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“No Hay Guerra y No Hay Dinero” There is No War, and There is No Money: A Case Study of the Organic Coffee and Ecotourism Programs of UCA Miraflor, Nicaragua

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“No Hay Guerra y No Hay Dinero”

There is No War, and There is No Money:

A Case Study of the Organic Coffee and Ecotourism

Programs of UCA Miraflor, Nicaragua

By

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In the face of persisting unequal relations between the global North and South, what strategies can rural Southern peasants use to ensure the protection of their livelihoods and resources? The Union of Agribusiness Cooperatives (UCA) in Miraflor, Nicaragua has developed and implemented organic coffee and ecotourism programs designed to sustain local peoples’ land and the health of the population as well as providing long-term economic diversification. This paper evaluates the effectiveness of these programs in providing actual long-term economic, ecological, and social benefits, as well as regular income, to members involved in the organic coffee and ecotourism programs. Through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and secondary data analysis, this research illustrates the priorities of rural peasant farmers and the obstacles they face as they attempt to participate in global markets dominated by organizations and policies based out of the global North.

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Preface

One night in El Sontule, after I had already been in the *campo* for a week or so, the father of my home-stay and I were talking. We did this a lot, since he liked to talk and I liked to listen. Since this was in 2007, shortly after Daniel Ortega had won the election, we were discussing Nicaraguan politics.

He explained to me that, during the revolution and the Contra War, the Nicaraguan government had spent a lot of money on fighting, so much money that some of it had even made its way up to Miraflor, since most of the fighting with the Contras took place in the area. The government used the money to help the people, so the people could help the with the government's war. But when the fighting stopped, so did the money, and the peasants were once again on their own.

He and the rest of Miraflor, and all of Nicaragua, had spent years waiting for the fighting to be over, but once it was, nobody knew what to do. Their jobs were associated with the war, and the war had influenced their everyday life. Amidst his critiques and jokes, he summed up Nicaragua's current situation simply by saying, "*Ahorrita, no hay guerra, y no hay dinero*" – Right now, there is no war, and there is no money.

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Glossary

CECOCAFEN: Northern Coffee Cooperative Center

CERE: Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies

CGE: Center for Global Education

FSLN: Sandinista National Liberation Front

ICA: International Coffee Agreement

ICO: International Coffee Organization

IFI: International Financing Institution

IMF: International Monetary Fund

MARENA: Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources

MIDINRA: Ministry of Agribusiness Development and Agrarian Reform

MRS: Sandinista Renovation Movement

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OCIA: Organic Crop Improvement Association

PLC: Constitutional Liberation Party

PRODECOOP: Promoter of Cooperative Development in the Segovias

SOPEXXCA: Society of Small Producers, Exporters, and Marketers

UCA: Union of Agribusiness Cooperatives

UNAG: National Union of Farmers and Ranchers

UNO: United National Opposition

WB: World Bank

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The world is getting smaller. The forces of globalization have woven the economic ties that bind today's world into an intricate web of trade relations, allegiances, and adversaries that encompass almost every aspect of society today. We all squander resources. Some of us regret it. The nations that have power want more resources. The nations that have resources want the power to control them. The global search for sustainable development has united people from around the world to try to stem the degradation of our planet, but power, money, and disparate priorities continue to maintain the same unequal relations that have existed for centuries. The global North still seeks to dominate the global South, while the global South still seeks a way to break the cycle.

In spite of increased public awareness of the number of global environmental and social problems, change comes slowly. In the North, grassroots movements and non-governmental organizations (NGO's) have emerged to regulate activities ignored by national governments; citizen action campaigns remain the most effective strategy to combat the unethical business practices that seem representative of global Western capitalism. In the South, the poor and powerless band together with help from ethically-oriented Northern organizations and individuals in an attempt to improve their lives and control their destinies. The question remains, how can the North and the South reconcile their differences and affect positive change to ensure the long, healthy lives of the people and environment in the Americas?

To begin to answer this question, I started at the bottom, with a case study of a group which is one of the most overlooked and undervalued: the peasant farmers of Latin America. My research presents an evaluative case study of the Union of Agribusiness

Cooperatives, Heroes and Martyrs of Miraflor (UCA Miraflor), Nicaragua, a union of agricultural cooperatives located in an ecologically protected area. UCA Miraflor members support themselves, among other things, through the production of organic coffee and ecotourism, as well as through remittances from abroad. I evaluate its coffee and ecotourism programs based on evidence from individual in-depth interviews and participant observation during a two-week stay in the community of El Sontule, in the high elevation zone of UCA Miraflor in 2007.

My evaluation of UCA Miraflor organic coffee production focuses on the UCA's roles in financing, land use, use of natural resources, monoculture versus poly-culture, and coffee production, export, and price. My ecotourism evaluation also focuses on financing and use of resources and environmental degradation, as well as family and community participation in the program. Based on these evaluative points, I discuss the economic and ecological successes, shortcomings, and sustainability of the UCA Miraflor organic coffee and ecotourism programs, and assess the relations between the UCA cooperative organizational structure and its members.

UCA Miraflor, Nicaragua was an ideal site to conduct my research because the UCA provides a variety of social and environmental programs that encourage the involvement of its members throughout the ecological preserve. The mission of UCA Miraflor includes the goals of sustainable development within a smaller, ecologically protected area and promoted through community-based programs designed by the UCA. Since the UCA manages the social programs as well as the environment of the preserve, a case study of UCA Miraflor creates an opportunity to concurrently research environmental, economic, and social concerns and produce real, on the ground results

from the view of peasant populations. The results of my research add to the body of knowledge on the effects of globalization, Fair Trade coffee, and tourism on poor populations in the global South and could also prove useful in other rural Latin American communities seeking to use the cooperative structure or to implement similar development strategies.

Thesis Organization

This thesis concentrates on the organic and Fair Trade coffee and ecotourism programs of UCA Miraflor, but also presents background information in order for to contextualize the case study and to help readers better understand the perspectives of Miraflor residents.

First, I begin in Chapter 2 by introducing several theoretical approaches to understanding sustainable development and discussing how they relate to organic and Fair Trade coffee and ecotourism programs in Nicaragua. This discussion frames the programs of UCA Miraflor and situates them within the global sustainable development movement. After I discuss my research methodology in Chapter 3, I present an overview of the recent history of Nicaragua and UCA Miraflor in Chapter 4. This chapter provides a local and national context for UCA Miraflor's coffee production and ecotourism programs and helps elucidate the plight of Miraflor's peasant farmers in the context of globalization. I conclude Chapter 4 with a brief discussion specifically on the importance of cooperatives in Nicaragua's history.

Chapters 5 and 6 provide my analysis, with Chapter 5 focusing on the organic and Fair Trade coffee program in Miraflor and Chapter 6 detailing the area's ecotourism program. Each of these analysis chapters outlines the development of the program in

question, the role of the UCA in that program, and an assessment of each project according to the evaluative points listed above. Chapter 7 is my conclusion, which summarizes my assessment of the UCA Miraflor coffee and ecotourism programs and gives recommendations on improvements to each program, the organization of the UCA, and relations between the UCA and Miraflor residents.

CHAPTER 2: APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) published a now famous report entitled *Our Common Future.* This report contains the most commonly used definition of sustainable development, defining it as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The idea gained popularity at the 1992 Earth Summit, at which 178 nations gathered together to discuss global problems with the environment and development. The idea that sustainable development can reconcile economic growth and environmental protection, thus creating a win-win scenario for both Northern and Southern actors, has encouraged its worldwide popularity (Gould and Lewis 2009).

However, since different nations also have different priorities, as well as differing amounts of power, subsequent definitions have altered the emphasis of sustainable development to best suit their various needs. To analyze this contradistinction, Gould and Lewis (2009) identify the three main, but unequal, goals of sustainable development that form the common thread between the various definitions*:* (1) economic growth, (2) environmental protection, and (3) social equity. Since the goal of Western free market capitalism is profit, the focus of most Northern-designed sustainable development programs is economic growth, while Southern actors center their sustainable development efforts on the alleviation of poverty and improving unequal North-South relations (Gould and Lewis 2009).

The lack of a clear definition of sustainable development, coupled with the contrasting goals of the global North and South, create a situation in which it is unclear

what it is we are trying to sustain or why we're trying to sustain it (Gould and Lewis 2009). Many people in the global North want to preserve Southern ecosystems for global environmental benefit and blame Southern residents for environmental degradation in Southern nations, but residents of the South claim that this is only one more attempt by the North to gain control of the international development process and Southern resources (Lewis 2000). Southern nations seek to implement sustainable development techniques to help their large poor populations and foster economic development, but often this involves the use of natural resources, which results in critiques from Northern environmental agencies and NGO's about harm to the environment (Lewis 2000). While nobody will argue for *un*sustainable development, the question of whose "needs" or "wants" are being addressed through sustainable development practices remains a critical point of debate (Lewis 2000).

Three Perspectives on Sustainable Development

The many interests and priorities influencing sustainable development strategies are reflected in three theoretical perspectives on sustainable development (Gould and Lewis 2009). These three perspectives present many of the important issues within sustainable development and provide background for evaluation of sustainable development strategies including the following evaluation of UCA Miraflor's organic coffee and tourism programs. These perspectives are: (1) Free-market Environmentalism (2) Policy-Reformist Sustainable Development, and the (3) Critical Structural Approach to Sustainable Development.

Free-Market Environmentalism

"Free-Market Environmentalism" (Sunderlin 1995) applies in a culture whose population believes that "the free market is the best way to address social problems" (Gould and Lewis 2009:271). Instead of questioning current economic or political issues, free-market environmentalism relies on the voluntary actions of individuals and corporations to improve the environment through green consumerism and pressuring changes in corporate behavior through boycotts on products that are harmful to the environment or human populations (Gould and Lewis 2009).

In addition to consumers committing to "sustainable consumerism," international corporations such as Volkswagen, Mitsubishi, and 3M have joined the Business Council of Sustainable Development to help address the global environmental crisis (Gould and Lewis 2009). Corporations have also created voluntary agreements such as the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies (CERE), through which they pledge to voluntarily issue annual environmental reports and engage in environmental improvements (Gould and Lewis 2009). "Associating with such voluntary principles provides positive public relations benefits, without requiring dramatic shifts in actual corporate behavior, and signals that there is little need for government intervention" (Gould and Lewis 2009:272). The basic assumption of free-market environmentalism is that sustainable development based on green-capitalism is possible without any drastic changes to the existing market infrastructure.

Policy-Reformist Approach to Sustainable Development

Like free-market environmentalism, policy-reformists also believe in the ideology of economic growth and do not question existing political or economic arrangements;

instead, proponents of this approach look to "how policies can be reformed to integrate sustainable development" (Gould and Lewis 2009:273). The idea behind the policy-reformist approach is that the economic system need not be changed, but rather adapted to meet the environmental, economic, and social goals of sustainable development (Gould and Lewis 2009).

Though many nations, including the United States and Canada, have refocused their international aid agencies to a "greener" image, environmental improvements are difficult to gauge (Gould and Lewis 2009). The policy-reformist approach assumes that poverty can be reduced through economic growth and that environmental quality will then improve in time (Gould and Lewis 2009). However, measures used to examine sustainable development such as the sustainable national income, which compares actual levels of economic activity with sustainable levels of activity, show that "many development schemes are accounted for as net losses rather than gains because the environmental costs are calculated as outweighing the economic benefits" (Gould and Lewis 2009:273-274).

Critical Structural Approach to Sustainable Development

A critical structural approach to sustainable development takes a very different path than the previous two approaches. It examines "the degree to which the mechanisms of sustainable development serve to reproduce global inequality" (Gould and Lewis 2009:274). Critics of sustainable development believe that those unequal North-South relations established in the post-World War II "developmentalist" period are perpetuated through current Northern-designed sustainable development strategies (Gould and Lewis

2009). These critics focus on three key North-South linkages: trade, aid, and debt (Gould and Lewis 2009).

According to proponents of this view, sustainable development does not offer real alternatives to previous techniques. Rather,

> The sustainable development concept emerged to avoid addressing difficult conflicts between the environment and economic growth, the Global North and South, the rich and poor; and unless those conflicts are addressed, neither long-term environmental protection nor poverty alleviation will be achieved. (Gould and Lewis 2009: 274)

The critical structuralist approach states that as long as free markets dominate, economic logic and profits will always win out over environmental and social concerns, which makes sustainable development as currently practiced nothing more than an attempt to "co-opt demands for more effective efforts to protect the environment and address poverty and inequality" (Gould and Lewis 2009:274). The conclusion of the critical structural approach is that:

> Only dramatic changes to the structure of the global economy, the goals that drive it and the distribution of what it produces (both goods and bads) could bring us to a socially and ecologically sustainable relationship between social systems and ecosystems. (Gould and Lewis 2009:274)

The critical structuralist perspective encourages the most drastic changes to current development practices in pursuit of sustainable development. However, in my view, it is also the most applicable sustainable development perspective when examining rural Southern farming, since poor farmers have suffered most from existing development strategies and have more to gain from global economic change.

Sustainable Development Techniques

As sustainable development continues to be a worldwide buzz word, nations in the global South are searching for strategies that offer the potential for economic growth

and environmental protection while also alleviating poverty. The theoretical perspectives I presented above introduce sustainable development and its conflicts, but "it is the real-world application of the concept that we must turn to in order to understand the difficulties, contradictions, and trade-offs that sustainable development paths present" (Gould and Lewis 2009:275). My research is centered on two of the most popular Latin American sustainable development strategies: Fair Trade coffee and tourism.

Fair Trade Coffee

Nicaragua has always been a predominantly agricultural economy, but historically the nation's agriculture has also been the vehicle of colonialism. Given that global legacy, Nicaraguan farmers continue to be hard-pressed to improve their position in the agricultural market. Alternative trade programs emerged in the 1960's and 1970's as attempts to provide economic and social benefits for Southern producers. Many of the early efforts were from church-based groups and emphasized solidarity and activism aimed at alleviating poverty and generating employment in developing countries, thus laying the groundwork for the Fair Trade coffee and other products that emerged beginning in the 1990's (Jaffee 2007).[1] "These solidarity groups viewed the creation of alternative trade networks as part of a much larger critique of capitalism and the global economic system" (Jaffee 2007:13).

Coffee that is labeled Fair Trade must meet certain environmental, social, and financial criteria, though many different certifying bodies and definitions exist. Jaffee (2007:2) presents a list of the most commonly used criteria. They are:

- Guaranteed minimum (floor) prices to producers

[1] For more information on the development of Fair Trade coffee, see Daniel Jaffee's book *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival* (2007)

- Fair wages to laborers
- Social development premium[2]
- Advance credit or payment to producers
- Democratically run producer cooperatives or workplaces
- Long-term contracts and trading relationships
- Environmentally sustainable production practices
- Public accountability and financial transparency
- Financial and technical assistance to producers
- Safe, non-exploitative working conditions

Through these conditions, Fair Trade coffee organizations believe that Fair Trade certification not only delivers fair prices and living wages to producers, but also, among other benefits, empowers producers, supports sustainable farming, ends rural poverty in producing countries, and helps create a more equitable international global coffee market (Jaffee 2007). However, researchers such as Dan Jaffee critique the Fair Trade model and question the tangible benefits and advantages actually received by producers of Fair Trade coffee. In addition to the prolonged stagnation of the price of coffee, which has only been raised once since 1989, most of the present-day concerns are centered on Fair Trade certification and the global Fair Trade coffee market itself and how they have exacerbated the current predicament of unequal North-South relations and resulted in an ecological "neocolonialism" (Jaffee 2007).

Jaffee (2007) explains that organic and Fair Trade certification standards were designed from a Northern farming perspective that has not translated well to Southern

[2] This premium paid to organic and Fair Trade coffee farmers can be used by communities for local development needs such as schools, roads, or health centers

farmers. There is no longer a market for non-organic Fair Trade coffee; rather, Fair Trade certification is supposed to enable certified farmers to implement organic production techniques that promote sustained ecological and economic benefits, even during periods of low price (Jaffee 2007). Unfortunately, such is not always the case. As certifying bodies enact stricter organic and Fair Trade standards, producers must bear the added costs without compensation or negotiation with certifying bodies. Jaffee (2007:152) argues that "it is the uncritical application of this Northern model" that constitutes "ecological neo-colonialism" and that Fair Trade organizations need to reframe international certification standards to address the economic, social and cultural contexts of small coffee producers in the global South and reduce the power held by certifiers.

The greatest threat to the global Fair Trade coffee market is itself. A schism continues to grow between "movement-oriented" Fair Trade organizations and large multinational corporations seeking entry into the Fair Trade market (Jaffee 2007). The specialty coffee market represents a threat to large mainstream coffee companies like Proctor & Gamble and Starbucks that have become giants quenching the thirst of the coffee-parched population of the U.S. Because of this threat, mainstream coffee companies are "simultaneously attempting to beat, join, and weaken Fair Trade and the challenge it poses to the way they do business" (Jaffee 2007:224). If they do join the market, they want either to keep Fair Trade coffee relegated to the profitable niche market or to earn the Fair Trade label with only minor adjustments to their practices (Jaffee 2007). The potential danger is Fair Trade losing the ethical backbone on which it was founded, and the social benefits promoted therein. Jaffee (2007:216) cautions:

> Just as the meaning of organic – once a transformative social movement – has been reduced to a question of allowable inputs, so the Fair Trade movement is in danger of its significance being narrowed to a single variable: price.

Jaffee (2007) documents the positive impact of Fair Trade in improving the livelihoods of producers and their families and demonstrating that alternative trade is possible, but he believes that the system itself can be greatly improved. In response to those concerns, as well as the many other factors within Fair Trade, Jaffee (2007) provides recommendations on how the Fair Trade market can be strengthened, namely: (1) improving the Fair Trade system, (2) strengthening the Fair Trade movement, and (3) changing interactions within the Fair Trade market.

For the purpose of this research project, the most relevant of Jaffee's recommendations centers on improving the Fair Trade system.[3] To accomplish this, Jaffee (2007) suggests, first and foremost, an adjustment of the base price of coffee so that it actually reflects a living wage for producers. Labor costs, production costs, and inflation have increased, but coffee's base price has only been revisited and increased once since the collapse of the International Coffee Organization in 1989. This stagnation of Fair Trade coffee's base price is one of the main causes of the current coffee crisis (Jaffee 2007). The allocation of benefits must also be revisited to provide a higher percentage of the value added through the commodity chain to coffee producing nations as coffee is processed, roasted, and sold on the market to consumers (Jaffee 2007). Jaffee (2007) also recommends the reduction of entry barriers for farmers wishing to produce Fair Trade coffee and addressing the demands of organic certification, including

[3] For more recommendations on improving Fair Trade arrangements, see Chapter 9 in Daniel Jaffee's book *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival* (2007).

prohibiting certifiers from demanding that farmers meet new requirements without justification and financial compensation for the additional costs accrued.

Tourism

Despite Nicaragua's predominantly agricultural history, the development of tourism has recently become the main focus of government policy to combat rural poverty and improve the national economy (Borge 2003, cited in Croes and Vanegas 2008). Within the tourism industry, national governments, international aid agencies, NGO's, and indigenous groups have touted ecotourism specifically as a model for sustainable development (Gould and Lewis 2009). An effective ecotourism program has the potential to protect land and ecological diversity while simultaneously providing long-term economic and social benefits and sustainable use of natural resources (Gould and Lewis 2009).

Like Fair Trade, ecotourism does not have one clearly accepted definition. There are few specific environmental or social rules to enforce, which has resulted in some controversial and seemingly contradictory rural development plans under the banner of "ecotourism" (Gould and Lewis 2009). In terms of sustainable development, Gould and Lewis (2009:276) suggest that ecotourism be defined as "a form of nature-based tourism that contributes to sustainable rural development," with the goals of environmental protection, economic expansion, and the social equity of residents of tourist areas.

The presence of such various interests in ecotourism results in a number of inherent paradoxes that demand trade-offs if ecotourism is to be used as a sustainable development strategy (Gould and Lewis 2009). The three main paradoxes presented by

Gould and Lewis (2009) are: (1) who benefits from ecotourism, (2) what is sustained by ecotourism, and (3) who decides how an ecotourism program is to be developed?

The question of who benefits from ecotourism also carries with it the decision between more employment and less environmental protection because "as facilities expand and resource inputs and waste outputs increase, gains on the social side of sustainability become trade-offs with the ecological side" (Gould and Lewis 2009:283). The choice of who is employed in ecotourism programs has social consequences in and of itself. As research on the Belize Tourism Board has shown, more value is being placed on English literacy than indigenous knowledge and, as a result, extensive ecological experience and knowledge is being overlooked (Gould and Lewis 2009). As ecotourism programs increase in size, the loss of indigenous knowledge is accelerated along with the loss of ecological sustainability (Gould and Lewis 2009). To combat this, Gould and Lewis (2009:283) suggest that ecotourism outfits maintain an appropriate scale to provide "sufficient local employment while effectively competing with other potential uses of local ecosystems, notably resource extraction."

This leads to the next paradox, which centers on what is sustained by ecotourism: economic growth or ecological preservation (Gould and Lewis 2009). Though ecotourism utilizes intact ecosystems and encourages environmental protection, "at the local level, ecotourism does represent a primary, and perhaps the singular, ecological threat to 'wild' nature in many parts of the world" (Gould and Lewis 2009:284). The introduction of more people to an ecosystem, especially as an ecotourism program grows and requires greater infrastructure such as roads, buildings, and airports, creates a disruption to the environment even among so-called "low impact" ecotourism programs

(Gould and Lewis 2009). Even more dangerously, since ecotourism protects natural resources, ecotourism programs are in direct competition with businesses whose goal is resource extraction and, in cases of economic crisis, national governments are likely to prioritize less sustainable practices that generate profit more quickly (such as the extraction of resources), thus endangering the potential long-term sustainability of ecotourism (Gould and Lewis 2009).

The final paradox presented by Gould and Lewis (2009) is who makes the decisions that control the ecotourism process, primarily Northern ecotourists and Southern governments. Ecotourists present a bit of a contradiction, since even low-impact, environmentally conscious travelers often travel great distances to conduct ecotourism; the greater the distance and the more money ecotourists spend, "the greater their negative impact on the global environment" (Gould and Lewis 2009:285). Additionally, Southern nations are reliant on these transnational tourists who are funded by extensive capital generated from ecological destruction in other locations, thus creating a paradox within ecotourism transportation alone (Gould and Lewis 2009).

Because many ecotourism programs utilize state-protected parks and preserves, "the sustainability of ecotourism is dependent upon national development policy and orientation" (Gould and Lewis 2009:286). If the state is dependent on ecotourism, then policy orientation will allow for the management of lands that coincides with the goals of ecotourism and long-term ecological protection (Gould and Lewis 2009). However, ecotourism conducted on private lands is entirely dependent on the whims of the landowner (Gould and Lewis 2009). Governments must balance the rapid generation of profits with long-term sustainable development goals, with the primary threat to long-

term environmental protection coming from "the transnationally generated pressures originating from the international financing institutions" (Gould and Lewis 2009:286). Such international financing institutions like the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) often encourage states to overlook long-term social and ecological goals in favor of short-term gain through rapid exploitation of public land that will enable the countries to participate in free-trade blocs, pay off debts, or as a condition to receiving further loans (Gould and Lewis 2009).

With tourism becoming such an important global economic force and development strategy around the world, the protection and promotion of heritage and culture as well as ecosystems has become an important method of attracting tourists, though different implementation approaches exist. One example is the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage Program, which was formed in 1972 to enact a worldwide program to encourage preservation and participation at sites of "outstanding value to humanity" around the globe. Even post-socialist nations such as Russian and China have become competitors in the commodification of their tourism industries, but there are questions regarding the application of hegemonic Western-based tourism practices in such emergent tourist markets (Breidenbach & Nyíri 2007; Bartholo, Delamoro & Bursztyn 2008), of which Nicaragua is also a player.

Similarly to coffee producers of the global South, conducting any form of tourism is like playing a game designed by a stranger, since tourism programs are generally designed for Northern tourists with little regard to the culture or well being of Southern residents. The risk is a universal tourism model that, if implemented, might destroy any

traditional cultural values important to residents and replace them with created "images of places that are capable of attracting growing numbers of consumers of packaged tourism" (Mészáros 1995; Bartholo, Delamaro & Bursztyn 2008:109).

Instead of a one-size-fits-all tourism model, a fairer and more just alternative design would be rooted in *situated development* in which the aim is "an adaptable social construction in continual dynamic adjustment to the data of the place and the situation" (Zaoual 2003; Bartholo, Delamaro & Bursztyn 2008:106). This reorientation towards the specific community creates social inclusion and provides "an alternative to a development paradigm that has produced fragmentation, polarization, violence, and displacement in the Third World (Stein 1996; Bartholo, Delamaro & Bursztyn 2008:106). In this way, local heritage and culture would both be preserved and reinvigorated for the welfare and benefit of those in the community.

Conclusions

Sustainable development advocates have a tough task ahead of them in attempting to concurrently provide economic, ecological, and social benefits. The disparate goals of the global North and South prevent the emergence of a common path to sustainable development between the Americas. Economic and ecological concerns continue to butt heads, and social concerns are frequently relegated to the background. The fundamental question raised by the WCED in *Our Common Future* remains: how do we meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs?

Fair Trade coffee has been shown to improve participants' quality of life, reduce poverty, and provide environmental and social benefits, but its long-term sustainability is

unclear (Utting-Chamorro 2005). Fair Trade agricultural production remains a viable coping strategy to help some farmers avoid market fluctuations, but is it delivering the promised benefits to small Southern producers? Dan Jaffee (2007:263) warns us that "we cannot rely on the market to provide economic and social justice." Instead, Jaffee (2007) calls for increased participation from consumers and concerted action by global institutions and grassroots movements to uphold the ethics of Fair Trade: only through an informed decision-making process that takes all interests into account can we counteract the harmful effects of current trade strategies and reduce corporate power. This would allow Fair Trade to operate as a form of "new globalization" that utilizes counter-hegemonic networks in pursuit of reframing globalization as from below, finally giving just attention to the South and its interests (Murray, Raynolds, and Wilkinson 2007).

In order to pursue sustainable development through a bottom-up approach, on-the-ground work must also be done in the South if Fair Trade is going to thrive. First, to gain a more complete perspective, it is crucial to collect and analyze sounder empirical data on the impact of Fair Trade on the environment, labor conditions, and the well-being of small Fair Trade coffee producers and producer organizations to ensure that the objectives claimed by Fair Trade are being achieved in practice (Utting-Chamorro 2005; Jaffee 2007). Until an understanding exists that encompasses the "wants" and "needs" of all the diverse Fair Trade actors, the goals of Fair Trade are ineffectual and the necessary cooperation is impossible. In response to this, Jaffee (2007:265-266) provides the following admonition:

> Unless Fair Trade explicitly ties itself both to the creation of alternative trading institutions and to broader social movements for global economic justice, its impact will remain confided to isolated households, communities, and niches, and

> it might indeed become irrelevant in the fact of the larger effects of corporate-led economic globalization.

The sustainability of ecotourism is also unclear. In addition to the trade-offs I documented above, Gould and Lewis (2009) critique ecotourism as a vehicle for sustainable development. From a free-market environmentalist perspective, ecotourism could be made more sustainable through renewable-energy-based transportation and by providing full knowledge of the ecological impact of ecotourism and competing industries that allows consumers to boycott damaging products and frequent only the most ecologically and socially beneficial ecotourism outfits (Gould and Lewis 2009). From a policy reformist perspective, governments could be encouraged to limit the scale of ecotourism enterprises and those competing with them to reduce the detrimental effects of large-scale tourism operations, and to continue to designate ecologically protected areas and pursue ecologically-friendly paths to development (Gould and Lewis 2009). As a global effort, governments and multilateral organizations could reduce the pressure to sell natural resources for a short-term profit by establishing new debt relief policies (Gould and Lewis 2009). From a critical structuralist perspective, social and ecological priorities could subjugate free markets so governments would be required to "respond to the needs of their populations rather than international investors" (Gould and Lewis 2009:288). Such redistributive policies could help alleviate poverty in the global South without relying on unsustainable economic growth and diminish the need to organize economies and ecosystems around Northern tourist dollars (Gould and Lewis 2009).

The main problem with most current sustainable development strategies is the lack of attention paid to the specific locations, cultures, politics, and populations in which

they are implemented (Belsky 1999; Lewis 2000; Barholo, Delamaro and Bursztyn 2008; Gould and Lewis 2009). Regardless of whether it is Fair Trade coffee, ecotourism, or any other Northern-designed sustainable development programs, the Southern populations which are most affected are those that are most often overlooked. When designing sustainable development plans, in addition to taking all environmental, economic, and social considerations into account, "sustainable development must ultimately be rooted in the relationship between specific human populations and the specific ecosystems located in specific places" (Gould and Lewis 2009:287).

From an academic standpoint, in order to thoroughly examine and analyze the effectiveness of sustainable development strategies, an interdisciplinary approach is necessary that includes contributions from rural and environmental sociologists as well as conservation biologists and other natural scientists (Belsky 1999; Gould and Lewis 2009). The natural sciences can offer guidance regarding ecological impact, but the socio-economic impact of sustainable development strategies on communities could be offered by sociologists to complete the analysis (Gould and Lewis 2009). My research provides insight into the use of organic coffee production and ecotourism as sustainable development strategies for rural Southern peasant communities of UCA Miraflor. As such, the results of my study are of value to the social sciences, but also could be used by economists interested in the effects of the global Fair Trade industry, and biologists interested in the protection of the rare flora and fauna of UCA Miraflor.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

General Research Approach and Site Selection

Individual in-depth interviews and participant observation were conducted in the summer of 2007 in two of the 24 communities in the UCA Miraflor Nature Reserve, El Sontule and Las Nubes, and in the UCA office in Estelí, Nicaragua (See maps in Appendices C and D). I purposely chose the communities because Dr. Dan Spencer, one of my committee members who has long-lasting contacts with them, was able to provide me with introductions to community leaders. Additionally, in the summer of 2009, Dr. Spencer will be taking copies of this thesis with him to UCA Miraflor to share with the organization. My initial visit to El Sontule was while participating in a travel seminar with Dr. Spencer and a group of students. This gave me an easy entry into the community when I returned two weeks later to conduct my research, as I already was trusted among the population, leading them to feel more comfortable speaking with me and encouraging others to do the same.

Dr. Spencer and I deliberately chose a home-stay with people who were very involved in their community. Our selection was a home-stay in which the house mother was a leader of the women's cooperative that conducts ecotourism, and the house father a farmer with a rival coffee organization called the Promoter of Cooperative Development in the Segovias (PRODECOOP). By having easy access to two very different vantage points, I gained a unique perspective on life and work in Miraflor.

Selection of Interview Participants

I conducted interviews in both Las Nubes and El Sontule because the two communities, like most of Miraflor, are small, adjoining geographic areas with common

kinship networks and housing spread out among the hills. Snowball sampling led me to interview subjects in both communities.

Through snowball sampling, interview participants recommended other community members to me whom they considered to be quality candidates for further interviews. As there is really only one social network in the area, all of my interviewees are either members of the same extended family or friends, though each was informed of the confidentiality of their interview. I wanted a mixture of male and female participants from the communities, but I had no precise distribution planned. I considered it important to have a mixture of males and females because the cooperatives in UCA Miraflor are distinguished by gender, with the men's cooperatives producing coffee, beans, and other crops, and the women's cooperatives founding and conducting the ecotourism program as well as farming coffee. This does not necessarily mean that each cooperative is made up of exclusively one gender, but rather that each has a board of directors (usually the founders) that works directly with the UCA and the gender of this board determines the gender associated with the cooperative.

In all, I interviewed eleven men and five women aged 26-66, with the interview distribution being as follows:

	Male	Female
Miraflor Residents	8	3
UCA Employees	3	2

My interviews do not provide a representative sample of the population of this area within UCA Miraflor since they were selected through snowball sampling. My

interviewees include UCA members, members of other co-ops in Miraflor, and farmers that were not members of any cooperative. My limited time and resources would not allow me to travel throughout the 206 square kilometer (51,000 acre) reserve to different communities, and not all of the 5,000 residents of the reserve are members of a cooperative or even active in agriculture. I chose what I considered to be a manageable group size for a single researcher, within a manageable geographic area, and received quality data from its residents. Thus this study provides only a limited assessment of UCA Miraflor as a whole, but a contextualized portrayal of views of community members in the two research communities.

The UCA employees I interviewed were chosen by an UCA manager to include variety of responsibilities within the ecotourism and organic coffee programs in order to collect a more rounded perspective of views within the organization. I thought that it was important to interview employees of the UCA in addition to residents because a different frame of reference exists between the management, professional coffee *tecnicos* (technicians), and educated young people working for the UCA and the campesino farmers living in El Sontule and Las Nubes, despite the fact that they work together on the same projects. More to the point, I wanted to determine what sort of rift might exist between the two groups, how the lines of communication function, and how individuals in both groups saw life in UCA Miraflor continuing in the future.

In-Depth Interview Questions

I used separate interview protocols for community members and UCA employees. The only difference in the protocols was that I asked UCA representatives how they became involved with their organization and why, while I asked residents why they chose

to live in Miraflor. I asked all interviewees questions regarding life in UCA Miraflor, the history of the community and the union, relations between the two, any previous experience with agricultural cooperatives in Central America, the Reserve's mission statement, coffee production, and ecotourism program. I meant the questions to be open-ended and used ample follow-up probes. While in Nicaragua, I had a native speaker review my Spanish interview guides in terms of vocabulary and the Nicaraguan Spanish dialect. I made recordings of all interviews and took detailed notes throughout the process, incorporating effective probes and insights from earlier interviews into later interviews (see interview protocols in English in Appendix A, and in Spanish in Appendix B).

I asked each interviewee open-ended questions about organic and Fair Trade coffee in order to assess their knowledge of and reasons for farming the crop, as well as their opinions regarding the productivity of the cooperative and the global coffee market as a whole. The quality and amount of information gleaned from individual interviews varied greatly due, in part, to the interviewees' differing levels of involvement in coffee production.

Method of Transcription, Coding, and Analysis of In-Depth Interviews

I analyzed my interview data using NVIVO to determine the themes and issues that were brought up most often by residents and UCA representatives, *each* of whom I gave a pseudonym to be used throughout my analysis. I then filtered this data to distinguish between the interests more valued in the *campo*[4] or organizationally and those

[4] In Latin America, the countryside is known as *el campo*, and its residents, typically peasant farmers, as *campesinos.*

that are common to both groups. This both focused the themes of my research and assisted in my assessment of the interaction between the UCA and residents of UCA Miraflor. As my interviews went on, I cross-checked my data and placed less emphasis on some themes that were not discussed as often and altered my interview questions to delve more deeply into those issues that arose more regularly or did not fit into my established questions.

Description of Participant Observation

In addition to interviews, I used participant observation in my time in the *campo* both as a research tool and a necessity. As this is a very tight-knit group of communities, I felt that it was paramount to present myself not as an American there to judge but as a person who would work and socialize alongside the rest of the community. I stayed with a prominent family in El Sontule who escorted me to my interviewees until I was familiar enough with the people and the land to conduct interviews on my own. When not interviewing, going over my notes or updating my materials, I milked cows, planted beans, repaired furniture, chopped wood, and rounded up livestock. I also had long conversations on peoples' patios, sang songs, made jokes, and helped teach at one of the Reserve's elementary schools. I spent time every day writing down my notes and thoughts of what I had seen or done and took many rolls of film to accompany them.

When I was able to secure a guide, I visited some of UCA Miraflor's ecotourism sites, such as Las Cuevas de Apaguis (The Caves of Apaguis) and La Laguna de Miraflor (Miraflor Lagoon), to observe how developed the sites are as tourist attractions, how much impact has been made on the ecosystem, and how easy they are to reach, as well as their aesthetic values. I limited my visits to those attractions within a three-hour horse

ride because I usually had interviews to do in the afternoon when the men were home from the fields, so there were many "ecoroutes" that I was not able to see, but my guided rides and my time in Miraflor while on my travel seminar allowed me to experience most of what the "*zona intermedia"* and the *"zona humida*" (intermediate zone and moist zone, the mid-level and higher elevation areas of the reserve) had to offer. The "*zona seca*" (dry zone, the lower elevation area) has even more ecoroutes, as well as more ecotourists according to my interviews, but I had neither time to study lower elevation communities nor an introduction to the members of those communities.

Whenever possible, I brought coffee into the conversation in order to learn as much as possible about the local production methods. While on my travel seminar, I also toured the UCA Miraflor Coffee Cupping Laboratory to view the entire roasting process. I included detailed notes of these conversations in my daily journaling and used them to construct additional interview prompts and to build a vocabulary more effective for the topics of my research, as many terms and units of measurement were previously unknown to me.

The time of my visit corresponded with the wet season, however, and according to residents, life is much different in the dry season in that the majority of tourists visit during that time. Moreover, December, in the heart of the dry season, is also coffee harvest time. I had intended on making a return visit in December for follow up research, but limited time and resources forced me to reconsider, and I concluded that my first visit produced sufficient data. My participant observation would have been especially affected by a change in season, with more light shed on the business of peak coffee production,

but the villagers' and co-op leaders' views and opinions gained through my in-depth interviews likely would not have changed with the season.

Analysis of Participant Observation Data

I analyzed my participant observation data in combination with my interview data. During my research, I made notes of any themes or questions that were made evident throughout the day and incorporated them into subsequent interviews. I made extensive use of my participant data journal when describing the history of the UCA Miraflor area, especially concerning the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN), the Contra War, and the formation of the cooperatives. In these important areas, participant observation and informal everyday conversation with residents yielded as much insight as my secondary data sources and proved my participant observation to be invaluable.

Data Quality

I conducted all of the interviews in Spanish without a translator. As a result, I encountered some problems with vocabulary and dialect. I am a proficient Spanish speaker, but many of the residents of UCA Miraflor possess no more than an elementary school education, and technical terms or difficult words required repetition and explanation in every interview in order to elicit a satisfactory response and continue with the interview. Almost as often, my interviewees would have to explain a term to me. I became accustomed to the Nicaraguan dialect quickly, but *campesino* slang and colloquialisms were unknown to me, so we educated each other.

I conducted interviews in a variety of places including inside homes, on the side of roads and in fields, thus ambient noise was an additional problem. This had a greater effect during the translation process, which I completed myself. The sounds of wind,

parrots, rain, music, children, or livestock distorted all of my interview recordings, regardless of where they were recorded, resulting in my needing to send out several of my recorded interviews to a professional transcription service before I felt comfortable translating the remainder. These issues affected my gathering of data and the timeliness with which I analyzed it, but I believe the quality of the data from my interviews has not been affected.

Researcher Credibility

Conducting field work in an undeveloped country and speaking a foreign language presented me with a variety of challenges, such as those discussed above. As a male *chele* (Nicaraguan slang for Caucasian) who stands almost a foot taller than the average Nicaraguan, I stood out as a foreigner. Simply by being a man, the other men in the *campo* were quicker to incorporate me into their group, aided by my familiarity with physical labor and my willingness to take part in their work (and do it correctly). Since the bulk of the conversation between men centered on agriculture, participating in the farming and asking lots of questions quickly endeared me to the men.

The women of the *campo* were quite different, since they are accustomed to treating men in a way that was unfamiliar to me. Serving my needs such as food, laundry, and countless cups of coffee were their priorities rather than bonding with me through conversation. As my time in the communities passed, the women also gradually opened up more, but only when they were not busy with cooking or chores, and were usually more talkative when other men were not around. Since I did not want to challenge any gender norms or overstep my bounds, those were the times I took advantage of to hear their views and opinions.

My separateness as a large *chele* man eventually came to assist me in my research, as residents of UCA Miraflor grew accustomed to seeing me walk or ride through the communities with other residents. My presence changed from being *a* chele to becoming *the chele* that was residing in that area of the *campo* at the time, which made residents more open and friendly, both in interviews and everyday conversation. Towards the end of the time in Miraflor when I traveled without a guide, I even received the same waves from across fields, passing salutations on roads, and spontaneous chats as locals.

In addition to being a proficient Spanish speaker, the fact that this was not my first visit to Latin America also assisted me greatly in gaining residents' trust. I had already spent a good deal of time in Mexico and several weeks in Honduras on a humanitarian mission with my family building houses for the impoverished population around the capitol city of Tegucigalpa. Prior to my research, I was already familiar with the culture and norms of Central America and Nicaragua, making my entrance as a researcher much smoother than an inexperienced individual would have had, despite my difficulties.

In addition to my cultural and linguistic qualifications, my coursework in Sociology provided me with the necessary foundation in qualitative research to successfully collect my data and analyze them upon my return. Many of the challenges facing UCA Miraflor are not very different from those we are up against in Montana and the American West, especially concerning natural resource conservation and environmental protection. As such, my studies in the Rural and Environmental Change

option of Sociology had prepared me to identify such conflicts at my research site and to frame them into the Latin American context.

CHAPTER 4: NICARAGUA AND THE GLOBAL CAPITALIST SYSTEM

Nicaragua was heavily influenced, both economically and ethnically, by colonization through the 16th and 17th centuries, first by the Spanish, and later by the British and Americans, with each nation attempting to gain control over its land, people, and resources. This competition established a centuries-long series of tyrants and wars in Nicaragua, and the nation's poor population continues to attempt to break the cycle of colonialism and foreign control today.

In 1522, Spanish conquistadors first settled the area that is now known as Nicaragua and incorporated it into the Spanish Kingdom of Guatemala along with the rest of Central America. Following a short resistance, most of the indigenous people submitted to Spanish rule and also converted to Christianity. The wealthy Spanish conquistadors expanded their fortunes by sending indigenous people as slave labor to Panama and Peru. Nicaragua's indigenous population dropped from an estimated one million to thirty thousand in the first forty years of Spanish rule due to foreign disease, mistreatment, neglect, and the disruption of the local livelihood system (Plunket 2007:8).

The 1800's brought massive immigration into Nicaragua from many European nations, and with it, not only newspapers, banks, and hotels, but also agricultural businesses, most notably organized, large-scale coffee and sugar cane plantations. In response to this surge of immigration was an equally large spike in Nicaraguan nationalism and, after a short war with Spain in 1821 and a string of political and economic disputes within an attempted Federal Central American State, in 1838 the Nicaraguan people declared themselves independent. Unfortunately, the population proceeded to divide itself into factions that fought among themselves. With the

Conservatives operating out of Granada and representing traditional landowners against the liberalization of trade and the Liberals claiming León their center and praising a more open market, Nicaragua was plagued by a series of Civil Wars through the 1840's and 1850's. These wars often also including interested parties from neighboring countries such as Costa Rica and Honduras and, coupled with increasing foreign interference from Great Britain the United States, defined Nicaraguan politics at the time (Walker 2003).

In 1849, the United States took advantage of Nicaragua with a treaty promising American protection in exchange for exclusive rights to an inter-oceanic canal through the nation belonging to the U.S., but the intrusion of American adventurer William Walker and his mercenaries at the bequest of Nicaraguan Liberals proved to be the turning point in the negotiation. Walker successfully captured Granada and installed a U.S.-recognized puppet president, but his self-appointment to the presidency in 1856 and subsequent proposal to reintroduce slavery and annex Nicaragua was not met well in any political sphere of Nicaragua.[5] In 1868, the United States also wrote off the idea for an inter-oceanic canal, due in a large part to the 1855 opening of the Panama Railway, which provided the necessary trade and infrastructure for it to eventually open the Panama Canal in 1914.

The political climate of Nicaragua did not remain calm for long, and in 1893 General Jose Santos Zelaya took power. A 16-year dictatorship followed, characterized by strong nationalism, foreign investment mostly from the United States, and the development of a Nicaraguan infrastructure and a modern economy using those funds

[5] The "National War," as the expulsion of Walker came to be called, briefly brought the warring factions of Nicaragua together, and in 1857 Walker was deposed, and the U.S. Navy evacuated and returned him to the United States. On September 12, 1860, Walker was executed by firing squad in Honduras after being captured by the British Royal Navy, who considered him a threat to their efforts in the region and handed him over to the local authorities rather than return him to the U.S. (Plunkett 2007:11).

(Walker 2003). These nationalist sentiments were counter to American interests, since at the turn of the 20th century, nearly all coffee, gold, timber, and banana production in the country was American-owned; in 1909 the United States sent in the U.S. Marines to support the Conservatives in their rebellion against Zelaya. With the help of the U.S. Marines, Zelaya was deposed; the Marines departed, only to return in 1912 to suppress a peasant uprising led by a former member of the Zelaya government. They crushed the revolt and did not leave Nicaragua again until 1933, save for one instance described below. Involvement by the United States in Nicaragua continued to escalate, and in 1916, the U.S. secured rights to choose the next president of Nicaragua by posting Marines at the polls to ensure the protection of the United States' interests (Plunkett 2007:12).

American control of the country's government did not go unnoticed by Nicaragua, and in response, some were inspired to form another nationalist force. One such individual was Augusto Sandino. In 1925 the U.S. Marines left Nicaragua in an attempt to display a more peaceful sentiment, and in 1926 the 'Constitutionalist War' began between Sandino, his "Sandinistas," and Nicaraguan liberals against the United States forces in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas' goal was ousting the puppet Conservative government which served U.S. interests. As a result, the U.S. Marines returned nine months after they left. In 1926, Sandino and the Sandinistas began their military campaign, targeting American-owned business. They were spurred on by early victories and received ample recruits from former Nicaraguan employees of U.S. businesses. In the same year, the United States helped to negotiate peace between the Liberal and

Conservative forces and took control of training Nicaragua's National Guard, appointing Anastasio Somoza Garcia its first Chief.

In 1932, the Nicaraguan people elected Juan B. Sacasa as their president, and he expressed willingness to negotiate with Sandino, who was still fighting a guerilla war out of Las Segovias in the northern mountains of the country. In February 1933, Sacasa and Sandino brokered a peace deal, but Somoza's unchecked National Guard continued its persecution of former Sandinistas. On Februrary 21, 1934 Augusto Sandino was assassinated in Managua on orders from Somoza, signaling the start of a forty-five year hell for the poor population of Nicaragua. Somoza and his friends benefited, but the rest of the citizens experienced war, the absence of government assistance, and the continued prioritization of American interests over the well being of most Nicaraguans.

On January 1, 1937, Anastasio Somoza Garcia appointed himself as dictator of Nicaragua, and between 1937 and 1979, he, his two sons, and his cronies used whatever means necessary to maintain complete control over the country's citizens, resources, and wealth. The Somoza dynasty's values were imposed by the country's National Guard, which continued to seek out and kill the remaining Sandinistas and menace, imprison, torture, or kill any others who might threaten the regime's power (Walker 2003). Through gross corruption, brutality, rigged elections, bribery, terror and unsuppressed greed, the Somoza family ruled Nicaragua for almost fifty years (Plunkett 2007). By maintaining total control over the National Guard and through skillful manipulation of the United States government and supporting its regional policies, Somoza received all the weapons he needed to keep the Nicaraguan peasants from freeing themselves (Walker 2003).

In the meantime, Somoza rewarded his family and friends with ownership of the cattle, land, crops, precious metals, factories and sawmills of the "democratic" nation. This crony capitalism was supported through Somoza's creative use of government funds and the government's confiscation of property owned by German and Italian immigrants during and after World War II. The Somoza regime viciously repressed any of the peoples' attempts to organize and demonstrate against its hegemony.

On September 28, 1956, poet Rigoberto López Pérez assassinated Anastasio Somoza Garcia, as which time, Somoza's sons took power. Luis Somoza Debayle became the new President, while Anastasio Somoza Debayle became the Chief of the National Guard. Luis held the presidency from 1956 until 1963 and, after dying of a heart attack, was succeeded by Rene Schick, who ruled from 1963 to 1966. In 1967, Anastasio officially took control of the nation as president and proved more than capable of continuing his family's reign of terror, going so far as to horde the international aid money for victims of the 1972 Managua earthquake for himself, his family, and those loyal to him, despite the fact that the quake demolished the city and left 30,000 Nicaraguans dead and almost as many homeless. In 1974, Somoza declared martial law in Nicaragua to keep control of the population, but the dynasty's days were numbered.

Years earlier an opposition had found inspiration in national history and had started to take shape, gaining ground, experience and recruits all through the 1960's despite continued repression by the National Guard. In 1961 in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Carlos Fonseca, Tomás Borge, and Silvo Mayorga had formed the *Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional*, the Sandinista Front for National Liberation (FSLN). The FSLN rhetoric forwarded Marxist ideals informed by the Cuban Revolution and nationalistic

ideals inspired by Sandinoto counter the destitution of the Nicaraguan people at the hands of the Somoza regime and to empower them to take action. The stories of the FSLN's heroism and insubordination during the Somoza dictatorship and American control of the nation continued to propel the recruitment of rural peasants and urban workers to the FSLN. Gradually, more and more Nicaraguan people began to heed the FSLN's advice, joining unions and committees. In 1969 the FSLN presented the "Historic Program" documenting the goals of deposing Somoza and obtaining individual rights, land reform, health care, and education for all Nicaraguans.

Both men and women participated fully in the FSLN army, including both combat and leadership positions. Many women such as Dora Maria Tellez and Doris Tijerino participated in raids and clandestine operations, becoming leaders through the revolution, earning them positions in government following the war (Plunkett 2007; Tellez 2007). In 1982, FSLN cofounder Tomás Borge even gave a speech to thousands commemorating the role and status of women in the Revolution and explaining the Marxist/Socialist philosophy of the FSLN behind it (Borge 1982, cited in Borge 1991). The freedom from oppression and sense of empowerment among Nicaraguan women remains an important historical detail and one that is still evident today.

The importance of Christians and liberation theology throughout the course of the Revolution is also worth noting. Liberation theology takes its name from a 1971 book by Peruvian theologian and Dominican priest Gustavo Gutiérrez, who defined it as "critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the Word" (Gutiérrez 1971 cited in Sigmund 1988). Liberation theology as a school of thought began at the 1968 Latin American Bishops' Conference in Medellín, Colombia, where the bishops produced a document

noting the many social, economic, and political inequalities throughout most of Latin America and calling for the church to assist the poorest and neediest of their populations (Walker 2003; Sigmund 1988). Liberation theologians within the Roman Catholic Church utilize Marxist theory and "socialist inspiration" in their quest to liberate the poor and oppressed (Gutiérrez 1971 cited in Sigmund 1988).

In 1969 and 1971, the FSLN approached Nicaraguan priests and liberation theologians Ernesto Cardenal and Uriel Molina requesting the priests' assistance in the revolution. In 1971, the priests began working with the FSLN teaching the basics of liberation theology, mostly to middle-class Catholic young people (Belli 1988). Their teachings centered on the virtues of Marxist analysis and the importance for Christians to side with and assist the poor (Belli 1988). Nicaraguan priests spread liberation theology through political activism and by providing an effective network for peasants, especially in rural areas, aided by their establishment of the first Christian Base Communities (CEB's) in Nicaragua (Belli 1988). CEB's were one of the most important communication tools for Christian revolutionaries throughout Latin America, and liberation theology proved to be an effective recruitment strategy for the FSLN throughout the 1970's and 1980's (Belli 1988).

During the 1970's, the FSLN continued to gain recruits. But it was the assassination of Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, editor of national newspaper *La Prensa* on January 10, 1978 by Somoza's goons that is generally agreed to have been the straw that broke the public's back. More than 50,000 Nicaraguans flooded Managua's streets, finally unable to tolerate the Somoza dictatorship any longer. This demonstration inspired the FSLN to make its final push through the country, and on July 19, 1979

victorious FSLN soldiers and supporters marched through Managua. Anastasio Somoza Debayle fled to Paraguay where he was eventually assassinated by a Sandinista commando team in 1980. FSLN supporters call this period *El Triunfo*, "The Triumph." But, after decades of war there was a nation to rebuild and further challenges on the horizon.

Beginning in 1979, the FSLN established and presided over the Government of National Reconstruction composed of members appointed from across the political spectrum. The FSLN made meeting Nicaraguans' basic needs its top priority, something that had been overlooked by every ruler since the Spanish colonization. Amidst the clearing of the rubble, the Government of National Reconstruction launched a national literacy campaign, and the population's illiteracy rate dropped from fifty percent to thirteen percent in the first year (Plunkett 2007:19). The new government provided free education for all citizens, as well as medical aid and health training to help eradicate and prevent disease.

The FSLN enacted large-scale reforms to improve urban areas, but perhaps more important was its program to address agricultural production, which had been drastically reduced during the Revolution. The FSLN introduced an Agrarian Reform program that redistributed land and provided credit, training, and technical assistance to farmers. The land reform was the central and most controversial FSLN program because though it benefited two-thirds of the population that had not been allowed to own land under Somoza and increased production of food staples, the friction it caused between the FSLN, Nicaraguan conservatives, and the United States may have encouraged the start of the Contra War (Plunkett 2007: 21). The Reagan administration never had any intention

of recognizing or dealing with the FSLN government of Nicaragua and had been putting political and economic obstacles in front of the Sandinistas from the start (Walker 2003). The Agrarian Reform, as well as several groundless allegations directed at Nicaragua from the United States, gave the U.S. a reason to escalate its interference in the nation (Walker 2003).

The Agrarian Reform Program allowed many peasant farmers to continue working on larger privately-owned and state-run farms to ensure sufficient production and to encourage foreign trade, but around half of Nicaragua's farmland was redistributed to formerly landless peasants. The Somoza family's assets, about one-fifth of the country's cultivated land and one-quarter of the industrial sector, were confiscated and divided into state cooperatives and farms to be worked by peasant farmers (Plunkett 2007:20). The FSLN had promised the peasants and workers that they would finally shrug off colonialism and be able to own and work their own individual farms. But instead, many found themselves working collectively in state-run plantations, while the remaining large producers received most of the governmental support. In 1980 these discontented farm workers and the remaining exiled members of Somoza's National Guard found a friend in the newly elected President of the United States, Ronald Reagan.

Fueled by animosity towards communism and with American economic interests in mind, the government of the United States created a questionable pretext against the FSLN to allow further U.S. intervention in Nicaragua's politics. Citing alleged gun running from the FSLN to guerrillas in El Salvador, the United States government authorized CIA involvement in Nicaragua to such a extent that between 1981 and 1986 the United States officially transferred U.S.$100 million to fund, equip, train, and assist

counter-revolutionaries (*"Contras"*[6]) in Nicaragua (Plunkett 2007:21). The Contras' mission was to destroy the revolution. At their height in the mid-1980's, the Contras numbered around fifteen thousand, with some forced recruits but ample volunteers coming from the disgruntled peasantry and Miskito Indian populations, which felt overlooked by the new FSLN government, as well as former National Guard soldiers (Walker 2003). Most of the Contras' operations took place close to the borders of Honduras and Costa Rica, as they were never able to gain control over towns.

According to internal statistics from the Nicaraguan government, the total death toll of the Contra War was 30,865 people, of which 21,900 were Contras, and 8,965 were FSLN supporters – around 4,860 troops and 4,105 others, mostly civilians (Walker 2003:56). The U.S. government was tried and found guilty in the International Court of Justice for the CIA's involvement in the Contras' 1984 bombing of Corinto Harbor. The same year, FSLN candidate Daniel Ortega soundly beat the opposition and was elected president of Nicaragua in what was hailed as a fair election by several independent parties on hand but denounced by the United States government (Plunkett 2007).

In 1983, in response to this persistent assault by the Contras, funded and led by the U.S., the FSLN introduced compulsory conscription in Nicaragua. Between 1984 and 1988, the maintenance of armed forces accounted for around half of the national budget (Plunkett 2007). In 1983, the governments of several other Latin American nations formed the 'Contadora Group' to plan for disarmament and a cessation of hostilities in Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador (Walker 2003). Made up of the presidents of Mexico, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela, the group formed several proposals, all of which were rejected by the United States. In 1985, the U.S. imposed a trade embargo

[6] Abbreviated from the Spanish "*la contra-revolucionarios*," meaning counter-revolutionaries

against Nicaragua, adding financial hardship on top of the loss of life endured by Nicaraguans; this trade embargo also stoked further worries by anti-communists in the United States by forcing the FSLN to turn to friends in Cuba and the U.S.S.R. to purchase arms for its forces. However, on November 3, 1986, when a Lebanese magazine exposed the Iran-Contra scandal to the world, global public outcry could no longer be ignored. The Reagan administration had attempted to skirt Congress, international law, and the 1983 prohibition of federal funding to the Contras by selling arms to Iran and using the earnings to continue its financial support of the Contras.

On August 7, 1987 the Contadora process culminated when five Central American nations signed a regional peace initiative. Costa Rican president Oscar Arias spearheaded the initiative, which earned him a Nobel Peace Prize in that year despite the continued fighting and funding of the Contras by the newly elected President George Bush. The FSLN regularly announced its willingness to have peace talks, and in March 1988 an agreement was reached between the Sandinista government and the Contras. In February 1989 a meeting of the Central American presidents decided to give the Contras ninety days to disarm, but an infusion of $50 million from the U.S. government and the Nicaraguan presidential election in the following year prompted them to keep their arms and increase their attacks (Plunkett 2007:24).

The violence did not end until February 26, 1990, with the election of Doña Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, widow of the editor of *La Prensa* assassinated by Somoza twelve years prior. She beat the FSLN presidential candidate Daniel Ortega fairly, and the United National Opposition, comprised of fourteen parties in coalition, took power.

Despite continued sporadic fighting, President Chamorro declared the end of the war on June 27, 1990.

With this loss of political power, the FSLN leadership eventually divided. Accusations of theft by party members and abuse by President Ortega amidst political differences regarding social democracy versus a more class-based struggle led to the creation of various parties such as the Sandinista Renovation Movement (Plunkett 2007). Debates among Nicaraguan politicos regarding FLSN policies and *Sandinismo* (the ethical and political views that define members of the FSLN) continue to this day.

Doña Violeta Chamorro's time in power resulted in a resurgence of the trade union movement, some much-needed economic stabilization and budget deficit plans, and the installation of a functioning market capitalist economy. In response to universal fear of continued fighting and to help ease former Contras back into society, Chamorro drew up the Transition Protocol, signed by the FSLN on April 25, 1990. The protocol was designed to ensure the peaceful transition of power and disarmament of guerilla groups in the northern and central areas of the country but retain a reduced and de-politicized FSLN army for the use of the country's government. The election of Chamorro also sent waves through the agricultural community because, since the FSLN had lost power, the ownership of lands that had been confiscated and redistributed during the Agrarian Reform was once again on the table, prompting a land scramble by rural peasants and the returning wealthy.

Following the defeat of the FSLN, the UNO coalition succumbed to its political differences and collapsed, which ushered Arnoldo Alemán and the Constitutional Liberation Party (PLC) into power on October 26, 1996. Despite his attempt at

promoting a less revolutionary image and campaign, Daniel Ortega lost the election. Alemán had been elected mayor of Managua in 1990 by promising modernization, foreign investment, and U.S. culture and these same values reigned through his presidency. With a background in his family's coffee farming business, Alemán was an adamant supporter of Somoza, whose property had been confiscated by the FSLN during the Agrarian Reform. Like most other wealthy Nicaraguans, Alemán despised the FSLN and the revolution, which is apparent in his administration's cuts in health and education funding as well the removal of food subsidies and agricultural credit soon after his election. Alemán's presidency was known most for government corruption and made the general situation for the majority of Nicaraguan citizens worse (Walker 2003). Unemployment increased dramatically, and Managua was overrun with gangs and drugs (Plunkett 2007:34).

In 2001, The PLC maintained its power when former vice president Enrique Bolaños was elected to the presidency, beating Daniel Ortega once again. Nonetheless, Bolaños was quick to bring forth allegations of corruption, money laundering, and embezzlement against former president Arnoldo Alemán, shattering the widespread opinion that Bolaños was simply Alemán's stooge. This resulted in a twenty-year prison sentence for ex-president Alemán that was converted to house arrest for health reasons.[7] Bolaños attempted to reduce the country's foreign debt and poverty while diversifying its economy, but his efforts to influence government policies through a joint effort between the PLC and the FSLN resulted in his expulsion from the PLC and renewed threats from the United States government regarding any alliance with the FSLN.

[7] Alemán's sentence was further reduced to an early release in December, 2007.

On November 5, 2006, under the banner of party reconciliation, Daniel Ortega and a changed FSLN returned to power. A relatively quiet political climate has reigned thus far, though former FSLN compatriots still struggle with each other with a fervor matching what they showed during the revolution. Ortega's policies continue to focus on improving health and education, and he continues also to develop friends out of favor with the United States, such as Hugo Chávez of oil rich Venezuela. Ortega openly expresses his disapproval of the U.S. and its economic policies while applauding revolutionaries and freedom fighters the world over. For instance, in 2008 he endorsed the Bolivian Alternative for the People of Our America, an organization based on multi-level cooperation and integration of the Latin American and Caribbean nations and providing an alternative to the economic proposals of the United States in the regions.

Since 1990 and the end of major conflict in the nation, conventional tourism has replaced "red tourism" to become a major player in the national economy of Nicaragua, and the export of coffee, bananas, sugar, beef, and tobacco remains a vital part of the country's economy, accounting for approximately thirty three percent of the national GDP (United States Department of State 2008). Unfortunately, the Nicaraguan economy is unstable and heavily reliant on foreign remittances from Nicaraguans living in the United States, Costa Rica, and abroad. The government continues to rebuild the war-ravaged country and receives loans from the IMF to combat national poverty. In addition, several nations, including Russia and Mexico, have partially forgiven Nicaragua's debt. The Ortega administration continues to slowly pay off the remaining foreign debt, but years of conflict have taken their toll on Nicaragua, and the nation continues to search for an improved position in the global market.

The Cooperative Movement of Nicaragua

Nicaragua's history of tyrants and foreign influence resulted in a grave situation for the nation's poor. For the better part of the twentieth century, Nicaraguans struggling in poverty were not offered any assistance from their government to help them improve their situation. In the 1980's, in response to this poverty and powerlessness, landless peasants of Nicaragua formed over 3,300 agricultural cooperatives to empower themselves and affect the national social and economic situation (Kroeker 1996).

The concept of empowerment is generally recognized as multilevel, encompassing personal (psychological and material), organizational, and societal concerns to develop new community processes as well as larger-scale structural change within communities (Kroeker 1995; 1996). As peasants analyze their situation and began to take actions that increase their own influence in their lives, feelings of self-value and belief in change can increase (Kroeker 1996). Once a belief in change is achieved, empowerment is enhanced in cooperatives through interactions and structures based on mutual respect and broad participation (Kroeker 1996). In order to bring about meaningful change, "empowerment must also involve broader societal transformation by challenging the people and institutions who hold substantially more power through confrontation or collaboration" (Kroeker 1996: 124). In pursuit of empowerment, grassroots movements have emerged in response to harsh sociopolitical situations and deficient social services such as those in Nicaragua, and these movements have sought socio-economic and community development, including income generation for poor populations (Wilpert 1991; Kroeker 1996).

In the 1930's, Augusto Sandino began the Nicaraguan struggle for land reform to address the severely unbalanced distribution of private land holdings throughout the country. From that time through the 1970's, peasant populations in Nicaragua continued to create a small number of cooperatives through union organizing, peasant demonstrations, and migrations to the agricultural land on the frontier (Kroeker 1996). In 1979, after the overthrow of the Somoza dictatorship, the cooperative movement was solidified and grew rapidly[8] as "as spontaneous way for the poor to resist social pressure and access resources" (Serra 1991; Kroeker 1996;126). The participants of cooperatives pressured public institutions for recognition and direct support, and eventually, the Sandinista government included co-op formation as a part of its national strategy (Kroeker 1996).

From 1980 to 1985, under the coordination of the Ministry of Agribusiness Development and Agrarian Reform (MIDINRA), the FSLN government began to prioritize land reform and assisted the cooperatives (Kroeker 1996). MIDINRA representatives provided agricultural credit and training to peasant farmers, but the assistance was poorly and intermittently implemented (Kroker 1996). Additionally, leaders of the national farmers and ranchers union (UNAG) that the FSLN organized to assist the co-ops were sometimes seen as autocratic or disrupting the organization ("El Movimiento" 1987; Serra 1991; Kroeker 1996).

In the later 1980's, after the FSLN implemented a series of structural and policy changes, MIDINRA and UNAG became less autocratic and more responsive to the demands of the cooperatives and provided incentives and loans for the small production

[8] For example, 410 new co-ops were formed in the first five months of the new FSLN government in 1979 (Serra 1991; Kroeker 1996; 126).

of peasant farmers (Kroeker 1996). UNAG grew in size, in 1988 reaching 100,000 cooperative members; it also became more participatory (Kroeker 1996). This participation led members to stage massive demonstrations and to resist pressures from UNAG and other groups to determine the organization of cooperatives, which also resulted in increases in land reform, assistance provided to co-ops, and influence in national leadership and decision-making (Serra 1991; Kroeker 1996). Put simply, "the co-ops increasingly contributed to the national economy and social change," largely by redirecting the cooperative movement and continuing to struggle against outside forces seeking to control it (Kroeker 1996; 127).

In 1990, the country's cooperative movement began to decrease in scale. That year's election of Doña Violeta Chamorro into the presidency brought an end to public assistance provided to co-ops and excluded poor farmers from bank loans (Kroeker 1996). As wealthy private producers obtained increasing power, the economic system no longer provided incentives for the small production of peasant farmers (Kroeker 1996). Cooperatives continued to receive limited support from MIDINRA and banks, but problems of autocratic or inadequate leadership and support increased as the service professionals tended to distance themselves from the co-ops and act superior towards co-op members (Kroeker 1996). Many of the professionals of MIDINRA and other organizations showed a lack of respect to the culture and way of life of the countryside, calling it "backwards" and making no attempts to understand the peasant mind-set (Kroeker 1996; 113).

In the 1990's, the grassroots cooperative movement of Nicaragua was rejuvenated by the increasing popularity of organic and Fair Trade coffee. The Nicaraguan

cooperative movement was still strong in many rural peoples' minds, and the empowerment-seeking peasant farmers were already cultivated primarily shade-grown coffee in mountain soil that requires few synthetic inputs (Utting-Chamorro 2005). This created an ideal situation for Northern grassroots organizations concerned with global environmental and social issues to begin to increase the market participation of the often-overlooked Southern peasant coffee farmers (Utting-Chamorro 2005). Grassroots organizations and donors have continued to work with small coffee farmers within the specialty coffee market, including those in Miraflor because:

> The Fair Trade coffee industry requires small farmers, organized in democratically run cooperatives, to grow and roast quality coffee cultivated under traditional and environmentally sound agricultural conditions (Utting-Chamorro 2005;587).

Farmer-owned specialty coffee producer associations emerged to provide agricultural credit, training and technical assistance, storage facilities, and export services to member cooperatives (Utting-Chamorro 1995). Such groups include the Promoter of Cooperative Development in the Segovias (PRODECOOP), the Northern Coffee Cooperative Center (CECOCAFEN), and the Society of Small Producers, Exporters, and Marketers (SOPEXCCA) (Utting-Chamorro 1995). These groups encompass many cooperatives of small peasant farmers in Nicaragua who continue the uphill struggle for empowerment and equality in global trade through Fair Trade coffee.

UCA Miraflor History

UCA Miraflor is also one of these cooperative organizations that provide financing and technical assistance to peasant farmers. The UCA represents an organization that has continued its work at the grassroots level, working specifically with the population of Miraflor to design community-based programs that empower UCA

members and Miraflor residents alike. Many of the cooperatives in UCA Miraflor were formed during the FSLN Agrarian Reform in the 1980's and received aid from MIDINRA and UNAG prior to the UCA's involvement. As such, UCA Miraflor coffee cooperatives provide a perspective that is representative of many other cooperatives formed during Nicaragua's cooperative movement in the 1980's, as well as applicable to the current involvement of Nicaraguan co-ops in the Fair Trade market.

The peasant population of the highlands of central and northern Nicaragua perhaps best represents the nation's history of conflict. Though the Northern areas are some of the most agriculturally fertile lands of the country, these lands were also the site of some of the bloodiest fighting in the struggle between the Nicaraguan people and the nation's dictators and during the Contra War. Historically, the people here have been farmers, growing crops for the owners of the land and the food for their own tables with limited pay or mobility. However, these mountains have also been highly valued by guerillas for the countless hiding places in their remote and rugged territory and their convenient location near the Honduran border. For five years while fighting the National Guard and U.S. Marines, Augusto Sandino hid in the Segovia Mountains, in the seventy-five miles between UCA Miraflor and Honduras; Contras flowed into the area over mountain passes from their training camps across the Honduran border to attack the FSLN revolutionaries (Plunkett 2007). The farmers of these northern areas have been involved in the formation of modern-day Nicaragua to such an extent that there is a museum in Estelí dedicated to them called "Heroes and Martyrs of the Revolution."

After suffering for generations under the hands of privileged landowners, it is no surprise that the workers of the northern Nicaragua have responded to calls to organize

themselves. In the 1920's, the former employees of U.S.-owned businesses swelled Sandino's ranks. In the 1980's, the residents of Miraflor and other areas, especially the Northern agricultural zones, answered to the nationalist, equality-focused approach of the FSLN and assisted greatly in ensuring that the revolution was a success. Working together empowered the oppressed *campesino* population, and throughout the 1980's, cooperatives sprang up all over the highlands to help reestablish the agricultural backbone of the nation that had been damaged during the revolution. Northern peasants urged on the FSLN Agrarian Reforms and reaped most benefit of the benefits of such reforms. The area that is now known as UCA Miraflor was part of the land that was redistributed during the Sandinista Land Reforms and became the home to several cooperatives established in the 1980's following "*The Triumph.*"

As noted earlier, this attempt to rebuild Nicaragua's agrarian economy was short-lived, and, according to my interviews, the Contras began regular attacks on Miraflor cooperatives in 1984. Many of the farmers, seasoned soldiers after their participation in the revolution and the Contra War, continued their fighting through mandatory armed service with the FSLN, while all others participated in the defense of the cooperatives, which were the target of the majority of Contra attacks. My interviewees told me that the *campesino* motto became *produzco y defiendo* (produce and defend), and with rifles slung to their shoulders as they plowed, they did just that. As a result, any peasant over a certain age could tell countless stories of kidnapping, decapitation, torture, starvation, betrayal, and fire that were endured until the 1990 election of Doña Violeta Chamorro brought hostilities between the FSLN and the Contras to an end.

In addition to the armed hostilities of the Contras, the United States also made efforts to destabilize the Nicaraguan economy through blocking World Bank loan requests and encouraging other nations not to trade with Nicaragua (Walker 2003). This "low intensity conflict" was meant to add to the psychological terror of the Contra's military activities. In 1983 or 1984 the FSLN bought arms from Cuba and the U.S.S.R., which aided the U.S. in displaying the FSLN government of Nicaragua to the Contras and the American public as a representation of the dreaded red menace of socialism (Walker 2003). The cooperative organization itself was controversial as well, so cooperatives and other FSLN policies became both military and economic targets for the Contras. On the other hand, to the farmers, the cooperatives represented the first time in their lives they had ever been able to work their own land, individually or collectively.

However, even once the fighting had stopped, the land in Miraflor and the rest of the *campo* around the nation was not secure. When President Chamorro began the redistribution of land that had earlier been redistributed under the Agrarian Reform, many cooperative members sold what land they could for what money they could before the land could be confiscated. Many were relocated either by the government or by returned landowners (over 5,500 private land claims were reported in 1991), while others were fortunate enough to organize and be represented by unions of small farmers and peasants that were able to prevent illegal confiscation of the land (Plunkett 2007:36). Though some cases are still being debated, in November 1997, then President Arnoldo Alemán and the FSLN reached an agreement regarding confiscated property that compensated former landowners, allowed the 100,000 peasant farmers to retain their new land titles,

and required return or payment by those who acquired especially large land holdings with the FSLN Agrarian Reform (Plunkett 2007).

In 1990, amidst the frantic scramble for control of the agricultural land of Nicaragua, a group in the Miraflor region interested in preserving the cooperative movement organized themselves with the Union of Agribusiness Cooperatives (UCA), forming five cooperatives growing potato buds. This was the start of UCA Miraflor, the site of this research project. UCA Miraflor received small donations from European and American NGO's during the start-up phase and used this money for housing, environmental protection, reforestation, and organic agriculture. The UCA represented the farmers and managed their training. In 1993, in response to residents' concerns, the UCA also succeeded in achieving legal protection status from the Nicaraguan government designating Miraflor as an ecological preserve. However, not all residents of the UCA Miraflor Nature Preserve are members of the UCA Miraflor cooperative or any other agricultural co-op. Though the UCA manages the entire preserve, its natural resources, and the entire population therein, fewer than seven-hundred of the approximately 4,100 residents of the preserve are UCA members.[9]

In 1994, a European organization called "La Casa del Tercermundo" (Third World House) approved UCA Miraflor's first major project, producing organic coffee, and provided $400,000 over a three-year period to be used for labor to get the project going. Davíd, a coffee worker with the UCA explained that the project was implemented in April, 1994,

[9] Other cooperatives also operate within the preserve, but I am not aware of their memberships. Residents decide for themselves whether to become members of the UCA or another cooperative, but all receive the aid of the UCA's social and environmental programs throughout the preserve.

> …to pay for the technician team and to finance everything in the operation; in livestock, in coffee, to establish pastures to cut, for fences… some small projects with hens… and they established some *pulperías* (neighborhood markets) there in the *campo*… it lasted approximately from 94 to 98.

With this initial project, the UCA Miraflor farmers began growing organic coffee on 130 *manzanas*, the approximately 1.7-acre agricultural plots used in the countryside. The money lasted until 1998 when Hurricane Mitch cut a swath of destruction through Central America, including UCA Miraflor. The UCA manager then contacted a Swiss aid organization that assisted the UCA cooperative until 2001, as well as various other American and European organizations, which have continued to provide the UCA with limited financial support until present day. The organizations have funded UCA projects such as the solar panels distributed to select member's houses several years ago that provide the only electricity in most of the communities.

UCA Miraflor is currently made up of twelve main cooperatives; nine of them are agricultural cooperatives with mixed gender membership, while three are female only co-ops that work with either agriculture or the ecotourism project.[10] Together, the cooperatives have approximately 660 members. Cooperative members work with organic and traditional coffee, ecotourism, livestock and milk production, with the UCA providing marketing routes to the United States and Germany for organic coffee grown in the preserve and selling the milk down the hill in Estelí, a town of 119,000 residents which is the business center of the region. UCA members also produce an organic, fungus-derived pesticide called Mirabiol that is a natural alternative to farmers all over the country who fear the severe health risks of agricultural chemical use.

[10] The number and membership of the cooperatives seems to fluctuate often and I found many slightly differing figures through the course of my research. The information I gave above represents the most current distribution to the best of my knowledge.

In 1993, UCA Miraflor asked residents of Miraflor communities about the environmental problems in the area. Deforestation and contamination of drinking water through use of chemical pesticides were at the top of the list, so the UCA began lobbying the national government for the Miraflor area to be designated a protected area. These goals were also motivated by the two hundred-plus species of both birds and orchids that reside there. The Miraflor region achieved legal protected status as an ecological preserve in 1996, with the UCA appointed as manager of the preserve and the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA)), acting as co-manager, specifically focusing on the development of plans for the zone's unique ecosystem, agricultural land and resources.

Since achieving legal protection as an ecological preserve, the UCA has worked with Miraflor residents, both those who are cooperative members and those who are not, to preserve the land and the ecology of the area. The UCA regularly offers workshops to provide environmental and agricultural training, and UCA and MARENA technicians make frequent trips the preserve[11] to safeguard that no residents do any unsanctioned cutting or clearing as well as answer any questions for residents. As I will discuss in the following chapters, some UCA programs have achieved greater success than others. But the involvement of the organization in all economic, environmental, and social activities in UCA Miraflor continues. The UCA's involvement and accessibility to residents is what sets it apart from other cooperative organizations operating in Miraflor whose sole concern is the coffee business. The UCA manages other cooperatives in Northern Nicaragua, but I am unaware if their involvement with residents in other areas is comparable to the variety of programs it has implemented in UCA Miraflor.

[11] Most of the UCA employees live within the UCA Miraflor preserve.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF THE UCA MIRAFLOR'S ORGANIC COFFEE PROGRAM

History of the International Coffee Trade

The balance between economic security and ecological preservation is one of the main burdens facing developing nations such as Nicaragua. Environmental issues such as the protection and utilization natural resources, what crops to farm, and how to farm them interlock with social interests concerned with participation, equality, gender, and empowerment, all with the overarching need for financial security. Concerned citizens and organizations of the global North, fueled by the interests of small producers of the South, are searching for common ground and the most effective strategies for communities to take in order to ensure the long lives of their inhabitants and the sustainability of their resources and ecosystems. The agricultural relationship between the two is a frequent point of debate and, within it, the environmental, social, and political context of coffee is an ideal illustration of this uncertain quest for sustainability.

Because of fertile land and cheap labor, Latin America has long been a valuable breadbasket for wealthier nations, yielding tropical fruits, nuts, cocoa and coffee in addition to an abundance of timber and precious metals. As of the 2007 coffee harvest, Latin America produced 72 percent of the coffee sold on the global coffee market (United States Department of Agriculture 2007), but the involvement of large corporations and increased production from other nations like Vietnam (with help from World Bank investments) has created a drastic downturn in the world coffee market (Davidson 2005) as well as a persisting environmental and economic debates regarding the fairness of participation in the market and the social and environmental benefits being delivered.

From the 1960's well into the 1980's, the International Coffee Organization (ICO), comprised of the major coffee producing nations and regulated by the International Coffee Agreement (ICA), maintained the international coffee price at $1.00-$1.50 per pound of un-roasted beans (Jaffee 2007). However, the ICO collapsed on July 4, 1989 due to "changing consumer coffee preferences, a growing surplus of coffee from non-ICO members, and, most important, the geopolitical goals of the United States government" (Jaffee 2007:42).

Journalist Peter Frisch described the resulting effects across the world; many coffee-producing nations ceased the buying and stockpiling programs that controlled their supply. This enabled large foreign coffee buyers such as Proctor & Gamble and Nestle to purchase coffee directly from naïve small growers, resulting in "free-for-all coffee exports and a production boom that continues to generate more beans than the world needs" (Fritsch 2007:2).

In December, 2001, coffee fell to an all-time low of 41 cents per pound, and a World Bank study found that between 200,000 and 400,000 seasonal Latin American coffee harvesters had lost their jobs, including 120,000 in Nicaragua alone (Jaffee 2007). The small farmers of Latin America found themselves powerless and malnourished, facing the loss of the only industry they know. Many abandoned coffee entirely, some migrating to the United States and elsewhere in the world to look for new lives as the coffee market continued to fluctuate, leveling out at 95 cents per pound in July 2006 (Jaffee 2007).

The fluctuations of the global coffee market illustrate the complexities of a commodity chain, an approach developed by world system theorists such as Terence

Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein. A commodity chain is “a network of labor and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity” (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1986:159, Talbot 1997:1). A commodity chain is akin to an economic production line, in which each successive link in the chain adds to or changes the product and generates profit for the player at that stage, from the producers to those at the various stages of processing and roasting, exportation, and sale to consumers. Small coffee farmers in Latin America are positioned at the beginning of the chain, with an unfinished product (un-roasted coffee) and often with no other option than to sell to large American corporations that will process the product and sell it on the global market.

Beginning in the 1960’s, some small Latin American coffee farmers attempted to skirt around the middle man by processing the beans themselves and producing instant coffee. This allowed the nations to produce and store a product ready for consumption for long periods of time until it was exported to core markets (Talbot 1997). Coffee businesses in Latin American nations also attempted to sell instant coffee in non-traditional markets in Asia and the Middle East, but it was unpopular and they ran into continued legal trouble with large multinational coffee distributors that already had existing networks for selling their own competing instant coffee (Talbot 1997). This led both sides to file lawsuits that cited unfair competition and discrimination among processed and green coffee products (Talbot 1997).

Taxes on the different products imposed by importing nations exacerbated the competitive environment of the young industry, and though Latin American countries made progress in the instant coffee market, it was not as successful as initially expected, so producers in most countries shifted their priorities to other types of coffee products.

Talbot (1997) explains that instant coffee production failed to result in two key types of benefits: (1) the generation of backward linkages to the local economy in the form of increased demand for labor and other inputs used in the manufacturing process and (2) larger shares of the total income and profits generated along the entire commodity chain. Had these benefits emerged, the nations would have tapped into a self-sustaining instant coffee market that was much more economically feasible and productive.

However, the coffee market is in a constant state of change, and demand for instant coffee is no longer a major concern for Latin American producers. Since their unsuccessful attempts in the 1970's to break free from the hold of transnational instant coffee organizations, Latin American coffee companies have solidified their place in the small instant coffee market, even achieving local ownership of processing plants in Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador. However, because instant coffee only accounts for approximately one-fifth of the export to core coffee markets (Talbot 1997), a new approach was needed.

The current development strategy for coffee producers rests on the popular niche market of specialty coffees, particularly those labeled organic, Fair Trade, shade grown, bird friendly, and so on. Though organic Fair Trade coffee does not exploit the commodity chain in the same way as instant coffee, it offers the potential to generate profits while sustaining, in fact often blurring the line between, the ecosystem and farmland and empowering small farmers. The press received by worldwide environmental and social issues has spurred the industry's popularity to the aggressive state it is in today.

Organic and Fair Trade Coffee:

Distinctions in the Niche Market

Within the niche market of specialty coffee, different production techniques and materials are utilized than in the production of traditional coffee, and qualification for the various certifications areas are also separate entities, creating an entanglement of terminology that must be understood. A simplified version of the division is presented by Davidson (2005): Arabica beans vs. robusta beans; shade-grown vs. sun-grown; traditional farms vs. modern farms; poly-culture vs. monoculture. Though there are exceptions, when applied to coffee, the first set of terms (Arabica beans, shade-grown, traditional, poly-culture) are generally associated with one another, while the second terms (robusta, sun, modern, and monoculture) are linked among themselves.

Arabica beans are universally accepted as producing a higher quality coffee than robusta beans and are the choice of organic and Fair Trade coffee farmers for that reason, but the labor and certification requirements are much more intense for organic and Fair Trade products and less coffee is produced. Arabic coffee is generally shade-grown using traditional farming techniques, in which in addition to avoiding chemical pesticides and fertilizer that can harm land and farmer alike, thus farmers must cultivate native plants as well as their coffee in order to reach the highest "useful diversity" through complexity of the vegetation. This creates what is referred to as a "coffee garden" in which the native and introduced species maintain the health of the ecosystem as well as providing an ideal habitat for growing coffee (Davidson 2005; Moguel and Toledo 1999). This use of poly-culture keeps the soil healthy and productive but requires greater

knowledge of the producer to distinguish between helpful and harmful vegetation and limits the size of the coffee parcel, further reducing production.

Robusta beans are used to produce instant coffee and to blend with Arabica beans in most coffee produced by large multinationals (think of those products that come in large tins). Generally robusta beans are sun-grown on large plantations that produce a monoculture of coffee, specializing in high, market-oriented production through intense year-round labor and extensive use of chemical pesticides (Davidson 2005). These are the farms and production techniques labeled modern, producing high yields in the short term but leading to soil degradation, erosion, and possible contamination of ground water in the long term (Davidson 2005).

Commercial poly-culture farms do also exist, but require the importation of species of *Inga* trees for their shade and nitrogen-fixing potential (Davidson 2005). These same species of *Inga* are used on traditional shade farms as replacement trees in areas that have already been heavily deforested and were found by a study in Panama to support 100 percent of local forest species (Rotenberg 2007). Such commercial poly-culture farms are in effect still a monoculture, but one that requires the assistance of a "monospecific canopy" to match (thus making in a poly-culture) and also still require year-round labor and often still use chemical pesticides and do not yield the biodiversity of traditional shade farms (Davidson 2005).

In order to operate in the organic and Fair Trade coffee markets, certification is required, with organic certification involving a set of standards regulating inputs and practices in the *production* process, whereas Fair Trade certification involves a set of standards in the *trade* process (Bacon 2004). There is no longer a market for non-organic

Fair Trade coffee (Jaffee 2007), so both certifications are required to participate in the Fair Trade market. Certification is an expensive process for farmers, which is exacerbated by the need for farmers to renew both organic and Fair Trade certifications annually. Farmers generally require outside assistance to achieve certification, and once certification is obtained, there is debate among farmers, consumers, and what Jaffee refers to as "ethical" organizations as to whether or not it was worth struggling to achieve. Until 2004, coffee producers were responsible for funding organic certification and inspection, while the Northern organizations importing the product bore the cost of Fair Trade certification, but currently the coffee producers must obtain both certifications themselves (Jaffee 2007).

The Latin American page of the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO), lists the ten standards of Fair Trade. They are:

- Creating Opportunities for Economically Disadvantaged Producers
- Transparency and Accountability among trading partners
- Capacity Building for the producers and their marketing organizations to build long term relationships
- Promoting Fair Trade
- Payment of a Fair Price based on regional or local context and agreed upon through dialogue and participation
- Gender Equity for producers and within organizations
- Safe and healthy Working Conditions
- Child Labor respecting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as local laws and social norms

- The Environment (encouraging better environmental practices and the application of responsible methods of production)
- Trade Relations with concern for the social, economic and environmental well-being of marginalized small producers

Researchers such as Dan Jaffee critique the Fair Trade system and Northern neoliberal policies in the global South to determine the effectiveness of such alternative trade agreements in delivering actual improvements to those invested in the market, or if it is only a perfunctory bone thrown to the farmers and their advocates whose purpose is solely keeping farmers at a disadvantage to increase profits and endangering the long term viability of the Fair Trade market. Just keeping specialty coffee contained within its niche market is endangering the founding ideals of Fair Trade, according to Jaffee, because the certification and marketing power remains tilted towards large multinational corporations that "play along" with the ideals of Fair Trade and apply the profitable addition of a product labeled "Fair Trade" to their current production. By dedicating only a small percentage of their production to Fair Trade certified coffee, large multinationals' aim is to receive the financial benefits of Fair Trade while ignoring the social and environmental concerns that form the ethical backbone of the Fair Trade market.

UCA Miraflor as an Example of the Specialty Coffee Market in Nicaragua

This section provides an analysis of the organic coffee production of UCA Miraflor, focusing on the farmers of El Sontule and the surrounding areas. I evaluated the coffee project with reference to land use, avoidance of the potentially damaging effects of monoculture, annual production and price of coffee exports, family and gender

participation in coffee production, and amount of additional resources the cooperative uses in organic coffee production and trade.

Since UCA Miraflor is a very small coffee producer, it is at the absolute beginning of the commodity chain. Its members are scraping by through cooperation and outside assistance by international nongovernmental organizations (NGO's) such as Heifer Project International and Third World House, which provided them with financing and advice. My evaluation will include UCA Miraflor members' reasons for instating the organic coffee program, involvement of the UCA with local coffee farmers, the certification process, coffee production, and prices obtained on the international coffee market. It will conclude by illustrating the production environment within the preserve and its connection to the global coffee market.

The ambiguous and divergent nature of the global coffee market makes each individual coffee farmer's decision about what sort of coffee to produce a gamble. Involvement in organic and Fair Trade coffee has been shown to reduce the livelihood vulnerability of farmers due to market cycles and natural disasters (Bacon 2005), but the additional costs of producing organic and Fair Trade coffee and uncertain benefits keep some from moving towards such production. These mounting certification costs were cited both by farmers I interviewed in UCA Miraflor and residents of Dan Jaffee's Mexican communities as one of the main obstacles that prevents them from being a part of the Fair Trade coffee market. Membership in cooperatives and unions improves farmers' price and bargaining ability and offers them access to agricultural credit and marketing, but their position at the beginning of the commodity chain (which limits their overall profits) is difficult to overcome, despite an increasingly aware consumer base.

Since the specialty coffee market has been flooded by small coffee producers from around the world, being certified organic is no longer a sufficient protection for most small producers. The small coffee farmers must maintain a united front, just as they did to shelter themselves during times of political unrest. Since "the cooperative is the primary intervening variable affecting prices received at the farm gate" (Bacon 2004:504), unions such as the UCA are formed to try to improve small farmers' bargaining ability on an international market subject to the rises and falls of market forces.

As with anything else, scale is a factor. The more a group produces the better price they will receive for their raw goods. However, in the case of commercial organic and Fair Trade coffee, the additional costs and certifications required are a sizeable obstacle for individual farmers. The formation of agricultural cooperatives in the organic and Fair Trade coffee markets is a coping mechanism for small scale farmers, helping them to avoid the boom-bust market cycles of coffee by enabling them to eschew the expensive chemical fertilizers necessary for the more technical coffee systems (Davidson 2005) but the effectiveness of organization quakes in the face of the mounting costs and marketing competition.

The marketing of organic coffee produced the most disagreements and complaints among my interviewees, involving production, organic and Fair Trade certification, and rival organizations, most notably the Promoter of Cooperative Development in the Segovias (PRODECOOP), a much larger cooperative association also operating out of Estelí. Interviewees repeatedly accepted and denounced the fickle forces of the global coffee market as the principal culprit for their woes, but the on the ground realities of

small scale farming illustrated the complaints. Though all parties seemed to be on the same page regarding the priorities of environmental preservation and the health and sustainability of the communities, money proved to be the worry for all.

Findings

Reasons for Moving to Organic Coffee Production in Miraflor

Because of its high elevation and rich soil, traditional coffee has long been grown for personal consumption and limited sale in UCA Miraflor, but I was not informed of the details of coffee production prior to the involvement of the UCA. At that time, thanks to the public outcry of residents regarding environmental degradation due to the use of chemical pesticides and deforestation, the UCA began the production of recognized, certified organic coffee – as well as many other crops –in Miraflor. With the formation of the original five UCA Miraflor cooperatives in 1990 came NGO support to help fund organic agriculture in the preserve, but financing for the production of organic UCA Miraflor coffee was not received until 1994, leading to the initial organic coffee harvest in 1999, following several years of preparing for the implementation.[12]

When I brought up the organic production techniques used by UCA Miraflor, my interviewees included economic, environmental, and social considerations centered on the health and unity of the population in their assessment of organic coffee, with each concern being brought up about as frequently as the others by my various participants.

For instance, according to Davíd, a coffee technician with the UCA since its founding, the production of organic coffee by UCA Miraflor began with two goals: improving the price farmers received from coffee production and improving the health of

[12] I was told by interviewees that a three-year preparation period for organic coffee is standard.

the farmers and their families. He further explained the UCA's work with natural resources by saying:

> Well, organic coffee began the same as all of the projects. It was born… because Miraflor was producing what was more of a monoculture; potatoes were one of the products that were permitting the deterioration of the natural resources. So then to counteract that, they created an organic coffee farming project and that began to generate funds to finance the farmers… (Which established parcels for growing organic coffee and as a result) led to the transformation of the land from monoculture of potatoes to coffee parcels. So then… this was to improve the natural resources, and also was going to give a product that provided admission for the family (into the organic production group of the UCA. Since families all work their land together, the decision and responsibility belong to all family members), and that is good. The rise to these heights has been very successful. A good market has been achieved… for organic coffee, one for certified organic coffee, and another to for a quality coffee.

Jorge, an independent organic coffee farmer in Miraflor, also pointed out the importance of community health, noting that "only organic coffee is grown here in Miraflor, because chemicals are bad for the health. . . .There is no poison."[13] Luís, a Miraflor coffee farmer and member of PRODECOOP, pointed out that the switch to organic was a practical one, enabling co-op members "to get the most (economic and productive) benefit from everything on the farm."

Karina, another UCA employee, focused more on the social benefits from the switch to organic coffee production. According to Karina, the participation of cooperative members was instrumental in "forming the productive group" that allows the UCA to produce sufficient organic coffee for participation in the market and also helped improve the vocabulary and public speaking skills of young people UCA trained to help in organic coffee production, preparing them for continued careers in the industry

[13] Jorge's statement proved to not be entirely true, since there is also traditional (non-organic) coffee grown in the preserve

Many UCA Miraflor residents linked the health of the environment to the health and survival of the people. As UCA member Rodrigo explained:

> When I say defend the land to you . . .we are talking about the environment, we have to talk about everything that is land conservation: To defend the land is at least to care for the land where you grow, to draw a curved level, to put up the live wall, dead wall,[14] then to make an inlay on the land. It cost us here a lot to arrive at that process of... waking up the people, but today we have already acheived it because here many of the people burned,[15] and today they do not burn. All of the people are. . . working on the organic chapter (those producing without chemicals; "the productive group"), but when we talk about the organic chapter, we have to start with land conservation, to conserve land is to conserve life, if you don't conserve your life... you are ready (to leave this world).

Rodrigo's explanation not only shows the importance of Miraflor's history, but also illustrates how that history has strenghtened Miraflor farmers' connection to their land and even influenced the development of the UCA organic coffee program. After the people and the land of Miraflor had suffered for so long, residents want to do everything they can to keep Miraflor healthy.

The responses to my questions regarding the choice to produce organic coffee in UCA Miraflor yielded concerns similar to those voiced by other cooperatives in Nicaragua, encouraging those involved to "consider health, environment, education, and community development in addition to coffee price and quality" when designing project evaluation indicators for the cooperatives (Bacon 2005:506). Though both residents and UCA employees agreed that the implementation of an organic coffee project was mainly for financial reasons, it could not have been a better fit for the local residents of UCA Miraflor. The producers already loved their land and wanted to preserve it, and were

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[14] A live wall is wall of vegetation to prevent erosion on hillsides and a dead wall is one made of brick, cement, or barbed wire to prevent livestock or humans from entering.

[15] He means this both literally and metaphorically; the Contras set fire to many homes throughout the countryside – often with residents inside - until more fire-resistant structures made of cinder blocks and sheet metal were constructed in place of those made of wood.

already worrried about the health of the population. The UCA provided the necessary protections, credit, and training for them to move into organic coffee production, enabling them to maintain their land and their way of life and to protect the health of their families.

Involvement of the UCA in the Implementation of Organic and Fair Trade Coffee Production in UCA Miraflor

Davíd, a longtime coffee technician[16] with the Sandinista Agrarian Reform[17] before joining up with the UCA at the onset of its involvement in UCA Miraflor, told me that he and his team came to the UCA to work with organic coffee in UCA Miraflor. He explained that the director of the UCA at the time hired a Colombian named Jairo to investigate the nutrients in the vegetation around the preserve to determine the health and viability of the land for organic coffee production. Jairo and his technicians made two one-week trips to UCA Miraflor to work with a group of farmers "doing everything they could to set up organic coffee." At the same time, the UCA manager had "a heap of communications" from all over the world for the certification and marketing of the coffee, including with the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) International, the certifying body for Nicaragua, leading to the initial organic certification of UCA Miraflor on their 1999/2000 coffee harvest. The following timeline illustrates the certifications and affiliations of UCA Miraflor pertaining to coffee since its formation:

[16] A fulltime worker charged with ensuring proper implementation and production techniques, rather than a seasonal harvester or producer

[17] A part of the National Reconstruction following the triumph of the FSLN in the 1979 that reallocated agricultural land and provided training to peasant populations

1994	$400,000 donation (over three years) from Third World House for organic coffee production on 130 manzanas (221 acres) in UCA Miraflor
1996	UCA Miraflor gains legal protection status as a nature preserve co-managed by the UCA and the Nicaraguan Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA)
1999	First organic and Fair Trade certification of UCA Miraflor
2000	First organic and Fair Trade production of UCA Miraflor (1999/2000 harvest), marketed through Equal Exchange and the Northern Coffee Cooperative Center (CECOCAFEN)
2001	Two El Sontule men's cooperatives market coffee through both the UCA and PRODECOOP. The UCA loses Fair Trade certification and marketing route for coffee
2002	UCA Miraflor begins marketing organic coffee through InterAmerican Coffee[18] (to continue through the 2007 harvest)
2007	Two El Sontule women's cooperatives join with three co-ops outside of UCA Miraflor to market Fair Trade coffee in Germany

Davíd explained that following this first certification and entry onto the organic coffee market, their first buyer was Paul Katzeff,[19] marketing coffee through Equal Exchange. The UCA stayed with Equal Exchange for three years, through the 2001-2002

[18] http://www.iaccoffee.com/home

[19] Mr. Katzeff remains active in the specialty coffee market with his company Thanksgiving Coffee – see www.thanksgivingcoffee.com for additional details

coffee harvest. During this time, the UCA was also associated with The Organization of Northern Coffee Cooperatives (CECOCAFEN), another larger coffee company operating out of nearby Matagalpa. Through these associations, the UCA was also a part of Cafenica, a larger conglomerate organization made up of nine coffee cooperatives throughout Nicaragua, including PRODECOOP. It was this connection with Cafenica that allowed the UCA to sell coffee through the Fair Trade pioneer trading group, Equal Exchange.[20] During the three years with Cafenica, Davíd noted that UCA technicians received higher and more regular salaries and additional technical assistance, as well as four wet mills to store and ferment their coffee.

Unfortunately, while the UCA was marketing through Equal Exchange, a group of El Sontule coffee farmers switched their two cooperatives from UCA Miraflor to PRODECOOP, souring the UCA's relationship with Equal Exchange, which eventually led to Equal Exchange expelling the UCA from the organization. The incident provides a wonderful illustration of the on-the-ground forces of global capitalism in Nicaraguan agriculture, with money the deciding factor.

According to the information I gleaned from my interviews with UCA and PRODECOOP members, the deciding events began sometime in 2001. While the UCA was searching for a stable avenue for marketing the coffee produced by its members and introducing new non-coffee programs for the preserve, the two men's cooperatives in El Sontule found an open marketing route for their coffee through PRODECOOP. For a time they were members of both organizations, using the resources of the UCA but at first selling their Fair Trade coffee through the PRODECOOP and their organic coffee

[20] According to the Equal Exchange website, Cafenica provided their very first coffee in 1986 - http://www.equalexchange.coop/origin-coffee

through the UCA, which had found their marketing routes through Equal Exchange and CECOCAFEN. The overall production of the two cooperatives included coffee that they bought directly from non-union farmers, though it is unclear whether nor not that coffee was certified organic or to whom they sold the product. By the end of 2001, the two El Sontule cooperatives had chosen to market their coffee through the established Fair Trade marketing channels of PRODECOOP. The UCA expelled them, and, at the same time, decided to resign from and was simultaneously dismissed by Equal Exchange and CECOCAFEN, supposedly due to its dishonest dealings. [21]

Employees of the UCA were understandably upset at what they considered a breach of trust by the members of the defecting El Sontule cooperatives as well as a misuse of the UCA's resources, but as Rodolfo, a former UCA member and current PRODECOOP farmer, said, before the legal employment papers came through detailing to which organization the farmers and their production held allegiance, they did not think twice about working for both companies. When presented with the decision, they chose PRODECOOP. The UCA lost its Fair Trade certification (provided by Equal Exchange and CECOCAFEN) in the process, and in 2002, needing a new marketing outlet, the UCA joined InterAmerican Coffee to market the organic coffee produced in UCA Miraflor and continued to do so at least until the time of my research in 2007.

Also in 2007, two UCA Miraflor women's cooperatives from El Sontule joined with three other women's co-ops from Pueblo Nuevo, Dipilito, and Condego[22] in order to form a Fair Trade production group. Davíd told me that an UCA worker also coordinates the three outside cooperatives and had received an offer from a Germany coffee

[21] This is especially important since, at that time, a Northern organization was assisting the UCA with organic and Fair Trade certification, giving rise to the dishonesty.
[22] Three other small communities in northern Nicaragua

organization (name unknown) that wanted her co-ops to market Fair Trade coffee through them, but required them to first obtain Fair Trade certification. In order to accomplish this, the colleague contacted the UCA to join the five cooperatives' production and divide the $4,000 Fair Trade certification payment evenly between them. The three outside cooperatives were incorporated into the UCA, but at the time of my interviews the UCA needed to recertify once again and the employees did not seem comfortable with the situation. Since the UCA primarily markets organic coffee, they hold that certification, but employees question the need to also pay for Fair Trade certification for only a portion of their production.

Davíd and Roger explained to me that the UCA attempted to communicate to the German organization that the certification was very expensive and difficult for the UCA to renew each year, but the UCA was nonetheless searching for the funds to cover certification at the time I spoke with them. UCA Miraflor had had five successful harvests through InterAmerican Coffee at that time (2007), but though the UCA had an outlet for its organic coffee and a price decent enough to continue production, their efforts to re-enter the Fair Trade market have met mixed results.

The Role of the UCA in Organic Coffee Production in UCA Miraflor

By building on cooperative values and providing the necessary know-how and business savvy, the UCA helped enable Mirafloreños to move into organic and Fair Trade coffee production. The UCA assists Miraflor's coffee producers in four main areas: financing, training, organic and Fair Trade certification, and marketing.

Financing: The UCA is an "agricultural credit and loan institution" (Moon Handbooks 2008: 208). "The coffee that El Sontule (my main research community) has right now has practically been grown with the funds from UCA Miraflor," according to Davíd, an UCA coffee technician. Residents of Miraflor agreed with this analysis. As Rodolfo, a former UCA farmer put it; the UCA was founded as a vehicle "to realize financial projects." He explained the relationship in the following way:

> Each farmer decides for himself, because each person, each farmer does not have the same idea of work. . . And how to do it. I at least decided… to take a small financing loan to buy a small coffee area; some others (chose). . Livestock (or)… vegetables, then each can decide what it is they need from the financing. … They (the UCA) will give financing; they also give training . . . technical training for . . . the determined area that one requested. There were always people coming – the technicians, they always came to motivate the people, to motivate the people… to plan... they came to do projects like this on financing. They said some revolving funds were to serve a farmer . . . and after the small farmer returns the funds later, they serve another small farmer, and so then it is a revolving fund.

Outside financing is necessary for organic coffee farmers like Rodolfo, especially during the initial implementation. In addition to setting aside a coffee-specific area on his farm, Rodolfo explained to me that he used financing to purchase livestock to provide the natural fertilizer needed for organic coffee production and a vegetable garden to sustain his family. This allowed him to better provide for his family's needs and to use his land as productively as possible through crop diversification. Though Rodolfo made wise choices with his UCA financing during the time of his membership and business with the UCA, he was one of the El Sontule farmers that later broke away from the UCA to join another coffee co-op, PRODECOOP.

Other farmers who remained with the UCA found the financial support provided by UCA to be invaluable. Valeria, a UCA member, echoed Rodolfo's statement, stating that their reason for organizing with the UCA was "to receive some financing so we

would be able to work part of our land…with organic coffee." She noted that the community had been organized with the help of the UCA for ten years and that community members "always live in favor of the UCA because we have received many benefits." Another UCA member, Rodrigo, described the goal of UCA as "helping the farmers with everything they have access to… for organic coffee." He added that "right now we have been rewarded a lot in this part because that is what is helping the *campo*, we are still in organic coffee."

Training: Besides financial resources, the UCA also offered its members training in how to manage funds in order to provide benefits beyond organic coffee. The UCA also trained Mirafloreños how to move into organic coffee production. The training offered by the UCA for organic coffee farmers is intended to ensure that the financing is used properly and for the benefit of both the organization and the individual farmers as well as to guarantee that the production methods coincide with organic certification requirements. In Miraflor, the UCA has assisted the farmers "with the planting of seeds and how to handle the coffee barn," according to Rodrigo. But David noted that the training was not always effective. Referring to unnamed farmers in UCA Miraflor, he said:

> They had to work, and that is where we got it wrong because. . . There were directions that were not orders, so then they . . . had many shortcomings in looking after the plantation well, principally in what is referred to as fertilization. Because for fertilization to work, organic coffee requires large quantities of organic material that has to be manufactured. Some, because they do not have the materials, they do not have a livestock farm because the… first principle material for fertilization is manure and coffee pulp – right? So then later those that did not have many large livestock farms could then not obtain it (manure). So then they made a little bit of fertilizer, and it was very very poor, so then for that reason the plantation went badly. When the harvests are short, then they also do not want to do other activities because then they say that they can't turn out results – right? But already it is deteriorating, the plantation, it is not because… the organic field

> does not work properly, but because the plants are already damaged and it makes recovery very difficult, right? So then, they are nevertheless here in the production group, or rather, without poison (chemical fertilizer).

Though my interviewees seemed universally grateful for the training provided by the UCA, there does seem to be a discrepancy regarding the UCA's continued involvement in my research communities in El Sontule and Las Nubes. PRODECOOP farmer Luís argued that the UCA "only has a little bit of influence right now here in this community. Because, in the first place, the area is already protected. They already don't visit here" because, in his mind, the UCA does not have any further work to do if the natural resources are protected.

However, when I asked about the structure of the relationship and frequency of visits to the communities in Miraflor, Roger, a UCA staff member, claimed

> Each month there is a meeting of the board of directors, so then each month those people are carrying information to the farmers, but it is partly technical, necessarily you have to do visits at least once a month to them… but doing that is based on the necessities that the farmers have also.

Davíd, a UCA coffee technician, noted that UCA officials visit coffee farmers in Miraflor "one time each two months. There are emergencies, then we go more often. Sometimes when they go, they are going to be visiting for inspection."

Luís' comments would be easy to brush aside since he is a member of a rival cooperative, but because the involvement of the UCA is part of basically all community activities, any resident's opinion should be considered. The information from my interviews leads me to believe that the UCA does make the noted monthly visits, but probably only to the scheduled meetings of unions and boards of directors or in case of emergencies. If the visits are from technicians, there may also be some residents that would prefer to voice their concerns to a higher ranking UCA manager, but no mention

was made regarding any desire for more attention from the UCA in any specific capacity. Residents choose for themselves how involved they want to be with the UCA; some members participate in multiple programs and want to better understand the work of the UCA, while others simply want to do their work and live their lives, with or without the UCA.

Since UCA Miraflor was established as a nature preserve in 1990, managed by the UCA and the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment (MARENA), organic coffee farmers with the UCA have also received environmental and agro-ecological education in order to understand the relationship between farming and the Miraflor ecosystem. People in Miraflor are aware that shade coffee plantations function as "islands of biodiversity," unharmed areas surrounded by altered ecosystem (Hannigan 1995), so the benefits and reasoning of implementing such production techniques should be more pronounced in the case of UCA Miraflor. Rodolfo, a former UCA member, noted: "When I was working with the UCA in Miraflor, I was receiving a lot of training for... environmental conservation with a... with a colleague from Germany called Angelica; she was devoted to giving us training about all environmental aspects." This training included fertilization techniques, reforestation, and phasing out the traditional slash and burn farming techniques of the campesinos and the use of *barreras vivas* (live walls) whenever possible to prevent erosion on the sloped farmland.

Those members involved in different programs with the UCA also help to spread environmental education. Adrián, who grew up working his father's coffee farm in El Sontule and also became a guide with the UCA Miraflor ecotourism program, is an ideal example. His mother and father are members of different coffee co-ops, and their home

functions as an *alojamiento* (home stay) for tourists as well. He possesses a lifetime of agricultural knowledge, in addition to the environmental training he has gained from the UCA. His identification of orchids, birds, and other animals on our walks and rides together continually impressed me, and the informal conversations with he and his family contributed vital information to my understanding the agriculture and human culture of the *campo*.

Organic and Fair Trade Certification: Loans from the UCA also help coffee producers of Miraflor to obtain organic certification, according to Davíd. Since producers must be certified through Organic Crop Improvement Association International (OCIA) in order to export organic coffee, this assistance is vital, though I was not told if the money is from the UCA's funds directly or if the UCA obtains bank financing for annual recertification costs. Additionally, the UCA has the technology to call or e-mail contacts with certifying organizations to arrange for certification visits, which would be very difficult for Miraflor farmers to do themselves.

At of the time of my research, UCA Miraflor was exporting only certified organic coffee, not Fair Trade coffee, but initiatives were in the works to allow their participation in Fair Trade as well, most notably the afore-mentioned alliance of two El Sontule women's cooperatives with three outside co-ops. Fair Trade was a popular topic among my interviewees, but one that introduced a great deal of confusion and negative sentiments. Many interviewees scoffed at the term "Fair Trade," commenting on the lack of fairness for small coffee farmers and the shortage of interest on the part of the government and international business in giving them a fair price. Just as many, including some of the same respondents, praised the benefits of the Fair Trade market

and regretted not being able to join. However, everyone knew the complications in entering the market and the expensive process of certification.

For instance, Christián, a farmer who was not involved in the UCA or another coffee cooperative, noted

> Fair Trade is a bit difficult, because of the process you have to go through, for us in this community. In other cooperatives, they can do it. Actually, we are producing organic coffee. And with producing organic, one of the main principles is to protect the environment, and other principles are required when looking at Fair Trade. Fair Trade is where although this person is involved, to come and set the direct price for the farmer, there is another person in the United States that prepares the coffee... it (producing Fair Trade coffee) is more expensive. It is more expensive.

Josué, a UCA member, echoed this desire to obtain Fair Trade certification. "We are trying to be Fair Trade. The price is more agreeable to the farmer. Because the market that is in Nicaragua can be very bad. It (Fair Trade) protects the farmer." Another non-union farmer, Jorge, acknowledged that "A fair price is good. Fair Trade is good for the farmers but less (good) for the poor farmers who don't produce as much."

Valería, another UCA member, also expressed her doubts about the benefits of Fair Trade participation, claiming

> We sometimes think that neither (traditional, organic, or Fair Trade coffee) is very fair because it comes through intermediaries. We still have a little bit of doubt that maybe not, maybe it is not a trade; it is not a fair price we are receiving. But I am still not very clear on that.

Though residents seemed to understand that "Fair Trade" refers to a specific certification, several interviewees took the term more literally and judged "fairness" subjectively and personally rather than encompassing the Fair Trade coffee market as a whole. That is to say, some interviewees had difficulty distinguishing between the concepts of "Fair Trade" and "trade that is fair" in their opinion. I attempted to explain

the distinction when necessary, and such personal evaluations are not included in my analysis.

However, Miraflor residents' confusion between organic and Fair Trade certification reflects what could be a greater problem: if Mirafloreños do not understand the distinction between the organic and Fair Trade certifications, then they may also not understand the costs and benefits of each individual certification. If this is the case, the lack of information among residents could be a contributing factor to the faltering UCA Miraflor coffee program.

When I began my interviews in the UCA office, UCA managers helped to shed light on the Fair Trade situation. Roger, an UCA manager, explained "this year we are already certified for Fair Trade, but… the truth is… we can't sell anything. We can't sell coffee through Fair Trade, but the UCA is already within Fair Trade. Or it will be, we are making moves, and we hope that this next season we can sell Fair Trade coffee." What Roger is referring to is the absence of a marketing route for Fair Trade UCA Miraflor coffee, making certification an expensive and questionably necessary requirement.

Davíd attempted to decipher the situation for me, explaining that the certification status of the UCA is a result of the defection of the two El Sontule cooperatives to PRODECOOP. When the UCA was expelled from dealings with Equal Exchange and CECOCAFEN in 2001, they lost the security of Fair Trade certification, putting them in a situation where they needed to earn both organic and Fair Trade certificates for themselves without aid from a larger coffee organization. UCA Miraflor succeeded in obtaining the Fair Trade certificate in 2006, but since the UCA was only marketing

organic coffee at the time, the Fair Trade certificate was a useless commodity. Only in 2007, when the UCA's coffee cooperatives merged with the outside co-ops, was Fair Trade recertification required in order for UCA Miraflor to continue marketing Fair Trade coffee.

Although this offered me a certain amount of elucidation on the confusing certification status of the UCA, I wondered why the farmers I interviewed knew nothing about Fair Trade coffee, especially if their union was trying to market it through their joint venture with the other women's co-ops? The farmers' views on Fair Trade ranged from excitement and hope to only grudgingly discussing its existence, along with several interviewees mistaking my questions on Fair Trade coffee as requesting their general opinions on the price of coffee. My interviewees made little mention of implementing Fair Trade coffee in the preserve. Many residents were well versed in both the positives and the negatives of the Fair Trade market, but most did not consider it a possibility for themselves personally, even though some members of their community produce and distribute it. The expensive prospect of Fair Trade certification on top of being certified organic may have been a cause.

Among UCA Miraflor farmers, certification costs are based on individual *quintales* (100-pound bags) of coffee. For one quintale of gold (un-roasted) coffee, Fair Trade certification costs $10 and organic certification an additional $5, equaling, or perhaps canceling out, the organic "bonus" (a $20-25 incentive from the UCA or other larger coffee organization) received by individual certified organic farmers in UCA Miraflor. When this is multiplied by the 2007 production of 418 quintales by UCA

Miraflor, it amounts to $6,270 per year just for organic and Fair Trade certification costs. The UCA staff is unsure where the money for certification will come from each year.

The declining price of coffee that Davíd mentioned is affecting (Fair Trade) coffee farmers all over Latin America (Jaffee 2007). This is because the price for Fair Trade coffee on the international market has only been revisited once since the 1989 collapse of the ICO, while the costs of production and certification, as well as the cost of living have continued to spiral upwards (Jaffee 2007). As more and more money and time are required of the farmers to produce organic Fair Trade coffee, the benefits of their involvement remain static, offering little incentive for new entries into the market and making continued participation more difficult each year.

Jaffee (2008) states that thirty percent of Latin American Fair Trade coffee farmers and sixty percent of conventional farmers have to take out loans to cover labor costs, resulting in accumulating household debt that may or may not be repaid by the year's harvest, possibly leading to the repossession of their land. Price stagnation has caused so many farmers to require loans because the incentives that are supposed to be provided by Fair Trade to assist in certification and technological improvements are no longer sufficient. This further reduces small farmers' profit margin, requiring them to pay off the debts as well as provide for their families and worry about the cost of the next year's certification.

Like the people in Jaffee's research communities, those in Miraflor have the choice between growing conventional coffee cheaply, which generally requires less labor, or organically with the stringent set of production standards and added labor, or leaving coffee entirely. Though the UCA incorporated other cooperatives to form a Fair Trade

production group and theoretically receive the benefits of Fair Trade, such as a guaranteed price and higher price per pound, the UCA's other producers and residents of UCA Miraflor remain unsure of whether or not they would even want to become Fair Trade if the opportunity was presented to them. Between the necessary amount of organic fertilizer, labor, and certification and production costs in the near term, the UCA may not even be able to continue financing enough organic coffee producers to generate a profit, making a permanent move to Fair Trade status next to impossible with their current marketing outlets and level of production. This situation reflects the larger internal problems of the global Fair Trade market outlined by Jaffee that endanger the long-term viability of Fair Trade certified coffee.

Marketing: Davíd, a veteran UCA coffee technician, described the marketing duties of the UCA as *un medio*, a middleman, between the small farmers of Miraflor and the importers of Central American coffee in the United States and Europe. The UCA exists more as a communication medium between the farmers, the processing plants in Matagalpa and other cities in northern Nicaragua, and the larger marketing organizations such as CECOCAFEN, rather than as the sole buyer or decision maker on all coffee issues. The marketing work of the UCA consists of finding and maintaining marketing routes with larger coffee organizations throughout the commodity chain. The coffee moves from the *campo* to the UCA in Estelí, then on for processing in Matagalpa, before being sent to the United States to complete the cycle. The length of this commodity chain, as well as the UCA's position on it, limits the UCA's power.

Though organization into cooperatives improves the bargaining position of small producers such as those in UCA Miraflor, the competition inherent in a business driven

by capitalist interests make the marketing of coffee by a smaller organization an incredible challenge. I will illustrate this challenge by contrasting the coffee production of UCA Miraflor to that of PRODECOOP, a competing coffee cooperative organization in Miraflor and northern Nicaragua that lured two cooperatives away from the UCA in 2001.

Mirafloreños and UCA employees continually referred to the coffee production of UCA Miraflor as "*muy poco*," very small. According to figures provided by the UCA and in terms of overall production shown in Table 1, below, the co-op's "very small" production translates as follows:[23]

Table 1: UCA Miraflor Coffee Production 2003-2007

	Production	**Price per q.**	**Destination**	**Overall Earnings**
2003-2004	411 q. gold	$143.00	New York, USA	$58,773.00
2004-2005	204 q. gold	$143.00	New York, USA	$29,172.00
2005-2006	350 q. gold	$163.00	New York, USA	$57,050.00
	36 q. gold	$132.00	Germany	$4,752.00
2006-2007	418 q. gold	$152.45	New York, USA	$63,724.10
	23 q. gold	$132.00	Germany	$3,036.00
TOTAL	1,442 q. gold			$216,507.10

By comparison to the UCA's four-year total of 1,441 quintales, PRODECOOP annually exports an average of 30,000 quintales (thirty thousand 100-pound sacks) of mostly organic Fair Trade coffee directly into the international market (PRODECOOP 2008). However, PRODECOOP is made up of thirty-nine cooperatives totaling 2,300

[23] One *quintal*, abbreviated q., is equal to one hundred pounds (45.36 kg)

small farmers in several different geographic areas including Miraflor, compared to the fourteen cooperatives and thirty-five organic coffee farmers[24] that are presently members of UCA Miraflor.

With a wide variety of farmers and organizations producing coffee in the zone, I asked interviewees to help me disentangle the numbers. Roger broke down the various productions within the Miraflor Nature Preserve as between 3,500 to 4,000 quintales for all of the farmers in UCA Miraflor, including those who are not members of the UCA. The coffee that is not sold to the UCA includes around 800 quintales, which Mirafloreños sell to other unnamed coffee companies, and an estimated 500-600 quintales being produced by PRODECOOP farmers in the preserve.

Davíd explained the low coffee production of UCA Miraflor coffee producers as due to a lack of sufficient "resources to finance the farmers . . . The farmers have not applied the technology properly, and we have scarcely exported one container of coffee" in 2007. Clearly, the UCA had recently experienced a shortage of organic fertilizer as well as the ever-increasing certification and processing costs. The small farmers of UCA Miraflor have on average only 3 to 6 *manzanas* (5-10 acres) dedicated to coffee production.[25] According to David, since organic certification requires production from around 30 manzanas of land, it is only through organization into a cooperative that the farmers in Miraflor can tap into the organic market.

Low production notwithstanding, in 2007, Davíd was quite pleased of the price the UCA were receiving for their organic coffee, explaining that in past years the prices

[24] Reduced from a high of eighty in the late 1990's, according to my interviews
[25] El Sontule coffee production was averaged by Rodolfo and Christián as between twelve to fifteen *quintales* per *manzana* but with some farms producing as much as twenty or thirty *quintales* per *manzana*, while others scrape by, producing only with eight or ten *quintales* per *manzana*.

were as low as $40 or $50 per quintal, but the UCA found a buyer who pays $143 per quintal, of which $103 per quintal goes to the farmer. To further the comparison, he described the situation two years prior when "half the company was lost" when the UCA shipped coffee to a company in Yalí (another city in Northern Nicaragua; company not specified) at a time when one quintal gold sold for only 640 cordobas (about $32) compared to the present, when even just at the wet processing plant a farmer could receive $26 for one quintal of raw, unprocessed beans.[26]

Out of the $143 price tag, Davíd explained that "the UCA itself only charges for the exportation process, which is not more than $6 per quintal exported" for each of the four hundred quintales exported on average by the UCA. This then amounts to $2,400 that returns to the UCA office to pay for paperwork, red tape, telephones, and everything else required of the organization

Victor, a UCA manager, described the production of organic coffee as a

> Lovely experience because the price of organic coffee has been holding steady since we started. Although at this moment the farmers don't sell traditional coffee for an attractive price because for the past three years the price has stayed at almost the same level, the same standard as the organic price.

This seems to be more of a reflection of a weak organic price than an unprofitable traditional price to me, especially when the additional costs are figured into the equation.

Christián, a resident of El Sontule who is not a member of UCA, explained the farmer's side this way: "The prices vary, but normally a quintal of coffee costs $103. But we have more than that, like an organic bonus. We get a bonus of $15 per quintal." Another farmer, Rodolfo, described a similar system through PRODECOOP when asked, explaining that in addition to their price maintaining around $120 per quintal, that

[26] The wet processing plant is the first step in preparing picked coffee beans. PRODECOOP operates a wet processing plant in Miraflor that is available to any producer for a fee.

PRODECOOP farmers also receive a $15 to 20 incentive which fluctuates depending on the market price for coffee for producing an uncontaminated organic coffee.

Certification costs, an aggressively competitive marketplace, and dwindling production create a difficult situation for UCA Miraflor, especially because the UCA faces competition from other coffee organizations with higher production and extensive marketing connections that increase those organizations' profits and ability to provide certification and technical assistance to their farmers. The organic incentive (of around $20 per 100 pounds of coffee) received by UCA coffee farmers is eclipsed by the lower overhead of those who market through PRODECOOP. The UCA cannot offer their farmers what larger organizations such as PRODECOOP are able to offer their members, such as the improved price from higher production or wet mills run by UCA members. This distinction limits the UCA's ability to provide further financing for coffee production in UCA Miraflor.

Even if the UCA can retain its remaining production group, how long can the organic coffee market remain profitable, both for the organization and for its member farmers? This presented the primary challenge faced by the UCA in terms of coffee production during my interviews in 2007. Coffee production seems to be less of a priority for the organization now. The current UCA Miraflor website barely mentions coffee production, and as of February 2009 the product is not available from the only online coffee seller I was able to find that listed it. Since UCA Miraflor sits at 1,450 meters above sea level with an abundance of healthy plant life, fertile soil, and farmers to work the land, it makes an ideal location for growing coffee, but the on-going involvement of the UCA with the marketing of organic UCA Miraflor coffee is uncertain.

Problems and Critiques of UCA Miraflor

Coffee Production

In the course of my interviews with residents and employees of UCA Miraflor, several key concerns arose involving the production of coffee within the preserve. I will break down these concerns into the following categories: Confusion and lack of communication between UCA staff and Miraflor residents regarding the marketing role of the UCA and Fair Trade certification; The limitations of organic certification and the high cost of Fair Trade certification; Competition for marketing overpowering UCA financing and training; and competition with PRODECOOP over the same farmers.

Confusion and Lack of Communication Between the UCA office and UCA Miraflor Residents:

Davíd, a UCA coffee technician, described an apparent misunderstanding between the UCA and the small coffee producers, illustrating how farmers do not comprehend the role of the UCA in the marketing of UCA Miraflor coffee. Davíd was under the impression that UCA Miraflor residents did not understand that their coffee moves through the UCA to a series of locations before being exported, rather than being the sole responsibility of the UCA.

The majority of my interviewees from El Sontule and Las Nubes had at least a basic knowledge of the international price of coffee, the production process, and the inevitable market fluctuations. Those working in the UCA office unsurprisingly had a better understanding of the intricacies of coffee commercialization since it is one of the main functions of the organization. I am not sure if farmers' lack of knowledge about the

role of the UCA in coffee trade actually helps or hurts the functioning of the UCA and its farmers.

If UCA officials clearly explained to members how the organization functioned and the route of coffee following sale to the UCA, it could help members to understand the business side of coffee rather than just the production. This education would also be beneficial to clearing up the many misunderstandings I encountered regarding Fair Trade coffee. Most of the residents I interviewed did not seem aware that any Fair Trade coffee was being produced and sold in UCA Miraflor, even those who were members of UCA coffee cooperatives. Despite the limited production of the Fair Trade group, I would expect the integration of three outside cooperatives into the UCA to be news that any member would want to know about, especially if plans existed to continue the production of Fair Trade coffee. The fact that so many residents were not informed leads me to believe that the UCA was not receiving sufficient benefits from its Fair Trade business to promote it among its members.

The Limitations of Organic Coffee and the High Cost of Fair Trade Certification:

I was told repeatedly in my interviews that UCA Miraflor is happy with the price they were receiving for their organic coffee, but the program is clearly not advancing the UCA. Though the decision to move to organic production was a great step for UCA Miraflor in order to maintain the health of the land and the residents, organic coffee production is not delivering the expected financial benefits to members or the organization.

Theoretically, if the UCA were to discover a Fair Trade route and a way to pay for the necessary certification, it should receive additional funds to promote sound

organic production techniques. However, UCA Miraflor members have enough trouble gaining organic certification and covering the necessary production costs. Though the UCA gained Fair Trade certification for the production group of women's cooperatives, it is unable to sell any Fair Trade coffee from its other co-ops. I do not know if this is just a lack of interest, a financial issue, the absence within the UCA of an outlet for Fair Trade coffee, or a combination of reasons.

It is also unclear if Fair Trade certification and marketing would be able to rejuvenate the UCA's coffee program, given Jaffee's list of critiques and necessary reforms of the Fair Trade market. Certification costs and stagnant coffee prices could bring a quick end to the venture, were the UCA to attempt it, or it could deliver the improved salaries, technical assistance, and processing abilities described by Davíd during the UCA's time selling Fair Trade coffee with Cafenica between 1999 and 2002. Based on evidence from my interviews and the intrinsic obstacles of the Fair Trade market, I believe that the UCA will be unable or unwilling to re-enter Fair Trade coffee production, thus endangering the production of organic coffee in UCA Miraflor as a result.

Competition for Marketing Overpowering UCA Financing and Training:

Despite the best intentions of the UCA, their efforts seem to be no match for capitalism. The financing and training provided by UCA Miraflor have maintained the form and function of the *campo* since 1990, protecting the land and providing the funds for farmers to transform their plots and teaching them how to get the most out of organic production. The problem that UCA Miraflor has encountered stems from larger organizations with superior marketing abilities subjugating the UCA's attempts to

promote its organic coffee and creating a great temptation for local producers looking for a better price and the advantages of membership in such a company.

All of my interviewees described the influence of the UCA both historically and in the present, and even members who had left the organization noted the importance of the training and initial financing provided by the UCA. However, this appreciation does not always translate to a situation where a profit could be made and, although other UCA programs such as ecotourism are growing and moving forward, its organic coffee project seems to be a small fish in a very big pond. The low annual coffee production of UCA Miraflor puts it at a severe disadvantage when competing with larger marketing organizations, regardless of its attempts at to finance and train its farmers.

Competition with PRODECOOP over the Same Farmers:

Many coffee cooperatives operate in northern Nicaragua, but the presence of one of them (PRODECOOP), within the UCA Miraflor reserve, has created a situation where the two cooperative organizations operating in a relatively small, enclosed area are vying for the same producers. The fact that the two El Sontule cooperatives left the UCA for PRODECOOP in 2001 exacerbates the competitive environment, since everyone in the small communities talk and shares their opinions with each other.

Though the UCA leadership felt betrayed by the farmers' defection in 2001, they understand the distinction between the two companies. Davíd explains the difference:

> Because the area of UCA Miraflor is small, it is to say, PRODECOOP covers a heap of communities in the north zone, but only UCA Miraflor is UCA Miraflor, it is only Miraflor then, it is very small. So then... now these other PRODECOOP organizations practically are marketing, the mission and the vision is the marketing of coffee (unlike the UCA, who is also concerned with environmental and social programs, not just marketing coffee). So then they are working with a large quantity (of both farmers and coffee) right now, and each year they leave a good amount (of profit) to pay for all types of expenses.

He and Roger each cited a very high production amount for PRODECOOP, higher than I found on the PRODECOOP website, claiming 60,000 quintales gold (six hundred 100-pound sacks) are produced each year. I am unsure if the exaggeration was intented to excuse the UCA, but whichever the amount, PRODECOOP's eighteen clients in the United States and Europe create a much higher demand as well as higher prices for the coffee.

Davíd explained that PRODECOOP has two main advantages over the UCA: (1) lower organic and Fair Trade certification costs and (2) "the mouth of the farmers." Lower certification costs translate to better pay for the small farmers, even after other fees including the organization's commission. The greater membership and production of PRODECOOP allows it to lower the costs of certification for its farmers, making for easier entrance into the production group and less need to rely on loans. Many of the PRODECOOP farmers only pay 65 to 70 centavos per quintal of gold coffee for certification, marking a $12 to 13 difference per quintal when compared to the farmers of UCA Miraflor.[27]

By "the mouth of the farmers," Davíd is referring to the campesino negotiating skills that are put into effect by the advantaged PRODECOOP farmers at their dry processing plant in UCA Miraflor, where varying charges exist for non-members that allow one more potential variable increase in the profit margin for each quintal that passes through. Having their own processing plant provides PRODECOOP farmers with easy access and saves them an extra $16-17 per quintal processed, while the UCA farmers have to pay an additional $10 per quintal for the service, according to Davíd. I

[27] One-hundred centavos equals one cordoba. One cordoba is equal to approximately five cents.

was not informed of any plans for the UCA to construct its own plant, leading me to believe that it is either too expensive a prospect or one more instance in which the UCA is unable to compete with higher producing organizations such as PRODECOOP. Though the organic incentives are similar between the UCA and PRODECOOP farmers, the latter starts out with quite an advantage.

UCA Miraflor farmers made no mention to me about a rift developing between them and their neighbors who chose to work with PRODECOOP and did not speak bitterly regarding the processing plant fees. It seemed understood that PRODECOOP is a much larger organization that has superior marketing routes for its coffee, but when I asked how the UCA compares to other cooperative organizations interviewees have worked with, they made no direct comparison between training or financing. This could have been because the farmers I interviewed worked on established farms whose main concern was simply selling their product or it could have just become an accepted fact upon which the communities no longer dwell.

Clearly, the competition between the UCA and PRODECOOP has impacted the UCA by drawing the UCA's attention to its shortcomings in production and marketing. It is equally clear that the thread that keeps the small coffee farmers (especially those associated with the UCA) in business is tenuous. As Davíd put it, "if the farmers can't earn money with the UCA, they go elsewhere." If the UCA can't provide loans for small farmers and sell their coffee for an attractive price, there are plenty of organizations nearby that would be more than willing to incorporate their production.

Conclusion

The UCA provides its coffee farmers with everything they need to produce high quality organic coffee. Farmers receive financing to convert their land to coffee parcels, purchase livestock for fertilizer and other crops for consumption. The UCA provides training for its farmers, teaching them organic production techniques and environmental protection, as well as offering continued technical assistance, an English language program, and agro-ecological training at their institute in UCA Miraflor. Initially, the UCA helped to obtain organic and Fair Trade certification for the producers in order to receive an improved price and markets their coffee to the United States and Europe. The involvement of the UCA in UCA Miraflor has protected the ecosystem and provided families and entire communities in the preserve with the ability to maintain their lives and their land through UCA projects.

The efforts of the UCA have transformed UCA Miraflor into what it is today and have introduced economic opportunities, but the successes have been tempered by problems. Miscommunication between the union and members has created an unclear certification status where farmers are not informed of the potential benefits of Fair Trade certification, let alone the fact that the UCA already markets a limited amount of Fair Trade coffee. This is especially harmful since organic coffee production alone may not be a profitable enough source of income. But, high Fair Trade certification costs and Fair Trade coffee price stagnation, in addition to the cost of organic certification and shortage of necessary resources such as fertilizer, make the move to Fair Trade extremely difficult with UCA Miraflor's current low level of production. Despite the UCA's best attempts at training and preparing its farmers, this same low production has continued for several

years, resulting in marketing troubles for the UCA due to increased marketing competition from larger organizations with much higher production. The best example of this competition is with PRODECOOP, in which the two companies are competing for the very same farmers, PRODECOOP already having incorporated two UCA Miraflor co-ops in 2001.

The unfortunate consequence of these problems is in the additional progams that the UCA is involved in within the preserve. The other unions are only concerned with coffee, whereas the UCA is the principle protector of the land contained in the UCA Miraflor Nature Preserve and is also in charge of ecotourism and the general well-being of the population. Organic and Fair Trade coffee is not harmful to the ecosystem; indeed, it has clear environmental benefits built into its unclear framework, so regardless of affiliation, no serious harm should befall the environment due to the farming, but the UCA is responsible for ensuring that the other unions' methods include not squandering the resources of the preserve. Roger, a UCA manager, even expressed concern about FORO Miraflor, the association co-managing the preserve, not doing their part of the work and destroying the natural resources they are supposed to be protecting.

According to the UCA employees I interviewed, there is little communication between the UCA and PRODECOOP regarding coffee production, even at meetings of cooperatives. If the UCA is managing the nature preserve, perhaps increased involvement with the other coffee producers in terms of production methods and resource conservation would be beneficial. The UCA may or may not be able to continue reaping a profit from coffee production, but instead of looking over its shoulder worrying about further defection, it would be more advantageous for all coffee actors operating in UCA

Miraflor to have an unanimous and mutually beneficial understanding that would encourage cooperation between all of the cooperatives and sustain the area for continued coffee production and environmental concerns, as well as for the welfare of the residents.

As the UCA appears to be moving away from organic coffee production, other programs are gaining in importance. The projects supporting livestock, the sale of milk, and production of organic 'Mirabiol' pesticide continue to advance and provide economic diversification for the residents of UCA Miraflor, while the ecotourism program within the preserve has moved to the forefront in terms of interest and economic gain. It is this program that I analyze next.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS OF THE UCA MIRAFLOR ECOTOURISM PROGRAM

The Development of Nicaraguan Tourism in Contemporary Times

The turbulent political history of Nicaragua discouraged large scale tourism for the better part of the 20th century. Its beaches, lakes and mountains were considered too dangerous for mainstream visitors while revolutions and wars raged on. In the 1980's, however, the number of Northern visitors to Nicaragua began to rise. Poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti referred to these intrepid travelers as "tourists of revolution" (Babb 2004), and their goal was to see and experience political unrest in exotic locations around the world. The socialist ideology of the Sandinista revolution provided them with such a draw, and Nicaragua was among the nations to benefit from their interest.

Those who chose to make "red pilgrimages" (Babb 2004) to Nicaragua in the 1980's were the beginning of a tide of tourists to wash into Central America soon thereafter. Their interests were social, political, or adventurous, and they wanted to be a part of transformative events in progress, which were often set in motion by the governments of their home countries. In 1990, the FSLN was voted out of office, diminishing the draw of "red tourism" along with the number of tourists. Nevertheless, the word was out on Nicaragua, and the timing was fortunate, since years of war had crippled the Nicaraguan economy.

The election of Doña Violeta Chamorro to the presidency in 1990 brought stability to the war-torn nation, but it also lessened the nation's appeal to tourists seeking danger and strife. Though the positive economic impact of government policies instated in the Chamorro regime was dubious, it was during this time "when the United States

failed to offer (foreign) assistance at the level expected and international coffee prices plummeted, that Nicaragua sought to develop tourism" (Babb 2004:545). The Nicaraguan government decided to market the country to conventional tourists, many of whom were already visiting Costa Rica, their more American-friendly neighbor to the south, as well as other Latin American nations. At this time, tourism became one of the central foci of the Nicaraguan government as a way to diversify the predominantly agricultural economy and to overtake coffee production as the main industry (Babb 2004).[28]

In the 1990's, Nicaragua's attempts to diversify its economy through tourism received a push as popular environmentalism and global capitalism unleashed the phenomenon of ecotourism on the world.[29] The beautiful nation became known to world travelers, and ecotourism projects began to spring up in Nicaragua and throughout Central America to take advantage of the largely intact ecosystems. Ecotourism itself is the center of much controversy regarding the harm it causes to the environment despite its environmentally conscious moniker. Not all "ecotourism" outfits actually have environmental conservation as the driving force behind the business, which can lead to cutting corners, overly creative marketing, and outright lies about their business practices in order to attract ecotourists.

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[28] There have been many instances in which communities have attempted to diversify their economies using tourism as a reaction to an economic downturn or the loss of an industry, such as the coffee crisis in Nicaragua. For instance, communities such as Kellogg, Montana and Kolari, Lapland, Finland have built ski resorts following mine closures and used tourism as an economic redevelopment strategy to keep afloat after their livelihood suffered a drastic change (Neil and Tykkylainen 1998).

[29] Within sustainable development, ecotourism is defined as: "a form of nature-based tourism that contributes to sustainable rural development" (Gould and Lewis 2009:276)

Semantics and business definitions are not the center of my research and my purpose is not to critique the global ecotourism industry, nor to take it upon myself to decide if the UCA Miraflor ecotourism program is truly worthy of the title. The UCA refers to the program as ecotourism, and it is conducted within a protected area, so hereafter the program will be called ecotourism. Ecological concerns, as well as UCA conservation policy, are a major source of the analysis that follows. Here, my interests are focused on Miraflor and how the UCA and Miraflor residents work together to promote and sustain themselves and their land through ecotourism.

Regardless of what type of tourism it is, the industry is now at the forefront of Nicaraguan economic development policy. In an interview on June 30, 2003, Tomás Borge, former Sandinista commander and the only remaining living founder of the FSLN, stated that a clean and healthy tourist industry (without sex tourism) would become Nicaragua's number one industry and "rescue the national economy" (Babb 2004:551). Borge expressed his desire to reorient tourism "toward historical questions and, within the parameters of adventure tourism, guide visitors along the routes taken by the Sandinistas during the insurrections of the late 1970's" (Babb 2004:551). As I will later in this section, he is not alone in his passion for Nicaraguan history.

Whether visitors to Nicaragua are interested in ecotourism, historical tourism, or any other aspect of the country, tourists are the cornerstone of the current national economic policy, and studies have shown that an "enthusiastic tourism development policies as a means of economic expansion and poverty reduction may be fully effective in that tourism development leads to poverty reduction, rather than the other way around" (Croes & Vanegas 2008:102). A current (2008-2009) food crisis is severely crippling the

already wobbly nation while political and social unrest continues since the FSLN into power in 2006. However, if Nicaragua is able to harness and expand a conscious and sustainable tourism industry, it could be of great assistance for its debt-ridden economy.

This Case Study as an Example of Nicaraguan Tourism

As Nicaragua seeks to develop national tourism, the past and the present are bound to collide. The national history of conflict, current global concerns with environmental sustainability, and the welfare of an area's population must be taken into account when analyzing Nicaraguan tourism. As such, UCA Miraflor represents an ideal location in which to analyze these three factors.

Since UCA Miraflor is an ecological preserve, it also presents an attraction to the large number of environmentally-conscious travelers who visit Central America. By protecting the area's ecosystem, the UCA and residents have created an intact area with unique flora and fauna that will draw these "green" visitors as much as the area's experiences in the Contra War draw "red" tourists. The ecological draw of UCA Miraflor is supported by the UCA's conservation work, environmental education for members and residents, and through its guide training program.

The residents of UCA Miraflor comprise both those who are conducting ecotourism and those receiving the benefits, as well as having come up with the idea to conduct ecotourism in the preserve. In a sense, they are controlling their own destiny by assisting the UCA in management plans for the preserve and the community ecotourism program that provides them with income and it is this fact that separates the UCA Miraflor ecotourism program from other ecotourism outfits that do not encourage such

participation from local communities. As a result of this, they have important perspectives on whether the ecotourism program is advancing and producing the expected results. Even more importantly, since the residents of UCA Miraflor farmers are peasant farmers, the results of this study, when shared with the community, will provide valuable information on the effects of tourism on poor populations, a field in which data is particularly scarce (Markandya, Taylor, and Pedroso 2003; Croes and Vanegas 2008).

UCA Miraflor has potential in both historical and ecological tourism, mainly by virtue of being a community-centered ecotourism program. In 1994-1995, it was community residents who wanted to clean up the environment of Miraflor, and it was residents who first started telling tales to tourists from the days of the Sandinista revolution and the Contra War. Residents' involvement and interests, coupled with the security and assistance of the UCA, have led to the development of an ecotourism program in which Miraflor's history, environment, and society interact concurrently. As such, my evaluation of the effectiveness of the UCA Miraflor ecotourism program encompasses all three factors.

The following section will detail the implementation of the ecotourism program in the UCA Miraflor Nature Preserve. I will analyze the ecotourism program concerning the protection of natural resources, land use, protection of native flora and fauna, and the environmental impact of additional visitors on the ecosystem, as well as in terms of financing, gender differences in participation, and family participation. I conclude by assessing the social and environmental impacts having ecotourism facilities have had on

the preserve or Mirafloreños, and discuss whether or not stratification has resulted from families competing for foreign tourists.

The Development of Ecotourism in UCA Miraflor

History of UCA Miraflor Tourism

According to Davíd, a UCA coffee technician, UCA Miraflor residents had conducted uncoordinated tourism prior to the UCA's involvement. Since it was unofficial and carried out independently by residents, I have no precise data about this tourism. Once the UCA implemented an organized tourism project in 1990, it began to keep track of the number and nationality of tourists.

In Davíd's opinion, the additional programs the UCA implemented in UCA Miraflor spurred the development of the tourism project by bringing in foreign people who were going to be working with the UCA who wanted to learn about and experience life in the *campo* and how the work was done. He explained that:

> They wanted to work with the people of the *campo,* to learn… Many had come during the time of the revolution also, so then when the new government (FSLN) came, they came too.

These "red tourists" gave way to student groups mostly from the United States, who also wanted to learn and have the campesino experience, without the financial concerns of those visiting on business though perhaps still bearing some residual political motivations. It was not until 1990, when residents of Miraflor joined the UCA that ecotourism per se began within the preserve.

How the UCA Miraflor Ecotourism Program Began

In 1994 or 1995, shortly after the UCA began managing the UCA Miraflor preserve, UCA managers asked residents of Miraflor communities to identify key

environmental dangers within the area. The UCA and the Nicaraguan Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARENA), with help from residents, then developed a management plan for the zone to ensure the protection of the ecosystem against these and other environmental threats. The plan included a variety of organic agricultural projects (including organic coffee), dairy production, and education and social programs, all geared towards maintaining the livelihood of the population and preserve.

In 1996, the Nicaraguan government designated UCA Miraflor as an ecological preserve, and the ecotourism program really began to take shape. The ecotourism program was designed to be conducted by the UCA women's cooperatives to provide them with a source of income for their households, since the majority of the work with organic coffee is done by the men of UCA Miraflor and opportunities for employment for women are scarce. The women were, and continue to be, enthusiastic and organized in their involvement with community ecotourism. In 1998, after Hurricane Mitch devastated Nicaragua, the UCA hired two Nicaraguan women who had studied tourism and set them up in an office in Estelí to help establish and promote its ecotourism program. One of the pair moved to America shortly after that, but by 2000, members of the UCA in Miraflor were themselves conducting official ecotourism.

As was the case with the coffee program discussed earlier, when I asked my interviewees about the ecotourism program, they included environmental, financial, and community benefits that encouraged them to implement the program, with each concern being brought up about as frequently as the others.

For instance, Roger of the UCA explained that ecotourism fits right alongside organic coffee, agriculture, vegetable gardens, and livestock within the UCA's product diversification. He explained that ecotourism was implemented "to take advantage of the natural resources and also to look for a new source of income for the families of Miraflor." For Roger, the benefits of the UCA's work reach as far as the city of Estelí, since the UCA managed the preserve before it was protected and continues to do the majority of the protection of the area's natural resources, which affects the quality and quantity of resources available to the population of Estelí in the valley below UCA Miraflor. The purpose of the project was "not something to exploit the resources, but to maintain the natural resources that exist in Miraflor," echoed Karina, also an UCA employee. Adrián, an El Sontule resident, agreed with Roger and Karina. As he put it:

> Our source for earning money with ecotourism is the idea that instead of destroying the trees, to plant more in order to have a better preserve and protect our natural environment. We already live in a protected area so we do not owe the wood destruction. Instead of destroying the trees we have to take care and help to improve nature.

Davíd of the UCA office also expressed this sentiment, but maintained careful realism when he detailed keeping the small forested areas that exist in Miraflor for the benefit of the farmers and fencing off wells for human consumption to keep out livestock, saying the purpose is "to avoid… to *minimize*, at least, the environmental contamination."

Luís, a Miraflor coffee farmer with PRODECOOP, was quick to change the tone from environmental to social concerns when our discussion turned to the ecotourism program. He explained that ecotourism:

> …helps our environment here but it is also beneficial for the poor families… the poor families in Miraflor and places like this are influenced by ecotourism. It is beneficial for the poorest families, like the tourist home-stays in this area and the things we make here in Miraflor that the tourists like a lot.

My interviewees had what seemed to be a common sense approach to conducting ecotourism, reasoning that environmental preservation can prove to have both economic as well as ecological benefits. Victor of the UCA simply stated this combination allows those farmers involved in ecotourism to gain a better situation for themselves and their communities; "It is beneficial to have better conditions and protect more (areas) and to make it prettier and attractive" in order to attract visitors to ecotourism in UCA Miraflor.

Community Tourism:

Working with people in the Community is Development inside the Community

My interviewees continually used the term "community ecotourism" when describing the UCA program, reflecting the importance of the project to the entire UCA Miraflor preserve, as well as reiterating the high level of involvement of residents from the onset. It is important that the impetus to enact the project came from the residents themselves, since studies in community-based tourism have shown that such projects can improve the quality of life, "provided that the local community is taken into account and the planning and implementation of such development focus on creating opportunities and benefits for its members" (Bartholo, Delamoro & Bursztyn 2008:103). According to my interviews, the centers of the UCA Miraflor ecotourism program are community and family; this cooperation and inclusiveness are key components that distinguish the Miraflor ecotourism program from other tourism models.

Those I interviewed at the UCA were adamant about giving credit to UCA Miraflor residents for the implementation of the ecotourism program. Marisol of the UCA made it clear that "we are the ones managing things so that UCA Miraflor can be a protected area, but in reality the idea to declare Miraflor a protected area was from some

member farmers of UCA Miraflor." Victor, an UCA manager, echoed this, explaining that "the name is a UCA project, but the idea is from members and families in the area." Similarly, Karina, also in the UCA office, further clarified this by stating that "it is a program that was born mostly from the initiative of the families of Miraflor."

Rodrigo, a UCA Miraflor member and resident, described the ecotourism project as "a community tourism where many people benefit," explaining that "ecotourism came in place of familiar (family-based) tourism."[30] Adrián, another UCA resident emphasized the economic and community benefits of the program, pointing out that:

> The ecotourism program has become very important because it has already brought many benefits to the women's coop and to the communities, to the territory of Miraflor with the money they have gathered from what tourists pay… it uses what makes up the area, creates new paths, improves the home-stays and… and it helps us all economically so much with food and in what we need: clothes, shoes, everything. It has become very important and… and gives us a very good income.

Adrián's claim that all of Miraflor benefits from the community ecotourism program introduced another theme that came up repeatedly, often heatedly, in many interviews: that the ecotourism program benefits <u>all</u> of Miraflor. Employees of the UCA were especially emphatic in describing tourism as a force that should be embraced and appreciated by every resident within the preserve. Roger, a UCA manager, was at his most animated when he illustrated that though the program greatly benefits the families most directly involved, those in the community also profit through *pulperias* (markets) being built for tourists in communities, the renting of horses used by tourists from other community members, as well as the guide training for young people and the

[30] I believe that Rodrigo is referring to the uncoordinated tourism that occurred in UCA Miraflor before the ecotourism program, in which individual families boarded tourists.

accompanying English language program. He believes that "in that way it is working with people within the community and that is also development inside the community."

Victor in the UCA office voiced a bit of distress on the matter, saying that:

> There are some farmers that have something against the UCA, but they come and benefit from the area and have much recognition for the work they have done. In reality, it is for the people, it's not just for the population or for the organization or for the people in the government.

He explained "We don't just need members, but also people in the community" in order to continue advancing the ecotourism program and all of the UCA's work in UCA Miraflor. So in that sense, the ecotourism program functioned as a source of community development in Miraflor.

Community involvement in the ecotourism program is paramount, especially when dealing with poor, disadvantaged populations. Croes and Vanegas (2008:96) found that "strategies for tourism development have been found to be effective in unlocking opportunities for the most vulnerable groups within the tourism sector," but in order to be universally acceptable,

> …tourist expansion and development both need to receive support from and give support to the local communities, because tourism activities affect an entire community. This means that the new growth and development strategy should focus on increased economic production, social equity, and thus poverty reduction.

Fortunately, the UCA Miraflor ecotourism program does just that, encouraging participation of all residents and providing linkages back to the communities involved.

When a community organizes to conduct tourism, like when it organizes to form coffee cooperatives, residents give themselves a voice in what happens to their land. Nevertheless, they also have a responsibility to everyone else in the area to do what is necessary to fulfill the goals they have set. The addition of the community ecotourism

project appears to have done wonders in solidifying the income of those Mirafloreños who choose to participate, as well as having produced many clear benefits for the population as a whole. Family and community remain the focus of the ecotourism program and its benefits, and residents' personal connection to the land continues to thrive, while the history and culture of the residents is reaffirmed.

Heritage Tourism

In addition to being a program centered on communities in UCA Miraflor, ecotourism has also provided an outlet for the colorful history of the area. Josué, a resident UCA member, introduced the importance of local heritage, expressing his approval of the ecotourism project "because other people from other places come and learn the history. At least some of those people will take the stories to other places." He told me that this "interchange of thoughts and ideas" proved to be an original impetus for conducting tourism, as well as a potential source for continued interest in the future.

According to Andrea, a UCA resident active in several UCA programs through her cooperative including ecotourism, the first group of ecotourists was a group of students through the Center for Global Education (CGE). This was in 2000, before the UCA's ecotourism program had been officially implemented throughout the preserve, and she and her women's co-op, *Nueva Manacer* (New Dawn) were unsure of their interest in ecotourism or how they were going to entertain tourists. As it turned out, the student group that comprised their first visitors "wanted to know what the history was because we did not have any other thing to offer like tourist places, but what emerged most was the history." Andrea and other New Dawn members were more than happy to oblige.

The official name of UCA Miraflor is “Heroes and Martyrs of UCA Miraflor” for a reason: the people’s history lives on. The events of the Contra War and the Somoza regime are ingrained in the very fabric of the communities. Many *campesinos* still wear their fatigues, bullet holes decorate the concrete and cinder block walls of buildings throughout the area, and more stories exist in any small community than could possibly ever be heard by a single person. The area’s history and collective memory is every bit as valuable as its ecosystem in attracting and affecting tourists.

In a 2009 conference on heritage and cultural tourism at the Brigham Young University, Jerusalem Center for Near East Studies, referring to tourism training programs in the post-conflict landscapes in Bosnia and Palestine, it was found that “the heritage element bears a direct relationship to conflict, post-conflict, and economic transition” (Gelbman and Ron 2009:128). The purpose of these programs was to contextualize the history of conflict on the culture and heritage of residents of such nations into general economic and political terms that relate to the development of national tourism now that hostilities have ceased (Gelbman and Ron 2009). The same could be said of Nicaragua, especially the war-torn northern mountain areas like UCA Miraflor, and the residents recognized right away how important their history of conflict and revolution is to their community, as well as to curious tourists.

Paola, an El Sontule resident, linked the area’s history of conflict with tourism when she told me that the organization of Miraflor communities that made them targets during the Contra War has “advanced them” and led them to success under the UCA’s programs. By remembering their history, residents of UCA Miraflor have additionally strengthened their ecotourism program. If Mirafloreños continue to educate visitors

about their unique ecosystem as well as their history and culture, they will improve their ability to connect with tourists and their chances of maintaining their link to the past, provided that they avoid mythologizing their history or only recreating it to market to tourists.

UCA Involvement in the Ecotourism Program

Protection and Management of UCA Miraflor

As the principle manager of the UCA Miraflor nature preserve, the UCA was responsible for the necessary legwork to achieve protected status for the area in 1990. With UCA management, the area's environment is maintained, making it possible to conduct community ecotourism. My interviewees continually expressed their gratitude for the work the UCA has done to protect the ecosystem in UCA Miraflor, which, along with helping legally protect the UCA Miraflor ecological preserve, includes halting the traditional slash and burn agricultural techniques, replacing clear cutting with reforestation, and maintaining "eco-routes" for tourists.

Prior to the involvement of the UCA, slash and burn had been the primary farming technique in UCA Miraflor. Such practices do add some nutrients to the soil, but involve the constant rotation of large farming areas while the field that was burned remains fallow or becomes a livestock pasture. In addition to reducing the air quality in UCA Miraflor, the constant need for many large agricultural areas encouraged further deforestation. When the UCA implemented organic agriculture in the preserve, it reduced the size of agricultural plots to avoid the need to slash and burn, as well as to preserve the remaining trees and land.

Since the UCA Miraflor area is heavily forested, it had been a source of timber for as long as any of my interviewees could remember. Unfortunately, extensive clear cutting by the country's logging industry, as well as slash and burn practices, had caused widespread erosion that threatened both the environment and the agriculture in UCA Miraflor. By calling an end to clear cutting, and through much reforestation work, the UCA and its members protect the native flora and fauna as well as promote quality organic agriculture by encouraging healthy tree growth that supports the soil. Karina, a UCA ecotourism coordinator, told me that the UCA also reforested the area around what were once wells and springs, which will eventually eliminate any erosion and result in much-needed cleaner water supplies for the communities.

The UCA also established the "eco-routes" that are scattered about the preserve as tourist destinations. Some locations already had established paths that just required minor trail work, while others had to be created from the ground up. The attractions along these eco-routes include the Miraflor Lagoon, several waterfalls, the Neolithic Caves of Apagüis, the coffee-cupping laboratory, and the "orchid garden," which is home to forty of the over two-hundred known species of orchids in UCA Miraflor. Depending on what the visitor wants to see, the three zones of UCA Miraflor (low, intermediate, and high elevation) each have differing attractions due to their varying altitudes and ecosystems, ranging from iguanas and swimming holes in the low zone to a high elevation primeval cloud forest where visitors might glimpse the quetzal, a beautiful species of bird that is extremely endangered throughout Central America.

Attracting and Booking Student Groups and Other Visitors

UCA Miraflor has many attractions to offer visitors, but as tourists continue to explore Nicaragua, the number of other attractions is rising, and local tourism organizations must work to receive their share of visitors. The UCA books groups in advance as well as accepting walk-in tourists at its office in Estelí. Moreover, the UCA ecotourism program is listed in English-language Nicaraguan travel guides such as Lonely Planet and Moon Handbooks. Depending on the interests of the tourists, the UCA arranges visits to different communities, since the zones possess different attractions, as well as differing infrastructure within the communities. Based on the size and composition of the group, tourists may need certain amenities or more home stays than a particular community is able to provide.

According to company data I received from the UCA office, and reinforced by interviews with UCA staff, the ecotourism program throughout the preserve as a whole has grown substantially in the several years prior to my research without experiencing any major problems, and even bringing a decent income to those members involved. I was not able to obtain any official information regarding the distribution of tourists to individual communities within the preserve, but the reported number of tourists received in UCA Miraflor as a whole is as follows:

Table 2: UCA Miraflor Ecotourism – Number of Tourists 2004-2007

YEAR	**NUMBER OF TOURISTS**
2004	190
2005	1,654
2006	1,591
2007	834 (through mid-May)

Total	4,269

According to my interviewees, the majority of tourists to Miraflor are from the United States and Europe, though UCA Miraflor does receive small numbers of visitors from elsewhere in Nicaragua, as well as other Latin American nations.[31] It has established rates for home-stays ranging from thirteen to seventeen dollars per night including meals or five to seven dollars per night without food (individual meals can also be purchased at home-stays). Guides cost groups of one to three tourists twelve dollars per day or four dollars per person in groups of four to five. Tourists who wish to see Miraflor on horseback must pay an additional nineteen dollars per day, or seven dollar per tourist depending on group size. From these fees, the UCA collects twenty-five percent from guides and twenty percent from home-stays for continued work with the ecotourism program and office costs.

Many communities in UCA Miraflor have been receiving groups from the same organizations for years and have developed a relationship and regular visits. My interviewees told me that the majority of the visits to El Sontule are from student groups, the most regular and longest-standing being the CGE, which was the initial ecotourism group to El Sontule in 1990, as well as my own travel seminar in 2007. Valeria, a UCA member and El Sontule resident, told me that the CGE groups used to only come twice a year but now make around five trips, each with a group of around twenty. She explained to me that they "don't come like tourists, but like university students."

The distinction is worth noting since several residents told me that the majority of tourists stay in the low zone of the preserve, only making day trips to the higher elevation

[31] The UCA lists its tourism rates on their website, www.miraflor.org.

attractions. I am, however, unclear on the reason for this. It could partly be simply that the lower zone is a shorter drive up the rough road to UCA Miraflor, which is impassable by bus during much of the summer wet season. The intermediate and high elevation zones are also the center of coffee production in UCA Miraflor, perhaps leading the UCA to focus on alternatives such as ecotourism for the less agriculturally-focused low zone, or it could be that those tourists who come in groups are more interested than individual travelers in the agricultural and organic coffee cooperatives of the higher elevations. My interviewees mentioned the distribution and regularity of tourist visits throughout the preserve as a source of concern, but made no specific complaints.

However, the potential for an unequal distribution of tourists throughout the communities is a danger that should be continually examined by the UCA. Despite the fact that the UCA and residents are united in the protection of UCA Miraflor's ecosystem and natural resources, there remains a risk that a division will develop between families that participate in the ecotourism program and those that do not, or as a result of competition for tourists between participating families. Such a rift developed in a rural community ecotourism project in Gales Point, Belize, where "while residents expressed group unity when confronted with inter-community competition, they also turned against each other as rural ecotourism encouraged intra-class differences" (Belsky 1999:658).

Though the Gales Point ecotourism program was a study in community-based resource management, once tourists began their visits, residents of the community began to fight each other to attract them to their homes rather than their neighbors'. Belsky (1999) cites a lack of attention paid to community differences and social processes when designing the tourism and conservation programs that fostered this segregation. While I

did not see any evidence of this occurring in UCA Miraflor's community ecotourism program, it remains a possibility of which the UCA must be wary in the future.

Since UCA Miraflor contains over 14,000 acres of land, there is a great deal of territory for tourists to explore, so visitors are likely are spread out across the preserve. Josué, an UCA member and El Sontule resident, cited an average of 150 tourists per year for each of the estimated fifteen communities in UCA Miraflor that conduct ecotourism.[32] If El Sontule receives five or six groups of twenty students from CGE each year, that alone totals one-hundred to one-hundred-twenty individuals. Andrea, another El Sontule resident and a member of the ecotourism co-op, told me that an additional average of fifteen tourists per week (in the dry season) who are not affiliated with a student group also frequent the community. Taken together, I believe that El Sontule receives its share of tourists to UCA Miraflor, but the majority of them are student groups, which may skew residents' perspectives due to the distinction between tourists and students, as Valeria noted earlier.

A certain amount of competition is inevitable since ecotourism is a source of income, and participants want to ensure that they receive ample visitors in order to maintain a profit from the venture. Davíd of the UCA even jokingly made mention of UCA Miraflor residents not reporting visitors or directing them to the UCA office, adding additional income for residents off-the-books. He described this as a minor coordination headache for the UCA rather than a continued problem of members going over the UCA's head. Most of the competition for tourists is reflected in the appearance of residents' homes and gardens.

[32] I am referring only to those communities that have home-stays and infrastructure for tourists, not just tourist attractions.

Financing for Housing Improvements

One of the main functions of the UCA is to provide agricultural financing to its members; however, it also provides residents with revolving funds, often obtained from American and European non-profits, to improve their houses and land in order to attract more tourists. Homes in UCA Miraflor are primitive by Northern standards. There is no running water or indoor plumbing, and the only electricity is from solar panels provided by a European NGO, which provide limited power to those houses that have them. Most of the *alojamientos* (rural home-stay houses) in UCA Miraflor possess this particular amenity to provide light and music to tourists, as well as their families.

Funding provided by the UCA, as well as income from the ecotourism program itself, also helps residents to further improve their homes for tourists accustomed to a more privileged lifestyle by amending their outdoor toilets to reduce odor and improve privacy, purchasing mattresses and cots, and expanding the gardens around their cabins. UCA employees and residents alike agree that the prettier and cleaner they keep the homes and the environment of UCA Miraflor, the better it is for the ecotourism program. As such, the nicer houses with the most colorful gardens are likely to receive more visitors than those that are not as clean or kept up.

Environmental Training

Providing Mirafloreños with environmental education is one of the primary duties of the UCA; this encourages the protection of the ecosystem and natural resources in UCA Miraflor. Indeed, every program introduced by the UCA fits into its quest for sustainable development and conservation. As discussed earlier in the coffee analysis, the UCA trains organic coffee producers of Miraflor in both agriculture and ecology in

order to help them understand the relationship between the native flora and their crops, especially shade-grown organic coffee. The UCA also educates all other members and residents on environmental issues such as deforestation and soil erosion in order to keep the population informed and encourage participatory planning in the union.

To further this goal, the UCA founded an Institute of Secondary Education (year unknown) for students at the primary and secondary school level, extensive youth programs, and the Agro-Ecology Institute of UCA Miraflor. The Institute of Secondary Education uses specialized programs developed in conjunction with the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education to introduce environmental concerns to young Mirafloreños at an early age and educate them on caring for their environment. While conducting my research in El Sontule, I assisted in one such class at the local secondary school while they were learning about some of the local wildlife and was impressed with the knowledge and enthusiasm of the students.

Once residents of Miraflor reach their adolescence, the UCA continues their environmental education through social movements with the youth of the preserve. According to Karina, an UCA ecotourism coordinator, the area has a history of strong youth movements centered on care for the environment and agriculture. Several of my interviewees, including Karina, were active in such movements when they were younger, and this involvement led them to continued work with the UCA. Marisol, another former participant in the UCA Miraflor youth movement who now coordinates a group of ecotourism guides, confessed to me that creating an improved future of the young people of Miraflor is her main drive to do her job well.

Roger, a UCA manager, explained that he came to be the leader of a youth movement group in one of the UCA Miraflor communities after the UCA established a Young People's Commission in the preserve (year unknown). Through this commission, the UCA created a youth cooperative that provided him with the opportunity to advance his work within the organization and gain experience in managing a cooperative. The youth in the cooperative gain an earlier understanding of the UCA's duties, as well as environmental and ecological training.

Many of those active in the UCA's youth organizations continue their training at the Agro-Ecology Institute of Miraflor, which trains students either in agriculture or agro-ecology and prepares them for employment with the UCA or elsewhere. Though I was told that the majority of students at the institute are UCA members, the educational opportunities provided by the UCA are open to all residents of UCA Miraflor. By including the entire population, the UCA encourages environmental education and participatory planning through which each resident is given a say in the development of UCA Miraflor. This is further strengthened by the UCA ecotourism program, which provides residents with a useful outlet for their training.

Guide Training and English Language Program

In addition to the environmental training detailed above, the UCA also provides specific training to residents who wish to become guides with the local ecotourism project. In order to be successful, the guides must be able to speak English and also possess the necessary ecological knowledge of the area. To this end, approximately fifteen to twenty young people from their early teens to mid-twenties were actively

training and working as “ecoguides” at the time of my research in 2007. However, I do not know for how long the UCA trains its guides or if they are paid during training.

The UCA trains these guides with special focus on the birds of the area, but also complete workshops in reptile identification, ecology, the archaeology of the area, and customer service. Their training is enhanced by the UCA’s English language program, which provides a steady supply of teachers following to primary schools in four or five communities in UCA Miraflor.

UCA Miraflor also trains its ecoguides through ongoing exchange with other nearby cooperatives and international NGO’s that conduct tourism in the area. For instance, the CECOCAFEN cooperative in Matagalpa and UCA San Ramon have sent youth from their co-ops to learn about conducting ecotourism from the UCA Miraflor ecotourism program, and Miraflor ecoguides have joined expeditions with Rally International to Costa Rica and other parts of Nicaragua to gain further experience in ecotourism. Youth involved in community ecotourism in UCA Miraflor also help host the various international delegations and coffee buyers that visit Miraflor, which further positions them to become leaders in their cooperatives and communities in the future.

Pros and Cons of UCA Miraflor Ecotourism

What Works Well

Ecotourism seems to be progressing very well both in terms of profitability and the continued protection of the UCA Miraflor ecosystem. Three main factors contribute to the success of the UCA’s ecotourism program: the family and community-centered

approach of the ecotourism program; the history and culture of residents; and active participation from the cooperative groups involved.

Family and Community: The residents of UCA Miraflor are very involved with almost every aspect of the community ecotourism program. Residents initiated the program and continue to energize the project through participatory planning with UCA managers. The UCA deserves credit as an organization for utilizing the unity of the communities to form cooperatives and considering the entire population in its programs.

Roger, a UCA manager, explained the benefits UCA Miraflor communities receive from the ecotourism program, noting that the UCA programs also provide advantages to all residents, whether or not they are UCA members. By both listening to and guiding the population of the preserve, the UCA maintains community cohesion as well as the future of their ecotourism program and their ecosystem. Most importantly, by addressing community interests, the UCA avoids the risk of marginalizing the residents they are striving to help by ignoring their concerns. The UCA has committed itself to the benefit all of UCA Miraflor, thus creating a situation that can continue to provide a sustainable source of income for the families and communities of the preserve.

History and Culture*:* Through intercultural exchange with foreign tourists in UCA Miraflor, the UCA has drawn in the area's history to help advance its ecotourism program. When an area begins receiving foreign tourists, there is a real risk for residents to change in an attempt to cater to tourists' preferences and lose their culture in the process. UCA Miraflor's ecotourism program has residents draw on the area's colorful history as a way to attract and entertain tourists; such efforts simultaneously help maintain local identity. The UCA and residents did not make a concerted decision to

utilize the area's history in the ecotourism program, but it has since become an important outlet for many members conducing ecotourism in UCA Miraflor.

Even while I was exploring eco-routes in UCA Miraflor, my guide combined knowledge of local flora and fauna with stories from the Contra War and earlier when describing the locations. For example, when I visited the Caves of Apagüis, my guide Adrián explained that the first residents of the cave were indigenous people of the area thousands of years ago who saw human faces and animals in the two different types of volcanic rock that intertwine through the caverns. He told me about the *duende*, a type of forest goblin, which still keeps residents from spending the night in the caves. He then told me that the Contras had camped in the caves because of their defensible position at the top of a hill, with no point of attack from above and any attempt up the steep slope from below being suicide.

UCA Miraflor has been made what it is by all that has occurred there, both good and bad, and by sharing the ecosystem and history of the area with visitors, the UCA and residents foster traditional knowledge within the preserve that could have been forgotten.

Active Participation from Cooperatives*:* From my interviews, the women involved with the ecotourism program seemed to be the most grateful for the assistance provided by the UCA. Valeria and Paola, both El Sontule residents and home-stay sponsors, told me how much they enjoy working at home and not having to go out into the fields every day. Conducting ecotourism is not all that different from the lives they were used to while raising their families during the revolution and the Contra War, but the ecotourism activities are taking place in a much more peaceful time without fear of

attack on the cooperatives. The women's enthusiasm is evident in their daily ecotourism co-op meetings.

Though the FSLN set a goal of gender equality during the revolution, certain gender roles persist in rural Nicaragua. Generally, the men go to work in the fields and the women stay home cooking, cleaning, and caring for the family. In part because UCA Miraflor members receive a limited amount of money from organic coffee production, the residents turned to ecotourism to provide another source of income. Because the ecotourism program is run by women's co-ops, it allows women become more involved in their cooperative union.

According to Paola, she and the other women of her cooperative love to help and share stories with each other and with other co-ops interested in tourism. By conducting ecotourism, especially community and heritage-centered ecotourism, the women are able to socialize with each other while they also make money. According to my interviews, the women of the co-ops that conduct ecotourism control their percentage of the money made through the UCA Miraflor ecotourism program. I have no exact figures, nor am I sure if residents earn dollars or *cordobas*, but a portion of the profits returns to the UCA to pay for office costs and to repay loans, while most of the profit remains with the women's co-ops to be used within the ecotourism program and by the families of the women involved. The women conducting ecotourism and the UCA both reinvest the money they make through ecotourism back into improvements within the program, creating a more self-sustaining program. This is especially apparent in contrast to the Fair Trade coffee production of Miraflor, which is supposed to provide money and social

benefits to participating communities, but has failed to do so in Miraflor for a variety of reasons.

The strength of the UCA Miraflor ecotourism program is in the women conducting ecotourism. UCA Miraflor ecotourism allows the members of the women's co-ops to socialize with each other while maintaining ecotourism as a profitable enterprise and helps retain community identity and celebrates its history.

Potential Problems

Though I found fewer concerns with the ecotourism program than with organic coffee, the project is not without its problems. In addition to the necessity of maintaining a sufficient influx of tourists, the two main dangers I believe UCA Miraflor should be concerned with are a potential rift developing between residents with differing resources or degrees of involvement in the ecotourism program and the cultural influence of Northern tourists.

Potential Development of a Rift between Residents: I did not observe a division between any residents or the UCA regarding the community ecotourism program. However, several of my interviewees did make mention of a certain amount of dissent among residents. Christián, a resident of El Sontule, explained to me that when the ecotourism program first began, some residents with home-stays almost immediately began competing with one another for tourists. He told me that:

> They wanted more trees and more plants on their farms because they wanted to receive more visitors and be liked by the tourists… the ecotourism project sped up very quickly here, but it also made people argue. Because people who have the resources receive more tourists.

This in-fighting was one of the main problems found by Belsky (1999) in Gales Point, Belize, which led to an unequal distribution of income provided by ecotourism in the communities and general discord. However, the situation in Gales Point was also influenced by social and political factors in the area that had been overlooked when designing the tourism model that caused problems with co-management and regulation of conservation and natural resources. Since UCA Miraflor has an ecotourism program that is community-centered, provided that the UCA continues to empower the residents and involve them in participatory planning while responsibly managing the preserve, no major rift should develop in the communities as a result of Miraflor ecotourism. However, I believe that residents will continue to compete for tourists in the future and the UCA should remain most wary of this potential problem.

Potential Influence of Tourism on Community Members' Values: The residents of UCA Miraflor are very proud of their history and love to share it with others, but when large numbers of foreign tourists come into an area, there is a risk that community members will begin to take on the tourists' values and forget their own culture. I did not witness anything along such lines occurring in UCA Miraflor during my time there, but the program is relatively new and such influences may not yet have emerged. Similar problems have emerged in other ecotourism programs in Central America, such as in the Cayo District and Gales Point, Belize (Gould and Lewis 2009; Belsky 1999).

On the other hand, since the ecotourism in UCA Miraflor is "community-based tourism," rooted in a situated development process, it is a type of sustainable tourism whose main focus is the welfare of the receiving community and the creation of benefits for it" (Bartholo, Delamaro, and Bursztyn 2008:110). But if the focus shifts to what

modern amenities and attractions many Western tourists want rather than what the community wants, UCA Miraflor ecotourism could develop at an unsustainable or overly rapid rate. At this point, this does not seem to be a danger for UCA Miraflor.

Conclusion

The UCA and residents of UCA Miraflor have teamed up to create an effective ecotourism program in the preserve. In response to the outcry of residents, the UCA established UCA Miraflor as an ecologically protected area, safeguarding the ecosystem and conserving the area's natural resources after years of haphazard destruction. The UCA attracts tourists, both student groups and individual tourists, to learn about the communities their activities. Residents have used UCA funds to improve their homes and gardens to further attract visitors and to improve the overall appearance of the preserve. The UCA educates all residents with environmental training; it has organized youth groups, a secondary school, the Agro-ecology Institute of Miraflor, and guide training that includes an English language program as well as training in the identification of local flora and fauna. Ecotourism now seems to be the main focus of UCA Miraflor, surpassing organic coffee production and gaining ground with new "eco-routes" being built and more young people being trained each year.

A key difference between ecotourism and organic coffee in UCA Miraflor is its inclusion of the entire population. Though all residents have the option to produce coffee, the certification costs and fluctuating market do little to encourage their participation. With ecotourism, the UCA has focused its work on providing benefits for each and every resident, whether they are UCA members or not. As the benefits continue

to trickle down through the communities, more residents want to become involved in ecotourism to receive additional income, as well as the advantages delivered to everyone such as renting horses and selling crafts to tourists. In this way, the UCA Miraflor community ecotourism program is self-sustaining, engaging a fresh rotation of workers through its youth groups while also supporting the UCA's mission in terms of increasing residents' environmental responsibility and the protection of the preserve's extraordinary ecosystem.

By initiating and maintaining a grassroots, bottom-up approach to conducting ecotourism in Miraflor, the UCA and residents are promoting sustainable development. Instead of a paved road leading to a huge hotel in the middle of the forest, Mirafloreños conduct ecotourism out of their homes, where tourists eat campesino food and live like their hosts. This develops community and family in Miraflor without the ecological impact of a larger-scale tourism program and creates a situation that is inclusive, rather than othering. Community members are encouraged to act as a community while the UCA provides improvements to homes with profits from the ecotourism program.

In order to advance the ecotourism program further, those residents of the area who are not UCA members also need to understand the importance of their involvement in their communities and attend planning and development meetings or bring any social, financial, or environmental concerns forward to the UCA. The community-based ecotourism program in UCA Miraflor appears to be thriving. The tourists are coming, and residents are putting in place the amenities they demand. In the future, the community must continue to construct an ecotourism program that offers foreign visitors

what they require without compromising the social cohesion of the communities or their choice to maintain a traditional lifestyle.

Change is probably going to come to UCA Miraflor, likely in the form of indoor plumbing instead of outhouses, the increased availability of electricity in communities, or other technological improvements. But rather than adopting overly rapid change inspired by foreign values and competition among residents for tourists, the UCA should be wary to maintain the communities' culture while conducting ecotourism in UCA Miraflor.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

The influence and efforts of the UCA in Miraflor cannot be understated. The UCA helped to keep the population of Miraflor organized and provides them with social programs, financing, environmental training, and economic opportunities that would certainly not be available without the assistance of the UCA. The work of the UCA with Miraflor residents is what made UCA Miraflor; it led to its designation as an ecologically protected area and developed infrastructure and programs that could sustain the area's environment, resources, and residents. Nonetheless, UCA Miraflor continues to face various obstacles.

The UCA's organic coffee program was floundering at the time of my research in 2007. Confusion and miscommunication between the UCA and its farmers intensified and drew attention to the limitations of organic coffee production and the expensive prospect of re-entering the Fair Trade market. In the face of the UCA's inability to prosper in the specialty coffee market, competition from larger, more successful and profitable coffee organizations operating in the area overshadow its efforts to help its members. Most dangerously, competition exists between the UCA and PRODECOOP, among others, over the very same small coffee farmers within the preserve. The UCA and its members seem in danger of losing coffee production as an effective source of profit, and the future of individual UCA coffee farmers is uncertain.

In 2007, while the UCA's coffee production in Miraflor seemed to be shrinking in importance, the ecotourism program was thriving and appeared to be showing signs of continuing to do so. The UCA ecotourism program promotes the area's unique ecosystem while employing a larger number of residents – "the entire community,"

according many in the UCA office, providing them with an outlet for intercultural exchange as well as a source of income. By centering ecotourism on Miraflor communities and highlighting the heritage and culture of UCA Miraflor and its residents, the ecotourism program has prospered on a variety of environmental and social levels and brought attention to the history that residents hold so dear. As of yet, no major problems have developed as a result of conducting ecotourism in UCA Miraflor.

In terms of sustainable development, I believe that UCA in Miraflor is fulfilling its mission, but I still have some concerns. The UCA uses land and resources effectively and safely by training producers in organic production and avoiding the potentially damaging effects of monoculture on the agricultural land of Miraflor. The UCA encourages family participation in its programs by providing financing and training in a variety of areas for any resident interested in becoming a member. UCA youth movements and education programs further bolster resident involvement.

The Agro-Ecology Institute of Miraflor in particular demonstrates the local community development work of the UCA in Miraflor. By providing location-specific training to all Miraflor residents, the UCA educates the population and also encourages their continued involvement in UCA programs. The environmental and social work of the UCA helps preserve the ecosystem and communities of Miraflor, but the long-term economic sustainability of UCA Miraflor remains ambiguous because of the influence of foreign tourists and potential competition among residents conducting ecotourism to attract them.

Taking a critical structuralist perspective on sustainable development (discussed in Chapter Two), UCA Miraflor should continue to focus its programs on the

environmental and social concerns facing its rural Southern producers. Both organic coffee and ecotourism are predominantly Northern-designed industries that critical structuralists believe may help perpetuate the longstanding inequalities between the global North and South. Though the organic coffee and ecotourism markets remain tied to free market capitalism, by focusing on the needs of residents and encouraging their participation in the development of UCA programs, the UCA may enable Mirafloreños to avoid some of the risks of Northern sustainable development strategies and create projects that provide residents with meaningful benefits. Ultimately, it remains to be seen if the UCA Miraflor will be able to effectively organize Mirafloreños to attain an equitable share of profits and benefits and experience minimal costs from these Northern-dominated activities.

The UCA regulates the natural resources of UCA Miraflor, but water is scarce, and the inappropriate use of agricultural technology by some UCA farmers has resulted in a shortage of organic fertilizer as well. Additionally, the social programs introduced by the UCA encourage cohesion among residents, but their relationship with other coffee producer organizations in UCA Miraflor is unclear and could prove to be a source of concern as competition in the coffee market continues. With so many agricultural operations in UCA Miraflor, the UCA cannot be expected to monitor all of them effectively or regularly, but a more inclusive and participatory framework among cooperative organizations in UCA Miraflor could be of great long-term benefit to all those involved.

Research Recommendations

In response to the current predicament of small farmers in the globalization and the dismal condition of the global coffee market, more detailed research is required at all levels of the commodity chain to identify the probable causes of persisting inequality and to introduce effective and ethical development strategies that take the interests of small Southern producers into account. Particularly important are the priorities and values of small Southern producers who were overlooked in the design of current trade models including Fair Trade. Such values include social inequality, poverty reduction, and more active and equal participation in the global coffee industry.

As global capitalism penetrates the furthest reaches of the world, an equal voice must be heard from all people to help stem the inequalities and hardships that continue to spring from our current dominant economic strategies. By organizing themselves into cooperatives, small Southern producers take a step towards empowering themselves enough to gain that voice, but it is not enough. The UCA Miraflor organic coffee program illustrates the difficult task of participating in the global specialty coffee market and the weaknesses of a capitalist-driven business model for the small farmers who are supposed to benefit, but can have immense difficulty even participating.

In response to this, I would encourage further research on UCA Miraflor but with several recommendations. Firstly, additional research on UCA Miraflor should include a representative sample of residents from throughout the preserve, including UCA members and those who are not, centered on those who are members of the UCA. Though the UCA's work benefits the entire Miraflor population, this would gain a more complete perspective from members and highlight any miscommunication that might

exist between the UCA and its cooperatives. By expanding research to encompass more communities in the Miraflor area, future researchers would be able to distinguish between the concerns of individual communities and those that represent greater threats to UCA Miraflor as a whole and construct a more complete evaluation.

Secondly, it could be beneficial to also conduct research on the other coffee cooperative organizations operating in the Miraflor preserve. Since my interviewees informed me that communication between the UCA and other co-op organizations is scant, valuable information could be gleaned from researching their goals and points of view. This could help to develop a unified approach to agriculture and the use of natural resources in Miraflor and potentially improve the relationship between the various organizations producing coffee within the zone.

Survey research on UCA Miraflor could also be of great value in providing representative information on UCA members and Miraflor residents, as well as to frame Miraflor within the Nicaraguan economy. For example, survey research could provide information on the impact and importance of foreign remittances in Miraflor. However, the logistics required for survey research throughout UCA Miraflor would necessitate a longer research period, preferably with multiple researchers working in cooperation. Additionally, the limited literacy of many UCA Miraflor residents could also prove to be a hindrance to survey research in the area.

My research provides a snapshot of UCA Miraflor. In 2007, organic coffee production was diminishing and ecotourism flourishing. In order to gain a complete understanding of the effectiveness of the UCA's organic coffee and ecotourism programs, future research is needed to document the continued development or shortcomings of

each program. Only through ongoing research of UCA Miraflor and other similar communities in the global South will we be able to identify the most effective sustainable development strategies for rural Southern farmers.

APPENDIX A

UCA Miraflor Resident Interview Protocol

This a qualitative interview guide, so additional probes may be added as necessary in order to clarify information from respondents.

The interviewer will begin by introducing himself and his affiliation with The University of Montana and having the participant read and sign the informed consent form. The interviewer will introduce the interview as follows: "I am talking to residents of your community regarding living and working in the cooperative. Would you be willing to talk to me? It shouldn't take more than 40-50 minutes. You don't have to answer all the questions, and you can end the discussion at any time. Your answers are completely confidential. Your name and your answers will not be identified as pertaining specifically to you in anything I write about the interviews." Then the interviewer will ask the interview participant to read through the informed consent form, answer any of their questions, and ask the interview participant to sign the informed consent form. If the interview participant agrees to allow the interview to be tape recorded, the researcher will ask the interview participant to sign the line agreeing to be tape-recorded.

Pseudonym of Person Interviewed: _____

Date: _____

1. What are the best things about living and working here?
    a. If you could change anything, what would it be, and how?
    b. Is anything working especially well or badly?
2. Describe a regular day for you in the community.
    a. Type of work
    b. Chores
    c. Interaction with others
    d. Meals – community/family/alone
3. Why do you live in Miraflor?
    a. Born here/family lived here already
    b. Employment
    c. Politics
    d. Environmental factors

4. Are you familiar with the mission statement of UCA Miraflor? If yes, what features do you know?
    a. How is it decided which coop will do what? (Coffee, dairy, ecotourism, etc.)
    b. Did liberation theology play a role? Then or now?
5. Tell me about the ecotourism program and how it relates to protection of your ecosystem and natural resources in the community.
    a. Did any clearing or destruction of ecosystem have to take place in order to conduct ecotourism?
    b. How many ecotourists use the routes each year.
    c. Who comes to Miraflor for ecotourism? Americans? Europeans? Nicaraguans?
6. Tell me about Fair Trade coffee.
    a. How much is produced?
    b. Where is it sent?
    c. How much money is made off of coffee?
7. Do you know how the community became involved with UCA? If so, please tell me about it.
    a. Describe the relationship between UCA and Miraflor.
    b. Has it changed or evolved over the years?
8. Tell me about your previous experience with cooperatives.
    a. Similar values/goals
    b. Similar products? Coffee/ecotourism/etc.
    c. Any specific positives or negatives about either? Did they have any influence on Miraflor?
    d. Were you part of the Sandinista Land Reform or coops in the 80's? Any difference between them and Miraflor?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about UCA Miraflor?
10. Age: _____
11. Sex: _____
12. Occupation: _____

13. Length of residence in the community: _____

14. If I have any further questions or need clarification of anything you said, would it be all right if I contacted you again in December? Yes____ No____

UCA Representative Interview Protocol

This a qualitative interview guide, so additional probes may be added as necessary in order to clarify information from respondents.

The interviewer will begin by introducing himself and his affiliation with The University of Montana and having the participant read and sign the informed consent form. The interviewer will introduce the interview as follows: "I am talking to residents of this community and representatives of your organization regarding living and working in the cooperative. Would you be willing to talk to me? It shouldn't take more than 40-50 minutes. You don't have to answer all the questions, and you can end the discussion at any time. Your answers are completely confidential. Your name and your answers will not be identified as pertaining specifically to you in anything I write about the interviews." Then the interviewer will ask the interview participant to read through the informed consent form, answer any of their questions, and ask the interview participant to sign the informed consent form. If the interview participant agrees to allow the interview to be tape recorded, the researcher will ask the interview participant to sign the line agreeing to be tape-recorded.

Pseudonym of Person Interviewed: _____

Date: _____

1. What are the best things about living and working here?
    a. If you could change anything, what would it be, and how?
    b. Is anything working especially well or badly?
2. Describe a regular day for you when you are in the community. What about when not in the community?
    a. Type of work
    b. Chores
    c. Timing – wake up, etc.
    d. Meals – eat with residents?
    e. How many days a week are you on site?
3. How did you get involved with your organization?
    a. How long ago?
    b. Reasons
    c. Do you enjoy it?

   d. Future plans?
   e. What roles have you had with your organization in the past? In the present?
4. Are you familiar with the mission statement of UCA Miraflor? If yes, what features do you know?
   a. How is it decided which cooperative will do what? (Coffee, dairy, ecotourism, etc.)
   b. Did liberation theology play a role? Then or now?
5. Tell me about the ecotourism program and how it relates to protection of your ecosystem and natural resources in the community.
   a. Did any clearing or destruction of ecosystem have to take place in order to conduct ecotourism
   b. How many ecotourists use the routes each year?
   c. Who comes to Miraflor for ecotourism? Americans? Europeans? Nicaraguans?
6. Tell me about Fair Trade coffee.
   a. How much is produced?
   b. Where is it sent?
   c. How much money is made off of coffee?
7. Do you know how your organization and this community became involved?
   a. Who approached whom?
   b. Who came up with the mission statement?
   c. Any assistance from government or NGO's?
   d. Future?
8. Tell me about your previous experience with cooperatives.
   a. Similar values/goals
   b. Similar products – coffee/ecotourism/etc.
   c. Any specific positives or negatives about either? Did they have any influence on Miraflor?
   d. Were you part of the Sandinista Land Reform in the 80's? Any differences between them and Miraflor?

9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about this community or your organization?
10. Age: _____
11. Sex: _____
12. Occupation: _____
13. Length of involvement with the community: _____
14. If I have any further questions or need clarification of anything you said, would it be all right if I contacted you again in December? Yes____ No____

APPENDIX B

UCA Miraflor Resident Interview Protocol

Este es un studio cualitativo, entonces sodeos adicionales se pueden incluir cuando se ha necessario para aclarar la información de los respondedores.

El entrevista empiece cuando el investigador se presete y su afliación con La Universidad de Montana y hara que el entrevistado lea y fimre la hoja de consentamiento. El entrevistador presenta se introduce la entrevista de la siguiente manera: "Estoy hablando con residents de su comunidad con respecto a vivir y trabajar en el cooperative. Está dispuesto para hablar conmigo? No debe de tardar más de 40-50 minutos. No necesita responder a todas las preguntas y puede termine la discusión en cualquier momento. Sus respuestas son completamente confidenciales. Su nombre y sus respuestos no les van a identificar como suyas pertenecido a usted en nada de que yo escriba acerca de las entrevistas." Entonces el entrevistador le perida a leer la hoja de consentamiento. Si el entrevistado consiente a permitir que la entrevista se ha grabado, el entrevisto le preida al respondedor a firmar la linea para permitir la grabación.

Seudónimo del respondedor: _____

Fecha: _____

1. Qué son las cosas mejores de vivir y trabajar aqui?
    a. Si ud. pudiera cambiar algo, que seria y cómo lo cambiaria?
    b. Hay algo especialmente bueno o mal en el cooperativo?
2. Describa un dia normal para ud. en su comunidad.
    a. Tipos de trabajo
    b. Quehaceres
    c. Ineracción con otras personas
    d. Horas de comer – de comunidad / con familia / a solo?
3. Porque vive ud. en Miraflor?
    a. Naciá aqui – familia y vivió aqui
    b. Empleo
    c. Políticas
    d. Factores ambientales

4. Conoce ud. la declaración de la mission de la UCA Miraflor? Cuál caracteristicas conoce?
    a. Quién decide cuál cooperative hace cuál producto? (café, lechería, ecoturismo, etc.)
    b. La teología de liberación tuve influencia en Miraflor? En el pasado o ahora mismo?
5. Digame sobre la program ecoturismo y como relata a la protección de su ecosistema y recursos naturales.
    a. Necesiata cortar arboles o prejudice la ecosistema para conducta ecoturismo?
    b. Cuanto ecoturistas usa las rutas cada año?.
    c. Quien ven a Miraflor para ecoturismo? Norteamericanos? Europeas? Nicaraguenses?
6. Digame sobre café comercio justo.
    a. Cuanto es produzco?
    b. Adonde le mande?
    c. Cuanto dinero gana cada semana de café?
7. Conoce como esta comunidad se ha involucrado con la UCA? En caso que si, por favor digame.
    a. Describe la relación de UCA y Miraflor.
    b. Ha cambiado o desenvolvido encima de los años?
8. Digame sobre su experiencia previa con cooperativos.
    a. Productos similares? Café, ecoturismo, etc.
    b. Valores o metas similares?
    c. Positivos o negativos en usa o otra comunidad?
    d. Estuvo parte de la Reformada Tierra Sandinista?
    e. Inflluya Miraflor?
    f. Hay diferencias entre los cooperativos Sandinistas y Miraflor?
9. Hay algo mas quiere compartir conmigo sobre la UCA Miraflor?
10. Edad: _____
11. Sexo: _____

12. Ocupación: _____
13. Cuantos años vive en esta comunidad: _____
14. Si tengo preguntas adicionales o necesito clarificacióde cualquier cosa que se dice, esta bien le contacto otra vez en Diciembre? Yes____ No____

UCA Representative Interview Protocol

Este es un studio cualitativo, entonces sodeos adicionales se pueden incluir cuando se ha necessario para aclarar la información de los respondedores.

El entrevista empiece cuando el investigador se presete y su afliación con La Universidad de Montana y hara que el entrevistado lea y fimre la hoja de consentamiento. El entrevistador presenta se introduce la entrevista de la siguiente manera: "Estoy hablando con residents de su comunidad con respecto a vivir y trabajar en el cooperative. Está dispuesto para hablar conmigo? No debe de tardar más de 40-50 minutos. No necesita responder a todas las preguntas y puede termine la discussion en cualquier momento. Sus respuestas son completamente confidenciales. Su nombre y sus respuestos no les van a identificar como suyas pertenecido a usted en nada de que yo escriba acerca de las entrevistas." Entonces el entrevistador le perida a leer la hoja de consentamiento. Si el entrevistado consiente a permitir que la entrevista se ha grabado, el entrevisto le preida al respondedor a firmar la linea para permitir la grabación.

Seudónimo del respondedor: _____

Fecha: _____

1. Qué son las cosas mejores de vivir y trabajar aqui?
    a. Si ud. pudiera cambiar algo, que seria y cómo lo cambiaria?
    b. Hay algo especialmente bueno o mal en el cooperativo?
2. Describa un dia normal para ud. en su comunidad.
    a. Tipos de trabajo
    b. Quehaceres
    c. Ineracción con otras personas
    d. Horas de comer – de comunidad / con familia / a solo?
3. Como llego a involucrarce con su organación?
    a. Hace cuantos años?
    b. Razones
    c. Planes del futuro
    d. Le gusta?
    e. Cuáles puestos ha tenido en su organición? Y ahora?
4. Conoce ud. la declaración de la mission de la UCA Miraflor? Cuál caracteristicas conoce?

   a. Quién decide cuál cooperative hace cuál producto? (café, lechería, ecoturismo, etc.)
   b. La teología de liberación tuve influencia en Miraflor? En el pasado o ahora mismo?

5. Digame sobre la program ecoturismo y como relata a la protección de su ecosistema y recursos naturales.
   a. Necesiata cortar arboles o prejudice la ecosistema para conducta ecoturismo?
   b. Cuanto ecoturistas usa las rutas cada año?.
   c. Quien ven a Miraflor para ecoturismo? Norteamericanos? Europeas? Nicaraguenses?
6. Digame sobre café comercio justo.
   a. Cuanto es produzco?
   b. Adonde le mande?
   c. Cuanto dinero gana cada semana de café?
7. Conoce como esta comunidad se ha involucrado con la UCA? En caso que si, por favor digame.
   a. Describe la relación de UCA y Miraflor.
   b. Ha cambiado o desenvolvido encima de los años?
8. Digame sobre su experiencia previa con cooperativos.
   a. Productos similares? Café, ecoturismo, etc.
   b. Valores o metas similares?
   c. Positivos o negativos en usa o otra comunidad?
   d. Estuvo parte de la Reformada Tierra Sandinista?
   e. Inflluya Miraflor?
   f. Hay diferencias entre los cooperativos Sandinistas y Miraflor?
9. Hay algo mas quiere compartir conmigo sobre la UCA Miraflor?
10. Edad: _____
11. Sexo: _____
12. Ocupación: _____
13. Cuantos años vive en esta comunidad: _____

14. Si tengo preguntas adicionales o necesito clarificacióde cualquier cosa que se dice, esta bien le contacto otra vez en Diciembre? Yes____ No____

APPENDIX C


HONDURAS
EL SALVADOR
NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN
Caribbean Sea
COSTA RICA
NUEVA SEGOVIA
MADRIZ
ZELAYA
CHONTALES
CARAZO
RÍO SAN JUAN
Lago de Managua
Lago de Nicaragua
Golfo de Fonseca
San Lorenzo
Santa Rita
El Llano
Dulce Nombre de Culmí
Puerto Lempira
Juticalpa
Siguatepeque
Auasbila
Leimus
Waspam
Río Patuca
Río Coco
Río Wawa
Bocay
Tegucigalpa
Danlí
Yuscaran
Teotecacinte
Bonanza
Puerto Cabezas
La Rosita
Siuna
Kukalaya
Ocotal
Quilalí
Wiwilí
Nacaome
Somotó
San Miguel
La Unión
Condega
San Sebastián de Yalí
Cholulteca
Prinzapolka
Río Tuma
Estelí
Jinotega
La Cruz de Río Grande
Potosí
Somotillo
Río Grande
Matagalpa
Río Blanco
El Sauce
Sébaco
Muy Muy
Nuevo Amanecer
Chinandega
Corinto
León
Boaco
Río Siquia
San Benito
Puerto Sandino
Managua
Tipitapa
Juigalpa
Rama
Río Mico
Bluefields
El Bluff
Masaya
Granada
Lóvago
Diriamba
Jinotepe
Masachapa
Nueva Guinea
Rivas
San Juan del Sur
San Carlos
Río Indio
Río San Juan
San Juan del Norte
Inter-American Highway
Coco
Puerto Viejo
Las Cañas
Río Chirripó
Nicaragua
International boundary
Departamento boundary
National capital
Departamento capital
Railroad
Road
Departamentos have the same name as their capitals except where noted.
0 25 50 Kilometers
0 25 50 Miles
Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.
800265 (545340) 10-85

APPENDIX D

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