down from his face. "Sons of bitches!" he whispered. One-week later ITCO bought two of the three parcels for sale at a very opportune price, according to Don Manuel, a very cheap price! The whole property was assigned the selling price of 400 Colones per hectare, and overdue taxes were calculated on that price. If he wanted to sell higher, he had to pay all the taxes, plus the corresponding selling taxes of 800 Colones each hectare.

- *"Take it all! Take the damn thing"* were the angry words of David Stewart that night, Don Manuel told me. *"See what you do with that land!"*

“Congratulations! You are now part of Bagatzí project.” Someone had kept records of his participation at the beginning and considered him and his family possible beneficiaries of the project. This way, he got into the Bagatzí project. In April 1979, Don Manuel came to Bagatzí settlement among other twenty other men –one from each beneficiary family- to start planting rice in some of the plots. The town which is today Bagatzí did not yet exist. These men built a couple of barracks where they lived and stored tools and seeds. They requested permission to plant and harvest rice in Bagatzí on what was then still ITCO’s property, and they did not yet know which plot ITCO would allocate to them once the settlement was ready to be populated. Working together, these men produced the first five harvests of rice from which originated Bagatzí’s cooperative in 1983 working in a land that still was not . Don Manuel recounted to me the negotiations and agreements they had to make with local tool stores and agricultural suppliers of Bagaces and Cañas. They did not have the capital to invest, but they had the land and ITCO support. He could not exactly recall the first time they faced the problem of dispensing fertilizer and weed control, but the area of the paddy collectively worked was likely between 80 to 100 HA. For doing so, they rented a small plane as well as some trucks that belonged to Pelón de la Bajura (the rice corporation that dominates the region). The subsequent harvest needed more hands, and thus they hired workers to supply the labour required for spreading pesticide and fertilizer. Picture 2 shows one plot along the road in Bagatzí where hired seasonal workers –likely from Nicaragua- spread fertilizer on the green new rice.

"There was a golden age of Bagatzí," Don Lucas commented to me with his eyes on that moment of his past. People from Falconiana and Bagaces came to Bagatzí to work under contract for each rice harvest twice a year because there was not yet artificial irrigation to allow more than two harvests each year. Many people from Falconiana worked in Bagatzí’s first rice harvests as waged agricultural workers. They worked in different stages of the crop: spreading seeds, mulching and applying fertilizer to the soil. Complementary off-farm income has been discussed in many studies (Gómez, 2003; Kay, 2008, 2008, 2015; Ploeg, 2010), and it has been contested, rejected or accepted, but it has not disappeared from the landscape of peasantry globally in an increasingly capitalist world.

Picture 3



Seasonal workers spreading fertilizer on a rice paddy in Bagatzí. Silvia Vasquez Olguin, 2016.

For the men that first came to Bagatzí the initial harvests were a huge achievement; they proved they could succeed on that land, and they even had surpluses after paying off the debts from the first harvests. With the passing of time some of the men brought their families to live with them close to the barracks. Some of the women worked cooking and doing laundry in the nearby river. In this way, the first families started the town of Bagatzí. In 1983, thanks to a grant from the Canadian International Cooperation for the development (Costa Rica – Canada foundation), the government built the first twenty houses in one of the plots next to the road, close to the entrance of Palo Verde national park. The families from Bagaces and those already living in the plots were relocated via lottery to the new town. Some of them were given access to existing houses; others had to build their own. Don Manuel was lucky to access one of the houses. But his family continued to live for a few years in Bagaces. They already had a house there. His son and daughter were finishing high school, and his wife wanted to be close to them there in Bagaces. He stayed at Bagatzí, living alone for the rest of his years, like many other men that came at the beginning. Bagatzí is a town of lonely men and abandoned houses.

Today, Don Manuel's son visits him once a year. Some years Don Manuel travels to Puntarenas to visit his son at the hotel where he now works as a manager. Don Manuel is so proud of his son! He did not stop talking about him. I wondered about Don Manuel's solitude,

the small house with the statues of the saints in the walls, the silence broken by the birds singing. I wondered if there was something else in these towns' future besides loneliness.

Don Lucas –from Falconiana- provides a different narrative of the settlers. He does not look like a sixty-year-old man. He was born in Bagaces, the nearest town to these settlements, in the year 1956. However, early in his youth, he travelled with his father to find virgin land for him and his siblings. There were too many brothers and not enough land for all of them in his father's original farm. Because of that, his father decided to sell his land in Bagaces, and travel all the way to Pavones in the south of the country. “We were destroyers of the land”⁵ said Don Lucas, because his father and many others like him felled forests and exposed the bare soils in the process of colonizing new lands. Felling trees and preparing the ground for agriculture is a process not unique to them but known to all new peasants in the agricultural frontier of Costa Rica (Brockett, 1988; Groot & Ruben, 1997). Don Lucas lived in Pavones for ten years before he decided to come back to his original town in San Bernardo, a suburban area of Bagaces. Once there, Don Lucas' brother, a beneficiary of the Bagatzí settlement at that time, told him that ITCO planned a second project. This project aimed to settle more families in another property five kilometres east of Bagatzí, closer to Bagaces. The idea sparkled in Don Lucas' mind. He said to me: "there was land in that place!" This was the most amazing statement I heard between the people I worked with during my research: “there was land at that place”. The land was always there, but the land appeared in front of Don Lucas' eyes like a mirage come true when his brother told him about the project.

But Don Lucas wasn't alone. Many other men like him came to reside on their parcels, next to the river and built their houses out of wood and zinc sheets. Don Lucas came to Falconiana in 1989 to build a house in his plot that was more like a shack. In this way, he secured a piece of land and an opportunity for him and his family. Five other families also arrived along with Don Lucas. The director of ITCO Bagaces was convinced that Lucas wanted to work the land, not just to hold it, but to practice agriculture; this made him, unlike the other “men who seemed to just want to become stakeholders,” according to Don Lucas. During these first years, the families lived

⁵ Interview conducted in June 2016. Falconiana, Guanacaste, Costa Rica.

initially in the plots assigned to them, then built a house and brought women and children to live there. They became neighbours and friends, connected by the Piedras River and the rough road along with the plots. The same road connected Falconiana with Bagatzí to the North and Bagaces to the East. Children from Falconiana attended elementary school at Bagatzí for years until, eventually, a school was established in their own town.

Land rights —for peasants and small stakeholders—is typically inaccessible until either the state creates accessible land to be allocated peasants, or there is a revolution that restructures the entire country. But the Costa Rican state was well aware of the risks to their allies if a revolution came and changed the order of the things that were working for the dominant class. Nicaragua and Mexico were reminders of changes the Costa Rican state did not want to occur. Costa Rica thus focused on the redistribution of land centred in the form of the peasant settlements and under the ideals of a developmental State (Groot & Ruben, 1997).

Once Don Lucas came and settled in the lands of the new settlement of Falconiana, he started to work for Bagatzí's Cooperative in rice production, preparing the land, and applying pesticides or fertilizers, receiving a salary for his work. In the days off and afternoons after his workday, he went to his land and worked his own crops. To what extent can a peasant be categorized as such while working for another peasant? This is a traditional question of peasant studies (R. Bartra, 1976; Bryceson et al., 2000; Kerblay, 1986; Shanin, 1990). Some authors (Araghi, 1995; Barkin, 2004; Brockett, 1988; Wolf, 1966) have debated what Lucas experienced in the initial years before Falconiana was established. He worked for the Bagatzí agricultural cooperative in the rice paddies, and then came back to his precarious piece of land at Falconiana to provide complimentary sustenance for his family. He required cash from wage income and the products of his land to supply his family's needs under current economic conditions, just like van der Ploeg noted (Ploeg, 2008) or what Bernstein called challenges to the "Limits of Inherited Conceptions" (Bernstein, 2010).

A few years after Don Lucas and the first families arrived at the plots, the settlement of "La Soga" (that translates as the Rope) was created. In order to populate this new settlement, many of Falconiana's inhabitants were relocated, even though they settled and worked parcels

at Falconiana for at least another four years. La Soga was filled with families from the nearest towns plus Falconiana's people by means of a lottery of place allocations. Populating La Soga required building new friendships and socialites while disassembling the community that had arisen in the challenging first years of small harvests and difficulties. The reason to move people from Falconiana to La Soga is lost in time and memory. Functionaries of ITCO do not remember why this resettlement process was implemented. I do not discount the possibility that it was intended to erode existing social strength and social networks. All forms of social organization were discouraged in that period for fear of social mobilization.

According to Don Lucas, only the most stubborn and fighting families rejected the relocation and remained in Falconiana. Don Lucas opposed the relocation to La Soga and organized some families to resist these new allocations. They wanted to stay at Falconiana because it was their land, they worked on it, and they had become attached to the place—they did not want new plots but rather the land they already held at Falconiana. "This place is healthy," said Don Lucas, "a great place to live; there are no diseases even with the swarm of mosquitoes that every evening raises from the water of the canals. This is a good place to live".

By 1994 Falconiana town started to be parcelled and allocated to its future inhabitants. But a large group of families lived at Falconiana's plots already. ITCO wanted to relocate the remaining families who still resided in their plots to the newly created town following the same lottery process they used in Bagatzí. And so, it was done. Friends and ties were broken and separated. Dona Flory –Don Lucas' wife- says that the new town never became as vibrant as at the beginning when they all lived in their plots along the river.

The effort to produce and the need for subsistence must be in equilibrium within each peasant family farm. Ploeg (2013:6) points out that "these balances combine incommensurable entities (e.g., labour and consumption) that are necessarily related to each other." However, in the case of Bagatzí and Falconiana, they were altered by the separation of land for producing rice monocrop for the local market, and space on which they lived which we have started to unveil in this chapter. Via the separation of house and lot, young children and women would not participate as actively in productive activities, in part due to accessibility, and in part, because

the separation reinforced the gender roles and the age-related activities that each member of the family could develop. Through my research, the families I interviewed stated that they prefer that young children and the wives stayed in the houses, while the work on the parcel is carried out by the husbands. This often led to hiring seasonal labour, occasionally, if the sons were older, incorporating family labour, but never incorporating the work of the wives and daughters on the plots. Also, the families became more and more dependent on nearby local markets to supply everyday needs for food and services.

According to the traditional perspectives in peasant studies, the peasant family farm and the land is a unit of production. In that space, the family inhabits the land from which they produce their earnings (Kerblay, 1986; Ploeg, 2013). In the case of Bagatzí and Falconiana, the separation between living space and productive space introduced profound changes in the production practices implemented by these families. The two settlements focus primarily on rice monocropping. The labour force required for the extension of the parcels came from seasonal migrant workers, not from the family unit. It is where the imbalance between production from the farm and consumption is apparent.

Thus, ultimately, the agrarian structure-the “set of institutions, norms (both written and unwritten) and social, political, and economic relationships governing the access to and use of land as a productive resource” (Stavenhagen, 1970, p. 01)- that dominates the Costa Rican countryside remained the same even after the creation of these settlements. The big corporation that shaped Guanacaste's agricultural landscape, the old and wealthy families that owned the *Haciendas*, did not lose their resources; rather, they were enriched by selling of pieces of their land to the government. Moreover, the corporations were not displaced by the peasants relocated to these settlements. Rice is still the main crop produced in Guanacaste, followed closely by sugarcane and grasses for feeding cattle. The state-made peasant settlements filled empty and unused spaces of the countryside while leaving intact the power structure and logic of production in the regions where they were situated. Thus, production continued to follow Costa Rican agricultural policy based on monocropping for export, fruit plantations, and small to medium scale family-owned coffee plantations.

Chapter 3

Production of space and community design

Costa Rican agrarian policy's expression on space production in peasant settlements

In the previous chapter, Costa Rican agrarian policy was analyzed from an economic and historical perspective. In this chapter, we examine the same policy through the lens of a Lefebvrian perspective on the social production of social space so as to understand the relations that emerged in this particular set of peasant settlements. The social production of space in Bagatzí and Falconiana as well as the other 800 ITCO settlements, reveal the contradictions of Costa Rican agrarian policy. During the first years of Bagatzí and Falconiana, three processes corresponding to Lefebvrian tri-partite space as described by David Harvey help us to understand the social production of social space (Harvey, 2014b). First a set of policies that shaped a particular **representation of the space** from governmental officers, technician and cooperators; second, a set of transformations of the landscape and the **material space** in Costa Rican countryside involving the slow disappearance of the hacienda and the rise of the small agricultural stakeholder; and finally a new set of **spaces of representation**—spaces that are lived and consumed by people in their everyday lives, such as the new settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana. Accordingly, Bagatzí and Falconiana as examples of the broader agrarian settlement policy, did not challenge or alter the Costa Rican stratified agrarian structure. Many ITCO settlements struggle with the spatial separation of land for work and housing location. This state-imposed separation of residence and cultivable space does not conform with peasant lifestyles and livelihoods. The Costa Rican government attempted to modernize the traditional peasant Family Unit of Production towards agricultural production for the market. Alternatively, a design proposed by Israeli aid cooperation for the (Guanacaste) region would have created peasant settlements similar to the peasant settlements and cooperatives called moshavim in Israel. These might have made the communities more sustainable over time given that the moshav model

conjoins family homes with cultivable parcels, and places homes in close proximity with one another to forge a sense of community. However, the Cold War geopolitics of the time meant that the cooperative moshav model was unpalatable and considered 'too communist' to implement in Costa Rica. The result was that the INDER (National Institute for Rural Development or INDER, formerly ITCO) peasant settlements did not promote shared work between landholders, but rather removed land-holders' residences from their productive parcels, which ultimately contributed to the disconnection of the second generation of settlers from the land. To provide context to the history and social production of space in Bagatzí and Falconiana history, the chapter proceeds as follows. It begins with an analysis of the Costa Rican agrarian policy and the production of the space. This is followed by an analysis of the Israeli proposal for peasant settlement in the province of Guanacaste (from archival documents and interviews I carried out with personnel from INDER), and a section on the Israeli Moshavim model for peasant cooperatives. A final section discusses the expression of the Lefebvrian tri-partite space in Bagatzí and Falconiana and the importance of the peasant cooperative model for the future of peasant settlements like these.

Costa Rican agrarian policy as an expression of capitalist space production

Costa Rica follows cycles of agrarian transformation and land grabbing in the Central American region (Edelman & León, 2014, pp. 196–197). Edelman and Leon (ibid) invite us to read land grabbing and agrarian transformations in a historical context because the landscape we see now has its roots in historical patterns of social practices and local meanings. Examining the history of the present situation is important to analyze the configuration of spaces and practices in peasant settlements like Bagatzí and Falconiana. I argue that Costa Rican agrarian policy does not respond to a revolutionary change on the tri-partite configuration of a capitalist space, but it contributes to the reinforcement of the traditional and rigid Latin American agrarian structure present in the country (Barracough & Dominike, 1970, p. 47).

Vladimir De la Cruz (1980) and Mark Edelman (1992) point out that Costa Rican peasant movements of the early 20th century, and Guanacaste history of Haciendas and cowboys, do not demonstrate the persistent and pervasive struggles for access to land that could have motivated an agrarian reform. Neither does Gudmunson's account (1990) of the Costa Rican coffee expansion through small family-owned farms since 18th century, because they were not affected by agrarian reform policies, but on the contrary, were stimulated through land tenure legalization policies implemented since the early republican period (Brockett, 1988; Cruz, 1980; Edelman, 1992, 1999; Edelman & León, 2014; Gudmundson, 1984, 1990; Jones, 1990; Kay, 2002; Pérez Brignoli & Samper, 1994; Royo, 2003; Samper K., 2005; Torres-Rivas, 1994). Antoni Royo (2003) understands Costa Rican agrarian policy as a proper agrarian reform, but I tend to disagree. Following de Janvry's classic typology of Agrarian Reforms (1990), the Costa Rican agrarian policy that created peasant settlements did not correspond with the classical understanding of a successful agrarian reform's attributes.

On the contrary, as we will see in this chapter, the Costa Rican agrarian policy of expansion of the agricultural frontier, modernization of the countryside, and population of inhabited zones of rural unproductive areas of the country does not amount to substantive agrarian reform (Alfaro, 2005; Barraclough & Dominike, 1970; Pérez Brignoli & Samper, 1994; Samper & Torrens, n.d.; Seligson, 1980). This set of policies and practices did not challenge old and traditional agrarian structures of land tenure and power relations. It did not displace old social and political structures of rule in the countryside to give power to the peasants, nor did it change political and institutional frameworks of agriculture and the economy. The Costa Rican case does not reflect a redistributive agrarian reform, but rather the implementation of rural settlement (rural colonization) policies focused on the expansion of agriculture products for export, and the containment of possible struggles for land access. But nor can Costa Rican agrarian policy be interpreted as the answer to the isolated cases of popular land reclamation during those years.

When we reflect on de Janvry and Ground's (1990) analysis of agrarian reforms, we can see that all land reforms in Latin America during the twentieth century, except the Cuban experience, had the purpose of fostering the development of capitalism in agriculture. The

reinforcement of cheap food production systems, with the accompanying principle that the “landed elites” would not lose power, meant that land tenure redistribution did not challenge the historical trend of land concentration in the continent.

Figure 5
Typology of Agrarian Reform from Alain de Janvry (1990)



Based on Alain de Janvray (1990) *The Agrarian Question and Reformism in Latin America*

Kay (2002: 1076) remarks on the importance of the character of agrarian reform and its impact on equity and growth. To Kay (Kay, 2002, p. 1076), East Asian agrarian reforms such as those implemented in South Korea and Taiwan, had a far greater redistributive impact than Latin American reforms (again with the possible exception of Mexico or Cuba). Following Kay two main attributes allowed for the redistributive aspect of the agrarian reforms implemented in these two East Asian countries:

1. Agrarian reform in South Korea and Taiwan occurred before industrialization and it worked to industrialization’s success. In Latin America, agrarian reform occurred after industrialization was well established, and was part of a policy of revitalization of the industrial project already in decline. In Taiwan and South Korea land reform was a major factor in getting their industrialization started. In

Latin America agrarian reforms, if they can even be called that, followed upon the decline of national industrialization processes.

2. According to Kay (2002) Taiwan and South Korea's agrarian reforms had a far greater redistributive impact, as mentioned before, because the agrarian reforms were political rather than economic, even though in both regions the main reason for the reforms was the economy. In South Korea and Taiwan, the landlord class was swept from power at the time of the agrarian reform, whereas in Latin America the landlord class managed to hold on to power during the first stages of the industrialization process. Because of this the landlord class in Latin America was able to block or delay any sort of substantive reform of the land tenure system.

Kay argues that in Taiwan and South Korea the landlords' place was taken by a "repressive but developmentalist state which imposed agricultural modernization from above and appropriated the peasants' economic surplus to set up, finance and direct the industrialization process" (Kay, 2002, p. 1077). Kay, like De Janvry and Ground, agrees that the Latin American agrarian reforms have been largely capitalist and not redistributive, and did not significantly alter the structure of land rights and land tenure across the continent. As Neil Smith argues, "capitalist development was a continual transformation of natural space—inherited absolute space—into produced relative space" (Smith, 2010, p. 119). As such the expansion of the Latin American agrarian frontier is the material expression of this continual transformation of natural space. It is also important to keep in mind that all transformations of seemingly empty natural spaces into socially-produced spaces of habitation and production are derived from human activity. As Eduard Soja argues in *Postmodern Geographies* (1989), "the spatial order of human existence arises from the (social) production of space, the construction of human geographies that both reflect and configure being in the world" (Soja, 1989, p. 25). A capitalist society produces capitalist spaces that are abstract and complex spaces for production and consumption. Consequently, an agrarian reform in a capitalist country will not produce profound changes in the power structure and access to resources but will tend to reinforce already-existing power

relations and logics of production. In the best-case scenario these reforms will introduce changes to modernize production and increase yields. Thus, Costa Rican agrarian policy reinforced historical patterns of land access, logics of production, and power relations because it was a colonization policy and a contingency policy for preventing future social struggles and defusing tensions arising from urban inequality. In terms of the social production of space, this set of policies and practices expanded agrarian capitalism while employing the same recipe of monocrop for export, land-labour power relations, and eventually the concentration of land and resources in the same few corporations that already exploited Costa Rican countryside.

The Israeli mission's proposal for Costa Rican peasant settlements in Guanacaste

When I began to think about the production of space in peasant settlements in Costa Rica, I visited the government institution in charge of the creation and support of these settlements, the National Institute for Rural Development or INDER. One afternoon in 2015 when I was looking for some information about Bagatzí and Falconiana I found a report at the library of INDER about a set of settlements in what is now Bagatzí. I was amazed by this discovery: someone planned these communities before the people even arrived. Turning its pages this “Finca Wilson” report –the old name that “Hacienda Ciruelas” ultimately replaced- revealed a world of ideas and imagined communities, cooperatives, plantations of tall papaya trees and shadowy marañón (cashews), oranges, vegetables and fruits. In the main town, not yet named, there was to be a group of central offices, classrooms and laboratories.

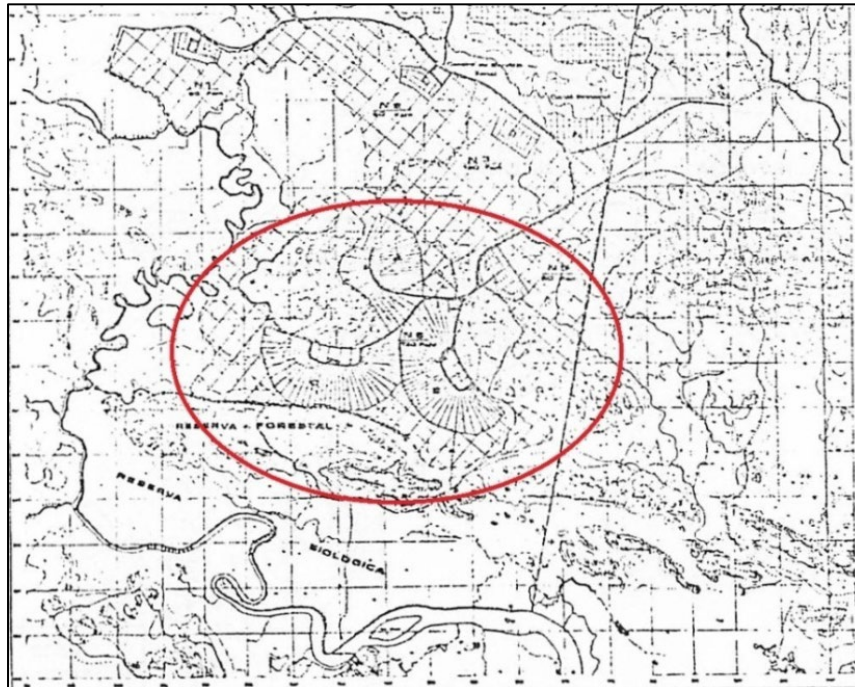
The Israeli authors of this report imagined a group of peasant settlements with central administration of water carried by the canals, an administration which would also be in charge of research and development. But what happened with these dreamt-of communities? Because now, when you visit them or read these pages, you will notice that the communities are isolated and disconnected from the other towns and cities of the region. The settlements are largely

bankrupt, the population diminishing. There is no high school or graveyard in any of these towns. Bagatzí and Falconiana are midway to becoming ghost towns.

In the final pages of the Israeli report there is a map with the proposal of how Bagatzí should be spatially organized. It looked like two “fans” or semicircular sets of sections with a center where the houses, facilities, storages, and services were to be located, and family parcels unfolded from that center. The quality of the image was not good, but you could see easily the spiral semicircular design that I would later realize is characteristic of the moshavim cooperatives in Israel.

Map 5

“Fan” settlement model proposed by Israeli co-operators based on moshavim cooperative settlements in Israel. Finca Wilson’s Report, 1978.



Israeli “Finca Wilson’s report” to ITCO. Jerusalem, December 1978.

The report was the product of a 1976 Costa Rican- Israeli cooperation agreement to exchange experiences on agriculture. Under this agreement Israel sent a group of six consultants to work with the Costa Rican Ministry of Agriculture in the design and implementation of a group of peasant settlements in the Northern region of the province of Guanacaste.

The Arenal dam and hydro-electrical project was created at the end of 1969 to provide electrical supply for the growing demand coming from the rapid urbanization of Costa Rica's Central Valley's and to support the industrialization expansion Costa Rica experienced from the 1950s via the export-oriented agricultural model (Arriagada et al., 2010; Calvo, 1990; Edelman, 1987, 1992; Kuzdas et al., 2016; Mora, 1984). The Israeli support to build on the Arenal-Tempisque project via a network of irrigation canals that would expand to the East bank of Tempisque River.

The first settlement and model for others to come was Bagatzí, or "Finca Wilson" as named in the Israeli report. This first and unimplemented Israeli design of Wilson's Farm had two small centers from where pieces of land were projected like slices of a cake. The settlement was designed to host sixty families dedicated to intensive agricultural activities, in part for self-consumption, but later oriented to the local and regional markets. The report team projected an expansion to six settlements and 3,200 hectares in the same irrigation area that the Arenal-Tempisque project planned to overflow its waters. The critical aspect of the report and the first plan for these settlements was that they be socially-oriented to become a cooperative. The internal organization should strengthen social skills, self-sustainability and overall self-governance.

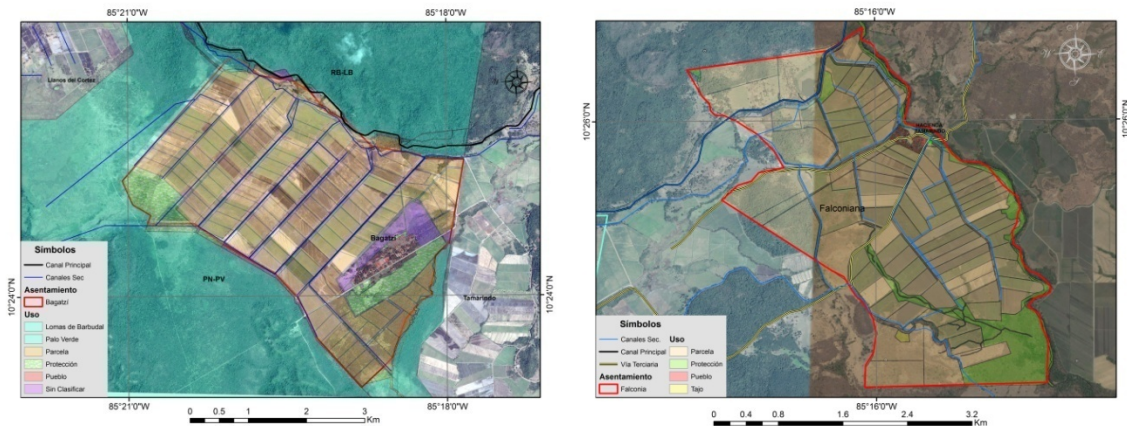
Mr. Roberto Fuster was the contact for the Israeli mission at ITCO. He travelled to Israel as the Costa Rican counterpart of the Israeli mission. He was amazed by the new technologies that Israeli government implemented to save water and protect water sources. He expected to implement those technologies in Costa Rica and in Bagatzí in particular, with drip irrigation systems and greenhouses, the most innovative technologies for Costa Rica at that time.

Bagatzí was born in paper and ink in 1976. As part of many Israeli cooperatives around the world, the Israelis that came to Costa Rica had in mind a successful model of planned land-uses, resources, and peasant workforce like in the moshavim or the kibbutz. Despite the unimplemented design in Bagatzí and Falconiana, it is important to trace parallel behaviours, possible outcomes, or alternative paths between the experiences of place in the two different kinds of settlements, Costa Rican peasants and the Israeli moshavim.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Costa Rican Institute for Land and Colonization (ITCO) created more than 800 peasant settlements around the country between 1961 and 2016. But all of them followed the same pattern of independent houses at the centre of town, along with some facilities like schools, healthcare units, and a community center, followed by the agricultural parcels, as Maps 6 and 7 (bellow) show.

Map 6 and 7

Bagatzí peasant settlement (1987), and Falconiana peasant settlement (1995), province of Guanacaste, Costa Rica.



Bagatzí

Falconiana

Note in purple the housing center in both settlements, and in yellow/green the lots, some of them more than 3 kilometres from the center town.

All government-created peasant settlements in Costa Rica share the same design of a town next to parcels. This design makes some of the parcels more accessible than others. In some cases, the distance is longer than the town length. But the Israeli moshav model for the new Bagatzí and its neighbouring settlements varied with more than a century long history. This is because the moshav model predated the creation of the Israeli state by British mandate in 1948, since some of the waves of Israeli colonization on Palestine lands modeled their arrangement of land and towns in the semi-circular distribution seen on Arab agricultural settlements at the end of 19th Century (Shafir, 1996). It was the result of a long trend of economic success, a complex ethnic composition, and strong and constant state support parallel to national processes of industrialization, similar to the Costa Rican case. But unlike the moshavim's history, the Costa Rican government implemented these peasant settlements and the agrarian policy as complimentary to state-led industrialization process started in early 1950s and as a tool for social

control, immigration containment, and to dampen social mobilization. Many of the authors we discussed in the previous section emphasize these points.

The Israeli final report proposed a model of strong state-supported peasant cooperative settlements based on Israel's particular national context. The Costa Rican government rejected the idea because of its particular national context. As we will see, the Israeli proposal that Bagatzí and its nearby settlements work as cooperatives, with democratic participation, shared resources and decision-making, and a non-profit orientation, was interpreted by the Costa Rican government as a threat to the dominant capitalist economic system. To understand all the possibilities of the moshav model it is necessary to review its historical background, and then contextualize it within the Latin American context of agrarian reforms and policies.

The peasant cooperative model in Israel

A *Moshav* (*Moshavim* in plural) is an agricultural cooperative that consists of all the residents of a single village. In each Moshav, production is individual as is consumption, and only matters of mutual concern are handled collectively, like purchasing inputs, marketing, financial transactions, and other activities in which economies of scale exist (Amit Cohen & Sofer, 2017; Applebaum & Sofer, 2012; Kimhi, 1998, 2010; Kislev, 1992; Sadan & Weintraub, 1980; Schwartz, 1999; Sofer & Applebaum, 2006). With this idea in mind, the Israeli cooperators started the plan for a group of small peasant settlements in Guanacaste and the Northern Plains of Alajuela. Guanacaste was not the only province where these plans were implemented, but the success in implementation was marked by political concerns, as we will see in the next sections of this chapter. While the cooperative model of the Moshav has eroded via neoliberalism, the Moshav until the present-day as a unit of local government with municipal duties continues into the present (Sadan & Weintraub, 1980). The *Moshav* as a kind of village smallholder cooperative emerged in the early 1920s. Over the next three decades, its cooperative structure and rules underwent some changes in response to developments affecting its environment. During Israel's

first decade of statehood (1950s), the Moshav became the country's most prevalent form of agricultural settlement. Three decades of success in the Israeli agricultural landscape was enough reason to "export" this model to other regions of the world.

Picture 4



Beit Yosef, 1976.

Picture 5



Beit Yosef, 2019.

Picture 6



Nahalal, 1982.

Picture 7



Nahalal, 2016.

Beit Yosef Moshav (created 1937) in *Beit She'an* valley, and *Nahalal* Moshav (created in 1929) in *Yezreel* Valley, Israel. Pictures courtesy of Dr. Ayal Kimhi, Sir Henry d'Avigdor Goldsmid Professor of Agricultural Economics. Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Environment. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, from the National Photo Collection, photography department, Government Press Office.

Beit Yosef and *Nahalal* are two examples of old moshavim created in a circular pattern. Parcels of different crops, facilities of different nature spread from the center of town. Each segment is the property of a family living in the cooperative settlement. The Israeli mission had the idea of communal organization of Bagatzí's space like that implemented in the moshavim. In moshavim the space of cooperative settlements was organized around—literally encircled—a center of social and material structures.

Galor (2012) points out that the Moshav was established when Israel was under the British mandate, and at a time when not many countries had experienced the establishment of cooperative villages. But agriculture in Israel, as Ben David (1964) points out, had been planned since the beginning of the first settlements in the 19th century, which at that time was characterized by poor technology, lower yields or even crop failure. The main factors determining this particular type of development was water scarcity, the lack of sufficient rural population to work on these farms, and poor knowledge of the ecosystems, climate, and material conditions to successfully implement agriculture. This holds parallels with Guanacaste peasant settlements climate, water shortages, dryness, and depopulation. Galor (2014) notes that some cooperatives within villages were established during the British mandate between 1917 and 1948, but they also existed during the Ottoman Empire period prior to the First World War. The lack of rural population was employed to justify new peasant settlements in Palestine consisting of the immigrant Jewish population, but did not recognize the presence of the historic population of Arabs Palestinians (Shafir, 1996).

Schwartz (1999) maintains that initially the Moshav was a reaction within the Zionist socialist movement to the intense collectivism and egalitarianism of the kibbutz (collective settlement). The Moshav emerged as a compromise between those values and the preferences of its founders. For Schwartz (1999), and Sofer (2005) following him, five reasons explain the Moshav's affiliation with the Zionist socialist movement. These are apparent in the allocation of settlements on nationally-owned land in a renewable lease of 49 years, as well as in the planning by the Jewish Agency's Settlement Department of its physical and economic framework. The Jewish Agency was in charge of establishing new rural settlements and assisting them until they achieved self-reliance in the early 1920s. It is also clear that cooperative settlements depended on capital allocated by the Jewish National Fund and the Settlement Department, complemented by the adoption of the principle of self-labour whereby the farmer and his family were to cultivate the land by themselves without recourse to salaried labour (Schwartz, 1999, p. 130). Here we can see that the project was to settle families, but not individuals, on conditions that they would offer each other of mutual support and assistance. This followed the egalitarian principle of equal distribution of land and capital among the smallholder family units of the Moshav (Kislev, 1992).

Schwartz remarks that with the passing of time the “collectivist spirit” of the first settlements became consolidated in cooperative arrangements for activities, such as marketing and the provision of water and agricultural supplies, and the adoption of collective decision-making bodies of the *Moshav* Association. Michael Sofer (2005), following Schwartz, argues that the *Moshav* plan was based on these principles—both ideological and practical (Schwartz 1999). Moshavim and other types of peasant settlements were part of a colonization process and plan, not an agrarian reform. The Israeli government introduced peasant settlements like Moshav in Palestinian territory, with political and economic guarantees to expand Israeli presence and control in occupied territories.

Over time moshavim in Israel consolidated various cooperative organizations, through centralized management and the progressive merger of regional and national level cooperative unions. To Schwartz (1999) the success of the *Moshav*’s consolidation period rested in the hard work and puritanical standards of their members, as much as the high demand at the national level for agricultural produce that began in the pre-WWII period and continued after Israeli statehood. During the 1960s and 1970s several factors contributed to the rise of Moshav incomes and its success. Schwartz observes that one important factor in Moshav success was the injection of large amounts of subsidized capital into the development of new, capital-intensive agricultural products. Farmers also received extensive debt relief when their financial situation threatened their ability to function. Farmer-owned agribusiness was another very successful use of subsidized capital in the Moshav model. One interesting parallel between the Costa Rican and Israeli case is that the small size of both countries contributed to the development of work-links between rural areas and urbanized centers, like the central and peripheral cities, increasing the diversification of income sources as a complement to the family’s agricultural income. In this way, members of Bagatzí and Falconiana’s families worked near cities, such as Bagaces or Cañas, in small commerce or in the offices of big agricultural corporations. Frequently this became the main employment for second generation Bagatzí and Falconiana settlers.

Many social and economic factors influenced *Moshavim* success, but also eventually its decline. Schwartz (1999) notes that even with the apparent financial prosperity allowed by the

model, Israeli society suffered deep social and economic changes. These included reinforcing middle-class access to goods and services, land, and credit, including who could purchase pieces of old *Moshavim* close to big cities with no intentions to develop agriculture. Similar processes unfolded in Costa Rica, but due to other factors. In Costa Rica, non-peasant newcomers with links to political parties could be granted land and credit or were included as part of the original beneficiaries of the peasant settlements program. In Israel, social interaction within the *Moshav* became less important with the passing of time, and the mutual dependence of its members decreased, which also weakened the *Moshav's* social control of its resources and organization. The same happened in Costa Rican peasant settlements like Bagatzí and Falconiana.

After the mid-1980s economic crisis in Israel, a process of intense decooperativization followed. The Israel state retracted its original support for the Moshav cooperative model, and with its abandonment, the model started to contract and decline slowly. In the mid-1990s few moshavim remained in place and even fewer of them received government support. Neoliberal economic policies and restrictions on state social intervention weighed on the continuity of *Moshavim's* success. Israeli cooperators could not forecast the future of the *Moshav* model in Israel and its progressive transformation in part because of the search for new sources of income through pluriactivity, and the decline of agricultural employment due to the intensification of agricultural production (Amit Cohen & Sofer, 2017; Applebaum & Sofer, 2012; Kimhi, 2009; Schwartz, 1999; Sofer & Applebaum, 2006). Perhaps when promoting the project in Costa Rica the Israelis were unaware of the consequences of the implementation of land reform and settlement programs elsewhere in Latin America. Kinsley and Binswanger are clear when they say that “settlement programs are too often designed with the assumption that all settlers will succeed. This has led to centralized administration and rigid designs, rather than decentralized approaches, flexibility in implementation, support for spontaneous settlement, and reliance on settlers’ own investment capacity” (Kinsey & Binswanger, 1993, p. 1477).

In the Israeli proposal the first five new settlements of the Bagatzí area would host approximately 180 families. They were originally planned as a group of cooperatives in which Bagatzí was to be central, and a model farm to the others. The Latin American context of these

settlement programs of land reform faced, to paraphrase Janvry and Ground (1990), a hierarchy of factors on the production performance of agriculture. These ran in decreasing order of importance, from cheap food production of food staples, to control of the state agricultural policy and exterior commerce agreements by its landed elites, to the land tenure system itself that controls the distribution, acquisition and usage of the land (p. 94).

The decision of the Costa Rican government to reject the Israeli proposal leads to the question of why an unimplemented design was important. Other countries like Angola (Kimhi, 2010) successfully implemented peasant re-settlement programs based on family-owned property similar to the moshav model. In that case, the entire region was revitalized, and more than 600 families from the original resettled ex-combatants arguably thrived and dealt well with social and productive struggles.

The original idea of the moshav model implemented in Israel would benefit peasant settlements on other contexts like Guanacaste settlements in Costa Rica. But this was not possible due to political opposition within the Costa Rican government. Later on, the section about “some remarks on the importance of cooperative models to the case of peasant settlements” in this chapter the position of the government officials of ITCO and SENARA will be clear. The two interviewees –Dr. Fúster and Eng. Coto- will talk about the reasons for opposing to the cooperative model. The director of ITCO expressed his concerns against a model of using the land and organizing the peasants because he did not want to offer the chance of growing radical ideas between the newly settled families of Bagatzí.

I want to end with Yoav Kislev’s closing thoughts on the moshav model in his work *Agricultural Cooperatives in Israel* (2013) : “the founders of the kibbutzim and the moshavim hoped to spread socialism and equality to all corners of the land, but history may judge that farm cooperation in Israel functioned as an instrument to achieve other, associated goals more than as an end to itself. However, as an instrument, it was highly successful” (Kislev, 2013, p. 19). Costa Rica lost its chance to have this kind of tool for producing an alternative space to the dominant capitalism spaces in Guanacaste. As I will show in Chapter 5 and 6, the consequences of implementing the opposite design will affect the everyday life of women, children and young

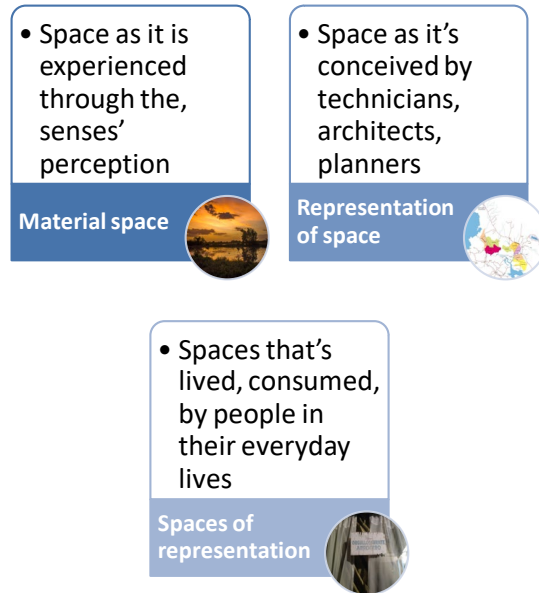
men of the settlements. In the next section I want to delve into the discussion about space not as the passive place of social relationships, but the real space where social practices exist and operate. These same social practices that we will see were put in motion during the creation of Bagatzí and Falconiana.

The Lefebvrian tri-partite space in Bagatzí and Falconiana's context

In his work, Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 2013, pp. 96–100) offers us three points of access for understanding space. The first is **spatial practices** or the use of the space by a society; second, the **representations of space** that are the ideas that dominant parts of society have about how space should be conceived and used; and third, the **spaces of representation** that people experience, the expression of these dominant ideas plus all the everydayness that is imposed on the physical space by its use.

To Lefebvre (2013), space is not the passive place of social relationships, but the real space where social practices exist and operate. The social space is neither simply mental space nor physical space; it is not a “collection of things or an aggregate of (sensory) data or a filled empty space” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 27). He also warns us that social space has a double and contradictory illusion of both transparency and opacity. The false transparency of social space lies in its appearance as a free-action field. It manifests itself in material aspects of the social world that are innocent of its contradictions. Social space is transparent because it seems to be comprehensible and transcendental, but it is opaque too as it only offers the illusion of reality, appearing as natural and substantial as something that is real appears. This opaque aspect can, in Lefebvre's words, be identified in the concept of Nature—something real but unreachable.

Figure 6.
Lefebvrian Tri-Partite concept of Social Space



From Lefebvre (1991). Tri-partite space concepts. Images from Bagatzí and Falconiana, Silvia Vasquez Olguin, 2016-19

Each society may be accessed through its space, but this space cannot and must not be objectified and reified. To Lefebvre, each mode of production produces its own spaces. With capitalist production it seems that there is no way to generate another configuration of space uses and practices, dispositions and interactions other than what capitalism prescribes as a capitalist economy, capitalist production, and capitalist relations.

Employing the definition of a peasant discussed earlier in this dissertation, a peasant space is characterized by a set of autonomous decisions that the family unit carry out on issues of production and land use that is not entirely oriented toward the market economy. This autonomy, instead, allows production both for self-consumption and for the market, in some cases complemented with off-farm wages and seasonally-hired workers, to balance the elements of labour and consumption, drudgery and utility. A peasant space consists of an array of non-commoditized land, labour and products that coexist and resist the logic of the capitalist economy and its production of space. Via this assumption Bagatzí and Falconiana settlements are peasant spaces transitioning toward capitalist spaces for agricultural production. Peasant spaces like backyards used as *milpas* (small traditional gardens for self-sustenance) in Bagatzí (Picture 8,

below) persist as pockets of resistance in the face of a highly-commoditized market and profit-oriented economic system. This system separates the workers from their means of production, in this case peasants from the land, and monopolizes the means of production in the hands of a single class -an (agrarian) bourgeoisie or landed capital- with the consequent polarization of class relations.

Picture 8



Corn, "coyote" cilantro and beans in a backyard in Bagatzi. Silvia Vasquez Olguin, 2016.

Tripartite⁶ space as conceptualized by Lefebvre suggests the ways different actors in the social production of the space envision the same space differently (Lefebvre, 2013). As we saw in Chapter 2 politicians imposed the goals of development and economic growth on the old Hacienda Ciruelas (known later as Finca Wilson), without even being there in person or knowing their intended end. This is where **representation of space** happens, similarly to the Moshavim model although never implemented, they were both abstract ideals about the function and shape of space. They sought for to transform rural spaces of far-off provinces like Guanacaste as tools

⁶ I use David Harvey's "tripartite" (Harvey in Gieseking et al., 2014, *The People, Place, and Space Reader*. Chapter 2: "Space and the World") classification of Lefebvre's divisions of material space, representation of space, and spaces of representation (Gieseking et al., 2014, pp. 14–15), acknowledging that there is a dialectical relation between them. Also, the seeming separation of the three aspects implied by the use of the term tripartite is contested by Edward Soja in his work *Thirdspace* (Soja, 1996) and in his contribution to Gregory and Urry's *Social Relations and Spatial Structures* (1985) Chapter 6 "The Spatiality of Social Life", the latter of which is crucial to my dissertation (Soja, 1985).

for development. These politicians had a specific idea of how progress could be achieved and by whom. The Costa Rican government wanted to control rural development and the agricultural economy of immense areas of the country (Scott, 1999, p. 12). The government also wanted to alleviate social struggles for land in the areas near the state capital through relocating people in new peasant settlements and mobilizing resources to do so. Thus, the Costa Rican government, as we saw in the Chapter 2, set out to establish peasant settlements such as Bagatzí and Falconiana across the country.

With one idea in mind—peasant modernization for the economic growth of the country—ITCO technicians travelled the country looking for spaces to locate the new peasant settlements that the politicians dreamt of. This is how the **representation of space** transformed **material spaces**, through ideas about how space should be configured, beyond or despite political directives or ideological promises. Hacienda Ciruelas is the **material space** that existed before the peasant settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana. Hacienda Ciruelas fit the representation of the space of the old agricultural export-oriented model of previous governments in Costa Rica. ITCO bought Hacienda Ciruelas to transform it in peasant settlements. The people, the ordinary inhabitants of these areas, who already lived or arrived at Bagatzí, Falconiana and the other settlements, had their own ideas about how to transform their newly acquired space into something else—their imagined space, their ancestral home, their dreamland. The result of the conjugation of the newcomers' images, memories and practices, and the ideas of the government about development and production, was the **space of representation** these people ultimately lived in.

Every one of these people, politicians, technicians, peasants, hacienda owners, rural workers and neighbours to these areas, exist within a larger structure of ideas, uses, practices and values that we identify as capitalism. Lefebvre holds that *(social) space is a (social) product*. I utilize parentheses for the social in this affirmation to imply the provisional nature of this hypothesis. Where are these places, how do they work and become social products? If we sustain that each society produces its own space, and Bagatzí and Falconiana are product of a capitalist state that can only produce capitalist spaces, from the outset these settlements cannot be

peasant spaces. Rather people in these towns use the space and produce their own spaces through their productive practices. Parcels, towns, houses, roads, and services show us capitalist uses of space. But other arrays of social relations also emerged, pertaining to peasant ways of living, producing, commercializing, and understanding space.

I spoke about space transformation in peasant settlements, but not the entire Hacienda Ciruelas was transformed into peasant settlements. A vast portion of the east bank of the Tempisque River was left aside because the lands were easily flooded every rainy season. Its 'unproductive' condition made possible the creation of one of the most important protected areas of the country. These are wetlands and sites of reproduction and migration of many birds important to the entire continent. To Lefebvre (1991) natural space disappears irreversibly, leaving behind only scattered preserved areas. The sprawl of urban development, the production of each particular social space is made at the expense of natural spaces, pristine spaces free of social intrusion. As a counterpoint, Neil Smith (2010) picks up on this idea and offers a substantial revision. For him, there is no such thing as nature devoid of human intervention; even nature is a social construction, conceptual as much as it is material. In addition, our knowledge is socially produced as much as the spaces we inhabit, and what's more, both condition each other. According to Lefebvre, "both partial products located in space—that is, THINGS—and discourse on space can henceforth do no more than supply clues to, and testimony about, this productive process—a process which subsumes signifying processes without being reducible to them" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 37). As we saw in the previous chapter and will see in the one that follows, in the vortex to create new modern peasant settlements, a piece of land was separated and later it named a national park, not because of its attributes, but in spite of them.

In time the spatial practices put in motion in communities like Bagatzí and Falconiana produce particular spatial representations according to the experiences of their inhabitants. These representations are a system of non-verbal signs for Lefebvre (1991, p.39). We can find some of them in the way Bagatzí neighbours recognize themselves as "*arroceros*" – rice growers—through their productive practices. They produce rice, and when they cannot, they rent the land to one of the rice industries of the area. Spatial practices produce spatial representations in the

disposition of the houses and the parcels separated by long distances as per state made peasant settlements in Costa Rica. The Costa Rican capitalist state created these peasant settlements with an ideal of productive practices and social relations represented in the position of different areas and practices in space.

Bagatzí and Falconiana's families are peasant families with two properties: one is the house with enough space to create a *milpa* (small traditional garden for self-sustenance) the other is the parcel, a larger piece of land for a farm outside of the town. These people now identify themselves as peasant and rice growers because there were no other options for them. First was the rice as we discussed in Chapter 2, then came the water through the irrigation canals, and the families of the men that worked the paddies in the early years of Bagatzí. Spatial practices are the building process and the architecture of the towns, and the agricultural production of the parcels. Agricultural productive practices and people of Bagatzí and Falconiana do not coexist in the same space. Spatial representations of peasant families of these two towns integrate social and political practices. Representations of space blend ideology and knowledge, according to Lefebvre (1991), in the core of practice. In Bagatzí this mixture is clear: only growing rice makes sense, only its technology and marketing give earnings. In Bagatzí you are meant to be a rice grower because this is the spatial representation allowed in the particular configuration of space of the town and the parcels. In many other settlements, like Falconiana, the pressure to be a rice grower is replaced by the idea of being a farmer, to produce more, to have higher yields, to make ends meet. The crop changes, but spatial representations transcend the settlements. In the end peasant families in peasant settlements like these ones consume spatial representations that the government created: modern farmers—usually individual men, not their families—are fully incorporated into the market relations: making profit and innovating, taking risks, and interpreting the conditions of the economy for their advantage.

Spaces in Bagatzí and Falconiana are lived spaces more than conceived abstract spaces, penetrated by peoples' imaginations. Spaces of representation are lived and spoken, and they have a core or affective center that can be identified in towns like Bagatzí and Falconiana, in the home, the school, the plaza that is soccer field too, and the parcels. But all these distinctions

between spatial representations and practices have the consequence of creating distractions about what is actually happening in the social space. Social space is not a thing between others, Lefebvre warns. This space embraces other objects and comprehends the social relations that produced these objects. In this space, things coexist simultaneously with order and chaos.

Some remarks on the importance of cooperative models to the case of peasant settlements

After several interviews during my field research in Costa Rica in 2015-2017, an idea about the reasons for Bagatzí and Falconiana's decline and seeming "failure" started to take shape. I began to ask some questions around the original design proposed to Bagatzí and the rest of the planned settlement of "Finca Wilson". Why did ITCO not promote and establish peasant cooperatives? Only very few were created in 15 self-identified cooperatives and 12 producers' associations, out of the 880 peasant settlements in the country. I interviewed two government employees that worked closely in the creation of Bagatzí and Falconiana, and one of them, Roberto Fúster Vasquez, worked with the Israeli group (INSERT FOOTNOTE FOR APPROXIMATE DATES of these interviews - can just be month, year). Asking him why cooperative models were not promoted, the answer was clear: a cooperative was a design "too communist" for those times. And being called 'communist' was an insult, as we remember from Don Manuel's interview about the history of Bagatzí in Chapter 2. A person deemed a communist is considered untrustworthy, rebellious, or disobedient. After talking with these government officials, I believe that the Costa Rican government did not want communities with these characteristics ("communist" or "socialist".) Because the Costa Rican so-called agrarian reform was not substantive, it is possible that the government avoided any form of spatial planning, distribution of resources, or peasant organization that would even remotely resemble political consciousness and social justice.

Roberto Fúster and Marvin Coto worked closely with the "Finca Wilson" ITCO project. The former was an economist at ITCO, while the latter still works at SENARA—the national service of

water and irrigation. Both give us their impressions concerning the origin of these communities, the context within which they were formed, as well as their particular approaches to the failure of these peasant communities. They have opposite ideas concerning the role of the state and the future of peasant communities in 21st century Costa Rica. I believe Marvin Coto, an engineer, represents the prevalent position of the Costa Rican government regarding rural development through modernization. He believes that the “peasant” should disappear because they are insignificant to the Costa Rican modern economy and its plans for the future of the country. But let us hear their thoughts.

Roberto Fúster Vasquez, also an engineer, was one of the few Costa Rican counterparts to the Israeli mission. He has a vast memory of the period when he was part of the old ITCO, then IDA, now INDER. Fúster was a direct participant in the development of the Bagatzí settlement and worked closely with the Israeli researchers and cooperants. He offered me a historical perspective on the Bagatzí project from his experience as an ITCO technician in charge of creating these peasant settlements. He first pointed out that the emphasis of agrarian policy in Costa Rica at the end of the 1970's was to develop “growth poles,” following Francois Perroux’s 1955 models of development. To this end, Costa Rican 1970's agrarian development policy was oriented to reclaim all abandoned spaces, spaces never previously settled, or spaces with irregular land tenure rights. The areas designated as growth poles in Costa Rica were the counties of Coto Sur of Perez Zeledón in the South of the country, Río Frío in the Northern Caribbean lowlands of the Heredia Province, and Coyolar of Cañas in Guanacaste Province. The process of developing these areas included investments in social infrastructure, such as roads, settlements, education or healthcare services, and a strong impulse toward agro-industry. Rice was the perfect crop to help in the development of a large growth pole in Cañas, Guanacaste.

The goal was to buy unproductive land from the big haciendas in the region of Cañas and Bagaces, and the Israeli mission was contacted through its embassy in Costa Rica to develop the idea of growth poles. The majority of technicians and engineers working at ITCO at that time were deeply enthusiastic for community enterprises and cooperatives. However, the President of ITCO, Manuel Salazar Navarrete -another engineer-, felt the opposite and disagreed with

cooperative initiatives. Instead, he pursued the development of growth poles through individual, small to medium-scale land tenure. At the beginning of this development initiative, the settlement of Bagatzí was empty. Bit by bit new settlers arrived, first the men, and following them the women and children. To Roberto Fúster, although the new settlers of Bagatzí were people with the desire to possess land, they were not peasants. They planted rice because that is what they knew best, without knowing what was best for the land and the climate. There were large rice enterprises at that time which lent heavy machinery, trucks, and shuck infrastructure to the new Bagatzí settlers. New settlers needed the services of soil preparation, weed control and harvest, which they attained from major local rice enterprises (Tio Pelón Hacienda, and Pelón de la Bajura Hacienda).

The new settlers of Bagatzí and later Falconiana were viewed mainly as potential entrepreneurs. The process to produce rice requires minimal workforce, and when it was necessary, it was Nicaraguan migrant workers who performed that function. In the history of this region, the province of Guanacaste was a hub and entrance point for the arrival of migrant workers from Costa Rica's Northern neighbor of Nicaragua⁷ (Rodríguez & Meneses, 2011; Rodríguez Vignoli, 2004).

Ten years after the establishment of Bagatzí settlement, rice was the main crop in the area, if not the only one. Rice was easier to develop than fruit trees or other diversified crops that needed more time to grow to be profitable. Large-scale rice production requires high-cost machinery and services, with a workforce employed. Given this, logic would point to the consolidation of a production cooperative to face the high costs of intensively mechanized production. But in Bagatzí and Falconiana the individual producer's model prevailed. Once the settlements were established, ITCO had the mandate to support whichever organizational model

⁷ To Abelardo Morales, one of the most prominent researchers of migration patterns in Central America, the Nicaraguan population settled in a territorial pattern formed by an axis of localities located in the regions of the Costa Rican Pacific coast. This is where historically the most important cities were concentrated (Morales et al., 2010). Regarding the demographic dynamics in the bi-national border between Costa Rica and Nicaragua, in the last three decades a process of increasing settlement led to a higher concentration in urban agglomerations, and the intensification of cross-border flows of the mainly migrant labour force. Both trends are juxtaposed insofar as both the process of settlement and mobility are stimulated by the economic/labour dynamic characterizing recent development of the border region in both countries. Indeed most relevant feature of the border dynamics between Nicaragua and Costa Rica is migration as a whole complex process.

the settlers wanted to follow. In preparation for this, ITCO facilitated a series of workshops, educational processes, and participatory research with the members of Bagatzí settlement to inform them about the variety of organizational models they could opt for. ITCO gave workshops about the cooperative model for peasant settlements, but people at Bagatzí did not agree on implementing a cooperative. Don Manuel—one of Bagatzí's first settlers—remembers the night of the final meeting to vote on the administrative model for the settlement; an agreement could not be reached. Many Bagatzí settlers opposed the Cooperative model arguing that the mistakes and laziness of a few neighbours would be carried by them all, and this was seen as unfair. They were afraid of losing the land, getting trapped by debt, or facing years of bad crops or low earnings, even losses, because of the wrongdoings of others. As such, the pros of sharing costs and benefits of a cooperative were overwhelmed by the cons of the potential for irresponsible individual behaviour, distrust, and gossip.

An individualistic model of one parcel to one family, separated from the place where they would live, in some cases by two to five kilometres, triumphed so that Bagatzí ended up comprised of individually-owned tracts of land. As discussed in Chapter 2, in the first five years the rice harvest was carried out collectively as the land that was the property of ITCO and not assigned to the families. Working the area together, and collectively sharing costs and benefits, did not work from their perspective sufficiently for the settlers to see the benefit of continuing working as a cooperative. ITCO allowed a group of 18 men to work the land at the beginning of the Bagatzí project and to continue to produce rice during the rainy season each year until the settlement was finished. After that the land was divided into parcels and the families settled. There was no water for irrigation or consumption, only the rain between May to October (rainy season) and the water extracted from small rivers, such as the Piedras River close to Bagatzí. The first stage of the "Arenal-Tempisque Irrigation Project" did not reach Bagatzí until the end of 1984 (IICA & SENARA, 1992).

The men who came to Bagatzí to first plant rice in 1979 hired a small airplane to deliver fertilizer, fungicide and agrochemicals during the different stages of the rice harvest, a practice followed by large Haciendas like Tío Pelón and Pelón de la Bajura. Don Manuel remembers clearly

finding the pilot who was recommended by one of the managers of Tío Pelón. The money from these first and very successful harvests was deposited in a fund for financing the costs of future rice harvests, but it was so much money that the men decided to create a Cooperative of “goods and services” to supply the necessary inputs for rice production, small credit to the families, and later operate a supermarket in Bagatzí. “*Coope-Bagatzí*” was the name of the cooperative that still exists, only by name, and it was very successful during the 1980s and 1990s. But as a practical business it was not enough. The people of Bagatzí wanted individually-owned properties without having to share the work with others or depend on the other inhabitants. Thus the position against the consolidation of a producers’ cooperative came mostly from distrust and uncertainty about the behaviour and capacities of other members. The rice crop also facilitated delocalized management. There were good results from the cooperative effort to manage the first harvest. But many of them, Don Manuel recalls, wanted the same success (the same money) for themselves and did not wish to share with the rest of the community, even though that amount of money and success was only possible because of the shared effort.

As discussed above, Costa Rican agrarian policy was insufficient to count as a meaningful agrarian reform (De Janvry, 1981; De Janvry & Ground, 1978; Kay, 2002). It did not challenge or modify the old agrarian structure of the countryside with its traditional power relation between big haciendas/agricultural enterprises and small stakeholders, peasants, and agrarian workers traditionally linked to sugarcane, rice, or cattle production in the province of Guanacaste. Across the country and in the last fifty years, ITCO (now INDER) expanded the agricultural frontier through a process of colonization, but not redistribution of land. The representation of the space of Costa Rican government did not change or even seek to change the dominant pattern of land tenure and agricultural production in the country (De Janvry & Ground, 1978; Edelman, 1992; Rodríguez Solera, 1988). Material space continued its transformation to serve the capitalist economy and its social relations of production and reproduction. Peasant cooperative initiatives could have changed the shape of power relations in the Costa Rican countryside, but that did not happen.

The *Moshav* model worked in Israel to the empowerment of rural communities, the spread of successful peasant settlements, the strength of semi-private property in cooperatives, and to consolidate national identity. It was intended for the Costa Rican case under the same assumptions. “Finca Wilson” presented the opportunity to accomplish significant change in the way peasant settlements were established by the government, and the proposal worked in consonance with the colonization process that ITCO was developing since its creation, but the project as the Israeli delegation made it demanded large resources from the Costa Rican government, and a different representation of the space for a peasant community working as a cooperative.

Material space in these settlements and the rest of the country followed the same pattern of parcels separated from towns with the consequent implications for the everyday life of peasants, generations to come, and the economy of the region. The same neoliberal policies of state involvement, restriction and reduction of social policies that ultimately affected the Israeli countryside impacted the Costa Rican model of rural development too (Corson, 2011; Kay, 2008, 2015; Ploeg, 2008). The context was even worse in the Costa Rican case (Alfaro, 2005; Babin, 2012; Cordero, 2011; Edelman, 1999; Pérez Brignoli & Samper, 1994) because it was not intended to promote the takeoff of rural communities and agricultural production, but to complement industrialization processes in contraction due to neoliberal policies.

Picture 9 shows us the possibilities of space. It shows a house in Falconiana built on the parcel and incorporating workable land and housing space. In it we can see that the place inhabited by those few families who subsist in Bagatzí and Falconiana, their houses and their gardens, are full of their peasant productive practices, of their social relations, their institutions and prescriptions. When the use of space for production allows inhabitation, you will see it, as in picture 9. In the space of the houses in Bagatzí and Falconiana, place and peasants remain more or less unchanged since the establishment of the communities. In the parcels the agrarian structure and traditional social ties of power and dispossession via foremen and seasonal workers are recreated in each harvest, in each of rice and sugarcane plantation just as was the case more than 30 years ago.

Picture 9



New houses in small farms like this one are built on parcels previously dedicated only for cropping in Falconiana.
Silvia Vasquez Olguin, fieldwork, 2017

In new places like the parcels next to Falconiana where more houses have been built in the last years, you can see the return to a model of shared space for housing and production. It is clear that if the peasant family is left alone in the parcel, peasants will build a house and work the land beside the house just as occurred in the initial settlement described in Chapter 2, or as we can now see in the new houses built on the old parcels sold in Falconiana (see Picture 9.)

I agree with Armando Bartra that the peasantry is a category that explains relations with and within capitalism, and in its very existence embodies the contradictions of an economy that is modernized and growing at the expense, and sometimes despite but in need of agriculture (A. Bartra, 2016). In that relationship, for capitalism and modernity to exist, the features of the past and the countryside must disappear in the crucible of industry, homogeneity and technology.

But peasants persist and do not disappear as predicted even when differentiating among themselves, or introducing technology and adapting to the many social, economic and climatic changes. Peasants will use every inch of land at hand to produce, to make nature bloom, to feed their families and us as well. See Picture 10 of an abandoned housing lot in Bagatzí full of corn and plantain.

Picture 10



Corn and plantain for family consumption planted in vacant house plots in Bagatzí where houses were never built.
Silvia Vasquez Olguín, fieldwork, 2016.

Finally, in a contemporary expression of the inner contradictions of capitalism in the Costa Rican countryside, in peasant settlements like Bagatzí and Falconiana material space has a decelerating effect on transformations in large-scale social relations. I do not rule out that profound and accelerated transformations in geography and space can accelerate transformations in the social relations previously held there. But that only reinforces the relationship between both aspects of life: we inhabit spaces and transform them, but in that process, space adheres to social relations and these too matter, as Maurice Halbwachs suggests “like brick and mortar” (Halbwachs, 1980). Memory, tradition and practices are embedded in the matter of the space we inhabit.

This is the case in Bagatzí and Falconiana where few family members were involved in farming, behavior reinforced by the separation of agricultural land and housing, and because of the incorporation of waged seasonal migrant workers to cover the needs of the rice monocrop farms. The traditional peasant productive practices, the necessary balance between work, rest, and consumption particular to the peasant family unit of production, changed to adapt to the demands of producing rice as a monocrop for the national market. Only in the nearby space of the gardens and backyards around the houses, and abandoned lots and side roads, did traditional

agrarian practices find a place to foster small patches of corn, beans, and plantains for auto-consumption, where - unlike in the parcels- women and children became involved. Peasants' persistence over time lies in the slowness in which the matter of the place responds to the changes of society –because it bears the mark of repeated and ritualized forms of life, productive practices and social relations, transits, uses, and rotations. To change or alter social relations, the more-than-human material and thus space should be destroyed and remade.

We have reached the end of our discussion on agrarian reform and its limitation in capitalist underdeveloped countries like Costa Rica. This was a colonization program, not a substantial agrarian reform. As I showed in this chapter, within the spatial arrangement of these state-made peasant settlements, the traditional agrarian structure characteristic of Latin America did not change. The concentration of power (in the relations of “patrón-peón” in Spanish for the complex relations of power and money between owners of the land and the seasonal agricultural workers that in many cases resided in the same haciendas,) land and resources, and structures of exploitation remained in place. Potentially beneficial alternative arrangements of land and housing, such as the *Moshav* model, might have strengthened social relations and the participation of all members of the family unit in the production process, but the final outcome of a transformation of the social relations in the countryside was not guaranteed either. Spaces planned by government technicians and politicians, later inhabited by newcomers to Bagatzí and Falconiana reveal one side of the process of social production of social space in the Costa Rican countryside. The other is the enclosure of nature and the production of remnants or pockets of nature as we will see in the next chapter's discussion of the ecological history of the region.

Chapter 4

Historical ecology of a human made savannah

Story of borders, travels and travelers

This chapter presents a historical review of the prehistoric and contemporary waves of colonization along the central region of the American continent identified as Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forest (SDNtF). The Costa Rican government established the peasant settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana, among others, upon a landscape and ecosystem that had been changing for thousands of years. This *longue durée* ecological process of change only continued with the introduction of industrialized rice production and artificial irrigation systems that came with the ITCO (Institute for Lands and Colonization by its Spanish acronym) settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana, and the establishment (almost simultaneously) of protected areas like Palo Verde national park and Lomas de Barbudal biological reserve. These long-term transformations to the landscape and ecosystems demonstrate the mutual constitution of human and more-than-human natures. From a traditional Marxist perspective, capitalism produces capitalist spaces where “nature” is the remnant leftover after urban expansion. But in the countryside, the processes of urbanization and expansion must be understood as co-constituted with ecological change and waves of peasantization and depeasantization (Araghi, 1995) as I described in Chapter 2. Different forms of land tenure and property relations, agricultural practices, and cattle ranches and *Haciendas* manifest varied aspects of the social production of space as much as the purported separation of nature and productive spaces in Bagatzí and Falconiana. The dichotomies of nature/culture and cultivation/habitation in peasant settlements like Bagatzí and

Falconiana is tenuous and porous at best, and certainly artificial. Social relations of production and “non-human” ecological changes do not end at the wired fence that separates protected areas like Palo Verde National Park from the rice paddies of Bagatzí. This chapter discusses these topics via the following sections: I begin with a description of the contemporary SDNtF, followed by a discussion of the relationship between Mesoamerican forests and early human settlement. I then turn to European colonization and the introduction of African grasses as a way to “read” ecological history and ecosystem change. Three final sections close the discussion on the transformations of the Costa Rican SDNtF landscape drawing from historical research, archival documents and interviews of some of the founder of Bagatzí and Falconiana: rice and the monocrop industry; the transformation from Haciendas to peasant settlements; and the position of Palo Verde national park and Lomas de Barbudal in revealing ecological history.

The Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forest of our days

I want to expand our understanding of how human-nature relationships are configured and how they unfold. Long histories of human occupation of this landscape need to be told. Histories of extensive extraction that denuded forest and produced savannas need to be told, but none of them are linear, for some overlap with others. Such histories are also deeply interconnected, like the story of maize pollen found deeply buried in the ocean floor of Guanacastean shoreline, and in the muddy floor of a glacial lagoon in the Costa Rican southern valleys of San Isidro del General.

Society’s spatial practices produce social spaces’ materiality. Social practices materialize the social production of social space; this is the spatiality of social relations (Soja, 1985). To Lefebvre (1991), spatial practices contain social reproductive and productive relationships that ensure social continuity and take shape in material spaces like towns, buildings, or monuments. I argue in that sense the SDNtF of Guanacaste is socially produced as much as ecologically.

Long stories of vanished trees and travellings of a seed along the digestive system of domestic and wild mammals will show us how a landscape –this human-made savannah- was built through intense and fragile interspecies connections. A social and interspecies landscape driven by accumulation rather than equilibrium, contrasts with a less intervened landscape in the protected areas of Palo Verde and Lomas de Barbudal.

Writing stories of trees, rice plants, introduced grasses from Africa, and/or vanished forests from a transdisciplinary environmental studies perspective entails many challenges. Thriving among the turbulent waters of specialization, storms of patriarchy and misogyny, and the deep-water monsters of self-doubt is difficult. Writing transdisciplinary studies puts you under constant scrutiny: why are you asking these questions? Who are you? Where do you come from? These questions address my accent, my name, my disciplinary origin, and make me a foreigner to all of those you talk with. This was among the most significant limitations I had to overcome in my process of gaining a PhD in environmental studies: to develop my own voice, a transdisciplinary, risen-from-the-south, woman's voice.

I perceive the landscape while trying to explain it here. It may appear the history of this landscape is one of linear processes, of starting and end points. But it is not this way. I must remake my own mental landscape of Guanacaste region. Where there is now rice fields used to be large sections of Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forest (SDNtF). In the early 20th Century, before Palo Verde National Park or Bagatzí and Falconiana, these rolling hills ensconced the big hacienda Ciruelas, later known as Wilson's Farm, as we saw in Chapter 2. The frontier between Palo Verde National Park and Bagatzí expresses Costa Rican social practices and relations of production. Property demarcations identified –but also classify and protect- the remnants of Guanacaste' SDNtF. This limit between wild nature and cultivated land is product of the triad that Henri Lefebvre (1991) offered us: spatial practices, spaces of representation, and representations of space acting together to guarantee the persistence of a mode of production and its society. To Lefebvre, spatial practice in capitalist societies “embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and *urban* reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, 'private' life and leisure)” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38, emphasis mine).

I conceptualize the embodiment of spatial practices through rural communities and peasant settlements instead of cities. Rice and sugarcane monocrops landscapes, peasant settlements, Palo Verde National Park, and through the Seasonally Dry Neotropical forest of the province of Guanacaste make visible the social production of social space. This is the forest I'm looking for: an inhabited forest, a specific habited space. A space empty of beings, human beings, is not what I seek to understand. The abstract space of mathematicians and philosophers is not the space I am looking for. The trace of human habitation marks the beginning of the particular historical ecology of this forest from my perspective.

We cannot see the extent of the SDNtF that covered all Guanacaste' lowlands⁸ due to the historical patterns of reduction, predation, deforestation, fire and agricultural practices. Dr. Mahmood Sasa in many conversations and email exchanges during the past six years pointed out that SDNtF label is a big box where to find all deciduous forests in zones with seasonal rainfall patterns of more than five months with no precipitation at all, as much as a major presence of deciduous woody species and relatively low precipitation, if it rains at all. If that is the case, areas close to Palo Verde national park could be called SDNtF. Thanks to this generous label the towns of Bagatzí and Falconiana as well as the primitive Wilson's Farm itself could be located in what was in older times a Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forest.

The contemporary landscape of Guanacaste – fragmented grasslands and irregularly-forested, wavy hills – lulls the casual observer into thinking the land has always been this way. But this is not the case. The landscape visible today is the product of deep economic transformation that the region suffered since violent Spanish colonization, multiple land tenure arrangements, the introduction of cattle and grasses, and resource extraction. But this same

⁸ Pizarro, 2009 p.207. "Among the documentation found without a doubt, the accounting book of the "Hacienda el Tempisque" owned by Federico Sobrado Carrera is the main intermediary in the international trade of wood extracted from the area." Circa 1908 the extraction of precious wood was a prosperous economic activity to the Tempisque basin. Speaking about its power, Pizarro continues "In the eyes of specialists and simple stakeholders, this type of document shows a state of progress in logging and a striking commercialization of wood in the dry tropics. While revealing a curious and unexpected panorama of deterioration and affectation of the river, where although it was true it was mediated by natural processes, it was also by a no less striking intensification of the commercial traffic of wood and other marketable goods, through of the prodigious channel, already at the beginning of the 20th century."

region has been and remains part of Costa Rica's/Central America's Seasonally Dry Neotropical⁹ Forests (SDNtF). These forests of extensive coverage and deciduous trees offer a sweet scent and turn golden when their leaves prepare to fall in November.

I treasure this dry forest. My first encounter with it was on a golden afternoon, walking¹⁰ along a creek while yellow, brown, light beige or reddish leaves covered the floor of the forest. Only the dry knock-knock of a woodpecker as it answered the call of another bird interrupted the silence of the forest. The crackling sound of our steps over the leaves, crackling and whispering leaves and the sweetest scent of dryness, dirt, and leaves dying their small deaths into the big embrace of the drought to come linger in my memory. An entire ecosystem holding its breath until the rain comes back, if the rain comes back some day because rain is always an uncertain promise. The trees and the forest were undressing their foliage to wait barely naked, in their most pure and fierce beauty, for the rain to come.

Enriching this landscape are abundant and well-preserved, yet small, patches of mature Seasonally Dry Forests of the world dominated by secondary forests with deciduous species. In a conversation with Dr. Gerardo Ávalos from the Biology Department at the University of Costa Rica, he insisted that researchers and inhabitants of this forest tend to think that in the Neotropical Dry Forest most of the species are deciduous. But Dr. Ávalos asserted that maybe this is not accurate – perhaps many evergreen species interlock within the Dry Forest's ecosystem with deciduous species in what we could call the “contemporary primary dry forest”. However, he continued, in later successional stages, the evergreen species increase in abundance. Numerous evergreens characterize Palo Verde and St. Rosa National Parks, and even more so the surrounding rural areas.

⁹ I follow a broad definition of SDNtF which contains different vegetation types (Pennington et al., 2006). Neotropical –in my case, not used by Pennington et al., 2006- is a feature of political precision about the difference of New Tropics of America. One must understand that these are different than the rest of forest under seasonal regime.

¹⁰This was a visit to the Karen Mogensen Reserve in 2002 in Nicoya Peninsula, as part of a work shared with Swedish biologists that after spending many weeks in the rainforest wanted to experience the dryness of Costa Rican Pacific coast and its Dry Forest, if I could find a piece of it. We visited a mature Dry Forest, or what is called Primary Dry Forest in Guanacaste.

Accordingly, there is not a homogeneous single type of dry forest, and the dry forests we have now are fragmented and heterogeneous. Nature, particularly in such complex landscapes, ages in many unpredictable ways because it is not a machine. Forests change, behaving like a living fluid that recedes and returns. Let us try to imagine this forest of the past from the images we have in the present. Such forests cover a great part, but not all, of the province of Guanacaste. Guanacaste is home to wavy hills of grasses, grasslands for cattle, sparse spots of trees, and patches of SDNtF in a few protected areas. Even if Bagatzí and Falconiana are not in areas easily identifiable as “Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forest” today, the forest was there 200 or more years ago in what is now Palo Verde National Park, the Tempisque River basin, and almost all of Guanacaste’s Pacific coast. The high and majestic trees in the province of Guanacaste’s protected areas are not older than 200-250 years. The SDNtF of our day is not older than the new world that colonizers and newcomers transformed.

Indelible images of immense trees and the majesty of the landscape of SDNtF can lead to false assumptions about the forest’s age. One must ask: is the age of a forest measured by the older standing trees? The age of a forest is the result of a mixture of old trees and seedlings. While it is not uncommon to find old trees and seedlings, deciduous and evergreen trees mixed in this Guanacastean SDNtF, along with fragmented pieces of younger forests. In the Costa Rican case the dominant age marked by older individuals of each forest is not greater than 200-250 years.

But the forest in the field is the *material* space and it’s not exempt from struggles either. In Guanacaste there are some remnants of the pre-colonial forest we identify now as a Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forest/Pacific slope that also is a representation of the space coming from the minds and agreements of the scientific community. This forest is what Costa Rica tries to protect in Palo Verde and Lomas de Barbudal. This forest is the material space and the spaces of representation that people of Bagatzí and Falconiana experience today. The historical ecology of this area tells an older story.

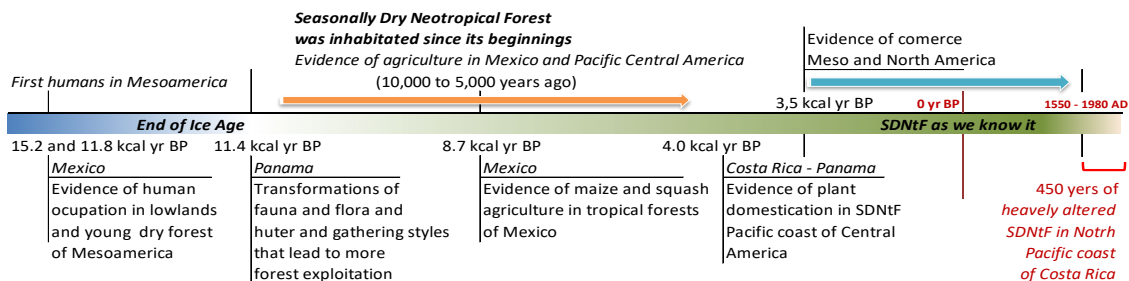
We love to label, to name and create boxes, but nature resists standardization. Most of the so-called “historical” Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forest was altered years ago, and there are

almost no fragments of mature Dry forest or representative Dry forest to study, even in Palo Verde National Park or its surrounding area. Dr. Ávalos remarked to me that likely only in some parts of Santa Rosa and Palo Verde national parks there are small fragments of evergreen forests; these, according to Daniel Janzen, *resemble* a primary Dry forest. It is this that we accept as “The Dry Forest” (Janzen, 1986). It’s a “representation of the space” that was catalogued, labelled, preserved, and isolated from humans and its threats. It’s more imprinted in the mind of the scientists and technicians than in material space.

Evidences of early forest and Meso-American Human Settlement from maize and pollen

But this is a story of multiple layers of change and transmutations. This forest of seasonal patterns of drought and rain was historically inhabited as can be seen in Figure 7. This was a forest easy to travel through, easy to settle within, easy to burn and open up for human habitation. Evidence of human habitation in Central America is found in traces of fires, ashes of burnt forest and burnt food (Arroyo-Mora et al., 2005; Cooke, 1998; Cooke & Ranere, 1992; DeClerck et al., 2010; Denham et al., 2007; Fowler, 1985; Piperno, 2011; Piperno et al., 2007; Piperno & Fritz, 1994).

Figure 7
Mesoamerican human colonization and Dry Forest habitation



Silvia Vazquez Olguin schematic drawing on Denham et al, 2007; Frankie et al, 2004; Janzen, 1986; Lange, 2006; Piperno, 2011; Pizarro, 2009; Reyes Paniagua, 2010.

Early humans arrived in tropical lands and first colonized Mesoamerica around sixteen thousand years ago in what is now the Pacific coast of Mexico. Large areas of the Central American forest were populated by these human newcomers. According to Piperno (2011b), the forest was not a “*barrier*” to humans; it worked as an intricate biome of human habitation and inter-species co-creation. Piperno uses the concept of biomes to explain the origins of early agricultural and anthropomorphic transformations of landscapes in Mesoamerica. Ancient foodways belong to these early agriculture and anthropomorphic transformations. I agree with Haraway (2016) when she asserts that what we eat carries information from the outside to our bodies, transforming our gut flora and making us what we are in accordance with our biome too. But don’t run to find these settlements—some of them are likely now under the waters of the Pacific Ocean because they were established on exposed land due to low sea levels during the last glaciation. What these early humans left behind for us are small particles of ash and pollen found on the bottom of the ocean along the Mesoamerican Pacific coast, the product of landscape transformation by forest fires.

Continuing to follow ash and micro coals, Cooke (1998) finds “a sudden increase in particulate charcoal at Lake La Yeguada (Panama) after ca. [carbon adjusted] 11,000 BP” (1998:185), which means presence of humans in the forest, uses of fire to cook products of the forest, and a type of young ecosystem where “humans began to burn fires in oak-Ilex-magnolia forests at this time” (1998:186). We now follow a smoke column into a very different kind of forest. Traces of Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forests are not yet apparent, whether in seeds or in pollen. The Lowlands of Central America more than 10,000 years ago were similar landscapes to the savanna you see today. These were lowlands of thorn bushes and colder weather. If the Seasonally Dry Forest was to grow, it started here in a long road of inter-species domestication and warming weather, until it became what Piperno (2011) suggests was the biome of early Mesoamerican people. In old and new SDNTF forests, according to Cooke, “forest plant products and small animals were surely collected” (1998. p.186) for human consumption. This means humans were intrinsic parts of these ecosystems, and after more than 11,000 years we are no longer strangers in our lands. To Piperno, “people ‘settled into’ their landscapes, staying for longer and/or more frequently returning to specific locations, and they frequently manipulated

and altered their environments by creating clearings in forests and/or burning them” (2011:456), or by collecting, hunting and chasing small animals and plant products that gave shape to the ancestors of the forests we see now.

Evidence of maize pollen speaks to early and successful domestication of both plants and humans. There is more than one way of interpreting domestication. As early human colonizers of Mesoamerica domesticated maize, this crop also domesticated human palates and digestive systems. But I gladly agree with Iriarte (2009) too in his assertion that maize casts a long shadow over the diversity of diet in Mesoamerica. But because of its undeniable importance, maize pollen has a story to tell. Richard Cooke (1998) tells us about a particular piece of pollen, found from deep drilling of the seafloor of Costa Rican Pacific coast, and another found in the bottom of a glacial lagoon in Costa Rican Talamanca mountain range, tells the story of domestication of maize and biomes. These pieces of pollen bring back Teosinte (Cooke, 1998) –the grandmother maize, the old predecessor of the long sweet yellow corn cob we eat these days-, and speaks about human-transformed ecosystems. Eleven thousand years ago human beings inhabited a forest that was colder and different than our present-day forest, but that contained the seeds and plants that unfold in the SDNtF of our days. There is a delicate and fuzzy connection between this early habited forest and the SDNtF of our time, but these old pieces of pollen speak about human-inhabited forest, transformation of ecosystems and diets, and in some way of social production of social spaces.

Eleven thousand years transform newcomers into neighbours. It is so important to me how Haraway describes her appreciation of “the fact that human genomes can be found in only about 10 percent of all the cells that occupy the mundane space I call my body; the other 90 percent of the cells are filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such” all together playing the symphony of being alive together, making who we are because of being together (Haraway, 2015, p. 3). I argue that people in Central America carry the forest within them, such as by living in it, or by being close enough to breathe it or eat from it. We can feel the power of this forest over rain patterns and water streams, animals that visit our space, sounds we register and then forget. Teosinte and squash domesticated by some of our ancestors are a part of us, as

much as the forest that is no more, through a long history of making the present, playing together in this symphony of destruction and survival (Denham et al., 2007).

Why speak of a forest that doesn't exist anymore? This forest has a long history of change, intervention and alteration—it is a landscape of constant change, in the sense it is a landscape of social production of space. This is true even when it looks so quiet, almost sleepy, under the midday sun of its dry season when only the cicadas seem to survive the rampaging heat. Heat is one of the characteristics of this human-made savanna. If you can escape the heat of the sun and walk under the trees in some areas of Palo Verde, or climb some of the forested hills that surround Bagatzí and Falconiana, it will be cool there. I promise.

European colonization and the introduction of African Grasses

To many authors¹¹, the pattern of change from forest to degraded land passes through agriculture, but does not stop there. Declining harvests lead to the abandonment of land, and then to the introduction of cattle or to a rotation of crops. However, the process of degradation of the land's productivity, diversity, and loss of sustenance had already started, and thus, land would ultimately be abandoned anyway. These practices of extraction have radically transformed the forest's landscape toward pastures that are currently common. This process is especially critical to the process of social production of space, and the effort to reconstruct historical ecology.

¹¹ George Woodwell (2001) discusses with other authors the possibilities of existence of forest under our current circumstances of overpopulation, overuse of nature and pollution of the environment. One section of the text addresses agriculture and argues the Tropical Dry Forest is the first in being endangered by human intervention around the world. Daniel Janzen (1988) bases his observations on that less than 2% of the tropical dry forest (TDF) in the Mesoamerican region was sufficiently intact to be considered worthy of conservation, having declined from an original area of 550,000 km². Parson (1979, 1986, 1995) has a large group of papers about the expansion of African grasslands in Central America as evidence of forest loss and especially on SDntF. Recent work on SDTF or just TDF is available in "Biodiversity conservation in human-modified landscapes of Mesoamerica: Past, present and future" (DeClerck et al., 2010) and Dirzo Chp. 12 "Seasonally Dry Tropical Forest biodiversity and Conservation Value in Agricultural Landscapes of Mesoamerica" in: Dirzo et al. Ed. (2011) Seasonally dry tropical forests: ecology and conservation (Dirzo et al., 2011)

Murphy and Lugo say it clearly: “we will never know the true original or potential extent of dry forest because many savannas and scrub or thorn woodlands are thought to be derived from disturbed dry forest” (Murphy & Lugo, 1986, p. 67) but what we can see now are only grasses and scattered tree patches. Currently, SDNtF exists as a forest in the minds of ecologists and biologists as a *representation of a space* labelled “SDNtF” in Lefebvrian terms because the Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forest is fragmented, spread and diminished almost to its disappearance in huge areas of Mesoamerica.

A landscape is a complex array of vegetation, animals and insects among other species, curling, whirling and rising over soil formations. Landscapes include humans too. A landscape can be, and lately often is, a result of human intervention. But if something gives a memorable character to a certain landscape it is its vegetation, as indicated by Parsons (1970) who speaks about the process of “*Africanization*” of Neotropical Grasslands. This process began in the late 19th Century along with the introduction of European cattle, the practice of European farming, and the slave trade. Uninvited travellers landed in ports of the New World along with the bitter harvest of lives from the slave trade. Seeds of African grasses were brought in ships as poultry feed and bedding for the enslaved persons (Parsons, 1970, 1976). Early colonizers spread these seeds like fire through the seventeenth and nineteenth century as they opened new spaces for agriculture in Brazil and northern South America, these spaces were later abandoned and used for cattle ranches.

The new grass varieties were optimal for cattle. There is a long co-evolutionary history of grasses and ruminants in Africa (Carney, 2001; Carney & Rosomoff, 2009; Downing et al., 1992; Parsons, 1965). In lands of the New World, grasses and cattle from Africa met each other again. Colonizers brought changes to the landscape through the introduction of new productive practices (e.g. land tenure regimes like haciendas, or new productive practices like large monocrop and plantations), new species including wheat and cattle, and changes in diet and consumption habits introduced in the quotidian life of the newcomers and Indigenous peoples. These practices profoundly altered Neotropical ecology and landscapes. Colonial authorities, commercial adventurers, and slave traders imposed their representations of the landscape –the

way they conceived space, its uses and purpose. These forces transformed the material space, shaping it as the green landscape of grasses along the American continent. Local residents experienced transformations of their material space particularly through changes in the orientation of local economies towards cattle ranches and meat production for the international market, monocrop of new crops like wheat, and the introduction of new land tenure regimes.

Grasslands like those in the province of Guanacaste are the open wound of colonialism and ongoing, savage extraction. I assert such transformation is a representation of the space imposed on colonial landscapes in the form of wavy hills of grasses, open spaces, and scattered aged forests. Such representations of space became spaces of real change—spaces where representations became real and made sense in the mind of newcomers and local elites. But, to employ Lefebvre's terms, in the process of social production of social space, nature remains corralled and dispersed among the urban sprawl of housing and factories, highways and skyscrapers,. However, the grassy landscape of *haciendas*, and cattle ranches in Guanacaste are the direct product of the social transformation of economies and ecosystems, not just a remnant. Palo Verde national park was originally an abandoned cattle ranch, with some area dedicated to agriculture, and many other like swamps with few patches of SDNtF. The same was true for Lomas de Barbudal. Expanding Lefebvre's understanding of urban spaces as the predominant expression of the social production of space, I argue that haciendas and cattle ranches, long extensions of grasses and deforestation are also socially produced for a specific economy as much as urban spaces are.

Various authors write that the colonization and exploitation of humans and American landscapes can be seen through the expansion of cattle grasses in America(Carney & Rosomoff, 2009; Downing et al., 1992; Janzen, 1986; Parsons, 1965, 1970). The composition of soils and landscapes in Central and South America evolved without association with cattle. Cattle came from another place and were installed here (Bishko, 1952; Carney & Rosomoff, 2009; Parsons, 1965) over the grasses that conquered open spaces and became forest. Table 5 demonstrates how grasses expanded across South America to the North, reaching Central America in a very short period of time.

Table 5
Expansion of grasses in Central and South America since colonization to early
20th Century

Origin	Comments	Grasses	First arrival to		
			Latin America	The Caribbean	Meso America
Guinea Coast	Bird seeds	Guinea - <i>Panicum maximus</i>	Brazil, 18th	Jamaica, 1741	Costa Rica, 1885
Angola	Slave bedding in cargo ships	Para - <i>Brachiaria mutica</i>	Brazil, 18th	Puerto Rico, 1844	Mexico, 1872
Angola	Replacement for abandoned coffee lands	Gorudra - <i>Melinis minutiflora</i>	Brazil, 1800 - 1814	Jamaica, 1920 - 1924	Guatemala, 1920
Angola	Introduced in contaminated packets of Gurdura	Jaragua* - <i>Hiparrhenia rufa</i>	Brazil, 1829	Jamaica, 1920	Costa Rica, 1915

* Jaragua is of the most rapid expansion in Latin America. It spreaded 4000 km² in half a decade.

Silvia Cristina Vasquez Olguin Based on Parsons (1979, p. 142-52) research about the expansion of introduced grasses in the Americas.

Producing social spaces is an ongoing event. Most of the landscapes in the American Continent were the product of social relations of production during colonization and were the consequence of colonial expansion. What we see now as grasses in the province of Guanacaste and many other parts of Central America were forests. To walk over grasses is to walk the scar of colonization. I wonder about the 'pre contact' natural landscape to which Lefebvre refers (1991) because most of the "natural landscape" of the Americas disappeared centuries before our days, its memory preserved in oral histories of the Indigenous people of these lands. The so called "natural landscape" was transformed by deforestation and endeavours of mineral extraction, persecution and genocide.

Let me tell you a short story about the transformation of landscapes in my own backyard. I was a graduate student doing my master in sociology when I met Dr. Mahmood Sasa. He is a professor at the microbiology department at the University of Costa Rica studying snake venoms. Our work focused on the demography of *Bothrops asper* in Costa Rica's Central Pacific region. I was "the sociologist" of the team. I dealt with humans; meanwhile, they—the biologists—dealt with venomous *fer-de-lance* snakes or *Terciopelo* as we call *B. asper*. We walked through farms and side roads during mornings and evenings trying to find a single snake. I accompanied the

biologists because my humans were working at those times on the same farmlands we wanted to cross.

Many new grass varieties were growing in my backyard; this was much to my mother's anger, who then had to ask our gardener to mow more frequently. My long, enlightening walks had an additional impact beyond stretching my muscles: with the passage of time, the months of field research gave a priceless gift of grasses to the ecosystem in my backyard. I did not notice until one day, close to rainy season when one stops mowing, there were different grasses rising above the seemingly-missing original lawn. What was this miracle? Star grasses, long red leaf grasses, some of them with strong stems like bamboo. I was amazed. Meanwhile, my mother was upset and worried about the lawn in her beautiful backyard.

After technical consultations with several botanists, agricultural engineers, and garden lover friends, the verdict was clear: with my boots, I was transferring species from the grasslands and pastures of my field site to my house hundreds of kilometers away. Trapped in the dry mud of my boots that I diligently scraped in the backyard on my mother's orders to avoid bringing dirt inside the house, I had spread some of the most fierce, resistant, and aggressive African grasses in my own backyard—all over the soft and untouched lawn that my mother cared for so much. It goes without saying that our backyard never returned to its ever-green beauty.

Now think about the expansion of African grasses that Parsons described as coming from "Eastern tropical Africa... an independent center of development for a number of sown forage grasses, including virtually all of the important ones that could be considered truly tropical" (1979:143). These grasses spread and sprouted in marginal lands, abandoned lands, nutrient-poor and eroded lands of the new continent. Some of the first colonizers and agriculturalists of the New World called these grasses the "salvation of the economy" in the Americas (Allen & Barnes, 1985; Downing et al., 1992; Parsons, 1965, 1976). Already deforested and degraded areas of the continent welcomed these new grasses, which gave a starting point for the meat trade in South and later Central America in late 19th century.

This is a long trip to the past on which I ask you to join me: all the pastures and grasslands one can now see in place existed where there was a forest. Where you see grasslands for

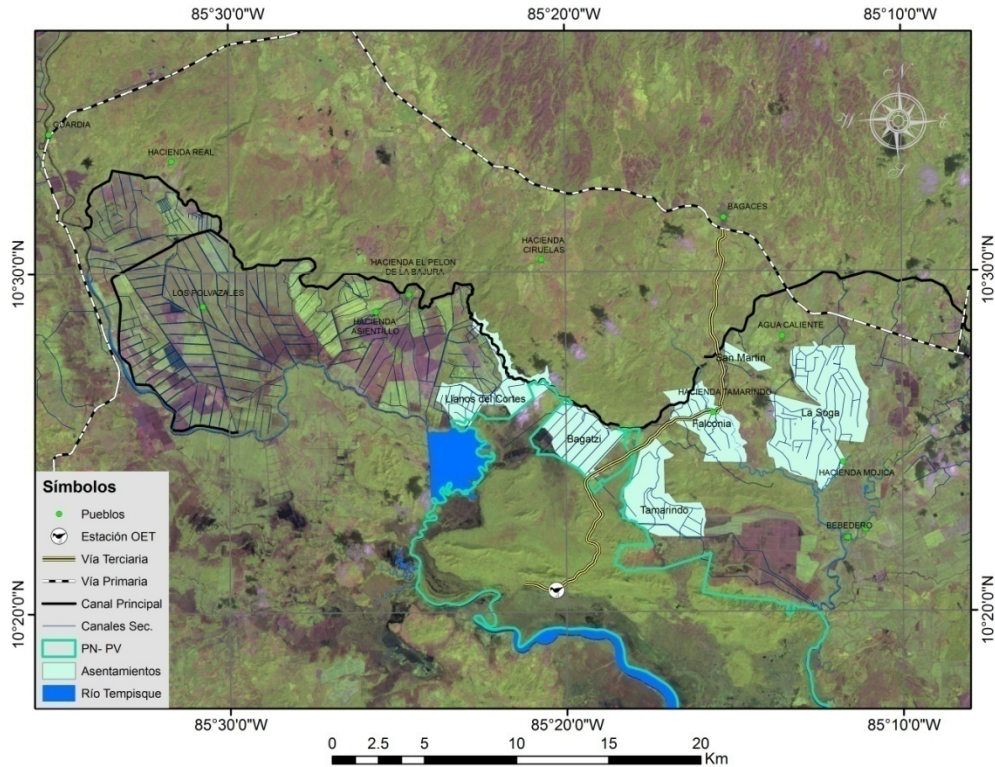
pastures, the forest was removed in order to open space for agriculture and a latter cattle economy. Prior to colonization, there were no savannas and grasslands in Costa Rica or Central America that could fit cattle or other imposed, extensive monocrop. Parsons (1979:143) highlights that where you find grasslands today –all over these wide areas of what he calls “*derived*” savanna, spaces gained from the forest, large extensions of landscape that “once supported trees- are full of African grasses. There are savannas at higher elevations, but they are moorlands, thorn steppe and woodlands where there are few or no cattle at all.

In the specific case of the province of Guanacaste, one can identify the probable extent of a historical dry forest by mapping the grasslands, as pastures that are today spread along the province and Pacific slope of Central America with Seasonally Dry weather. If you see pastures, question their history! Grasses of that strength and resistance did not exist in America before colonizers came and planted them to raise cattle in abandoned and degraded agricultural lands. I want you to see the possibilities of understanding SDnTF in Guanacaste as large as it could have been before colonization, extending over the areas that are grasslands now around Santa Rosa and Palo Verde national parks.

Rice and Monocrop Industrialization for export in Guanacaste

Rice! It seems to be everywhere. There are rice paddies in all the peasant settlements of the Arenal-Tempisque irrigation district. You can see them in the parcels along the road to Palo Verde National Park, and the border between the park and the towns of Bagatzí and the old Tamarindo – a settlement already wholly abandoned, and in use by the Tío Pelón rice enterprise. From a satellite image, you can still see the former distribution of parcels of the Tamarindo settlement as Bagatzí had them, but the settlement no longer exists. Could it be the future that awaits Bagatzí and Falconiana? From the air in map 8, there is no difference. Palo Verde and Lomas de Barbudal areas are surrounded by rice paddies, some of them belonging to peasants, while others belong to large rice companies.

Map 8



Rice is everywhere! Peasant settlements, corporations rice paddies, and Palo Verde. Source: Atlas CR-2014, IGN-CR 2014, INDER 2015, OET-PV 2014, Management Plan MINAE-PV 2014-2024. February 2017. Juan Serrano OTS-PV, Costa Rican Office and Silvia Vasquez Olgún York University. Projection: UTM-Z16. Datum: WGS - 84

Rice monocrop and cattle ranches have been a constant in the Tempisque Basin for more than 100 years. At the end of the 1990 the government envisioned the region as Costa Rica's breadbasket/rice field. This was the *space of representation* the Costa Rican government implemented in Guanacaste and Bagatzí farms especially. But since early years an unwanted relative to the commercial white rice started to appear in many small paddies of farmers and peasants and in the big paddies of companies like Tío Pelón and Pelón de la Bajura, the infamous red rice (*Oryza sativa spontanea*). But of course, the rice companies have the resources to cope with the red rice "infestation." Machinery to select the grain, remove its cover, pack and label it has been created to standardize crops and to create artificial conditions in the field.

To get whiter rice, it has to be polished. If red rice is within the grain it has to be polished even harder to become white. If it has to be removed, there is no machine to automatically identify and remove red rice, or it is too expensive to implement. The high cost of intensely processing weedy red rice with commercial rice is passed to the peasant and producer, receiving less money for it.

Red rice (*O. sativa spontanea*) is a problem for peasants when it has to be cropped; weedy red rice matures early and drops to the field easily. When rice arrives at the rice company or facility where it will be polished (whitened and defused of all its nutrients only later to be artificially re-imbued with vitamins and minerals) many of the grains of red rice are in the batch. We could eat it with its characteristic colour, it's just people prefer white rice. The polishing process of red rice is very important because it needs to become white, but this troublemaker resists polishing, and it breaks more frequently along with its white relatives during polishing. Broken rice lowers the price of the final product. Rice companies are more than happy to pay less to peasants that provide batches contaminated with red rice. All of us likely eat red rice along with white rice. Those batches of short grains or "80/100" with not 100% unbroken rice is likely red rice mixed with white rice. Polishing whitens red rice but at a great cost.

There is a diligent molecular biologist woman in a crowded lab in the University of Costa Rica who studies Costa Rican red rice. One late afternoon, under a thunderous tropical storm, we shared a long conversation spiced up with laughs and memories. Her kindness and knowledge when we talked was a reminder about staying with the trouble. My learned lessons from years working with Haraway suddenly made sense: staying with the trouble means not running away from red rice but embracing its strengths and weaknesses, its resilience to savage capitalism, its messages of resistance from the past. Red rice in Guanacaste is regressing as Dr. Griselda Arrieta-Espinoza said to me because it is acquiring wilder characteristics that resist standardization. Modern, commercial strains of rice have synchronized flowering. They are more homogeneous, which make the harvesting process more manageable. Red rice flowers earlier and for a longer period of time which gives it more opportunities to thrive than its white relative.

Dr. Griselda Arrieta-Espinoza is the head of the laboratory of Genetic Improvement of Crops at the Center of Research on Cellular and Molecular Biology at the University of Costa Rica. Red rice has a weakness that is its strength in evolutionary terms: seed shattering occurs early and easily, which favours the dissemination of the plant in the seed bank of the field crop. Commercial varieties of *Oryza sativa* have gotten rid of that characteristic in favour of staying attached to the stem for a longer period, resisting winds and manipulation until machinery arrives. Seed dormancy¹² keeps red rice in soil banks for long periods. These characteristics – dormancy and brittleness – make red rice very stubborn and difficult to eradicate. A conventional method of eliminating a weed –treatment with herbicides– is unsuccessful in this case, because red and commercial rice are so closely related. The herbicide attacks them both. Hard work making seeds resistant to strong herbicides travelled along the open wound that capitalism opened in *Oryza sativa* and its relative *Oryza sativa spontanea*. In a very admirable way of staying with the trouble, Griselda Arrieta-Espinoza decided to study this wild and unwanted relative, because there is strength in it, because yelling “make it disappear!!” is not going to work in this case. Multiple attempts to eradicate *O. sativa spontanea* from paddies using *O. sativa*’s “herbicide resistant” varieties made it even more resistant to herbicides.

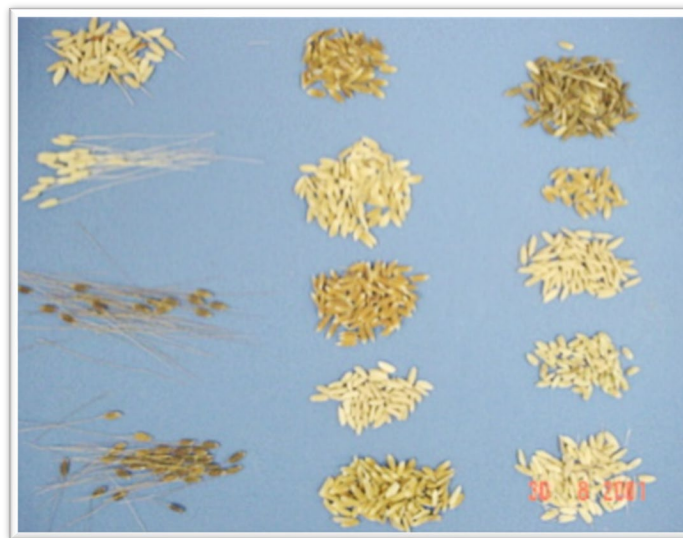
Red rice travelled so far from my past and my memories that it surprised me in the middle of the library, as I was reviewing my records of interviews. Red rice was there and with it, the cherished memory of a beloved person. Elena Sánchez Olguín is my elder cousin, first daughter of the first generation of Costa Rican Olguín. I’m the only and last Argentinean of that generation, and she was the first Costa Rican. For some time, we were close friends, dealing with life and loves, family crisis, dreams and exiles. The continuous impulse of exile –that I name “historical inertia” imprinted on our family decades ago-- and our personal wanderings separated us and made her travel to Oregon to pursue her Ph.D. in Cellular and Molecular Biology many years ago concerning gene flow in weedy rice like red rice. She died a few years later. We never had a chance to say goodbye. I think because of that, she is still with me. Now she looks over my

¹² Dormancy refers to a period in an organism's life cycle when growth, development, and physical activity are temporarily stopped. In rice's case this corresponds to the time when the seed drops and lays on the ground just to sprout next season.

shoulder and laughs because I'm struggling to come to terms with red rice and with her memory, as much as she did with weedy rice a decade ago.

What are you doing here, red rice? Between white rice and white pieces of paper over which I try to chase peasants and forests, you offer a hint of yourself and raise the flag of rebellion and independence, fragility, and strength. If I pay enough attention, I can almost hear your story of ancient domestication, lost battles against poisonous herbicides, and comebacks. Red rice tells its story of long travels in containers and bags of truly certified *clean-of-red-rice* rice seed, and long naps on the floor of some paddies, just to emerge stronger and taller than your white brother. Do you see it Elena, like I see it, the red standard-bearer of a crimson flag?

Picture 11
Red Rice Varieties.



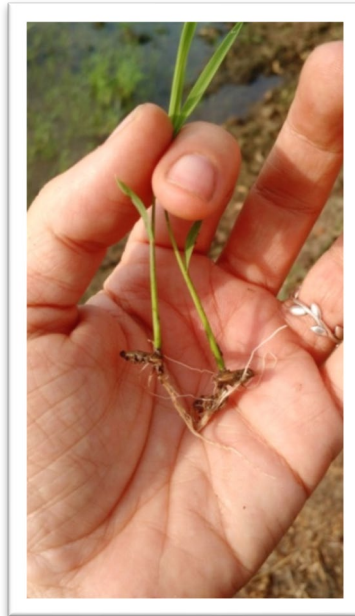
Picture courtesy of Gerardo Sánchez Olguín from archives of Elena Sánchez Olguín's research about "Gene flow and hybridization in red rice." Oregon, United States. 2007.

Red rice likely is a rebel –in its capability to resist and rebel modern standardization- variety of rice and indeed a new adhesion to the big family of rice. Some varieties of "rice" are not even related to *Oryza sativa*. Some are definitively wild and tasty and beautiful. I assert so-called wild rice is a construct to distinguish which variety is fully incorporated into the market (and enhanced through the Green Revolution's improvements) from those types which stayed

out of the commercial circuit until recent years when they were “discovered” by palates hungry for new tastes to put into expensive dishes.

Picture 12

It starts with a grain.



Picture by Silvia Vasquez-Olguin. Bagatzí, Guanacaste, 2017. This is a picture of two rice seedlings at Bagatzí town.

Do you think of rice as an exotic oriental product that landed in the Americas in late colonial times? Actually, we know that native species of rice grow well in this big and diverse American continent in tropical areas from the Amazon basin to Hudson’s Bay. In Costa Rica, there are three populations of native rice: *O. glumaepatula*, *O. grandiglumis* and *O. Latifolia* (Zamora et al., 2003). Dr. Griselda Arrieta-Espinoza, in a late May 2017 personal communication, introduced to me the concept of “*hybrid swarm*” to describe the ecological condition of rice in Costa Rica and in the Americas. This term refers to a group that is genetically diverse, with a fluid transfer of genes that quickly hybridizes.

What is a “weed” and what is not is a good question. With his kindness and open smile, as always, Professor Rod McRae at York University said to me, “*a weed is a plant that is in the wrong place.*” Red rice is a variety of the same rice that appears in paddies at Bagatzí and

Falconiana and all the settlements irrigated by Arenal-Tempisque Irrigation District (DRAT by its acronym in Spanish).

From haciendas to peasant settlements through rice monocrop

The big hacienda Ciruelas gradually transformed into five peasant settlements, one national park and one biological reserve, plus –as we saw in Chapter 2- many private farms of sugarcane and rice in this very area of seasonally dry neotropical forest. Lefebvre (1991) proposes that each society produces its own materialization of these social relations in space. Each society within a mode of production creates an array of spatial practices, spaces of representation, and representations of space. In Lefebvre’s words “as for representations of the relations of production, which subsume power relations, these too occur in space: space contains them in the form of buildings, monuments and works of art” (1991, p. 33.) In this sense the remnants of old SDNtF and the characteristic landscape of the province of Guanacaste also subsume power relations. Instead of buildings and monuments, I want to show you a tree.

To illustrate, let’s examine the emblematic Guanacaste tree, the national tree of Costa Rica and *pièce-de-resistance* of Costa Ricans’ cultural discourse of nationality and identity. Through abandonment of cultivated lands, a recovery process occurs that is called *natural management*. Natural management of forests is a euphemism in Costa Rica for “forget that useful land there.” Several decades of land abandonment and impoverishment of peasants’ settlements, and the decay of the big cattle hacienda in the province of Guanacaste, lead to a natural recovery of this landscape. In the long run, this has meant an increase in absolute forest coverage¹³. In the province of Guanacaste’s case for a long period during the past century, cattle remained more present in some areas than others. Cattle ranch practices caused continuous

¹³ Arroyo-Mora et al, 2005. “The effect of the abandonment of cattle grazing areas during (1979–1986) is most notable in the following period (1986–2000), when the positive forest restoration rate is the highest (4.93) among all three periods”

spreading of guanacaste tree seeds (*Enterolobium cyclocarpum*.) Interspecies relations, human activities, the trees' dispersion, and the social impact on ecosystems are all represented in the high treetop of guanacaste trees, in this landscape of forested hills and grasslands and paddies. The guanacaste tree is an inhabitant of novel ecologies that look deceptively old.

In novel ecologies that survive savage extraction –the economy that thrives in the verge of survival, on the bare leftovers left behind centuries of extraction and dispossession- and savage capitalism, the guanacaste tree is a survivor that moves through the digestive system of cows, horses, and tapirs. Some of Daniel Janzen's¹⁴ work on seed dispersion/predation on the province of Guanacaste's ecosystem shows us how dependent, connected and fragile the very existence of the dry forest is; we see this through the emblematic presence of the guanacaste tree.

Additional inhabitants of a novel ecology and new landscapes in recent years are the paddies or rice fields that spread alongside the Arenal-Tempisque Irrigation District since the mid-1980s. The decay of the cattle market and cattle haciendas gave way to monocrops like sugar cane, melon and watermelon, and lately to rice. Now where you can see green tall grass, doubt! That may not be grass at all but rice in an early stage of growth, or even sugarcane.

A point of departure for understanding SDNtF in Guanacaste is that the forests, in general, have natural cycles through which they pass with growth and age, which can even include geological cycles of disappearance and growth that occur over millennia. Natural events, diseases, fires, and the arrival of humans to Mesoamerica circa fifteen thousand years ago, have impacted the shape and composition of this forest. These events led to the establishment of a young forest after particular interventions, and the cycle continues with new combinations of species. Modern disturbances like selective logging, fires, agriculture, and capitalism have

¹⁴ Daniel Janzen is a prolific scholar on seed-spreading mechanism of mammals in the dry forest of Guanacaste. Early in the 80's of part century he studied the range of survival of consumed and then barely digested seed and buttons. In some of his most well known texts like *Digestive Seed Predation by a Costa Rican Baird's Tapir* (1981a), as much as *Enterolobium cyclocarpum Seed Passage Rate and Survival in Horses*, *Costa Rican Pleistocene Seed Dispersal Agents* (1981b) plus a second paper published the same year too in Ecology journal *Guanacaste Tree Seed-Swallowing by Costa Rican Range Horses* (1981c), it's easy to see his interest on the survival of at that time like now threaten iconic dry forest landscape.

resulted in the conversion of older forests to younger forests, savannas, grasslands, or pastures for cattle.

Another person who knows about rice and the rice market in Costa Rica is Professor Álvaro Azofeifa from the CIGRAS¹⁵. In our conversations he showed me how white commercial rice produced in Bagatzí and Falconiana was easier than anything else, because commodity chains, processing facilities, and market demand were there. During the second half of the past century, rice production migrated to the northern region of Guanacaste. Always associated with irrigation systems or with close access to water –first close to the Tárcoles basin, then to the Tempisque basin, and to the Arenal-Tempisque Irrigation District- rice found its place in the national project of development and agricultural self-sufficiency of that period.

The big transformation of Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forests to grasslands and irrigated pools of rice was part of the national project of development that started in the early 1900s. This area was planted with a variety of crops like rice, but maize, soy and sorghum too. To Álvaro Azofeifa, Bagatzí's choice to produce white rice resulted from the accessibility and cost-effectiveness of the markets already established for rice crops at national level, by the rice agro-industry that had consolidated in the latter half of the 20th century. Peasant-producers, like those of Bagatzí, decided to stay with the rice, which was a decision attuned with the local and national market. The ecosystem and landscape were already changed, altered to make room for pastures and rice. And here again, representations of space create mirages within my ideas of a typical peasant space in Central America.

The case for Palo Verde and Lomas de Barbudal

The darkest green parts of map 8 (page 104) in the previous section correspond to the Lomas de Barbudal Biological Reserve and the Palo Verde National Park. The area of the

¹⁵ Corresponds to its acronym in Spanish for Research Center of Grains and Seeds in the Agronomy Department at the University of Costa Rica.

settlements and the protected areas where this investigation was centered belonged for a long time to landlord families, and to foreigners who invested in livestock and land grabbing. The ecological history of the Tempisque Plains is also the history of social relations and agrarian structures.

We should interpret protected areas as Henri Lefebvre thinks of nature, as an isolated and fragmented remnant after urban growth, in which it is often “difficult to discern whether that space is natural or artificial” (Lefebvre, 1991: 83). Nature is thus a product intensely connected to the social relations of production, where the *enclosure* (Carroll, 2014; Corson, 2011; Cronon, 1996; Kelly, 2011) and the limits cannot contain the natural objects in their totality. Nature in Bagatzí and Falconiana surroundings spread in the productive spaces, and vice versa. For me, protected areas are artificial, because the symbolic and philosophical division between nature and society is artificial.

Picture 13



Bagatzí, Falconiana, and old Tamarindo settlements, now TíoPelón rice paddies. Silvia Vasquez Olguin. Satellite picture 2017, Google Maps.

Lefebvre (1991) suggests that we contemplate a wheat or cornfield, or, in this case, a rice lagoon as we see it in Picture 14. In Bagatzí small spaces of cultivation between Bagatzis houses, the productive practices implemented, as well as at the edges of properties adjacent to Palo Verde, I saw relations of production and property that benefit from the national park. For

Lefebvre, uncultivated lands, forests, and areas - apparently not mediated by human beings - belong to a space free of relations of production. The closeness of Palo Verde and Bagatzí speaks of interconnection, co-creation, and synergy. I wonder if we can claim that there are parts of the land not mediated by human beings at all, not intervened and adapted, transformed, appropriated, inhabited. I deny “terra nullius”.

Picture 14



Rice paddy covered by water in the first stages of growing in Bagatzí. Silvia Vasquez Olguin, 2017.

In this dissertation I rethink Lefebvre’s statement about nature as much as his views of underlying material of cities and inhabited spaces. Nature is a product, and the original material at the same time of the social space. The social relations of production benefit from the material space that nature is, sometimes commoditizing its apparent isolation. If its valid to sustain the separation of social and natural spaces as artificial, the same can be said about the separation of spaces where social relations of production unfold from spaces where they seem absent. I maintain that the protected areas and all the spaces that we identify as “nature” are the product of social relations and social relations of production in particular. The decision not to use a space for human agrarian production is in fact a decision that shapes that particular space. And to consolidate the difference and the apparent separation between nature and society, fences, limits, uses and restrictions are created. Even those preserved “natural” spaces produce profits,

income and generate economic activities as a result of their existence. The very concept of nature we produce these days is inundated with the residue of human social relationships.

Nature, different than cities and urbanized spaces, is perhaps a little less impregnated with social relations of production, but human intervention always existed in some way. In protected areas, research is carried out that generates income for related institutions and their members (*Palo Verde Research Station - Organization for Tropical Studies*, n.d.; *Welcome to Organization for Tropical Studies - Organization for Tropical Studies*, n.d.) via research fees and permits. Protected areas that border on productive areas are common in the Central American region. The vast majority of national parks in the region are not interconnected (Andam et al., 2010; Janzen, 1986; Kirksey, 2012). But even so they provide environmental services such as pollination, irrigation, diversity preservation, soil quality, among others. We see more and more in protected areas' traces of human activities, services and commoditization of ecosystem dynamics. Have we not thought about what we "protect" within these spaces? Or is it rather those social relations of production acquire new faces in spaces not open to them previously?

Lefebvre writes that "the more a space participates in nature, the less it participates in social relations of production" (Lefebvre, 1991: 83). He sees social relations of production as the mechanism that generates, fragments, and isolates pieces of "nature" as a category of management and protection. The same social relations of production that participate in productive dynamics also traverse nature isolated and fragmented in protected areas. In many protected areas such as Palo Verde, there are social relations of production taking place. There are cattle grazing in the park with and without permission from the authorities. There are recovery projects that introduce livestock to accelerate the natural processes of ecosystem recovery (Frankie et al., 2004; Janzen, 1986) and there are natural activities that impact and allow productive practices in the areas surrounding the park. For Lefebvre, natural spaces are (like nature itself) in decline (1991, p. 83) because he makes a separation that is abstract and forced between nature and society.

The creation of the settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana, and the others in the region (La Soga, Tamarindo, Llanos de Cortez, and San Martin) was part of a huge effort to expand

agricultural frontier on quasi-abandoned lands of old haciendas. The haciendas were established more than two hundred years ago along the Tempisque River, as the history of these lands comes to us from Chapter 2. The old productive model of haciendas and cattle ranches gave space to the development and modernization that industrial agriculture promised to bring with it.

Picture 15



Young and mature guanacaste trees in a cattle parcel in Bagatzí. Silvia Vasquez Olguin, 2017.

The fractioning of the big haciendas into small family parcels did not help the recovery of the SDNtF; it remains only in Palo Verde and Santa Rosa National Parks. The optimism of many biologists I interviewed suggests that even this altered and deciduous forest is still the SDNtF. It is the forest we have now, greener and more fragmented, populated by peasant families, cows and rice paddies. In the production of social spaces for the peasant settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana nature was produced too. I argue that the last remaining pieces of SDNtF were a product of the lack of agricultural value of the low lands of the Tempisque River basin.

These lands flood during each rainy season to create what is called “the lagoon” in Palo Verde; the lagoon remains for more than four months between August and November. And so, hybrid spaces were created where daily life was rooted in irrigation canals and parcels, between government housing program’s houses and ballast roads. The result of the complex social production of space and nature in Bagatzí and Falconiana made that productive spaces and

protected areas coexist together, side by side, sometimes separated only by barbed wire and the firm belief and stubbornness of saying “here begins the National Park.” The same can be said about the coexistence of modernity and rurality, poverty and agricultural corporations. Thus spaces and demarcations were created product of social production of the places where the lives of peasants, biologists, conservationists, and lost tourists seek an oasis in the endless heat of the midday of Guanacaste.

Picture 16



Palo Verde’s lagoon from the “Mirador” (view point) during the rainy season. Silvia Vasquez Olgúin, 2016.

The lands that Palo Verde occupies now lack agricultural value, as do Guanacaste’s other protected areas. Cattle were introduced in the open fields that the extraction of precious woods created. Colonialism and capitalism extracted resources from SDNtF, cornering remnants of forest, patches of scattered trees, in the top of hills and in the bottom of flooded lowlands. I want to propose at the end of this section that we should look at this landscape and see the footprint of the SDNtF in the spaces that residents work and inhabit.

Thus, the effort to protect SDNtF can be carried out in the backyard of the houses and paddies that remain in the peasant settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana, as well as many other peasant settlements in the province of Guanacaste. Nature as socially-produced is in the landscape and the productive practices that shape it. In Bagatzí, Falconiana, Palo Verde and Lomas de Barbudal the process of producing space occurred through the introduction of human

presence in the old forests of Mesoamerica, in the colonization process, in the introduction of grasses and cattle, and in the deforestation and recovery of scattered forest patches. In rural areas, the social production of space may take the shape of an emblematic tree, rice paddies, and grasses. From here, I now invite you to meet the people that live in Bagatzí and Falconiana, including those who left and returned to their parents' houses.

Chapter 5

Writing footnotes

The lifeworld of peasant women in their communities

Writing footnotes about women's lives and community affairs

In this chapter I explore the reach and length of women's residual power after capitalist expansion as Silvia Federici clearly invited us to consider in her work *Caliban and the Witch* (Federici, 2003). In the context of the peasant settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana and from the quilting workshops, interviews and observations of the everyday life of these towns, I observed women's residual power expressed through their use of scarce and limited space, and in the kind of areas to which women have access. Spatialized social relations lay atop socially-produced space that shelters them, and spatialized social relations reproduce the delimited space they inhabit. This is the dialectic logic behind "the social" in the social production of space. Following Lefebvre, I agree that the capitalist mode of production produces a particular capitalist space (Lefebvre, 1991). Space conspires to maintain specific social relations over others that struggle in a hostile environment, and social ties reproduce space through practices, memories, and rituals (Halbwachs, 1980). Women's residual power after capitalist expansion (Federici, 2003) is expressed through the reach and length of their freedom of movement, involvement in family enterprises, and equal access to land and property rights.

My work must open spaces for women's voices and experiences. Some time ago, I was a student in the Sociology Master Program back in Costa Rica. Together with a friend, I made a presentation about the history of the feminist social movements in Latin America. After a brief discussion, we agreed that our stories were largely marginal and difficult to locate, but we must

honour our stories, and take pride in what women have done. This is an approach I owe to a friend from my time at the University of Costa Rica, María Flores-Estrada.

In making our largely marginalized stories visible, Maria proposed to offer the entire presentation as “footnotes.”¹⁶

¹⁶**The page jump is on purpose.** I want to dedicate this empty empty space to the life and death of women around the world, because our struggles and fights are written and experienced like "footnotes" in textbooks like they were marginal stories or short comments. I want to address this section acknowledging Maria's wisdom and her call to make women stories, our lives and struggles, visible. We have to move them to the main text and never again be a "footnote."

Spatialized social relations

Spatialized social relations at the INDER settlements occurred atop socially produced space which confines peasant women: the spatialized social relations that came with the separation of plot from home discussed in Chapter 3 only delimited the space that women in the settlements could inhabit. For exploring the experiences of women in Bagatzí and Falconiana, I work with two concepts: capitalist mode of production produces a particular capitalist space (Lefebvre, 1991) and the acknowledgement that space is also gendered (Massey, 1994, 1995). Complementing these two ideas, I sustain –based on the work of Maurice Halbwachs, 1980- that space conspires to maintain specific social relations over others that struggle in a hostile environment, and social ties reproduce space through practices, memories, and rituals (Halbwachs, 1980). The women of Bagatzí and Falconiana recounted to me stories that occurred in the town, but they were largely isolated from the land parcels. For these women, Bagatzí and Falconiana start and end in the housing area of the towns. Their depiction of their world in quilts we made at the two participatory workshops, which are the basis for methodology and method in this chapter, reveal the limited extent to which women in these communities can take part in the family business, contribute to decisions about the plot and the crops, or participate in activities and productive practices implemented on the land. Separation of land for agriculture and housing reinforces traditional gender roles and disconnects women from their land and their future.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I discuss the methodology implemented and then turn to the role of the production of space in maintaining traditional gender roles. A consequence of these traditional roles is the structure of land tenure by sex in Bagatzí and Falconiana, which I then analyze in the next section. This is followed by a discussion of the role of space in these communities for the crystallization of gendered social roles. Women tell two stories about their resistance and persistence in these peasant settlements in the section that follows. The chapter closes with a reflection on the sense of place and belonging among the women of Bagatzí and Falconiana.

Quilting maps and kitchen table talks: Methodology from a feminist perspective

My entry point to these communities was my experience as a researcher and sociologist at Palo Verde National Park, and my earlier work with the Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS-Costa Rica) dating back to 2008. OTS had a keen interest in documenting the history of the peasant settlements that were close to the Park and the Biological Station due to the long-term relationship the organization wove with these towns and the multiple projects the organization helped to implement in these communities. Bagatzí and Falconiana are not just neighbours of the park and the OTS but are sometimes allied with it and partners on many projects. Consequently, once I arrived at the station, a network was put in motion. The mother of one member of the crew at the station, who was part of the first group of settlers of Bagatzí, became my first contact and my gatekeeper to the town. The same occurred with another member of the staff at the station. His family was among the organizers of Falconiana's first group of beneficiaries. The Gatekeeper technique allows access to communities where trust is fundamental to the study. In my case, I wanted to speak with women in an environment of trust and camaraderie.

I conducted two quilting workshops in which we made maps of Bagatzí and Falconiana. The workshops were activities which produced two results, first creating the conditions to favour a conversation about the everyday lives of these women; and second, to create a representation of the inhabited space of these women from their perspectives and experiences. A workshop is a participatory technique to deliver information, to share experiences and to hear from others. Fundamentally it works as a learning space, and as a participatory exercise that empowers the participants. Via the participation of six women in Bagatzí and seven in Falconiana, these workshops aimed to create opportunities to talk about life in the community, the families, the problems and dreams that these women were open to sharing with me. I sought to link the reality of the everyday lives of these women with the work of Sylvia Federici entitled *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Federici, 2003). This work explores how capitalism disempowers women, shaped their roles and limited their freedom, making them solely responsible for reproductive labour at the house, nearby gardens, and social relations

within the community and other women for raising children, small animals, and small commercial transactions.

The art of mapmaking has always amazed me. Maps are treasures with secret information, clues and politics of showing and hiding. Maps are also tools for propagating world views and the materialization of colonial rule. But maps are old storytellers too, and that is what I love the most about them. I can stare at a map for hours and still find new layers of meaning, new stories and protagonists most of the times erased from the main picture. A map can be a tool to make visible the invisible. I tried to contribute the impossible task of creating the map of the lives and movements of the women of Bagatzi and Falconiana by asking them create their own representation of their living space with pieces of fabric, needles and threads.

Picture 17



Photography by Marta Vazquez Olguin. Bagatzi , Guanacaste. 2016

Mixing map-making and quilting techniques was a natural process for me as I have observed my mother sewing my entire life. The noise of the sewing machine was a backdrop to my childhood. It comforted me, made me feel at home, and reassured me that my mother was always nearby. I want to pay tribute to all the mothers, grandmothers, women in my life that sew histories and memories into my life. I want to thank them for the long hours of sewing pieces of the fragmented worlds together, threading the needle with the thread of their tireless lives.

The technique of creating these maps used small colourful pieces of fabric I brought from Canada and a long white fabric I bought later in Costa Rica to sew together the pieces that represent the town and its parts, from the perspective of women. Through this exercise, I wanted the opportunity to create a safe and intimate space where we gather and talk. I spoke with some women in the two towns until I chose one woman's house as a host for the evening activity of mapmaking from each community. The two women who I asked to host the workshop in their communities helped me to find other participants. These women invited the other women, and I organized the event. At their houses they prepared coffee and served cookies and sweet bread. The day of the workshop we set the table and the supplies for work and, between us, created a representation of the town as they wanted it to be, with the details and the colours of their choice.

As we sewed, we talked about everything and nothing, about the town, the school, their kids and husbands, and their families. One might think of this as a "focus group" with a specific activity in the hands of those taking part of it. Through the act of sewing pieces of fabric, we ended up interlocking stories and memories that enriched the tapestry with the map we hoped to create. I named these meetings "workshops" because some of the women had never sewed before, while others possessed much knowledge and experience as they were well-known seamstresses in their towns. All of us learned something through our meeting. I wanted to capture a glimpse of their lives in the intimacy of a kitchen table talk, sharing a cup of coffee, threading stories and pieces of fabric. We sewed most of the parts by hand. I finished securing all the pieces once I returned to Canada and was in my apartment residence at York University. The creative design and final arrangement of the maps was entirely my responsibility.

One interesting detail is that the colour and patterned parts of fabric of the maps came from a women's quilting group in Carlton Place, Toronto, Ontario. A dear friend of mine knew about my plan to make these maps. I asked her for some leftover pieces of fabric, and she mailed me a box full of precious pieces of leftover fabric from her quilting group. Once in my home in Costa Rica, my mother gave me pieces of fabric that belonged to her and my grandmother when my sister and I were children. I want to think that these maps connect women along the

continent, and across time and generations. The experience of mapmaking and quilting connects the lives and struggles of women along distance and time. I imagine them sewing together. I listen to their voices, and I feel comfort once again from the noise of the sewing machine.

Picture 18

Hands on the work. Assembling pieces for the maps back in Toronto.



Photography by Silvia Vasquez Olguin

The talks followed many paths: family, the towns, the roads, the rice, the kids and the school, old and new school teachers, the water. In recounting them, I depict land tenure and space and gender roles, plus two short stories about the water and about planting lettuce. With these stories, I seek to show how women's spaces are shaped and constrained by social norms concerning what women are and who they are supposed to be. While this was not the main topic of my dissertation, during my research, the lives of these women started to draw my attention, and I wanted to move them from the side stories and footnotes to the main text.

Space production that strengthens traditional gender roles

Flory's family was one of the few with children at that time in Falconiana, and their children had to travel to Bagaces every day to elementary school sometimes as hitchhikers and

sometimes on a bicycle. When Flory's husband moved to Falconiana accompanied by her and their children, among their first endeavors was to fight to construct a small primary school in their town. Flory's second son was lucky: he went to the school in Falconiana. Two teachers came during the first years; the first one was kind, the second one was bitter. The women at the quilting workshop in Flory's house laughed at this memory and shared memories of how good the first teacher was.

The work on the quilting map continued, and the women started to talk about the animals in the town. There are many small animals in Bagatzí and Falconiana. These include plenty of semi-feral cats, house dogs, hens and their chicks, bombastic roosters crossing roads without a care for cars or bicycles, but not many bigger animals like cows or horses. They belong to the men. What belongs to the women are the small and the unimportant, the medicinal plants, the hens that lays eggs. Returning to our quilting work, women wanted to represent all of the things that are present in the town, but the fabric was insufficient or the colours incorrect.

These women demanded "true colours"! The colours of their roof tops and walls, the colours of the gravel road and the roosters. What can Flory put at her house to identify it? "*What can I put, if I sell all the children's books for the school, and I have hens, and I sell eggs*" she wondered. "*I want to put a pig in my house,*" Joaquina said. She wanted a small pig to show that she has a pig to raise piglets for selling in the community, and to eat at the end of the year in Christmas and New Year celebrations. "*It's for making some money,*" she said, but we didn't find a pig in the fabrics I brought. Instead, we created a funny representation of a pig in a corral. Oh! How we laughed trying to make a pig and its shed. The laugh was a sign of our complicity, I couldn't draw a pig, but we enjoyed the activity.

I offered them red triangles of fabric for rooftops for their tiny colourful houses.

Nidia said to me, "*I want one, but of natural colour.*"

I asked, what colour would be the "*natural*" shade she was looking for?

She surprised me with her candour; she said: "*natural, like the colour of the zinc.*" What do you think is the colour of zinc? Grey, white, blueish? It is silvery, metallic and sometimes with

a little bit of red rust. These women are amazing! I had not brought metallic fabrics, they would have to use red and blue and green. Houses and small animals are the property of women, even when the house and the parcel officially belong to their husbands. But the women of these towns own the realm of the house, manage small commercial transactions, care for the health of small animals and children, grandchildren, old mothers, and families in general. But not many of them have friends in the community.

Friendship is not a common thing in feminist rural Latin American studies. Women of Bagatzí and Falconiana talked about the times when they arrived in the town, how pleasant the climate was. They did not want to exchange these qualities to live in the city. But friendship was not mentioned. A Non Governmental Organization of cooperation between Costa Rica and Canada helped to construct twenty houses in the 104 parcels in the center of the town of Bagatzí and 20 more in Falconiana years later. In both cases the families moved from their first settlement in the parcels to the new town. If some ties and solidary networks were created they were broken with this new resettlement, as we saw in Chapter 2.

Because of the reinforcement of prevailing social conditions of production and household roles, the women of Bagatzí and Falconiana made maps that included the housing district that is at the center of their towns, but not the parcels of land. The women agreed on that from the outset of the workshops. Women of both settlements decided that the town is their space, and they know every detail and each person residing there. The lots, on the other hand, are the men's domain. The family parcels are located far away from the town, and women do not go to them very often. Because of this situation, both maps reflect the life in the town and not the lots, the rice, the struggles of monocropping, the isolation, or the disconnection with the rest of the region. The town was their bubble and their immediate world.

At a quilting workshop, Ines approached me to say she needed a piece of white fabric because her home was not painted. When I asked about the rest of the houses, the women discussed what to include in the map and what not to include. Women of Bagatzí decided to leave out some areas of the town because many houses there were abandoned. The original owners lived in these houses for a few years but left the town and the lots, likely under a set of

consecutive five-years contracts with the sugarcane mill. These dynamics may be related to the structure of these settlements in which traditional gender roles shape who in the family structure owns the land and the family's property.

Picture 19



Kitchen table talks. Quilting workshop at Flory's house. Falconiana, Guanacaste. 2016. Photography by Marta Vazquez Olguin

In Bagatzí , we see an example of property rights linked to gender roles. Bagatzí is similar to many other peasant settlements in Costa Rica. The same institution created the peasant settlements, introducing few changes to improve women's access to equal property rights with men. The decision whether women would participate in determining the use of the family property was for the men to make. ITCO did not include names of female partners or wives in the legalization process, only the name of the applicant. If this person chose not to add his partner, ITCO did not complain.

Women's history of land tenure and property rights in Bagatzí and Falconiana

Within rural/agrarian studies, attention to gender has mostly focused on the regimes of land tenure to which women have been systematically relegated. Women have only recently become subjects of land and property rights in Latin America and Costa Rica (Biggs et al., 2011; Binswanger et al., 1993; Bryceson et al., 2000; Cloke & Little, 1997; De Janvry, 1981; Deere & de Janvry, 1979; Deere & León de Leal, 2001; Desmarais, 2006; Duncan & Rutledge, 1987). In the late 1960s, ITCO was one of the first institutions to recognize shared property rights for couples who benefited from projects of land distribution. And early in the 1960s women were subjects of attention as family heads in projects of land access and credit that had previously disqualified them. In Bagatzí's history, 23 families represented through the name of the man in charge were the first settlers and beneficiaries of the project. Only one woman appeared on the list, her name was Cándida Sotela.

Luz did not remember Cándida Sotela. She believed this woman never actually settled at Bagatzí, and perhaps her parcel was assigned to somebody else. When Luz arrived with her husband to their lot outside the actual town of Bagatzí, there were few neighbours around. She didn't consider herself the owner of the parcel. It was her husband's land. The house, on the other hand, was hers to decide about for many, many years. Deere (2001) argues that the primary means through which ownership of land is acquired include inheritance, adjudication by the state, and purchase in the market. For her, "gender inequality in land ownership is due to male preference in inheritance, male privilege in marriage, male bias in the state programs of land distribution, and gender inequality in the market" (Deere & León de Leal, 2001, p. 2).

The following analysis comes from the information about Bagatzí beneficiaries available in the INDER's files. The INDER's department of Cadaster gave me the demographics of Bagatzí's families as my request, but they encountered difficulties to provide me with the same information about Falconiana's families¹⁷. The analysis is based on the ownership data of the 116 houses in the town and 106 parcels outside the town. Originally, they were 23 founder families

¹⁷ Data provided by interview (2017) and email exchanges (2018-19) with Eng. Cecilia Villalobos Sanchez from the Cadaster department, INDER.

in Bagatzí, 22 men and one woman were entitled as the sole owner of their parcel and house. There is no reference to the partners or wives of the 22 men whose names I found in the INDER archives. The separation of houses and parcels as we saw in Chapter 4 contributed to a feeling of disconnection from the land, the strengthening of traditional gender roles and the exclusion of young women of the second generation from agricultural work and the management of the family farm. Neither the mothers nor the daughters were part of decisions regarding whether to take on debts, contracts with large agribusiness, or crop selections. Often the distance between the house and the lot was significant, and to walk to it seemed dangerous for women¹⁸. This observations came up in the discussion of safety the same women expressed in the workshops, interviews and informal talks. The menace of sexual violence was bothersome and created risk. When I asked about the sources of this fear the women always referred to outsiders coming to the towns to perpetrate crimes, associating the the threat of sexual violence with property crimes committed in the past. We did not have open conversations about domestic violence and abuse, but from national statistics it is undeniable that this is occurring (Woman's National Insittute 2007, INEC 2010).

In Bagatzí, in sixteen families the men did not report a partner withwhom they share the house and the lot. Most likely they have a family, but if they donot, it appears the government gave land to single men, which makes no sense in terms of peasant economy. In other nineteen instances, men were the primary beneficiaries but included their wives and partners as the second beneficiary of the land. In terms of differentiation, these nineteen men decided to name their partners as secondary beneficiary of the land, and the primary beneficiaries of the house. For those who declared having a partner, ifwe look closely at the distribution of land parcels and houses between the sexes, the image suggests clear separation of gender roles and economic activities.

¹⁸ The nature of violence, primarily patrimonial violence (Boira et al., 2016; Chant, 1991, 1997; Chant et al., 2007; Contreras et al., 2016) that engendered other forms of violence against women, creates limitations on movement that these same women try to solve through migration and settling on other towns in search of better living conditions (the specific topic of violence is beyond the scope of the dissertation).

In general, Table 6 shows how men benefited most from the land distribution and property rights in Bagatzí. That is consistent with the data collected across Latin America by scholars such as Diana Deere in her (2001) *Empowering women: land and property rights in Latin America*, or Julio Boltvink and Susan Mann’s (2016) in their excellent work on *Peasant Poverty and Persistence in the 21st century*. Their work reveals that women are have benefited less from land reform and land access, are less involved in farm production and decision-making, and that domestic work is often invisibilized. Because Costa Rican agrarian policy of that period was not a substantive agrarian reform, equal access to land and property between women and men could not be achieved. The agrarian policy implemented did not change the traditional structure of land tenure, even between the poor and the marginalized. Material space was shaped as a result, and the distribution of land and properties did not change women’s conditions of subordination and dispossession.

Table 6
Dynamic comparison of the gap between men and women’s land tenure

		Who owns the Plot				
		Woman alone owns the plot	Man alone owns the plot	Man is owner in first place	Women is owner in first place	
		2 cases of a woman alone owns only the plot	4 cases of a man alone owns only the plot	26 cases of a man shares the only plot in first place	2 cases of a woman shares the only plot in first place	
Who owns the House	Man alone owns the house	2 cases of a man alone owns only the house	available information doesn't allow to know about this case	16 cases of a man owns alone both the house and the plot	3 cases of a man owns the house and share the plot in first place	zero cases of the man owns the house alone, and the woman shares the plot in first place
	Woman alone owns the house	6 cases of a woman alone owns only the house	2 case of a woman owns both house and plot alone	available information doesn't allow to know about this case	zero cases of a the woman owns the house and share the plot with a man in first place	zero cases of a the woman owns the house alone, and shares the plot with the man in first place
	Man is owner in first place	20 cases of a man shares the only house in first place	zero cases of a man shares the house in first place, and the woman owns the plot alone	zero cases of a man shares the house in first place, but he owns the plot alone	19 cases of a man appears sharing both the house and the plot in first place	1 case of a man shares the house in first place, and the woman shares the plot in first place
	Woman is owner in first place	10 cases of a woman shares the only house in first place	zero cases of a woman shares the house in first place, but owns the plot alone	1 case of a woman shares the house, but the man owns the plot alone	19 cases of a woman shares the house in first place, and the man shares the plot in first place	2 cases of a woman shares the house and the plot in first place

Silvia Vasquez Olguin analysis of the dataset from INDER about beneficiary families of Bagatzí, Guanacaste, Costa Rica.

The parcels in Bagatzí and Falconiana were allotted before the houses were even built. With that in mind, cases where a man shares the ownership of the parcel with his partner, but keeps total ownership of the house suggests that the man did not continue living in the

settlement with his family. This is not unusual. Initially, many families that first came to live together in the parcels built up their homes at those parcels. As we saw in Chapter 2, when some years later the ITCO adjudicated the new houses randomly, the man was likely assigned a house, but his family may not have selected to live in the settlements for various reasons, for instance relative inaccessibility of educational facilities, safety for children to move between school, lot, and house, and lack of proximity to healthcare and other facilities. As we saw in Chapter 2 and here again, the living conditions in Bagatzí and Falconiana were hard for women and children. Many families split up and left the settlements to return to the larger towns they came from.

Picture 20



The hosts of the memories I. Falconiana Quilting Map. Photography and quilting map by Silvia Vasquez Olguin, 2019.

This was the case for the families of Don Olider in Falconiana and Don Manuel in Bagatzí. In both cases, these men have sole ownership of their houses and share ownership of their parcels with their partners even though they have not resided together for many years. Out of the 101 houses of Bagatzí, 61 men are primary beneficiaries (21 men own the home without sharing it with a female partner, and 40 are first ranked beneficiaries but share the house with their partner). In Bagatzí, there are only 8 cases where women alone are the owners of the houses,

and in 32 cases women are primary owners of the houses sharing them with their partners. Even when their names are not on the property, women own the town, it's what makes sense to them. The quilting maps showed that.

Some families decided to name the women as the primary beneficiaries of the new houses in the new settlement's center, but the majority continued to place the family properties under the name of the father, and in some cases, only under his name. For the women in the two workshops the town is theirs, not the parcels. They own the spaces between and within the houses, the dusty streets, the path to the small convenience store, to the school and back

The most common property rights arrangement is when men own the parcel in the first place and women appear as the second beneficiaries, and the women are the first beneficiaries of the house property. It is less frequent to see the roles inverted regarding the house ownership and the lots. There are only two cases where the woman is the primary beneficiary of the house and the sole beneficiary of the lot.

Picture 21



Social consequences of this particular space in Bagatzí and Falconiana

The power of space over the structuration of social relations has been discussed by many authors from disciplines spanning Geography to Sociology (Gieryn, 2000; Halbwachs, 1980; Harvey, 2000, 2014; Low & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 2003; Massey, 1994, 1995; Smith, 2010; Soja, 1989, 1996). Drawing from the work of Doreen Massey (1994) concerning gender and workspace in England, we acknowledge the strength of the production of gendered space within a patriarchal society. Applying the same logic that Lefebvre uses to argue that capitalist society produces a capitalist space, we may say that a patriarchal society, where gender roles are strongly supported by discourses and practices, provides gendered space. Space answers to the logic of a sexually-segregated society, and by following this logic, space creates and reproduces a sexually-divided society.

In the towns of Bagatzí and Falconiana, women persist and resist poverty through their constant inventiveness and resourcefulness. They still live lives of well-established gender norms regarding how to be a good wife/mother/daughter. Women of Falconiana and Bagatzí work, care, cook, walk with and wait. In addition to expected domestic labours, they have hens for eggs and meat for self-consumption and sale, and some cows for milk and cheese. Women have gardens for medicinal plants, they sew, they manage small commerce, and they resist and transgress the thousands of years of imposition of the boundaries of the house to provide to their families. These acts might be seen as transgressions by the more traditional men of Bagatzí and Falconiana. But these small acts of independence are uncontainable efforts to do what is required within the limits of the house and the family, the neighbourhood and kinship.

Flory and many other women told me that when the settlements were first established women and men used to play soccer in mixed teams at the soccer field in the centre of the town. This was a vital public space. But with time, the encounters frequently diminished and eventually

stopped. “*Why where the boys play soccer, there are no girls?*” is the question that Doreen Massey asks in the opening of her book’s chapter on *Space, Place, and Gender* (1994, p. 187) and it echoes in my mind strongly. Through the lives of many women of Bagatzí and Falconiana, and in my own life too, I wonder about similar questions. Why are there segregated spaces for activities that can be done equally by men or women, like playing?

Meanwhile, boys play in significant areas of the schoolyards or parks in towns, in demarcated areas like the sports fields, and girls stay nearby in small groups, chatting and watching. The rules of camaraderie and discipline are for boys. Girls learn early to have friends but not sisterhood due to the lack of opportunities for engaging in cooperative, ludic activities at an early age. From the work of Bell Hooks *SISTERHOOD: Political Solidarity Between Women* I want to expand on the idea of *sisterhood* because “we are taught that our relationships with one another diminish rather than enrich our experience. We are taught that women are 'natural' enemies, that solidarity will never exist between us because we cannot, should not, and do not bond with one another” (Hooks, 1986, p. 127). The lines of the soccer field work as boundaries between the sexes in Latin America and many other regions in the world, sometimes based on sex, other times based on class or caste divisions. This image of separated groups playing very different games is what you see in the plazas and schoolyards of Bagatzí and Falconiana, as one would see around Latin American schools and towns where the soccer field is at the centre of the social life of small rural and periurban towns.

Many authors discuss degrees of freedom for women (Blokland, 2001; Lewicka, 2014; Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2013), which includes the distances young girls and women are allowed to walk alone or accompanied, and where they feel safe to go in comparison to young boys and men. It starts early in our childhood with the reinforcement of our family: where we can go, at what distance and with whom, where is safe to go, and “where” a place becomes a dangerous place—a place that can transform you into something bad, undesirable, stained. We frequently hear this: do not go to that part of the city/town because it is a dangerous/ugly place and you will be seen as one of the people living there, as hazardous/ugly/lost. These ideas follow us and shape the spaces we will inhabit as shadows and boundaries. Boys and some girls in Falconiana used to

play together close to the canal in the past, but not the children of today. The few children that remain in Bagatzí and Falconiana these days do not play in the surrounding areas of their community anymore; instead, they stay at home under the watch of their grandmothers and mothers. Children go to the small convenience stores on their bicycles, but they come back immediately after, no delays, no playing or moving around in the neighbourhood.

Because the design of Falconiana and Bagatzí separates the farming parcels from the town, some parcels are close to the residences. For those unfortunate to have their parcels at the very end of the settlement, however, the distance can be as far as three kilometres from their house. To cover these long distances, men walk or drive small vehicles and bicycles. Women, however, do not drive cars, do not walk to the parcels and do not help with the duties of the farm. Some of them can ride a bike, but many years ago, that practice stopped. Traveling became too dangerous for women, in their words from the interviews and the workshops. Women were assaulted, scared, followed or even raped on these lonely roads and alleys between lots. Women were slowly limited to the spaces around the homes, the way to the school, and to small convenience stores. Even the trip to Bagaces for groceries ended up being made by men. For Falconiana and Bagatzí's women, their lives revolve around the house, the school, the convenience store.

These are the primary features of their landscape. Is this because there is no place to go? Bagatzí, more than Falconiana, was meant to be the political and economic center for the region. It was planned to have a high school, classrooms and technical facilities for the settlements of the region, but we saw how it did not end up happening. Bagatzí, Falconiana, Playitas, Llanos de Cortez, La Soga, San Martin, all these settlements ended up following the same design, having the same problems and suffering the same consequences of depopulation, poverty, isolation, and stagnation.

Let us not forget that Claude Meillassoux insists in his book *Maidens, Meal, and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* that the capitalist mode of production depends for its reproduction on an institution that is foreign to it: the nuclear, patrilineal family, centred in the figure of the *pater familias*, the men in charge (Meillassoux, 1981). The family has maintained its

position as the social institution most comfortably adapted to this task, and, to this day, the most viable and cost-effective for the free mobilization of work—particularly of female work—. Thus, the Economic Unit of Production (EUP) so easily identified by classical peasant theorists like Chayanov or Shannin (Kerblay, 1986; Shanin, 1990) was created for the sake of accumulation, with a full-time in-home housewife and a full-time out of the house male worker. While farmers and land workers pre-existed it, the EUP of peasant theory favoured market-oriented capitalist relations (Federici, 2003; Meillassoux, 1981; Merchant, 1983; Silverblatt, 1987).

Two stories concerning the lifeworld of women in Bagatzí and Falconiana

Water is vital to the women of Bagatzí and Falconiana. Melina said during one of the workshops, *“I prefer to live without power than without water.”* Then, all of them turned to Flory and asked her, *“How was it when you first came to Falconiana?”* She told us that when she came to live at the first settlement next to the river, there was no water supply; they lived in a small house made out of wood and zinc next to the river where they retrieved water for consumption and for the crops. *“It was hard,”* she said, *“It was hard to go to the river and drag the buckets with water back to the house.”*

Flory arrived at the Falconiana settlement before the canals were finished and the water network reached the towns. Her first house was located in the parcel. Later the town was built up in a lot that did not have an owner, relatively central to the rest of the housing lots. Not even a power grid was extended to reach the parcels. She told us that the power grid passed from Bagaces to Bagatzí along the road at the entrance of Falconiana. But because the town was not planned, the power grid seemed to ignore them for a while.

The women at the workshop told me all at once *“water from the river can make you sick, because sometimes it comes clear, but sometimes it becomes turbid and dark, and your children can become sick.”* Water was needed, but the place was beautiful, and the river provided all the water that the parcel required. Then why not live there? A question floated over our heads: why was the town moved to its actual location? Years later, when Joaquina came to live in Falconiana,

there was still no water supply other than water pumped from the river to the houses. Some days this water was clear, but in the rainy season, it was muddy.

In those days intestinal infections produced by the river water were widespread for children and for older people. Sometime later, they installed a pump to extract water from the river to supply crops and family needs. But the pump frequently failed, more often than it worked. Flory also told us that her children at the time were too young to help her with the heavy chores around the house, but when they moved to the town and the house, the same house where we held the workshop, a water supply was available. *“It was like being in heaven!”* she said, *“even when it was the same water from the river, we now counted on a better pump to supply many houses and the piping was complete. But you know what? I missed my neighbours from the parcels, we were friends, and we supported each other.”*

Once they were settled in Falconiana, it was a challenge was to buy groceries and to go to the clinic in Bagaces, the nearest town 20 kilometers to the east of Falconiana and Bagatzí, which was a hard trip in shared trucks or bicycles. To sell produce at Bagaces, men had to walk or travel by bike. In the beginning, Flory’s husband had a bike with a big basket that he filled with soft white squash called *“Pipianes,”* one of the most delicious varieties of squash you could possibly taste. He was in charge of travelling to Bagaces, which was a long journey along the riverbank, to sell the squashes. In the rainy season, it was terribly difficult to leave the settlement because the riverbank was impossible to traverse. Years later Flory’s husband bought a car, but if the road was too muddy Flory would have to get out of the car, lay her newborn on a dry spot at the side of the highway, and push the trapped vehicle.

As you can see, the river was both a vital artery to the settlement and sometimes a nightmare for the settlers. Its water brought life to the crops and diseases to the most fragile members of the community. But it was the first source of water they had at hand. That was the life they faced at the beginning of the settlements (circa 1980), and that was the life she loved and suffered. Those were difficult times indeed.

We continued with the workshop and chatting when Vanessa said that she wanted to put the canal on the quilting map that we were sewing. It was a big stripe of yellowish green fabric

to represent the water of the big ditch. We were trying to give shape to the long strip when suddenly Flory spoke about the child that died many years ago, dragged by the waters of this same canal that runs just behind her house. This boy would play next to the canal some blocks north of her house. One afternoon he did not come back home on time, and the search began. *"It took all evening, and he didn't appear,"* said Flory with her eyes on the past. The entire town helped, but it was her husband Carlos who thought to follow the flow of the canal until it reached the parcels outside of town. He took the car and went to the last lot in the west, and then walked back toward the town following the bank of the canal until he saw the small body. He had some other men from the parcels help him recover the corpse of the child to return to his family. *"The canal gives, and the canal takes sometimes,"* Flory said. Many of the young women were unaware of this part of their town's history, and they talked for a while about safety measures to protect children from falling into the canal. *"We asked SENARA to block off the canal with a wired fence, but they never did it,"* said Flory to us with anger and frustration. The canal was vital because it marked the end of the town on the west side and the end of the old town to the north. The main road to Bagatzí and Palo Verde national park is the limit at the south, and the town ends naturally at the east where there are no more houses.

One day Flory used water from the canal for coffee, she told us, but not just any coffee. There was a meeting with the management of ITCO and SENARA at Falconiana to discuss the new water supply system. She recounted with a smile on her face that she prepared the coffee with the canal's water because they didn't have water supply yet, and the meeting had been called to put pressure on the government to extend the water network to Falconiana. She offered the men at the meeting this coffee made with canal's water as a test. *"If they thought that it was okay to drink the water from the canal, we could all drink the water without complaining,"* Flory said with her usual kind voice. When they were drinking the coffee, Flory said to them, *"I hope you enjoy the coffee. I'm sorry because there is no water in the town; I have to use water from the canal..."* After a moment of expectation, she said with a big smile on her sun-tanned face, *"Don't worry, nobody died that day! Nothing happened because the water had been boiled."* The women laughed! And so, did I! I cannot imagine the faces of all these men with a cup of coffee in hand after sipping from the mug, now thinking what they had just drunk! These same men of SENARA

were responsible for organizing each rice cultivation because they managed the water supply from the Arenal-Tempisque project. They knew perfectly well what water they were drinking! The women told me that their partners at that meeting exchanged concerned eyebrow raises but nothing else. What else can be done? The coffee was already served and consumed. Their women won that fight. Water supply reached Falconiana a few months later.

These women remember their experiences of their first arrival to the settlement. They lived close to the other families, friends, hens and cows, medicinal plants of rosemary, chamomile and aloe. The water of the river, the springs, and the canal are one; it is the water that irrigates crops and sometimes was used to prepare food, to wash the clothes and the children, or prepare coffee. From the space women inhabit in the towns, they remain and subsist, they persist. And they wait for their sons and daughters to come back to visit them, to stay, to bring the grandchildren for a weekend or two.

Poverty support is also present in the everyday life of these women. They receive complimentary food from the school their children attend, and plant seedlings to supply their diet, like lettuce, tomatoes, celery, and cucumbers; a complete low-calorie salad.

Luz showed me the enclosure in the back yard of their house. She had to enclose the back yard with wood and bushes she collected because the chicken and hens would eat her lettuce. She had received lettuce seedlings the week before we met. Lettuce plants are not from Central America. They are not even part of the regular diet of the local communities of peasants. They require a lot of water and shade to grow: two things which are not abundant here in the province of Guanacaste. Who gave them to Luz, I wondered? *“Someone at the school was distributing the seedlings among the children,”* she said, *“I received these from my grandson, they cannot care for the lettuces at his home, you know, Carlos works all the week at the station, and I take care of his children here at home.”* This, to me, suggested the disconnection between this project and the reality of the everyday life of peasants. ‘Where is the corn, or the beans?’ I asked. *“Corn!”* she laughed, *“I really miss the good corn for tortillas; there is not much of it around lately.”* The government instead distributes lettuce, cucumber, and tomato seedlings, but not corn or beans.

Some months after my visit, I encountered Luz walking on the road, watching her cows grazing. I asked her about the lettuce. *“No, qué va!”* That is a regular expression of disappointment in Spanish. *They died! They must have become ill or something because they didn’t grow, they just died some weeks after you saw them.”*

Chicken, hens and a few roosters were always part of the family. Yes, part of the family as members, food, source of protein from meat and eggs, and a source of money lately. In the canals, people can catch shrimps and small fish. In recent years tilapia have populated the waterways. They are an invasive species. Iguanas and garrobos, which are mid-size reptiles very similar to iguanas but consumed for their meat, were part of the diet at the beginning. Enormous garrobos lay under the sun in groups, lounging in branches of large Ceiba trees. Nobody eats them these days, which is a good thing for the garrobos.

Picture 22



Talking by the side of the road. Bagatzí , Guanacaste. 2017. Photography by Silvia Vasquez Olguin

Like many other women in the rural towns of Latin America, Flory brought with her the first hens for her henhouse when she married Pedro. Hens are part of the new family, like a woman's dowry. Luz is the only woman in Bagatzí who raises cattle. She does it for milk to prepare a soft, fresh cheese called *“cuajadas,”* which she later sells in her home. Sometimes by midday

the "cuajadas" have run out, and she must turn people away. *"I have to say come tomorrow!"* she said to me. *"I don't even have any for you to eat with the bread and your coffee,"* she lamented to me.

Luz walks her three big cows each morning from her parcel to the town commons, at the other side of the town over the road that passes next to Bagatzí and ends in Palo Verde National Park (refer to Map 6 and 7 in page 57, Chapter 3). In picture 22 the overgrowth grass hides the cows at the right side of the road where they are grazing. In the same side of the road another neighbour planted maize. On the last day I spoke with Luz before I left, she was taking care of her cows next to the tall growing maize in the commons. She told me that the cows were giving so much milk lately and so she has more "Cuajadas" this week than in the previous month—she was happy. I asked her why she was grazing the cow next to the main road, and she answered *"because this is the common area, for all of us that need it. It is time for the cows to eat fresh grass, you see? Here there is plenty!"* I asked if it had always been that way, and she said no. In the beginning, people from Bagatzí did not use the commons because they thought they had more than enough land. Lately she noticed an old man was planting maize there. She felt her cows should have the right to enjoy the green new grass growing in the commons, and she wanted to know what was going on there with that maize too. Curious woman. These are the spaces left to women in these rural towns nowadays: not the parcel, but the house, the church, and the school, and sometimes the commons. In this picture of Luz Romero, her cows are grazing in the only common area of Bagatzí, next to the road, under the electric towers.

Sense of place of Bagatzí and Falconiana's women

At the beginning of the workshop in Falconiana I asked, *"If someone needs to buy something, where do they go?"* *"To my place!"* Nidia jumped, *"to my place! If you need anything, there is a convenience store in my house."* There are two convenience stores in Falconiana, and the town divides their travels for groceries between these two stores named *Mariposa* or the butterfly (Nidia's store), and *Chucho's* store. The grocery purchases are made in Bagaces

supermarkets, however. Women of Bagatzí and Falconiana don't usually travel the 20 kilometres to Bagaces to buy groceries. Their partners do this instead. BWomen go to the clinic, and accompany children to doctor's appointments in Bagaces; however, they are companions, not agents. Public transportation does not help either. There is no single bus line to connect Bagatzí and Falconiana with the network of towns and services that exist within just 20 kilometres from them. Degrees of freedom, as many authors have studied, is less differentiated between young women and men, but it's clearly significant enough to be appreciable in the older generation of founders (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2013). Reproductive labour at home restrains women from going far, as there is always something to do at home, someone to care for, something to mend. It seems men have time for doing these other things, such as working, buying groceries, travelling to meetings, and spending time with other men in places where they make decisions that affect them all.

During the quilting workshops, women of the Bagatzí and Falconiana communities raised different topics in friendly conversation. Flory said, "*you know what? I want to die here; this is my place*" to which Joaquina replied, "*I do not want to die here!*" Joaquina's family is from Río Negro, a place a bit further east of these settlements. Flory and Joaquina are the same age but have a different approach to life in these towns. Their stories are also slightly different. Joaquina came to the settlement 18 years ago because she got a house in the town through a social housing programme called "*bono de la Vivienda*" (a social housing subsidy for poor families to help them to build their houses) that provided accessible housing at a meagre cost or even for free. She does not have a parcel to farm, however: her relatives are employed in agricultural labour as seasonal workers, sometimes working for sugarcane operations, and other times working for the rice companies. But often what her family does is *chambear*, which means to work wherever a pair of hands is needed.

I wonder if working a parcel of land is enough to create an attachment to a place? Is *working on your own property* a significant factor in creating a connection with the land that motivates you to pursue a life there? Or is it the structure of peasant work that strengthens their link with a place? In the end, everything comes together in the issue of being able of working

your land. In the end, property rights create the strongest connection to a place. As a result, it appears Joaquina and many others like her cannot create deep connections with their towns because they stay away there, but they do not own a lot where they can practice agriculture.

Joaquina wants to go back to “her homeland” in Río Negro where she is building a house, even though it happens to be far away. If it is not only property rights that give these women a secure connection with the place they inhabit, what could it be? We know that what is built on a space is not disconnected from the will of the builders. The social produces a particular configuration of space and ways of dwelling in that space, which is different for each specific group in any given society.

Not many authors in the social sciences see that social structures correspond to mental structures as much as the material configuration of space corresponds to social structures (Bourdieu, 2013; Bourdieu & Pons, 2013; Harvey, 2000; Smith, 2010; Soja, 1985). The pressure that society places on its members creates social cohesion, which gives individuals and groups a sense of belonging and rootedness. Here, it is essential to ask how social belonging can be linked to geographical belonging or belonging to a place. This can be explained in part by dwelling, because the act of dwelling in a place is done in the presence of others. The sense of belonging is connectedness and a bond to the materiality of built space as much as to natural surroundings, and to the people close by, the nearest, the neighbours. The experience of place is imparted through practices, production, and people’s day-to-day life. While practices are shaping place, the overlaying of work onto space gives the subjects their belonging and citizenship, says Lefebvre (1991), because this is a space that they comprehend.

To Flory, the town of Falconiana is her place. It became her place through the experiences of her partner and four sons in the family parcel, and her own experiences in the house and in everyday chores. Later her sons brought their wives to live in little houses built on the family property one next to the other, or within a short walk from there. Flory's history should have been common, but it is, in fact, unique. Her family is the only family that has second generation settlers already working the family land and residing in the town. Only one son went to live in Bagaces because of his work with a fish company. Bagaces is close, however, and all of them have

a car or a motorcycle to stay connected and visit their parents frequently. Flory cares for her ill and aged mother at her house now. Since her mother moved in some years ago, Flory has taken care of her diet, prescriptions, and appointments. At her age, she acts as a caregiver to her mother, and sometimes mother to her grandchildren. Flory's case is one where everything seems to revolve around one single woman, in concentric waves of responsibilities and duties that root her deeper and deeper to her house, her town, her family and the community. Joaquina's case, in contrast, is more representative of many women in these towns: daughters who travelled to live with their new husbands in the other cities, men go to work wherever they find jobs, there are seasonal movements out of town, out of the family, pulling her out, calling from afar.

Melina, Joaquina's 19-year-old daughter, does not want to follow her mother. She likes it here in Falconiana, but not too much, just more than in Río Negro, the dear homeland of her mother. A series of laughs landed on us: *"she is of age, my daughter can do whatever she wants, and if it's to stay here, she can do it!"* said Joaquina. A woman is considered an adult at 18 years old, like Melina with a baby and a partner. It seems that, because of her status as wife/mother, she is allowed to detach from her mother's dreams, her mother's homeland. But in this conversation, and many others with women of both towns, I noticed a sense of what I call generational discontinuity: a sense of fragmented belonging. The founders of the settlements want to stay in Falconiana and Bagatzí, like Flory and her husband, or Don Manuel, or Luz, but their sons and daughters do not. In Joaquina and Melina's case, the opposite is the case. Joaquina does not sense that she belongs to Falconiana, not even after 20 years. Her daughter Melina does not feel she belongs strongly either, but nor does she want to follow her mother, because she does not belong to the Río Negro either. Where do these sons and daughters belong?

Where do we belong? Where can our roots find space to expand and go deep, take life and connectedness? Is it possible that what social scientists theorize and call a "sense of belonging" could imply more than an individual sense of connectedness (Bennett, 2014; Benson & Jackson, 2013; Fortier, 1999), but is rather a social and transgenerational continuity or discontinuity (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006; Rérat, 2014; Tyrrell & Harmer, 2015)? In the case of these women, the sense of belonging is connected with the family to which they belong, which

are the partners from Falconiana or Bagatzí that give them a link that anchors them to the community, to the place. Belonging to the community is not expected of their sons and daughters. Children belong to their mothers until they grow to adulthood, and then they go where they want, or at least that is what they said. Children belong to the mother until they grow, but what does this mean? It seems like they are destined to abandon their towns, families and farms, they are unstoppable. The forces that drag them toward the cities are stronger than the links that attach them to the land.

A long process of depopulation transformed the face of rural areas of the world during the last half of the last century. Urbanization is the shining face of the same process that shows its darker face in the depopulation of rural areas of the world. As Deborah Bryceson, Kay, and Mooji (Bryceson et al., 2000, p. 3) points out, the two processes are major cyclical movements of macroeconomic trends on agricultural production. It is evident in the Costa Rican case and also in this region that processes of re-agrarization led to a process of depeasantization (Araghi, 1995), or to the disappearance of peasants and their practices, even when a country foments the expansion of its agriculture sector. Jan van der Ploeg (2008) shows a quantitative decrease in the numbers in the peasant population, but also a reconversion of many agricultural entrepreneurs as peasants. This last process has not yet occurred in Costa Rica. What did occur was an intense process of re-agrarization, as was clearly noted by Araghi (1995) for the rest of Latin America. Thus, in the Costa Rican countryside one sees an increase in the number and extension of agribusinesses like pineapple plantations, oil palm, and coffee that absorb large portions of agricultural seasonal workers. As a consequence, peasants seasonally work for the plantations and big agribusiness, such as rice and sugarcane production in the province of Guanacaste. As we mentioned in Chapter 4, agrarian policies in Costa Rica were not strong enough to transform agrarian structures equitably, but rather accompanied industrialization. The programs of structural adjustment implemented in the region worked to impel agricultural production for export, which in turn expelled peasants from their traditional lands, or involved them as waged workers for these agricultural investments.

I invite you to see the theory presented just a paragraph before, in the flesh and bones history of these peasants. For many of the old founders of Bagatzí and Falconiana, and much more for their descendants, the land these communities create is a land of passage, a temporary and provisional place for young women and men. Once the children become old enough to work and start new families, they do not return to these towns. There is nothing here for them; no work, no future, not even a place to build a house because you cannot live here and work elsewhere far away. Once children begin taking the long journey to high school, they have to start thinking about *where they will go to find a job*. These forces pull at the fabric of peasant families in these towns.

In the beginning, men came alone to populate and work the land of future settlements. In the cases of both Bagatzí and Falconiana, the first steps were to establish the settlement as an encampment of men close to the area of the lots, usually to work the land collectively because resources like water and machinery were scarce. This situation could last years, but it always ended with the second step of men bringing their families to live with them in improvised and precarious homes without access to water or electricity. Families needed to be together, the men told me, and the women agreed *“my husband brought us to live with him sometime after he came to the settlement,”* is what many women told me during the interviews and workshops. Flory said, *“we worked the land, and I managed to stay at home and send the boys to school, then to cook, do the laundry, all that is needed, you know.”* The women explained that *“yes, we came to stay with them, without husbands.”* Within this simple phrase was all the domestic and reproductive work put in motion every day to make it possible for the men to work their parcels. It was implicit that women stayed at home for the men to continue operating the land. They came to do their part as domestic labour, brought by men to make their lives easier, providing a companion to the family and purpose because women conducted the reproductive work needed for their families' wellbeing.

Don Juan Manuel told me that at the beginning of the past century when the region was a group of huge haciendas, women used to work in the “big house” of the gringo. They were domestic workers in the kitchen and attended to small animals, cleaning, mending, fixing.

Meanwhile, their husbands and partners worked with the cattle, and for some of the few crops that the hacienda had in those days. There were “pawns’ towns” –as the settlement of agricultural workers, *peones*, living inside the premises of the big *haciendas* where called- inside the haciendas, similar to company towns but originated by the need for manual labour on the huge cattle ranches. These informal and private settlements later became the towns of Bagaces and Cañas. At the beginning Bagaces and Cañas were encampments of cowboys and their families, free workers living and working seasonally from one hacienda to the next one (Edelman, 1987, 1992; Gudmundson, 1984, 1990; Rodríguez Solera, 1988; Wolf, 1966). Men working with the cattle, women working at the big house for the gringo’s family, the famous Steward family which history was shown in Chapter 2. You can see the gendered division of works and roles.

What these women did in the past, in the time of the Haciendas, was reproductive work, and it was considered waged labour because it was carried out for other families. What they did in their own homes was not paid labour, even when it was exactly the same kind of work. To Silvia Federici, the economic importance of labour reproduction carried out in the home, and its function in the accumulation of capital became invisible and merged with a so-called “natural vocation” designated as *women’s work*. But nothing in nature explains the sexual division of tasks, nor does it explain institutions such as conjugality, marriage or paternal filiation as a matter of acts. “All are inflicted on women by imposition,” says Meillassoux, all of it; therefore, they are facts of culture that must be explained and not serve as an explanation (Meillassoux, 1981, p. 26).

Women in Bagatzí and Falconiana still continue the long-line of divided gender roles and work. Their spaces reflect this division, home versus parcel, private versus public productive spaces, family versus work. They position themselves on one side of this division and their partners on the other. The reinforcement of this naturalized division takes a heavy toll on the future of these towns.

I still feel connected to these women. Even writing these pages I wonder what they are doing, how are Luz’ cows, how are the grades of her grandson, how is Flory’s mom’s health, is

Nidia still working at *La Mariposa*? How old would Melina's daughter be now, and how pretty will she look, will Joaquina finish her new house? And where am I now? Thousands of kilometres away still longing for that feeling of belonging, of family and slowness under Guanacaste's inclement midday sun.

The impact of the representations of the space in the women's lives

I want to bring together the ideas of spatial practices that Chapter 4 put in motion when the Costa Rican government established Bagatzí and Falconiana, with the everyday life of women discussed in this chapter. These women experienced constraints and limitations to full participation in the productive practices of their family farms, in the decision-making of the farm, and in access to community activities that would expand their social life in these towns. ITCO and SENARA, among other Costa Rican institutions, worked together to raise these towns with an idea of the type of work, the type of production, and lifestyle that would unfold in these settlements. They had plans, they gave training and advice on the kind of production to use with the water technology of the canals. These government departments sent people to extend and materialize the representations of the space the government endorsed, with consequences for the material space that would be experienced by the people of Bagatzí, Falconiana and many other peasant settlements. The decision to separate parcels from housing had a substantial impact on the participation of women in the activities of the farm.

In some cases, the distance between houses and parcels was so long that the men rode bicycles or bought a car just to move between the two. Women at Bagatzí and Falconiana do not drive cars, they ride bicycles, but they do not go alone to the lots. Another consequence of this separation is that women are confined to the realm of the house, and their freedom of movement becomes limited. Women at these towns move the short distances between the houses and the school, or the grocery store. For other transfers they need a man to drive them to the nearest town, to health appointments, to buy other groceries, to visit their families.

There are consequences at a higher level too. These families are disconnected from their own extended families because they moved away to inhabit these towns. The solidarity networks you can find in other rural towns do not exist here, or they are weak. As we saw in Chapters 2 and 4, each family was relocated after arriving at the parcel to a new house in the housing settlement. The few connections they had begun to establish in the previous settlements were shattered in the parcels. In the new town, everyone received a house randomly. Neighbours were separated, friends ended up living in opposite parts of the towns. Women had to rebuild social linkages again and again, and because of all of these adjustments, women considered the houses in the town their world, and the parcels the realm of men.

In terms of property rights, many of them share ownership of the parcels, but that is only nominal. They do not participate in decisions about the plot, the crops, or the debts. If women are confined in the town, men are confined too, but to the lots; men leave to work in the parcels early in the morning, and come back to the towns in the afternoon or later. The material disconnection of the design of the towns has a deep impact on the routines and rhythms of life.

The women participants of these workshops expressed their limitations and enjoyed the simplicity and health of their lives in these towns. I can only compare the life in these state-made settlements with the spontaneous rural towns of the rest of the country. While the limitations women of Bagatzí and Falconiana experience are shared by other women around the country, the latter can participate directly in what is happening on their lands, coffee plantations and small orchards due to the conjoining of the residence and parcel.

Spatialized social relations and involvement of women in the family farm are the two main factors analyzed in this chapter. The differentiation of gender roles within the peasant family in state-made peasant settlements like Bagatzí and Falconiana occurred against the logic that involves every member of the family unit of production in the farm duties. In comparison, Chayanov (1986) was not totally aware of the division of gender roles, reproductive and productive roles, and the overload of work and duties that peasant women suffer. His data collection was vast and well done, but gender issues were not part of the questionnaires (see Ploeg, 2013: Kerbay, in Chayanov, 1986). The separation of land for production and land for

habitation reinforced a separation of gender roles in connection with the production practices. Men dedicated their efforts to work the land of the parcels; women stayed at home working the house duties, limited to the area of the settlement dedicated to the houses, school, and small convenience stores.

In the case of Bagatzí and Falconiana, the separation between living space and productive space reinforced the separation and differentiation of gender roles among the members of the peasant family, and contributed to the exclusion of women from the productive space, from decisions regarding the parcel and later, of the inheritance as Chapter 5 showed. The interviewed families and young settlers from Chapter 6 said that the families have no plans to actively incorporate their daughters in the production of the parcel and in decisions regarding their future. They did not do it from the beginning, and the daughters grew up without understanding and participating in the productive practices of which their brothers were part.

Picture 23



“This is our place, the town, the paths between the school, the convenience store, and the houses.” Falconiana’s founder. Marta Vasquez Olguin, 2016.

Villages and parcels are two different domains. Women and children remain in the village, the parcels are for men. I maintain that a model designed for cooperation and access to productive resources such as that of Israeli peasant cooperative or moshav, which I discussed in Chapter 3, would have facilitated the participation of women in productive activities, giving

women the capacity and experience to take charge of a possible future in the parcels. If they were concerned about the safety of women, a community model focused on living space, and surrounded by productive spaces, would have facilitated cooperative forms of control and support among families. The use of space in the moshav model does not transform gender roles but does not disconnect the members of the peasant family from their productive land.

In Bagatzí and Falconiana, women do not work in the parcels. Very rarely are cases of women who came with their husbands, and after their death or departures, these women continued along with the management of the family land. The case of Luz is an isolated one between the families of Bagatzí and Falconiana. The dispossession of women is clear. In Bagatzí and Falconiana settlements, as in many other rural places in Latin America, women have limited and conditional access to the land and the possibilities of managing the productive resources of the peasant family. These findings coincide with Deere and León's (2001) research about women's property rights and land access in Latin America.

Another characteristic of capitalism and patriarchy in the countryside is expressed in peasant settlements like Bagatzí and Falconiana where material space has an effect on the large-scale gendered social relations. Uses of space imposed on Bagatzí and Falconiana worked to strengthen the division of gender roles and the separation of women from agricultural production practices in the parcels. I compare this issue with the differentiated roles of male/workers vs. female/housewives in urban industrialized context where the wage of the husband can afford the stay-at-home wife (Federici, 2003; Lobao & Meyer, 1995). As a possible consequence linked to the separation of women from agricultural productive practices, young women face challenges and limitations that make them question traditional gender roles and expectations and migrate.

Within the spatial arrangement of these state-made peasant settlements, which I showed in Chapters 2, 3, and here in Chapter 5, the traditional structure of the peasant unit of production and its involvement in the productive practices of the parcels changed. The changes were reinforced by the separation of land and housing. Land tenure for women stopped at the level of the founders. The new generation of settlers and especially young women do not have the same

access to land titles as their parents. In few cases their mothers participate equally in the ownership of the house and the parcels. In both settlements the parcels are property of the father alone and in few cases shared with the mother. What the young women see from a young age is that the space of the parcel is a male space, or a space which belongs to men. Women must get involved from an early age in the activities and decisions that concern to the family business, if they are to be considered potential owners equal to their brothers.

Chapter 6

The children of the rice

The younger generation of peasant settlers and the future of Bagatzí and Falconiana

In this chapter, I consider the future and explore what might become of these settlements and their inhabitants, given the aspirations of the second generation. Many young Bagatzí and Falconiana descendants left the towns some years ago, depriving these communities of their future. Along with the conversations with young people (5 young men and women from Bagatzí and Falconiana,) I interviewed one man and one woman from Falconiana, and one man and one woman from Bagatzí. I also revisit how the separation of productive land and housing has influenced the decision to migrate away from their hometown differently for women and men in this chapter. I discuss the role of inheritance or the lack of it in shaping their sense of home, belonging, and their migration patterns. Four themes are at the core of this chapter: the ways that rural youth migration patterns can help us understand the context of their choices; the role of family relations, inheritances, and individual aspirations; the meaning of home as a multilayered sense of belonging and longing; and finally the differences between men and women in their personal life experiences.

Rural youth internal migration patterns in recent years

Structural expulsion factors such as the concentration of agricultural property, the productive backwardness of family farming, and marginalization from the many advances related to modernization in the countryside explain the migration from rural regions to the cities. The combination of these three factors, but especially agricultural poverty, has been highlighted as a peculiarity of Latin America that explains a large part of the expulsion forces of the countryside. Rural migration is as much associated with the countryside's poor economic prospects as it is with the ideological discourse that in the city, everything is better (A. Bartra, 2016; Echeverría Victoria, 2013; Fulkerson & Thomas, 2014; Rye, 2011; Tyrrell & Harmer, 2015; Vignoli, 2008; Vignoli & Busso, 2009). The ideological component of rural-to-urban migration in developing and developed countries is a social phenomenon that Fulkerson and Thomas discuss in their edited book *Studies in urbanormativity: rural community in urban society* (2014,) and Rye (2011), Tyrrell & Hammer (2015,) and Echeverria (2013) observe in their research in Europe and South America. The image of the city as a better place, full of economic opportunities and employment permeates discourses, practices, expectations, and political promises directed toward the countryside and the peasants; ultimately, the idea is sustained by the peasants too.

Rural exodus and massive migration from the countryside to the cities profoundly affects the composition and size of the rural and urban populations. In particular, depopulation in rural areas drives productivity reduction and economic stagnation. This demographic tendency has slowed down in the past two decades in the region, but still has a significant impact on urban population growth. Rural migration, in general, is a self-sustaining process due to the very unequal and concentrated structures of property in the countryside, which led to policy options that promoted rural development and agrarian reform to stop it. The distinction between structural poverty and productivity inequalities in the countryside is crucial. Structural poverty puts the accent on the disparities between zones (rural/urban) while productivity inequalities emphasize the disparities that occur within the same area. Meanwhile persistent structures of poverty subsist in rural areas the productivity inequalities may only be a secondary problem,

though still a necessary factor in understanding rural out-migration and rural-to-rural migration, which has been significant in the Costa Rican case since the late 2000s.

For statistical purposes, Costa Rica has six Major Managerial Divisions (Central, North Huetar, Atlantic Huetar, Chorotega, Central Pacific, and Brunca as it can be seen in Table 6 below) other than Provinces. Regions, in this case, are similar to Provinces because they largely comprise the same areas and populations, with the exception of the Central Region that consists of the San Jose Metropolitan Area to the more urbanized and neighboring areas of the provinces of Heredia, Alajuela, and Cartago. The province of Guanacaste belongs entirely to the Chorotega Region, which is the second most important expeller of population in the country. On average, each year, 1200 young men and 1700 young women between the ages of 15 and 24 leave the province. The Great Metropolitan Area of the Central Valley, and the capital of the country, are the primary receptors of this population, followed by other areas that have more recently attracted members of the rural workforce.

The subject of rural youth studies pivots particularly on the change of personal trajectories from peasantry to something else, and more recently, the resistance to this change. Currently, the phenomenon of a new young peasantry repopulating and revitalizing Europe's countryside has been a subject of inquiry. The young adults whose narratives are central to this chapter are born in Bagatzí and Falconiana, who have since migrated out of the towns and no longer permanently reside in their home communities. This is the research of a void. These young people left an empty space behind, and I will try to explain the reasons for their exodus, likely shared with many other young rural people in Costa Rica.

Table 7
Migration patterns by sex in young adults of age 15-24, 1996-2015.

	Central			Chorotega			Central Pacific			Brunca			Huetar Caribe			North Huetar		
	Total	Women	W/M	Total	Women	W/M	Total	Women	W/M	Total	Women	W/M	Total	Women	W/M	Total	Women	W/M
1996-2015 total	21 117	10 212	1.08	6 783	3 559	.94	4 364	2 117	1.07	5 150	2 648	.97	6 947	3 346	1.17	5 911	3 047	1.01

Source INEC, Costa Rica. Silvia Vasquez Olguin

Guanacaste is the major expeller of the young female rural population in the country (Table 7, above). Excluding the Central Region which is the capital and the major concentration

of urban and industrial growth, the province of Guanacaste and the province of Limon in the Huetar Caribe region are expelling women almost at the same numbers. Possible reasons behind the differential in migration patterns between men and women may be found in examining the role of family farm inheritance as a critical determinant. Family farm inheritance could counterbalance out-migration among the young rural population of Bagatzí and Falconiana as arguably a significant part of the large female out-migration from Guanacaste arises from lack of access to the family patrimony that the farm represents. Through the stories of migration of these young women I highlight how a lack of material and emotional links to the village plays an important role in their decisions.

As young adults from peasant families, productive activities have linked them to traditional agrarian practices at an early age. They share similar motivations for migration with many other young people in the country. The lack of job opportunities and the ability to provide material sustenance to their original families, or to their new ones, pushes them to seek new job solutions away from rural areas. These young adults embark on a search for better living conditions due to the historical contraction of the agricultural sector.

Notably, their aspirations (educational, professional, or socially imposed roles they want to escape) are difficult to fulfill in isolated areas like Bagatzí or Falconiana. Diana Deere (2011), as well as Diane Wolf (1990) who writes about South East Asian daughters, Margaret Alston's (2004) work on Australian young women who migrate to metropolitan areas, and Cecilia Diaz (1997, 2005) who discusses young women taking care of the family farm and agribusiness in Asturias, offer insight to the study of Bagatzí and Falconiana despite the difference in the locations of these studies. In all these case studies, the role of gender norms and imposed social roles and duties on women motivate them to search for better options outside of the countryside and its rigid social norms.

The meaning of home for the second generation of peasants in Bagatzí and Falconiana

The meaning of home is central to understanding the second generation of settlers of Bagatzí and Falconiana. As Sixsmith (1986) explains, “home” can be a very personal experience, and it can have a deeply personal meaning. At this level, home represents a feeling of security, happiness, and belonging (Bell, 1999; Benson & Jackson, 2013; Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Fortier, 1999; Róin, 2015; Sixsmith, 1986). Home is the place where relationships with others take form. Home has a social dimension in Sixsmith's (1986) work because the idea of the place is seen as a social construction. From her work, I want to highlight the idea of different meanings of home co-existing in the same individual and place. Based on my conversations and interviews with Bagatzí and Falconiana's younger generation, I hold that home can be understood as an ideal of cultural belonging among *peasants' descendants*, a pragmatic confirmation of *the place I can come back to (my parents' home)*, and may be idealized as a *home where my children can grow up healthy and protected*.

Home becomes the place where you can be and express who you are or are not. In Easthope's (2004) work, *A place called home*, she provides a working definition of the place before embarking upon an examination of the connections between place and identity. Following her work, I want to position home and place, for the people of Bagatzí and Falconiana, as socially and affectively produced (Ahmed, 1999, 1999; Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Donkersloot, 2010, 2012; Easthope, 2004; Massey et al., 1995; Róin, 2015; Sixsmith, 1986). This, I argue, is especially the case for second-generation sons and daughters of the settlements' founders.

Róin (2015) questions the notion of home because it is often used as an unquestioned concept that does not reflect the diversity of living conditions among people. Nevertheless, home as a place has different meanings based on personal and family history, social connections, and environmental conditions of those whom we ask about it. The differences Róin found in the meaning of home for older people living in small remote communities, and those living in the city were noticeable, just as I found the meaning of home varied for the founders of the communities of Bagatzí and Falconiana versus their descendants. For members of the second generation that I interviewed, home and place attachment were deeply influenced by social conditions, financial

concerns, and opportunities, as well as their personal and family history. In Sarah Ahmed's (1999) work, *Home and Away: Narratives of migration and estrangement*, she examines the relationship between migration and identity by complicating our notion of what "home" means, both for the narrative of "being at home" and for the narrative of "leaving home." She considers the historical determination of patterns of estrangement where the living, yet mediated relation between being, home and world, is partially reconfigured in the perspective of those who have left home. Her portrayal fits the patterns one observes in the second generation of Bagatzí and Falconiana.

For these young people, home is a category within a place and also situated in their memories. For them, home is a place to return, sometimes materially, sometimes as a kind of a memory lane that becomes an aspiration for a clean and peaceful environment for their children, as discussed below in the section on the daughters. The first "home" of these young rural people is their "parents' home." This specific material place may or may not belong to them in the future, but it will always be the "home of their childhood." Once they grow into adults, young Bagatzí and Falconiana settlers have to find their "home" somewhere else.

For the sons of the founders, this is the land they do not want responsibility for, to return to or to work it. This was the land of their childhood, with long hours of work in the field, with crops and cattle, long distances walked and bicycled between home and school. It is predominantly a land of long distances to which they do not want to return. However, for those who do return, they do it to stay and build a house on their parents' land, although usually, it is only to dock for a period while the personal storm ends. For the daughters, it is expected that they will find a new place, have a house somewhere else, where a husband decides to live because the daughters are the property of the father to be given to the husband. There is no place for a divorced, single, or returned daughter permanently in the communities. This contrasts strongly with the experiences of returning sons. This chapter tells these different stories, which are an integral part of the present and future of the countryside in peripheral countries like Costa Rica, as well as for the countryside in developed countries like Canada.

While these young men wanted to have something of their own, an income, a job, they did not want land or an agricultural job. In this way, they did not identify their future with their

fathers. They did not aim to continue family work at the parcel, nor did they see the meaning of it when their fathers worked the land as always, with or without their help. Inheritance was not presented as an option, largely because they perceived their parents as still young, strong, and healthy. The future of the inheritance was too far away to be considered an opportunity.

Another aspect of their early years was their relationship with their fathers as authority figures. Constant clashes and even fights shaped their childhood and early adult lives. Two of these young men shared their memories and experiences with me. Both were very different, one migrated out of his town pretty young, the other stayed all his life at his parents' house, and years later bought a house crossing the street from his parents' old house. Both recognize that their generation suffers a deep detachment from the town and their parents' land. From different directions, they coincided in Bagatzí. My observations, conversations, and interviews in Falconiana told me a similar story, but I could not find second-generation young men to interview there. Falconiana is a small town; all families know each other; they can tell you that all the kids are gone. They are in other towns, working, with their own families, they are not coming back.

Some of the young adults from Bagatzí and Falconiana came back after leaving the settlements at a pretty young age. In some ways, they came to define themselves in opposition to their parents. They are not part of a family plan to transmit land and practices from one generation to the next one. Their parents broke the practice of peasant-to-peasant land and inheritance because these parents wanted "something better for their children." The central dilemma of this trajectory, in which peasants seek betterment for their children, is that it concurrently weakens peasants' livelihoods, productive practices, and continuity. The remaining old population of peasants, on the other hand, resists disappearance. Many factors, some planned, other by-products of local and national economic dynamics, conspired to send young adults out of rural towns to find a better future out from their families and places. Another, especially problematic aspect, is the neglect and rejection of young women as possible heirs and active parts of the peasants' families' future (Bonilla & Méndez, 1999; Díaz Méndez, 1997, 2005; Ramos Truchero, 2010).

Inheritance and the early involvement in productive practices

One of the recurring themes in rural sociology is the crisis of the institution of succession as a logical corollary of the crisis of agriculture in general. As I have remarked above, many factors intervene in the continuation of the family business, but the most important is the decision to improve the quality of life of their descendants, to create distance from peasants' struggles. Bagatzí and Falconiana are cases of peasants and rural farmers whose land was acquired in recent times. It is my argument that for the concept of home to take shape, it first needs to materialize via inter-generational continuity inland tenure.

Spain is a leader in researching the impacts of successional patterns in a rural context. The remarkable work of Lucrecia Ramos (Ramos Truchero, 2010, 2004) concerning women's role in small farms' success highlights the importance of women over traditional successional patterns of inheritance to the oldest son. Women are not the choice for inheritance in Latin America, and often the lack of legislation on women's property rights restricts their direct participation in the farm's succession (Deere & León de Leal, 2001). However, Ramos' findings showed how successful the farms where daughters took the reins had become. They held the family property via innovative, productive practices and new approaches. Inheriting land was not always the best livelihood option for many of them, but they fought to keep the farm alive (Ramos Truchero, 2010). The family does not necessarily favor uprooting rural and agrarian females, as Ramos (2010) explains via a Basque case; some family strategies break with the norm of transmission of family agrarian businesses through men. This, however, is not the case for Bagatzí and Falconiana. There are not yet cases of inheritance to women, except for the few widowers that inherited the land from their husbands. The founders I interviewed do not have a clear idea of what to do, or what actions to take for their future inheritance. What is relevant from Ramos' study is that she located cases in which the family guided their daughters to sustain, and ultimately possess, agrarian businesses, giving rise to "trajectories of feminine absorption" and "feminine trajectories of return" (Ramos Truchero, 2010, p. 19). In the future, I hope to observe if such cases arise in Bagatzí and Falconiana, but there have been none to date.

Pretty et al.'s (2006) research explores the relevance of community sentiments to Australian rural youths' intentions to stay in their home communities, including whether these sentiments can mediate how structural disadvantage factors into their decisions. Participants responded with statements such as: "If I could get a job here or go to University/College here, I would choose to stay in this town for the foreseeable future." This kind of statement is relevant to the future of rural areas because frequently, there is no opportunity to study or find a paid job in these towns. In Bagatzí and Falconiana, this is the first problem young people highlight: there is no paid work here, no clear source of income.

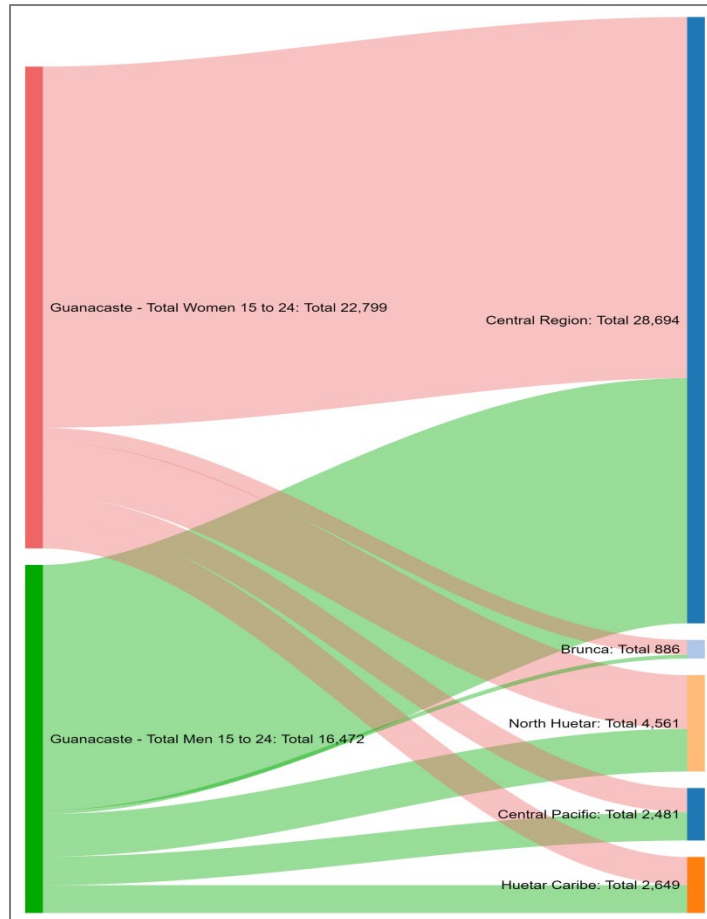
In their work, Tatiana Goetghebuer and Jean-Philippe Platteau (2010) found that the most common approach to prefer inheritance is grounded in the so-called "strategic bequest," where parents reward more attentive children with family heirlooms. Although potentially altruistic, the testator –a person who has made a will or given a legacy- can use what they bequest to influence the behavior of potential beneficiaries, so that they take appropriate actions that would promote the interest of the family farm (Goetghebuer & Platteau, 2010). This strategy is not used frequently in Bagatzí and Falconiana because the children have actually been discouraged from the outset to continue their parents' lifestyle.

The exclusion of daughters from the family business and productive practices in Bagatzí and Falconiana

Daughters of the rice were difficult to find. They are not around the town as much as their brothers. Only one daughter came to participate in the quilting map from Falconiana and none from Bagatzí. Some daughters of the founders live in the communities, but I could not contact any of them. Except for Melina at the quilting workshop, I met all the others because I interviewed their parents. They were accessible because they were temporarily living at their parents' houses. Except for Melina, the others did not have a house. In all cases, these daughters were residing for a season at their parents' houses because their children were there, attending school in the towns. That is the constant in the histories of the daughters of the rice, they were

silent, they were almost not there, and they passed by but did not remain. This feeling of temporality was not expressed in my interviews with the sons.

Figure 8
Migration from Guanacaste by sex. 1998-2015



There is a noticeable difference between the migration patterns of men and women to the Central Valley and capital. INEC, Home Survey. Costa Rica. Silvia Vasquez Olguin.

Statistics from INEC in Figure 8 (above) show how many and where to the women of the province of Guanacaste are expelled. This region is the most important in numbers of women that move to the Central Valley –where the capital of the country is located- likely to work in domestic labor or manufacturing industries.

I met Estefanía [name changed] because she was at her father’s house the day I interviewed her father. Estefanía is one of the daughters coming back to their original home. Many others like her are coming back temporarily, leaving the children with their parents at Bagatzí and Falconiana, and coming back to their towns. Estefanía was there, attending to us

while her father's interview was conducted, attending to him and her young daughter, who was enrolled at the school at Falconiana. Her daughter was getting ready for afternoon classes, and Estefanía was helping her and making the finishing touches to the meal. Estefanía told me, during a pause in the interview, that she was staying at her father's house because her marriage had broken down. However, she wanted to return to the town where she used to live and open a small convenience store (called *pulpería* in Spanish).

This kind of story demonstrated the link between place and people's lives. An old place like the parents' house becomes social and material capital to the next generation and provides space for temporary stays. She did not want to stay and work the land of her father in Falconiana; she only needed a place to recover and from where to return to her real life. Meanwhile, this house is a place for her daughter to reside more regularly, a clean place where she can enjoy and be happy. What does this place mean to Estefanía and many others like her? Shelter and sanctuary? These towns are good for their children to grow up in as they once did, but not good enough to want to stay and live there permanently. I asked her these questions, and she answered that the house was a good place to stay for some time, but the town does not have opportunities for people like her, to have a chance to work. She does not like hard work at the parcel, "that is my father's passion," she said to me. She thinks this is her father's hobby, something he does because he has a lot of free time.

One day in May, I sat with Don Luis under the shadow of his house's veranda. Next, to us, there were his three daughters, three silent daughters for whom this subsection is named. I could not know their names, my mistake, I never asked. They talked in quiet voices, playing with their newborn nephew –the son of the eldest sister – never interrupting his father, always obedient and ready to jump at the first word of their father. "Bring cold water to the lady!" he said, and the youngest ran into the house and came back with a glass of water and clattering ice for me. "Bring me some beans from the kitchen to show them to the lady!" he said, and another daughter ran into the house and came back with a sack of beautiful black beans from their father's farm. What we talked about that time is tainted now with questions: who were these daughters? What were their stories? One thing is certain after the long interview with their father, he has no son

to take the farm after him, and he was tired, his health weakened, and he has no hope in the future of Falconiana's agriculture.

Three daughters sat next to us and were totally invisible; three daughters and yet no future. Moreover, I did not rebel against that. I did not stop him right there and say something because I was processing the fact that young women are not part of Bagatzí and Falconiana's future. These three daughters gave a name to this section because I owe them at least that.

Months before my encounter with Don Luis, I took an afternoon to speak with Doña Flory. She was a key member of Falconiana's founding families, and she helped me organize the quilting workshop at her house. One afternoon we sat at her porch cooled by the shadow of her crowded garden and the roof of her house to talk about her life. She is a daughter too, after all. She recently brought her mother to her house at Falconiana, adding another piece to the chain of daughters caring for fathers and mothers. A common link in these stories is seeking good and healthy environmental conditions. Flory thought that her mother could recover her health in a place like Falconiana, where she can breathe clean air, eat healthy homemade food, and someone can take close care of her. Flory attends to all of her mother's needs, bathing her, getting for her medicines from the nearest town, cooking for her a special meal because of her prescriptions. To Doña Flory, the place becomes shelter and provides the environmental conditions for a healthy life. Doña Flory does not have daughters, only four sons. Three of them live next to her house or nearby. One of her sons works together with his father at the parcel. In her family, there is a clear path for the land to be inherited by one son.

To me, women are the weavers of social density, of social networks of caring, being themselves the thread and the needle. They worry about their children's health, their parent's health, their animals and gardens, and they think that a place like their town is a good place to live a healthy life in comparison to the city. "Nevertheless, the life of the girls was boring and harder than ours," said Alejandro, another second-generation young man of Bagatzí. The space of the house was for the girls, the soccer field was for the boys, along with the trips to play soccer against other towns' teams. The girls used to play soccer with the boys, side by side, in mixed

teams, but little by little they stopped playing, they had chores to do, errands to run with their mothers, taking care of their younger siblings.

Melina was one of the women that participated in the quilting workshop we had at Doña Flory's house in Falconiana. She attended with her mother, Joaquina. They are not founders; they arrived ten years ago when Joaquina found a house in Falconiana through the government's affordable housing program. They do not have a parcel in the town, only the house and the surrounding area of gardens and backyard. They too, came to Falconiana searching for a place to live. Melina attended Bagaces High school for some years, but she did not graduate. She married one of the sons of one of the founders' families in Falconiana, with whom she has a one-year-old young daughter. Melina talked a few times at the workshop. I was interested in her point of view concerning the town which differed from her mother. Melina liked living in Falconiana. Now she had her house, her family. Through her story, we can see one of the few cases of male inheritance. Her husband is one of the sons of his family, but he inherited the family land. He was a bequest heir, chosen between his brothers because of his interest in working on the farm. If sons have access to land in the inheritance, they stay in the town, they are retained, but the daughters are not motivated to stay, they are expelled. Few women from other towns come to take their place as partners of these sons along with inheritance or to seek jobs close to their parents' home where they have access to land on which to build their houses.

Melina is part of the town because of her husband; the rootedness of her husband gives her a stronger link to the town than what her mother could have. Melina sees a future for her and her family at Falconiana that her mother cannot share. Joaquina, in contrast, never felt at home at Falconiana, she wanted land like her parents' old farm to work, but the Affordable Housing Program does not allow the newcomers to access the land near the towns. Joaquina managed to obtain a small piece of land in Montenegro some years ago, where she plans to build a new home for herself while passing on her house in Falconiana to her daughter. Melina, in contrast, would not want to follow her mother. Joaquina is a single mom that raised her daughter alone at Falconiana. While Melina is attached to this town through her husband and his family, these two women's varied positions reveal the role of property and ownership in forging a future

for the next generation. The answer is simple; when I asked Melina what she needed to feel at home, to stay at Falconiana, and to give her daughter a similar sense of belonging, she said “land, a house, a family.” These are things she has through her husband, and him through his family.

What do the daughters have, external to their matrimonial relations? To answer this, I return to two important works that guided this sub-section about the daughters of the rice. One is Diana Deere and León de Leal's (2001) discussion of the dispossession of women and their disadvantaged situation in terms of access to land and property rights globally. The other is the recent work of Guadalupe Ramos and Cecilia Díaz (Díaz Méndez, 1997, 2005; Ramos Truchero, 2010, 2004) concerning the successful role of daughters in the renewal of successional farms in Spain. They observe that when women are involved in management and decision-making regarding their parents' properties, family businesses find higher chances of success, innovation, and consolidation.

Women are historically and systematically excluded from land as property (Deere & León de Leal, 2001; Lobao & Meyer, 1995). In Falconiana and Bagatzí, families with no sons and only daughters have no successional transference of land for inheritance, or any other sort of transference of the domain of the land to the daughters, not even the inclusion of the daughters in work and routines of the everyday agricultural practice at the farm. They only participate with their mothers in household chores and gardening duties such as tending to poultry. In the absence of sons to marry within the town, women vanish from the picture of who will take control of the land. In Bagatzí and Falconiana, this is a huge problem as there is no second generation of settlers seeking control of their parents' property, and the towns are disappearing. By not involving daughters in the future of their property, the very future of the farms is put at risk.

Overworked and excluded, the history of the sons of Bagatzí and Falconiana

I refer to the second generation of young men from the pioneer settlers in these two towns as “sons of the rice.” Many were born in the settlements, some arrived at a young age with their parents when the settlement was without schools, healthcare services, or public transportation. A constant among them all is that they worked from their early years in their families’ parcels. They frequently traveled long distances with their parents both to their parcels and to the school in Bagaces (15 kilometers from Falconiana and 25 kilometers from Bagatzí).

The sons of these families have a life trajectory that is totally different from that of their sisters. They left the towns and their homes when young, sometimes as teenagers, to find paid work and new opportunities in other towns. Many of them continued their secondary education, but very few of them have a degree or a profession. Seeking opportunities for a regular income was the main objective of leaving home. At their parents’ farms, the rice harvest paid twice a year, and the money went directly into their fathers’ pockets, even when these sons worked extremely hard. In response, they sought money of their own, rather than continuing to make money for their parents.

Daniel left Bagatzí at the age of 17. He remembered that there were many more children at the school in his day than currently. A large section of his generation continued studies in the high school in Bagaces, but almost none of them finished. A school bus drove the distance between Bagatzí and Falconiana to Bagaces in the morning, and back in the evening. Many of them went to Bagaces’ high school, and now none of them are living in the town. His six brothers live in other towns too. Liberia, the capital of the province of Guanacaste, and Bagaces, the nearest city, are the focus of their migrations, followed by some other places like San Ramon, and San Jose (the capital of the country).

Daniel had only one friend from his generation that lives in Bagaces and runs the family rice parcel from there. He told me that he used to come to Bagatzí from time to time, but was the only one to do so. All the others are “paid workers” of some of the big sugar plantations or other agribusinesses of the area. All the young men of his generation left the towns seeking a

paid job. Marriage, children, studies were not the reasons to leave the town. Instead, it was the need to find a consistent source of income, because the rice was seasonal at best, and when sugarcane took its place, there were even fewer work opportunities in the communities and income options. Sugarcane plantations took many of the rice paddies at Bagatzí during the nineties when these young men were looking for a future.

“I was told by my parents all my life ‘to study,’ ‘take advantage of our situation now that the rice is paying some money back,’” Daniel said to me. He recalled that he never worked enthusiastically in his parent’s parcel. He went to the rice paddy only if his father requested it. He and his brother did the same; neither worked the land because they wanted to nor did they see a future in it. I asked Daniel if he liked to work the land, he could not answer. His face showed me sadness. Why? Why was it so difficult for these young men to find a connection with their land? I believe it is because they did not feel the land to be theirs. Since the death of their father, Daniel’s family parcel is one of many others in the town leased to one of the local sugarcane producers in a five-year contract. Once the contract with the sugarcane corporation ends, Daniel, with his brothers and their mother, will decide what they will do with the parcel.

Daniel continued talking about his past. When he first left Falconiana in 1997, he went to work with some relatives at *Islita* beach (“Little Island” is the translation to English), close to Samara beach, currently one of the largest tourist attractions in the province of Guanacaste. He worked in the construction sector during that summer break. He was only 16 years old, but this was an “opportunity” for him. He laughs because it appeared as if he took a “vacation” from his family. He says that it was better to work in construction than to carry a 50 kilos bag of fertilizer on his back from home to the parcel, spreading it over long hours in the sun. He tells me that shortly after he started to work in construction, he had an opportunity to specialize in electrical installations. After that, there was no more “heavy work” for him.

The following year Daniel met a girl in Islita, and thus, in addition to his new work came a young family and responsibilities. He was only 17 years old at that point. He lived in Islita for twelve years, a significant period in his life. He worked three years in construction and hoped to work in maintenance at one of the big new hotels in the area. However, the only opening was

washing dishes at the hotel's huge kitchen. He accepted the job anyway. The first day the smell of grease was so strong, he had to take several breaks to breathe fresh air. He hated it, but opportunities came and went very quickly. A few months later, he found an opportunity to become a pastry apprentice, and although he had never baked a cookie or flipped a tortilla in his life, he took it. This was not a promotion; he still had to wash dishes. Soon after the first weeks in pastry, he was moved to "salads" and continued washing dishes.

Little by little, he forgot his idea to request a transfer to maintenance. He became accustomed to the smells of the hotel kitchen and worked for nine years there. Throughout these nine years, every low season from May to November, when the rainy season unfolds and tourists are scarce, and the hotel requires its employees to go without salary and find a job elsewhere. During this time, Daniel always returned to work in construction. As soon as the high season began in December, he would return to find his job waiting for him at the hotel kitchen. The developer for whom Daniel worked in construction was the owner of the hotel, too. It was a good arrangement for him and for his employer. His case was not isolated; many employees of hotels worked in construction, developing the huge touristic poles of Guanacaste of which Samara is one of the most important.

Daniel's childhood was surrounded by rice. He remembers that in his time, people marched to the port of Caldera to protest because imported rice arrived at the market. The imported rice was the worst threat to the rice farmers like his parents and their neighbors at Bagatzí and Falconiana. They would complain about the government's role in the importation of rice. Daniel remembers these times: *"Now people seem to forget how it was in those times, the way to do the things in old times. People in Bagatzí and Falconiana do not fight back anymore, do not complain anymore. I think they believe it is a lost cause,"* he told me, with eyes longing for the past. The protests against rice import policies drove the creation of CONARROZ. But the tool to control internal market price via imports was still an important mechanism embedded deeply in the National agrarian policy. CONARROZ itself uses it from time to time when the price or national rice tends to increase, and the big corporations face the challenge of having to pay more to the local producers. Little changed when the NAFTA-Costa Rica agreement was approved. The

partial protection of the national rice market remained in place until 10 years after the agreement came into force.

Daniel returned to his family's home with his children when he divorced, and the main reason was to be near his mother. She helps him with the children; the youngest goes to the elementary school at Bagatzí, the two older ones to the high school in Bagaces. A few months after Daniel returned, there was a job opening at the kitchen of the Palo Verde OTS Field Station, where he has worked ever since. I asked him what he wants for his children and their future. He said to me, "I want them to study and to have a future" with a smile on his face. I immediately asked where this future is. He responded, "*well, it depends on what they study.*" Daniel hoped that if Bagatzí grows big enough, his children could find a job here. If there is work to do, people do not leave. To him, this is straightforward.

The story of Alejandro is rich and full of potential. He is one of the very few young men of Bagatzí that stayed at their town, fought for it, learned, and practiced what he thought could be the best way to improve the lives of his family and neighbors. Alejandro was alone, and no other member of his generation accompanied him in his efforts. His case is emblematic of what could have been possible.

Alejandro's story began when he arrived with his father at Bagatzí in 1987. There were 20 pre-fabricated houses donated by a Costa Rica – Canada Cooperation NGO. His father was one of the members of the settlers' group who obtained these houses. In those days, there was an elementary school and a soccer field in Bagatzí. For three years, all the children of the rice shared classes in that school. Some of his friends went to high school in Bagaces, but he did not. There was work in those days in Bagatzí. He formed part of a "squad" with other friends, who worked from rice parcel to rice parcel, spreading seed and fertilizer, removing weeds. Those were times of hard work. He is one of the oldest sons of the rice, and he is the only one I interviewed with a direct connection and interest in his parents' land in Bagatzí.

Alejandro never left Bagatzí. Until recently, he stayed at his parents' house. He had the chance to buy his own, across the street from his parents. He is convinced that if one studies, then one has the problem of finding a job. The problem is the community did not support local

projects, he insisted. Their neighbors, he told me, do not think about how to support the local business and much-needed initiatives like a bus route, the cooperative, a local bank, a women association, a local unit of organic pest control (yes, it existed, and nobody continued after the first formation workshops, and the equipment is stored in the old building of the abandoned cooperative).

Now that the land is perceived as a source of income, they want to take part in the family business. I wonder if “now” is too late. Daniel told me he would like to have a small business in the town of Bagatzí. He thinks his parents’ parcel is large, and it should not be dedicated to only one crop. This is his way of speaking about diversification, and he is not wrong. The more successful parcels are diversified, and they are located in Falconiana. Bagatzí has a long tradition of monocrop. He considers artificial irrigation a good thing. And it is! He thinks about planting in the family parcel watermelon, melon, papaya, and many other local products that would be great on their land. He does not agree to have any of the two of the traditional crops of the region, rice or sugarcane, but to diversify. This is the kind of behavior that a successful farm looks for in their younger members: innovations, not afraid of change, and challenging the traditional practices. However, this is not happening in these towns.

Alejandro told me that after the initial years of good harvests, many neighbors were in significant debt (he was not specific about the source of these debts, but probably they were with the local banks for financing). The sugarcane industry offered to “buy” debts of landowners in a five-year contract whereby the sugarcane corporations would pay the debt, and in return, they would plant sugarcane. During the 1990s, rice producers of Bagatzí and Falconiana faced a fall in the price of rice due to neoliberal structural adjustment policies and new international requirements for Latin America’s internal and external economy. This was the time when the first imports of rice came to the country from China (CONARROZ, 2016). Reduction of the state investment in the local economy and especially in agriculture, forced many to lose their harvest for two or three consecutive years because there was no one to buy their products. In some cases, the government declared a “state of emergency” because of a possible shortage of rice production, influenced by the big national rice corporations that, ironically, defunded national

small-scale rice production to buy rice produced in other countries on a larger scale, and at a lower price. Thus, this so-called “state of emergency” strategy allowed big national rice corporations to buy rice from foreign countries at a lower price than the local production.

Meanwhile, the local producers like the peasants of Bagatzí and Falconiana had to wait with their harvest in long truck lines for no reason outside of the rice corporations’ parking lots. This waiting time only lowered the quality of their rice, increasing the humidity in the unprocessed grain, permitting the spread of moss and raising the level of “impurities,” which made the rice’s retail price lower. If they were lucky enough to sell their harvest, many times, red rice appeared in their batches considerably dropping the price, as we saw in Chapter 4. In some cases, these small-scale rice producers lost their harvests because they could not sell them at the minimal price to recover the investment, or they did not find a buyer at all.

In 1999, CONARROZ (Rice National Council by its acronym in Spanish) was created to protect national rice production after a series of strikes organized by small rice producers around the country. Alejandro and Daniel have in common that they both remember being part of those strikes at a pretty young age with their fathers. This could be one important factor in connecting them with their home. Alejandro, in his own way, is one of the few people of the second generation of Bagatzí neighbors interested in the future of rice production in Bagatzí. He wonders about the government’s intentions with national rice production and why CONARROZ does not conduct research or help small producers with inputs, equipment, and technical support.

Sugarcane replaced rice in the ’90s through the modality described above - renting the land for five years of consecutive renewable contracts. Every five years, the owner of the parcel did not have to do anything but wait until the end of the harvest season, in December/January, to receive money from the sugar cane industry. The sugarcane corporation subtracts seeds, fertilizer, and hired workers (those who harvest and transport the sugar canes to the sugar mills) – the mills are called “*Ingenios*” in Spanish, from the amount of money they owe the owner. If the sugarcane corporation bought the landowners’ debt too, the annual mortgage is also subtracted. Only some money remains after that, around US\$2000 per harvest on an average

parcel of 8 hectares. When you calculate the amount to cover the expenses of a family through the next year until the harvest season, it is insufficient.

Alejandro considers himself the only one of his generation remaining in Bagatzí. All his friends left the town, and only one of them returned to work the parcel, but he lives in Bagaces, he never returned to live in the town. Alejandro's sister married one neighbor, and they remained in Bagatzí until their two girls finished elementary school and had to travel to Bagaces to continue high school. At this point, the family decided to move to Bagaces permanently. This is the case of many other women in Bagatzí. Alejandro is still single. He does not want to move out of the town. He has many ideas and plans to better the rice production with biological pest controls, microfungus, and new seed varieties. He knows that the field station of CONARROZ and the University of Costa Rica are nearby, working on new varieties of seeds resistant to pests, climate change, and extreme weather conditions like the long droughts of Guanacaste. He laments that they do not implement these varieties or design new varieties for Bagatzí and the other former rice-producing towns of the region.

Daniel, on the other hand, says without hesitation that his relationship with his father was better when he was not living with him. It is likely that the same was true for his friends. During the twelve years he lived outside of Bagatzí, he rarely returned home, because of the characteristics of his job, and he did not want to. His parents never insisted on building a strong connection with the town, with the land, they never insisted on their children stay in the town, to work and find a place there. Daniel told me that he is unsure if that was also the case for his other friends, but they left the town too, and they never returned. Here one thinks of the work of Caputo (2013) who speaks of youth as a vital project:

“the psychosocial identity of the young person achieved in the distancing of the infantile figures of identification, in the questioning of the world, in the development of a system of own values, in the search of personal autonomy in front of the parental figures, in the individuation within the social world in which he/she lives, and (as the central task of

youth) in the constant search for an answer to the question 'Who am I?'" (Caputo, 2002, p. 02).

The elaboration of a vital project of the future is then, only one among these various challenges of the stage of youth.

The rhythm of work in the rice parcel was organized in such a way that the preparation of the land shaped the hiring of workers who drove trucks and carried out the heavy labor of preparing the land at the beginning of each new season. For a few weeks, there was no work for the second generation until the seed arrived and needed to be spread. Daniel's father rented a truck from the nearby rice industry, El Viejo, for the first part of the process, and he hired workers to spread seeds and fertilizer. There was no work for the young sons of the rice. The land was quite clearly their fathers'.

Alejandro spoke too about the problems derived from inheriting the land among too many siblings. This seems to be the case of many families in Bagatzí and Falconiana. His family is unusually small, and he has only one sister. All his friends, on the other hand, belong to extended families of many siblings. Without agreements between them, if there is no clear intention of working their parents' land, the most frequent decision is to sell. It is possible too that the land incurred accumulated debts of several millions of Colones, and after repaying these debts, the amount of money to share among the heirs is negligible. This is a discouraging, but frequent situation in these towns. To this situation, we also have to add the discouragement of the young daughters from taking and working the land.

Don Luis (Don Lucas' cousin and father of the three silent daughters) and his wife think that a son is responsible for the continuation of the parcel. They speak critically about other neighbors' sons because they do not see in them a possible continuation of their neighbors' lifestyle. They recounted how each of the sons of their neighbors, went to study, work, and live in other towns. The stories and memories they shared were about sons, but not daughters. Their own daughters were sitting close to them, talking softly, and invisible to this recounting of heirs. As discussed above, women taking the farm from their parents (Deere & León de Leal, 2001;

Ramos Truchero, 2010) has been successful in countries like Spain. Organizations of Rural Women are proliferating in South America, but in Costa Rica, misogyny and patriarchy permeate social structures of property succession, worsening the current situation.

The now grown-up children of the rice want a strong town, with opportunities, jobs, commerce. They do not want the ghost towns they now see. Sons and daughter of the rice seek vibrant towns with activities for themselves and their children, as they remember many things happening in their childhood: Every week teams of the young people would play soccer in the evenings, hold dances at the local town hall, attend community meetings about the future of the towns, the water supply, the doctor, the drugstore they wanted. They remember that if you played on the local soccer team, you were likely to play against other towns of the region, and even from other provinces, at least once a month. This was a good chance to visit other places and make friends. I wonder if this was a “gendered opportunity” because these soccer teams were all male.

Home is a place in the memory of the sons and daughter of the rice, home is where their parents live, but the material place of the home belongs to their parents. Ownership is an aspect of home for rural youth, and inheritance plays an important role in enforcing the idea of home, but inheritance is not part of their parents’ plans for the future, nor is continuity part of their parents’ plan for the future. Daughters and sons of the rice did what they could to find their own home, their opportunities. Only in the future will we know what is to become of these towns with no heirs.

This chapter showed the problems faced by the young daughters of the founders of both villages, along with the challenges faced by the sons at an early age and in the following years. Young women are not seen as possible heirs of the family parcel if the boys are not around. Both young women and their siblings leave the settlements at an early age in search of better employment opportunities. As we saw in Chapters 5 and 6, many of them left without even finishing high school, looking for jobs and livelihoods away from their families. Guanacaste is the largest expeller of women in the country. Not much more than the capital, but consistently over the past 25 years, as Chapter 5 showed. In the last twenty-five years, streams of women migrate

to the capital, to the lowlands of the north of the country and to the Pacific coast. A generation of women faced the dilemma of staying at home ignored and disposed or running out of the family home looking for a future outside of it. Their home of origin imposed traditional roles on them as restrictions on freedom, on the capacity for mobility and displacement, on the impossibility of pursuing studies in other locations far from their villages. Let us think that if they are not given permission to even go to work on a parcel that is located a few kilometers from their houses, they will not be allowed to study in another city or another province. That set of expectations and roles imposed on young women is a silence full of meanings in the workshops and interviews I conducted. When I asked about the reasons to get away from the town, the result was the same, the young women leave because they get married, they go out to find jobs or a husband, but they are never considered or trained as the next administrators of the family assets.

If families get older or the parents die, the second generation of siblings often makes the decision to sell the parcels and houses, and distribute what they have obtained among them. A few families sold their parcels before they could no longer work on them because of their age and kept the houses where they remain now. Very few families trained a male child to take care of the family parcel. If that was the case, the son must face the decision of what to do with the land once his parents are gone.

Inheritance, land tenure, and property rights are similar challenges for the new generation of Bagatzí and Falconiana settlers than they were to the founders. More imperative is the call to take over the farms and family business, but there no one out there to take it on. The lack of policy, planning, and follow up are the most evident problems faced by Bagatzí and Falconiana settlers that shows the failure of these state-made settlements. With the passing of time, the families failed to involve their sons and daughter in the productive practices of the land they worked. Now an aged population waits for something to happen. The future never came to these towns.

Chapter 7

Some conclusions about the social production of space and nature in the SDNtF

As I laid out in Chapter 1, the purpose of this dissertation is to understand the significant weight that spatialized social relations have on (local) social transformation in peasant communities, viewing spatial relations as equally significant as ties to a (global) capitalist economy. Through an in-depth study of the history and contemporary social relations in state-planned peasant settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana of the Guanacaste region of Costa Rica, this dissertation examines **the complex, and frequently contradictory, spatial dynamics shaping peasant and capitalist spaces in Costa Rica in the 20th and 21st century.**

Spatialized social relations shaped the origins and development of these towns, as in many other state-made peasants' communities. These peasant communities showed two important and detrimental trends: the gender division of labour, property and social roles were deepened and strengthened, limiting the access to land of new generations of peasants. The spatial configuration of these towns allowed monocrop and corporate agriculture to take advantage of their lands, but restricted the necessary family involvement in the productive practices and decision-making process of the family farm. I emphasize my findings that the influence of spatial configurations on social relations favoured ties to capitalist corporate economy and benefited the rice monocrop industry of the region, rather than peasants and their families.

In revealing these findings and their interpretation three relations have been central and they provide the basis for organizing this conclusion. These are **(i)** labour and productive practices and spatial relations; **(ii)** gender and spatial relations; and **(iii)** nature and spatial relations which collectively demonstrate the salience of spatial relations to the social production of peasant space in Bagatzí and Falconiana.

Space and productive practices in Bagatzí and Falconiana

Two notable and contradictory aspects of productive practices are influenced by the particular production of space in the state-made peasant settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana. One is the reinforcement of monocrop production in the parcels, and thus a capitalist orientation that undermines peasant production. The size (8 hectares per parcel) and separation of the parcels from the village, in some cases for more than 4 kilometers, collectively maintain parallel systems of rice production in the region. The state-made peasant settlements did not challenge nor change the dynamic of rice monocrop industrial production that already existed in the Tempisque River basin before the creation of the settlements. Chapter 4 discussed the intentions of the government to create these settlements for rice production. This particular agricultural staple is highly-industrialized; it requires huge amounts of supplies like fertilizers and pesticides and the sowing and the harvest are highly mechanized. The final milling for sale is also carried out in industrial facilities. Rice is not profitable as an individual enterprise. I argue that the design and ideas that founded Bagatzí and later Falconiana impelled the rapid transformation of individual farmers into agricultural entrepreneurs, a process which occurred to some extent for a number of the original settlers of Bagatzí.

The second aspect, in contrast, is visible in the use of every space available in the towns for productive purposes so as to sustain a subsistence economy. This is one of the ways in which peasants continue to produce spaces for peasant productive practices and economy, and it is more common in Bagatzí than in Falconiana. The two state-made peasant settlements may lack a church, but they use empty spaces in the towns to plant corn, plantain, and beans. Falconiana shelters a more diverse productive economy than Bagatzí where the rice monocrop and the sugarcane are predominant.

In a contemporary expression of the inner contradictions of capitalism in the Costa Rican countryside, in peasant settlements like Bagatzí and Falconiana material space has a decelerating effect on transformations in large-scale social relations. I do not rule out that profound transformations in geography and space can accelerate transformations in the social relations previously held. But that only reinforces the relationship between both aspects of life: we inhabit

space and transform it and, in that process, space adheres to social relations and these too matter, as Maurice Halbwachs suggests “like brick and mortar” (*Halbwachs, 1980*). Memory, tradition and practices are embedded in the material space we inhabit. The two towns did not develop a robust economy, did not innovate in new crop varieties or techniques, and did not build new houses or facilities after settlement. The empty spaces, lots that were left aside for the church, the cultural center, the community center or the high school are now planted with rows of corn and plantain.

Within the spatial arrangement of these state-made peasant settlements, as I showed in Chapters 2 and 3, the traditional agrarian structure characteristic of Latin America with its concentration of power (in the relations of “patron-peon” in Spanish for the complex relations of power and money between owners of the land and the seasonal agricultural workers that in many cases resided in the same haciendas,) land and resources, and structures of exploitation did not change. This is because few members of the peasant families were involved in farming, a problem reinforced by the separation of land and housing. Rather, waged seasonal migrant workers were incorporated into the needs of the farm rather than incorporating women to work on the parcels. The traditional peasant productive practices, the necessary balance between work, rest, and consumption particular to the peasant family unit of production, changed to adapt to the demands of producing rice as a monocrop for the national market and to balance the productive and reproductive work at home. Only in the nearby space of the gardens and backyards around the houses, and abandoned lots and side roads were subsistence staples such as corn, beans, and plantains raised for auto-consumption, where –unlike in the parcels- women and children were involved. The peasantry’s persistence over time resides in the slow pace at which material place responds to the changes of society –because place bears the mark of repeated and ritualized forms of life, productive practices and social relations, transits, uses, and rotations. To change or alter social relations, the more-than-human material of bricks and mortar or soil and agricultural parcel are necessarily must also be transformed.

Space and gender in Bagatzí and Falconiana

A contradiction of capitalism and patriarchy in the countryside is expressed in peasant settlements like Bagatzí and Falconiana, where material space further entrenched gendered social relations as opposed to transforming them. The use of space imposed by ITCO on Bagatzí and Falconiana settlements worked to strengthen the division of gender roles and the separation of women from agricultural production practices in the parcels. I compare this to the differentiated roles of male/workers vs. female/housewives in urban industrialized contexts where the wage of the husband can afford the stay-at-home wife (Federici, 2003; Lobao & Meyer, 1995). In rural areas the precarious balance of peasant choices between labour and consumption, and drudgery and utility meant that women were largely confined to domestic reproductive work. As a possible consequence linked to the separation of women from agricultural productive practices, young women face challenges and limitations that make them question traditional gender roles and expectations, and push them to migrate. The young women interviewed seek jobs, professions, and activities unattainable in their towns of origin, one result of the dynamics in peasant spaces carried in Bagatzí and Falconiana.

Within the spatial arrangement of these state-made peasant settlements as I showed in Chapters 2 and 3, the structure characteristic of the peasant unit of production and the spatial dynamics shaping productive practices in the parcels excluded women from production. The separation of land and housing reinforced this dynamic. Women's land tenure and ownership only applied to a few family founders. The new generation of settlers and especially young women do not have the same access to land titles as their mothers. In a few cases their mothers participated equally in the ownership of the house and the parcels. But in both settlements the majority of the parcels are property of the father alone and in limited cases shared with the mother. What the young women see from an early age is that the space of the parcel is man's place, it belongs to their fathers, not even to their brothers. If this is to change, women must be involved from an early age in the activities and decisions that concern the family business, to be considered potential owners equally with their brothers.

In Chapter 5 the topics of inheritance and involvement of women in the family farm are thus the two key factors discussed in this section of the conclusion. The differentiation of gender roles within the peasant family in state-made peasant settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana occurred against the peasant logic that involves every member of the family unit of production in the farm duties (even though Chayanov's *The Peasant Economy* (1986)¹⁹ was insufficiently conscious of the division of gender roles, reproductive and productive roles, and overload of work and duties that peasant women suffer through their involvement in the farm duties). In the case of Bagatzí and Falconiana the separation of land for production and land for habitation reinforced a separation of gender roles in connection with productive practices. Men dedicated their efforts to work the land of the parcels; women stay at home carrying out reproductive duties in the home, limited to the area of the settlement where the houses, school, and small convenience stores are located. In a unit of production where each member is necessary for the balance of production and consumption, it is a great burden to keep the women constrained to the house and household duties.

Villages and parcels are two different domains. Women and children remain in the village, the parcels are for men. As discussed in Chapter 3 I sustain that a model designed for cooperation and access to productive resources such as that of the Israeli moshav would have facilitated the participation of women in productive activities, giving these women the capacity and experience to take charge of a possible future in those same parcels. If they were concerned about the safety of women, a community model focused on living space, and surrounded by productive spaces, would have facilitated cooperative forms of control and support among families. The use of space in the moshav model does not necessarily transform gender roles but it also preserves the spatial connection between the peasant family and their productive land.

Chapter 6 illustrated the problems faced by the young female daughters of the founders of both villages. They are not seen as possible heirs of the family parcel when the boys are absent. Both young women and their male siblings leave the settlements at an early age in search of

¹⁹ Chayanov's (1986) data collection for *The Peasant Economy* was vast and well executed, but gender issues were not part of the questionnaires (Kerblay, 1986; Ploeg, 2006)

better employment opportunities. As we saw in Chapters 5 and 6, many of them left without even finishing high school, looking for jobs and livelihoods away from their families. The province of Guanacaste has consistently shown the largest outmigration of women in the country over the past twenty-five years, as Chapter 5 showed. A generation of women faced the dilemma of staying at home and excluded from production, or leaving the family home looking for a future outside of it. Their home of origin imposed traditional roles on them as restrictions on freedom, on the capacity for mobility, on the impossibility of pursuing studies in other locations far from their villages. If they are not given permission to even go to work on the parcel located a few kilometres from their houses, they will not be allowed to study in another city or another province yet reside at home. That set of expectations and roles imposed on young women was in evidence in silences replete with meaning in the workshops and interviews I conducted. When I asked about their reasons for leaving town, the result was the same, the young women leave because they get married, they go out to find jobs or a husband, but they are never considered or trained as the next administrators of the family assets.

Space and Nature in Palo Verde National Park, Bagatzí and Falconiana

Society's spatial practices produce social spaces' materiality. Social practices materialize the social production of social space that in Soja's work (Soja, 1985) is conceived as the spatiality of social relations. To Lefebvre (1991), spatial practices contain social reproductive and productive relationships that ensure social continuity and take shape in material spaces like towns, buildings, or monuments. I will add to that shortlist forest and biomes. Human intervention on natural surroundings remakes the more than human, co-creating spaces and people. I argue in this sense that the SDNtF of Guanacaste is socially-produced as much as ecologically-produced.

Long histories of human occupation, of extensive extraction that denuded forest and produced savannas, are recounted in Chapter 4. Such histories are deeply interconnected, like

the story of maize pollen found deeply buried in the ocean floor and in the muddy floor of a glacial lagoon alongside the people that cooked it for food and domesticated it to make it edible. I agree with Dolores Piperno's (2011b) extended work on the field of archaeology in Mesoamerica that the ancient biome of the early settlers in the continent was deeply shaped by human habitation. As such, it was a landscape socially-produced by the needs and demands of the inhabitants of these old forests. Early humans arrived in tropical lands and first colonized Mesoamerica around sixteen thousand years ago in what is now the Pacific coast of Mexico. Large areas of the Central American forest were populated by these newcomers. According to Piperno (ibid, the forest was not a "barrier" to humans, but it worked as an intricate biome of human habitation and inter-species co-creation.)

The contemporary landscape of Guanacaste's lowlands – fragmented grasslands and irregularly-forested, wavy hills – is product of an intense intervention that emerged at the beginning of the human presence on these lands (please refer to Figure 3 in Chapter 4). It continued in the recent colony via the implementation of land tenure regimes like the haciendas and cattle ranches. The fragile SDNtF is an open forest, with clear undergrowth and moments of the year when the trees change their leaves, opening the forest to full light of the sun. The creation of the settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana, and the others in the region such as La Soga, Tamarindo, Llanos de Cortez, and San Martin, were part of a huge effort to expand that agricultural frontier on quasi-abandoned lands of old haciendas that had been established more than two hundred years ago. These were spaces along the Tempisque River, as recounted in the history in Chapter 2. The old productive model of haciendas and cattle ranches gave way to the development and modernization that industrial agriculture promised to bring with it. The fractioning of the big haciendas into small family parcels did not help the recovery of the SDNtF. It is conserved only in the protected areas of Palo Verde and Santa Rosa National Parks. The optimism of many biologists I interviewed sustains that even this altered and deciduous forest persists as the SDNtF. It is the forest we have now, greener and more fragmented, populated by peasant families, cows and rice paddies. In the production of social spaces for the peasant settlements of Bagatzí and Falconiana, nature was produced too. I sustain that the last remaining pieces of SDNtF were a product of the lack of agricultural value of the lowlands of the Tempisque

River basin. These lands flood during the annual rainy season to create what is called “the lagoon” in Palo Verde—one that is present for more than four months between August and November each year. And so, hybrid spaces are created where daily life is rooted in irrigation canals and parcels, between government housing programs houses and ballast roads. Modernity and rurality, poverty and agricultural corporations, conservation areas and monocultures live side by side, sometimes separated only by barbed wire and the firm belief and stubbornness of saying “here begins the National Park.” Thus, spaces and demarcations of ecological conservation were created, the places where the lives of peasants, biologists and conservationists, and lost tourists seeking an oasis in the endless heat of the midday of Guanacaste, intersect.

The lands that Palo Verde occupies now lack agricultural value, as is the case for other protected areas of the Guanacaste region. Cattle were introduced in the open fields left behind when precious woods were extracted. Colonialism and capitalism extracted resources from SDNtF leaving remnants of forest, patches of scattered trees, on hilltops and at the bottom of flooded valleys. Arriving at the end of this dissertation I propose that we should see in this landscape the footprint of the SDNtF, even in the spaces that people use and inhabit outside the national park. I see it in the last Ceibas of Bagatzí and Falconiana and in the guanacaste trees and persistent grasses of the savannas.

Where I find myself in these spaces, practices, and roles

I am a Latin American woman, a researcher amid peasants, who seeks to understand and explain. I firmly believe that as researchers we first investigate what challenges us, what opens a window to the personal questions that drive each one of us. In my case, my research questions have always revolved around uprooting and resistance. I am the daughter of exile via my mother and father. I am uprooted and searching for home. I see myself in others, and I long for the certainty of belonging to a sense of place that I lack. My family, like many others, decades ago, was thrown into distance and time like arrows shot from a bow. I believe that I continue

reproducing that trajectory even beyond my mother and father's generation. In unstoppable inertia, the exiled continue to wonder where home is. This is a continuous task of seeking the social relations that will provide the explanatory matrix of our identity, anchored in brick and mortar. When I arrive at each new coast, I wonder the same thing: what makes these people so intertwined so strongly in the space they inhabit? What does it mean for them to navigate the space they do every day, the tours –the dances of Edward Soja (1989)- in those cities or small towns, creating and recreating meanings in transit, in inhabiting, in moving and stopping? Can I see who these farmers are and what they do, the prescriptions of how to do it and the limitations to the actions, in the space they inhabit?

My days staying at the Palo Verde station and national park were sewn with threads of friendship and a hint of formaldehyde through constant visits to the laboratories. Those laboratories are where other doctoral students counted legs of caterpillars and discussed video recordings of big bumblebees fighting for a branch to court elusive female partners. Others struggled with naming or not an extended family of Garrobos (*Ctenosaura similis* and no, it's not an Iguana), as they could easily recognize and name each one... "Biter," "Fighter," "Long-leg-Sally." Constant bleeding from feeding mosquitoes leads to the craving for others, other researchers, other beings, other sciences, and other skin than your own. Warm questions were asked at after meal chats:

- "What do you research here?" or "what are you doing here, besides feeding mosquitoes?" These were frequent queries to me at meal tables and coffeemakers.

These were the beginnings of the best moments of my days at Palo Verde field station. Of course, I answered!

- "I am conducting an ethnography of the social production of space and nature in the Seasonally Dry Neotropical Forest, here, close to the Park, in the neighbouring communities of Bagatzí and Falconiana. I work with peasants" (Smile, I say to myself, smile and continue smiling because that seasoned-by-the-sun-of-many-continent biologist that is seated in front of me is still chewing his frijoles and my nonsense).

He or she likely thought, 'how is that? Nature cannot be socially produced!' I can almost read their thoughts: I manipulated nature this very morning, I counted its scales and weighed its stomach content. Smile, I said again to myself.

- "And how so?" The question landed between us like an unexpectedly curious dragonfly.

This is when I knew that the person seated in front of me was stripped of glory and hubris and simply wanted to know. So, I told them what I did, what I expected to find, and what I already knew. And some of them crossed their own frontier and entered into my realm, across the "borderland" that Anzaldúa chanted to our ears, and they asked:

- "Do you think that peasants eat Garrobos as a part of their regular diet?"

- "Do you want me to ask them?" I said... "Because I can, actually it would be interesting to know..."

Some others were momentarily amazed and then retired quietly to their labs, their caterpillars and bumblebees. But I chased them down, I cornered them there in their labs, and I asked, demanded to be allowed to colonize their realm as much as they did mine. I was carrying out interdisciplinary studies, and I was doing it with them, despite them, but never without them.

In this lived scenario of wounds and mosquitoes, of science and everyday life, I invite you to start thinking about and fighting for the small and beautiful and horrendous and unexpected kin, it could be a mosquito, a beautiful guanacaste tree, a dying river like the Tempisque. I locate myself in this fight against climate change and its impact, capitalism and its doom on the Tempisque River and production of space and nature in peasant and scientific communities. This place, the borderland, is about to disappear like the Dry Forest that was here before us and in spite of us, persisting in small fragmented patches, while also dying with each leaf its slow death.

Conclusions sometimes only serve to give pause a moment and think about what remains to be done and what to do next. In terms of this research, I think it is very pertinent to continue deepening our knowledge concerning the daily actions and traditional practices of the peasant families and the implications for their future and that of their communities. I believe that the feminist approach to traditional issues of the agrarian question, ownership, and reproduction of

traditional gender roles should be included in the research agenda of geographers, sociologists, anthropologists. Likewise, the future of the new generations and rural communities is a theme that opens up discussion and critique of the public policies ostensibly supporting and promoting peasant and rural communities.

As forms of resistance to the extractivist economy and capitalist alienation, peasant family and solidarity economies are an interesting topic raising future avenues of research and activism. The answer to the traditional agrarian question remains the same: peasants have few options to overcome the intrusion of capitalist mode of production and practices into their logics of production. They may establish cooperatives, or sell their properties and become industrial/commercial wage workers and no longer peasants, or they may expand their farms and participate in profit-making agribusiness. The length and duration of the available solutions is what motivated this research; that the traditional agrarian question remains unresolved. To what extent do peasant livelihoods persist, even against the odds and advances of the market economy and the pressure on their resources? What this research has added is the incorporation of geographic and critical analysis to its resolution, so that by understanding the role of space in social relations we can better understand the dynamics that shape the future of rural communities. In their future, which is in many ways the future of all, of food security, of adaptability to climate change, of solidarity and tradition, are the voice of other rhythms and ways of creating and reshaping identity.

The active involvement of the state and its institutions in the persistence and transmission of peasant and rural family property, the vitality of rural communities such as Bagatzí and Falconiana, and the incorporation of technologies and services to traditional agricultural activities, is of paramount importance. Peasant and rural communities should participate in these policy efforts in broad and open consultations. But agrarian communities should not be designed from city desks by those who do not understand the importance of strengthening social ties, solidarity and support both through spatial design itself and via public policies, service provision and advice.

Now more than ever, the obstacles to progressive socio-ecologically sound transformation of social relations appear insurmountable, they cling and constrict us, and they drown communities throughout Central America, such as Bagatzí and Falconiana, between the tides of agro-business and the uncertainty of neoliberal and neo-colonial policies. International capital and weak national states implemented neoliberalism through the Central American countryside. As shallow-water predators, corporations and economic interests move slowly, encircling and waiting for the end and abandonment of communities like Bagatzí and Falconiana. They have already put their hands and investments into large sections of the peasant projects that benefited from the *Arenal-Tempisque* artificial irrigation system (Edelman, 1987, 1992; Edelman & León, 2014; Kuzdas et al., 2016). Now, more than thirty years since these communities were installed in the region, these corporations need only put the last touches on systems of rent and purchase of debts, so that those few who still subsist in Bagatzí and Falconiana sell them their lands. Little by little, due to state abandonment and because no one continues with the family farm, many peasant families have left the villages and the lots. Few subsist without future or legacy. The daughters left after livelihoods were denied to them in their original communities. The children of the rice grew and moved out in search of work and income they could not find in their communities. Fathers and mothers remained behind, without bequeathing their property, or transferring their peasant trajectories to the next generation. This is evident in Bagatzí more than in Falconiana.

When you write the conclusions of a study like this, you are tempted to propose and recommend it. Instead I want to think that there is a message inscribed in the stone and the mortar, in the ground, the water and the seeds, that speaks to me through the distance about hope and possible futures, and persistence against the odds challenging peasant existence in our times. In many ways, these whispers invite me to come back to these towns, to my roots, to continue searching for the meaning and answers I will always seek.

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