

**Decolonizing Architecture:
Vieques as a Symbol for a Post-Colonized Puerto Rico**

by
Tiara Aponte

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Author's Declaration

Declaración del Autor

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Abstracto

Puerto Rico has been a United States territory since 1898. Since then, our identity and culture has been threatened by the impositions of the colonizer. The so-called “identity crisis” caused by the relationship with the U.S. government, is felt not only at a personal level, but also in our economy, politics and sociability.

With the theme *Decolonizing Architecture* I explore our condition of colony, the struggles of the Puerto Rican people in favor of our emancipation and the role of architecture and memory to transcend our insular circumstance.

My thesis focuses on the island of Vieques, a Puerto Rican Municipality that was invaded in 1941 by the U.S. Navy. The navy expropriated 2/3 of the island. The East was used as a weapons training facility and the West for ammunition storage. The *Viequense* community, of approximately 10,000 inhabitants, was left in the middle of training zones for war. In 2003, after more than five decades of relentless bombings and the many protests and civil disobedience acts against it from the local community, Puerto Ricans from the main island and in the diaspora, the navy withdrew from Vieques.

Currently the previous Live Impact Area on the East side of Vieques is inaccessible due to cleanup from contamination but the land can be used to provide a renewable source of energy that would benefit the municipality. The intervention in the West is located on the former Naval Ammunition Storage Detachment where hundreds of abandoned bunkers are located. These bunkers will be rehabilitated to promote eco-tourism, to provide a space in memory of those who have died at the hands of the navy, and to commemorate Vieques' triumph. The design proposal is my approach on how to return the land to the community.

With this thesis I intend to recognize the collective memory of a people who are still struggling to control their destiny. We should never forget how the *Viequenses* got together and fought to defend their land and their dignity against the most powerful military in the world; in hopes that the rest of Puerto Ricans can someday understand Vieques as the beginning of the end of colonization.

Acknowledgments

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And to those friends I left in Puerto Rico, I adore each and every one of you. Thank you for your support and for the many words of encouragement.

To Gustavo, for inspiring me every single day to become a better person. I would have not been able to finalize this thesis without your support, your love and humor.

And finally to God for the countless opportunities He has granted me, especially for putting such amazing people in my life.

Thank you.

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For all Viequenses. Your struggle has not been forgotten.
Para todos los Viequenses. Su lucha no ha sido olvidada.

And for Grandpa. This thesis is for you.
Y para Abuelo Ché. Esta tesis es para ti.

Table of Contents

Tabla de Contenido

	xiii	List of Illustrations <i>Lista de Ilustraciones</i>
First Anecdote <i>Primera Anécdota</i>	xxiii	
	1	Part One - My Puerto Rico <i>Parte Uno - Mi Puerto Rico</i>
Second Anecdote <i>Segunda Anécdota</i>	12	
	15	Part Two - Puerto Rican Identity <i>Parte Dos - Identidad Puertorriqueña</i>
Third Anecdote <i>Tercera Anécdota</i>	37	
	39	Part Three - Vieques: A story about Resistance and Solidarity <i>Parte Tres - Vieques: Una Historia de Resistencia y Solidaridad</i>
Fourth Anecdote <i>Cuarta Anécdota</i>	97	
	99	Part Four - A Post-Navy Vieques <i>Parte Cuatro - Un Vieques Post-Marina</i>
	111	Part Five - The Design Proposal <i>Parte Cinco - La Propuesta de Diseño</i>
Fifth Anecdote <i>Quinta Anécdota</i>	169	
	203	Conclusion <i>Conclusión</i>
	209	Endnotes <i>Notas Finales</i>
	215	Bibliography <i>Bibliografía</i>

List of Illustrations

Lista de Ilustraciones

Pg. Fig. Description Source

- xx Fig. 1 Alberto de Jesús Mercado, Puerto Rican environmental activist better known as Tito Kayak, adjusts the Vieques' flag atop the Statue of Liberty's crown on Nov. 5, 2000, in New York. Eleven people protesting the U.S. Navy's use of the Puerto Rican Municipality of Vieques for bombing exercises were arrested after hanging two banners and flags on the crown of the Statue of Liberty.
- xxii Fig. 2 Nighttime image photographed on October 18, 2011 by the Expedition 29 crew from the International Space Station. It features the Eastern Caribbean Region; Dominican Republic in the foreground (bottom left), all of Puerto Rico, the Lesser Antilles (top) and Venezuelan coast (right).
- 1 Fig. 3 Landscape in Barrio Rabanal, Cidra, Puerto Rico, 1982.
- 1 Fig. 4 View of the Condado area of San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1989.
- 2 Fig. 5 Map of the Caribbean Region
- 3 Fig. 6 Political cartoon implying that U.S. President William McKinley (1897-1901) planned to acquire more foreign territories as he effortlessly acquires new suits.
- 3 Fig. 7 U.S. troops invade Puerto Rico, 1898
- 3 Fig. 8 Invasion of Puerto Rico, New York Times Front Page, July 27, 1898.
- 4 Fig. 9 First Company of native Puerto Ricans enlisted in the American Colonial Army, Puerto Rico, 1899.
- 4 Fig. 10 Soldiers of the 65th Infantry, also known as the "Borinqueneers", the-all Puerto Rican Regiment, after an all day schedule of maneuvers at Salinas, Puerto Rico, August, 1941.

Pg. Fig. Description Source

- 4 Fig. 11 'Not allowed to vote for President' - 3,000 crosses representing the soldiers that have died in the war in Iraq (Santa Barbara, 2008). "Being from Puerto Rico, Specialist Lopez-Feliciano was not allowed to vote for president. But as a soldier reporting to the commander-in-chief, he was allowed to die for the president."
- 5 Fig. 12 Luis Muñoz Marín, first democratically elected Governor of Puerto Rico, signing the approval for the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, February 6, 1952.
- 6 Fig. 13 A supporter of Alejandro Garcia Padilla, candidate for governor of the pro-commonwealth Popular Democratic Party, gestures during his closing campaign rally in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Sunday, Nov. 4, 2012.
- 6 Fig. 14 Puerto Ricans from the Independence Movement protesting against colonialism, 2010.
- 6 Fig. 15 Supporters of the Popular Democratic Party cheer while waiting for the arrival of their candidate for governor as the first tallied votes mark a tendency in his favor on Nov. 7, 2012 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- 6 Fig. 16 Pro-annexation supporters demanding Puerto Rico becomes the 51st State of the Union on Nov. 7, 2012.
- 6 Fig. 17 'Meme' showing President Obama and other U.S. politicians mocking the Puerto Rican Governor Fortuño (2008-2012) for his ludicrous expression.
- 7 Fig. 18 'Freedom Now!' The fist, a symbol of resistance in the independence and nationalist movements in Puerto Rico.
- 9 Fig. 19 Bumper Sticker 'If you want to live in a State, there's 50. Choose one and leave...'

Pg. Fig. Description Source

- 10 Fig. 20 The Political Ideologies in Puerto Rico. In the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, Puerto Rico is portrayed as the woman, and the U.S. as the man.
- 15 Fig. 21 Sugarcane cutter working in a field that had been burned, near Guánica, Puerto Rico, 1941.
- 19 Fig. 22 Mural 'Tres Razas y Una Cultura, La Puertorriqueña' *Three Races and One Culture, The Puerto Rican*, San Germán, Puerto Rico, 2011.
- 19 Fig. 23 In the cathedral of San Germán, Puerto Rico, 1946.
- 19 Fig. 24 The first meeting between the Tainos and the Spaniards.
- 20 Fig. 25 Sequence of movements of Bomba Puertorriqueña at Plaza de Recreo de Loíza, Puerto Rico, 2010.
- 21 Fig. 26 Musicians at the patron saint's festivities in the town of Loíza Aldea, Puerto Rico, 1981.
- 21 Fig. 27 Rosin Casillas in her house in Cidra, making *pasteles* for Christmas, 1981.
- 22 Fig. 28 Before hurricane San Felipe lashed Puerto Rico in 1928, the *plena Temporal* was written to warn people about the incoming storm. Print *Temporal* by Rafael Tufiño, 1954.
- 23 Fig. 29 *Plena* in the streets of Puerto Rico as a way to learn about our cultural heritage, to participate in its preservation, and to pass it along to next generations.
- 23 Fig. 30 Addicted to Plena, *Plena Callejera*.
- 24 Fig. 31 "We don't want reforms for the whites if the blacks are not freed." Print 1873-1973 by José A. Rosa Castellanos, 1973.
- 32 Fig. 32 Pledging allegiance to the flag, in a school in Corozal, Puerto Rico, 1946.
- 36 Fig. 33 Sergeant José Ramón Hernández Barreto (1938-2011) from the Puerto Rico National Guard. Best known as Cheo or Abuelo Ché, my grandfather.
- 39 Fig. 34 Poster 'Vieques Libre' by Dave Buchen

Pg. Fig. Description Source

- 40 Fig. 35 Puerto Rico's 78 Municipalities and the location of Vieques in the archipelago of Puerto Rico.
- 41 Fig. 36 Aerial View of former Roosevelt Roads Naval Station.
- 43 Fig. 37 Scale, population and income comparisson between Vieques, Puerto Rico, Manhattan, New York City, and Wolfe Island in Ontario, Canada.
- 46 Fig. 38 Jaime Annexy (in pit helmet), with unidetified *agregado*, inspecting the cattle in Vieques, Puerto Rico.
- 48 Fig. 39 Vieque's eight Wards in 1940 before the U.S. Navy expropriated its lands.
- 49 Fig. 40 Housing conditions of *agregado* families in Vieques, 1940's.
- 50 Fig. 41 Southwestern coast of Vieques, showing Playa Grande Sugar Central in operation, smoke billowing from its twin stacks, and cane fields as far as the eye can see. March, 18, 1941. Closer view on the right photo.
- 50 Fig. 42 Closer view of the Playa Grande Sugar Central in operation, smoke billowing from its twin stacks, March, 18, 1941.
- 51 Fig. 43 Both views of Northwestern coast of Vieques, showing Colonia Arkadia. Looking Southeast, smoke from the sugar factory is seen in the upper left quadrant of photos. The cattle, trucks and houses can be seen in the lower half of the photographs. March 18, 1941.
- 51 Fig. 44 View of the Northwestern coast of Vieques, showing Colonia Arkadia, March 18, 1941.
- 52 Fig. 45 Sugar Plantation Owners with children from *agregado* families, 1930's.
- 54 Fig. 46 Central Playa Grande map.
- 54 Fig. 47 Mosquito Pier in Western Vieques, Puerto Rico.
- 54 Fig. 48 Three Arch type bunker used to store ammunition in Western Vieques, Puerto Rico.
- 57 Fig. 49 Vieques' workers demand a Sugar Mill - '*Trabajadores de Vieques piden una Central*', 1943.

Pg. Fig. Description Source

- 58 Fig. 50 Vieques land ownership in 1940.
- 59 Fig. 51 Employees working in the pineapple cannery in Vieques, 1955.
- 59 Fig. 52 Calves in the stables of the Puerto Rican Agricultural Company in Vieques, 1949.
- 60 Fig. 53 Land ownership from 1948 when the navy started the maneuvers, until 2003 when the navy withdrew from Vieques.
- 61 Fig. 54 Vieques land under barb wire fences, symbol of the struggle against the U.S. Navy for access to the land.
- 62 Fig. 55 Drawing expressing how the Viequenses and Culebrenses' fate was in the U.S. Navy's hands, 1989.
- 62 Fig. 56 Governor Muñoz Marín in his office examining the map that represents Vieques' expropriated lands and what is left for civilian use, 1964.
- 63 Fig. 57 Political satire exposing how the United States is using Vieques as toxic landfill for their military interests; always benefiting at the expense of others.
- 64 Fig. 58 A Venezuelan submarine pulling into Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, Puerto Rico.
- 65 Fig. 59 Aerial bombardment on the Eastern tip of Vieques.
- 66 Fig. 60 USS Suffolk County on Red Beach, Vieques for amphibious landing exercises, 1969.
- 67 Fig. 61 The U.S. Navy bombing Vieques from air. 'In the next few days five Navy warships will fire up to 500 rounds at Vieques. Their aircrafts will drop between 550 and 830 dummy bombs', 1999.
- 67 Fig. 62 Hand grenade explosives and dodge bullets simulation, 1949.
- 67 Fig. 63 View from tank deck of USS Suffolk County on Red Beach, Vieques during amphibious landing exercises, 1969.
- 68 Fig. 64 U.S. Marines landing on Vieques, 1984.
- 69 Fig. 65 Cartoon representing the relationship between navy men and locals.
- 69 Fig. 66 The presence of navy men was rejected at some establishments in Vieques.

Pg. Fig. Description Source

- 70 Fig. 67 Operation Portrex, the largest airborne and amphibious maneuvers ever staged by the U.S. armed forces during peacetime, Vieques, Puerto Rico, 1950.
- 70 Fig. 68 The operation's scenario called for "the Aggressor Forces, which had captured Vieques and enslaved the inhabitants, to defend the island. The Liberating Forces from the United States would conduct a seven-day air campaign, followed by an airborne and amphibious assault to drive the aggressor back into the sea and reestablish order in this Western-oriented republic."
- 71 Fig. 69 The maneuver phase of *Portrex Operation* began on February 25th, and lasted until 11 of March, 1950.
- 72 Fig. 70 U.S. Navy parachute jump demonstration, Portrex Operation in Vieques, Puerto Rico, 1950.
- 73 Fig. 71 Around 80,000 men from the Army, Air Force and Navy participated in the exercises; with its primary objective to train the three services in the latest techniques involved in joint operations.
- 73 Fig. 72 The 65th Infantry (the aggressor), mostly all Puerto Rican soldiers, was able to halt the offensive forces on the beaches of the island. Their success led their deployment to Korea.
- 74 Fig. 73 Carlos 'Taso' Zenón defying the U.S. Navy during the halt of maneuvers.
- 76 Fig. 74 Vieques' fishermen interrupt navy exercises.
- 76 Fig. 75 The fishermen defy the navy and decide not to leave the waters of Vieques (Taso in the middle).
- 77 Fig. 76 Navy helicopters harassing Vieques' fishermen by getting within a few feet to their small boats. The fishermen fight back throwing rocks.
- 78 Fig. 77 Carlos 'Taso' Zenón (in the middle) and other fishermen celebrate with their families after successfully halting military maneuvers.
- 80 Fig. 78 A protest in front of the White House in Washington, D.C.
- 80 Fig. 79 Protests against the navy have united the Puerto Rican people.

Pg. Fig. Description Source

- 81 Fig. 80 The artwork of a child from Vieques with the statement, *The navy should not stay; I want them to go*. The drawing expresses the impossibility for children to differentiate between war and exercises to prepare for war.
- 82 Fig. 81 The ROTH Installation in Western Vieques, 2008.
- 82 Fig. 82 ROTH aerial view.
- 83 Fig. 83 '*Todo Puerto Rico por Vieques*' (All Puerto Rico for Vieques) mobilized 50,000 people in a civil march at the gates of Roosevelt Roads Naval Station in Ceiba, Puerto Rico, 4th of July, 1999.
- 83 Fig. 84 A protester with a sign expressing feelings of indignation and demanding that military exercises be moved to Martha's Vineyard, in the U.S., where many politicians own vacation homes, 4th of July, 1999.
- 84 Fig. 85 *Monte David*, the first civil disobedience camp established within the firing range, April 19, 1999.
- 85 Fig. 86 Fisherman Carlos 'Taso' Zenón taking food to the disobedients in the encampment *Monte David*. The crosses on top symbolize the many casualties the U.S. Navy has caused, including environmental pollution.
- 85 Fig. 87 Former Senator Rubén Berríos Martínez in the camp he established on the firing range, acting as a human shield to ensure the navy would not be able to conduct its maneuvers.
- 86 Fig. 88 One of the fourteen civil disobedience camps next to a 500 pound bomb.
- 86 Fig. 89 An encampment at *La Yayi* beach on the naval bombing zone. A fisherman ferries members of the media and other protestors to the site, May 3, 2000.
- 86 Fig. 90 Reverend Jesse Jackson arrives at Vieques to visit the civil disobedience encampments.
- 87 Fig. 91 Bishop Alvaro Corrada del Río arrives accompanied by other priests to protest in peaceful resistance. Throughout the year hundreds of people visited the camps to show support for Vieques.

Pg. Fig. Description Source

- 87 Fig. 92 People attending a Mass in one of the two chapels built on the firing range; both structures were later demolished by the navy.
- 87 Fig. 93 Civil disobedients hailing at a navy helicopter flying over the encampments.
- 88 Fig. 94 Puerto Ricans with different political and religious ideologies came together to demand 'Peace for Vieques' and 'Not one more bomb', San Juan, Puerto Rico, February 21, 2000.
- 88 Fig. 95 Entire families participated in the demands made to the U.S. Navy for an immediate cease of fire.
- 89 Fig. 96 An estimated 150,000 Puerto Ricans marched along *Las Americas Expressway* to support Vieques and the Puerto Rican Nation against the U.S. and its military, San Juan, Puerto Rico, February 21, 2000.
- 90 Fig. 97 More than two hundred people were arrested for civil disobedience acts that prevented the navy to carry out their war practices, May 4, 2000.
- 91 Fig. 98 Isabel Rosado Morales, heroine from the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, arrested on May 4, 2000.
- 91 Fig. 99 A protester is carried off by law enforcement personnel at Camp Yayi in the former Live Impact Area, Vieques, Puerto Rico, May 4, 2000.
- 92 Fig. 100 A sign at the entrance to the military base marked the time (8 hours) until the navy would leave, April 30, 2003.
- 92 Fig. 101 People celebrating the withdrawal of the U.S. Navy in Vieques at 12:01 am, May 1, 2003.
- 92 Fig. 102 People waiving the flag of Puerto Rico celebrating the victory at 12:01 am, May 1, 2003.
- 93 Fig. 103 The banner on the gate of Camp García reads, *Only the people who struggled will open this gate*.
- 93 Fig. 104 People tear down the barbwire fence surrounding the base, May 1, 2003.
- 93 Fig. 105 People hammered and tore down the military checkpoint, a symbol of Navy repression in Vieques, May 1, 2003.

Pg. Fig. Description Source

- 94 Fig. 106 In the morning, thousands of activists marched 4 kilometers from the town of Isabel II to the former military base to celebrate the navy's departure. The banner leading the march proclaims "We stopped the bombing. Vieques Triumphed. The struggle continues..."
- 94 Fig. 107 The march arrived at Camp García, know denominated 'Zona Libre 1ro de Mayo' [May First Zone Free].
- 94 Fig. 108 Anti-U.S. Navy and environmentalist activist Alberto DeJesús Mercado, also known as Tito Kayak, placing the Vieques' flag on top of the U.S. Navy practice bombing observation tower in Vieques, Puerto Rico, May 1, 2003.
- 95 Fig. 109 A child walks on the shores of a 'Free Beach' at Vieques, Puerto Rico.
- 96 Fig. 110 Fireworks on July 4th, San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- 99 Fig. 111 Aerial view of Vieques, Puerto Rico, 2007.
- 100 Fig. 112 Playuela beach in Vieques, Puerto Rico, 2012.
- 102 Fig. 113 Map of Vieques' land ownership since 2003 when the navy left the island, until the present.
- 103 Fig. 114 An unexploded bomb on the Yayi Beach, Vieques, Puerto Rico.
- 103 Fig. 115 Bomb shells removed from the wildlife refuge, Vieques, Puerto Rico.
- 104 Fig. 116 A technical team visits the 'Bombing Range Clean-up Project' zone.
- 105 Fig. 117 Eastern Vieques' new landscape is full of craters like this one from a 2000 pound bomb.
- 105 Fig. 118 A perforation in the metallic shield of this war tank serves as evidence that the navy used bullets coated with depleted uranium in their maneuvers at Vieques, Puerto Rico.
- 106 Fig. 119 Esperanza beach at Vieques, Puerto Rico.
- 106 Fig. 120 Bioluminescent Bay at *Puerto Mosquito*. This unique bay contains up to 720,000 single-celled bioluminescent dinoflagellates per gallon of water. These half-plant, half-animal organisms emit a flash of bluish light when agitated at night. The high concentration of these creatures (*Pyrodinium bahamense*) can create enough light to read a book from.
- 106 Fig. 121 A child leaps off a pier in the town of *Esperanza*.

Pg. Fig. Description Source

- 107 Fig. 122 The method chosen by the U.S. Navy to get rid of unexploded bombs in Vieques National Wildlife Refuge is open detonation; the cheapest method that continues to contaminate the island.
- 107 Fig. 123 During a research trip to Puerto Rico, James Porter, marine ecologist and associate dean of the Odum School of Ecology at the University of Georgia, took samples from underwater nuclear bomb target USS Killen, May 2, 2009.
- 107 Fig. 124 Heaps of destroyed military hardware at a processing area of the former naval training range on Vieques, Puerto Rico, 2008.
- 108 Fig. 125 Sign warning the dangers within the former U.S. Training Range, Vieques, Puerto Rico.
- 108 Fig. 126 Vieques National Wildlife Refuge welcome sign.
- 109 Fig. 127 An inert 500 lb. bomb, the size of which killed David Sanes.
- 109 Fig. 128 Shells presumed to be filled with depleted uranium.
- 109 Fig. 129 Bomb sweepers wield metal detectors in a several-thousand acre area littered with unexploded ordinance, at the live impact area of the former U.S. Naval Training Range, on Vieques, Puerto Rico, January 25, 2007.
- 111 Fig. 130 Aerial view of the former Naval Ammunition Storage Detachment in Western Vieques, Puerto Rico, 1981.
- 112 Fig. 131 Members from the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques in front of their office at the Justice and Peace Camp across the street from the gate of Camp García.
- 112 Fig. 132 Sign of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques and its main initiative, the 4 D's: Demilitarization, Decontamination, Devolution (return of the land), and Sustainable Development of Vieques.
- 116 Fig. 133 Current transportation from main Puerto Rico to the island Municipality of Vieques.
- 118 Fig. 134 This sustainable and cost effective method of transportation could be implemented in Vieques, especially for people who go to Vieques for a day and do not need to rent a car. It offers the opportunity to explore the island once people step off the ferry terminal.

Pg.	Fig.	Description Source
118	Fig. 135	Proposed transportation from main Puerto Rico to the island Municipality of Vieques.
120	Fig. 136	Aerial view of Punta Arenas in West Vieques.
123	Fig. 137	Design proposal site within the 'scar' left by the group of abandoned bunkers.
124	Fig. 138	Location of different types of bunkers. The green area emphasizes the site for this thesis.
126	Fig. 139	Bunker Type A Location.
126	Fig. 140	Bunker plan, front elevation, transversal section and side elevation; scale 1/32" = 1'.
127	Fig. 141	Inside view of Bunker Type A.
127	Fig. 142	Front elevation of Bunker Type A.
128	Fig. 143	Bunker Type B Location.
128	Fig. 144	Bunker plan, front elevation and transversal section; scale 1/32" = 1'.
129	Fig. 145	Front elevation of Bunker Type B.
129	Fig. 146	View from inside Bunker Type B looking outside.
129	Fig. 147	Inside view of Bunker Type B.
130	Fig. 148	Bunker Type C Location.
130	Fig. 149	Bunker plan, front elevation/ section of loading dock and longitudinal section; scale 1/32" = 1'.
131	Fig. 150	View of the Loading dock and entrance of Bunker Type C.
131	Fig. 151	View from the inside of Bunker Type C looking at the loading dock.
132	Fig. 152	Bunker Type D Location.
132	Fig. 153	Bunker plan, front elevation and longitudinal section; scale 1/32" = 1'.
133	Fig. 154	View of front elevation of Bunker Type D
133	Fig. 155	View of landscape around two of the Bunkers Type D.
134	Fig. 156	Bunker Type E Location.
134	Fig. 157	Bunker plan, front elevation and transversal section; scale 1/32" = 1'.
135	Fig. 158	Landscape around of Bunker Type E

Pg.	Fig.	Description Source
135	Fig. 159	View of front elevation of Bunker Type E.
135	Fig. 160	Inside view of Bunker Type E.
137	Fig. 161	Aerial view at the site for this thesis in West Vieques. Photograph taken November 10, 2000.
140	Fig. 162	Design Proposal Master Plan.
144	Fig. 163	Sunbathing at Vieques' beaches.
144	Fig. 164	Horseback riding through high pastures can be an adventure.
144	Fig. 165	Bird watching at Vieques, Puerto Rico, 2004.
145	Fig. 166	Kayaking through Vieques' mangroves, 2010. Kayaking in the Bioluminescent Bay at night is a must.
145	Fig. 167	Exploring the Ruins of Playa Grande Sugar Mill; one of the many places to visit and learn about Vieques' history.
145	Fig. 168	Wandering Vieques' boardwalks.
146	Fig. 169	A symbol palette for eco-tourist activities in Vieques.
148	Fig. 170	Perspective view of the design proposal for the Agro[ECO] Hostel in Vieques, Puerto Rico.
150	Fig. 171	The current state of many of the empty bunkers where nature has taken over.
152	Fig. 172	Floor Plan, Proposal for the Three-arch type D Bunkers. Each of these bunkers contain 6 rooms of the Agro[ECO]Hostel; scale 1/16" = 1'.
155	Fig. 173	Section A with cross-ventilation flow. Scale 1/16"- 1'
156	Fig. 174	Perspective showing Front Elevation of the Agro[ECO]Hostel.
157	Fig. 175	Section B showing layers of privacy. Scale 1/16"- 1'
158	Fig. 176	Front Elevation 1/16"- 1'
158	Fig. 177	Back Elevation 1/16"- 1'
158	Fig. 178	Side Elevations 1/16"- 1'
159	Fig. 179	Perspective showing Back Elevation of the Agro[ECO]Hostel.
160	Fig. 180	Perspective from the patio looking into the room.
161	Fig. 181	Perspective from the room looking into the patio.
162	Fig. 182	Aerial view looking into the patios.

Pg.	Fig.	Description Source
163	Fig. 183	Perspective view of Agro[ECO]Hostel.
164	Fig. 184	Perspective showing the rice paddies in between hostel bunkers where locals and guests can join in the harvest of rice.
165	Fig. 185	Agricultural Landscape surrounds the hostel bunkers.
166	Fig. 186	Inside the rice silo bunker.
167	Fig. 187	Rice silo bunker, type E.
168	Fig. 188	'Arroz con Jueyes'
172	Fig. 189	Location for the renewable source of energy proposal.
173	Fig. 190	Electric Service System in Vieques, Puerto Rico.
173	Fig. 191	Wind Resource and Transmission Lines in Vieques.
175	Fig. 193	The navy had all trees removed for the Live Impact Area in Eastern Vieques; the landscape would never be the same.
174	Fig. 192	Perspective of the renewable source of energy proposal.
178	Fig. 194	Proposed Plan for the Commemoration Space.
180	Fig. 195	Public Plaza overlooking the Fishermen's Gallery.
181	Fig. 196	People marching through the Public Plaza that overlooks at the Vieques' Memorial.
182	Fig. 197	Perspective view of the proposal for the Hammock Park in Vieques where people can bring their own hammock and relax under the palm trees' shadow after a day of exploring the island.
184	Fig. 198	Perspective of the Fishermen's Gallery in Vieques.
185	Fig. 199	Proposed Puerto Rican Flag atop Monte Pirata, highest mountain in Vieques, seen from the main island.
186	Fig. 200	Perspective for The Vieques' Memorial.
188	Fig. 201	Vieques' Memorial Floor Plan; scale 1/16" = 1'.
190	Fig. 202	NorthWest Elevation 1/16"- 1'
190	Fig. 203	NorthEast Elevation 1/16"- 1'
191	Fig. 204	SouthWest Elevation 1/16"- 1'
191	Fig. 205	SouthEast Elevation 1/16"- 1'
193	Fig. 206	Section A 1/16"- 1'

Pg.	Fig.	Description Source
194	Fig. 207	Section B 1/16"- 1'
195	Fig. 208	Perspective of the installation made out of bomb shells left in the Live Impact Zone, The Vieques' Memorial.
196	Fig. 209	Perspective of the crosses that represent the people who have died of cancer by the hands of the navy.
197	Fig. 210	Section C 1/16"- 1'
198	Fig. 211	White crosses along the fence of Camp García with the names of the people who have died of cancer.
201	Fig. 212	Hundreds of bomb shells used to bomb Vieques will point at the visitor expressing it could have happen to them, asking to empathize with the Viequense people.
204	Fig. 213	A sign on a wall in Vieques that has become a public displays of sentiments against the U.S. and its navy, 'Great is the empire that we defy, but greater than that empire is our right to freedom.'



Fig. 1 Alberto de Jesús Mercado, Puerto Rican environmental activist better known as Tito Kayak, adjusts the Vieques' flag atop the Statue of Liberty's crown on Nov. 5, 2000, in New York. Eleven people protesting the U.S. Navy's use of the Puerto Rican Municipality of Vieques for bombing exercises were arrested after hanging two banners and flags on the crown of the Statue of Liberty.

We have come not to make war upon the people of a country that for centuries has been oppressed, but on the contrary, to bring you protection... to promote your prosperity, and to bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government.

General Nelson Miles
July 25, 1898
Guánica, Puerto Rico

Under the Constitution of the United States, no power is given to the federal government to acquire territory to be governed permanently as colonies.

From the Congressional Record
55th Congress, first session,
February 6, 1899



Fig. 2 Night time image photographed on October 18, 2011 by the Expedition 29 crew from the International Space Station. It features the Eastern Caribbean Region; Dominican Republic in the foreground (bottom left), all of Puerto Rico, the Lesser Antilles (top) and Venezuelan coast (right).

First Anecdote

Primera Anécdota

I step onto the electric stairs, anxious to see who's waiting for me. Eager to feel the humidity and the hot breeze of the place that has watched me grow into a woman. I have been dreaming of this moment. Savoring the food made by my grandmother especially for the day of my arrival. Dreaming of how good it will be to feel the sand in between my toes once again.

I am on my way to baggage claim...

Suddenly I get uncomfortable with what my eyes are witnessing. White font. Blue background. I feel ashamed. I close my eyes and breathe hard. I shake my head in disapproval. I am angry.

Welcome to the Unites States of America.

Bienvenido a los Estados Unidos de América.

I just landed in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

My island. My country.

I spent all of yesterday with the spyglass in my hands; from Desecheo to Ataud, from Punta Borinquen to Punta Ponce, I saw all of her, I looked and looked at her, I admired her, and blessed her, and grieved for her... I grieved for her, and with her, for her beauty and misfortune. I thought how noble it would have been to see her free by her own efforts, and how sad, and crushing, and shameful it was to see her change from one master to another, without even being her own...

Eugenio María de Hostos

September 13, 1898

Writing in his diary while aboard the steamer "Philadelphia"
as it left Puerto Rico.

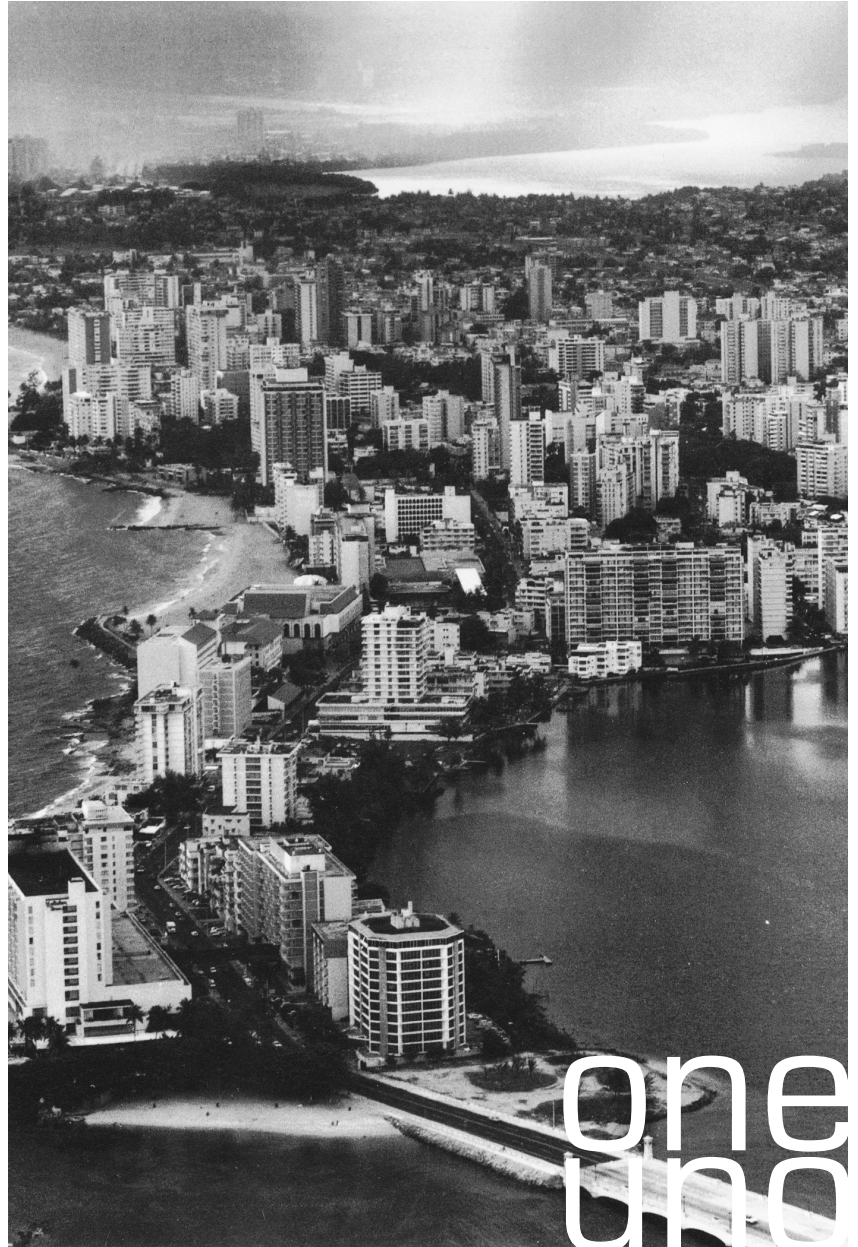
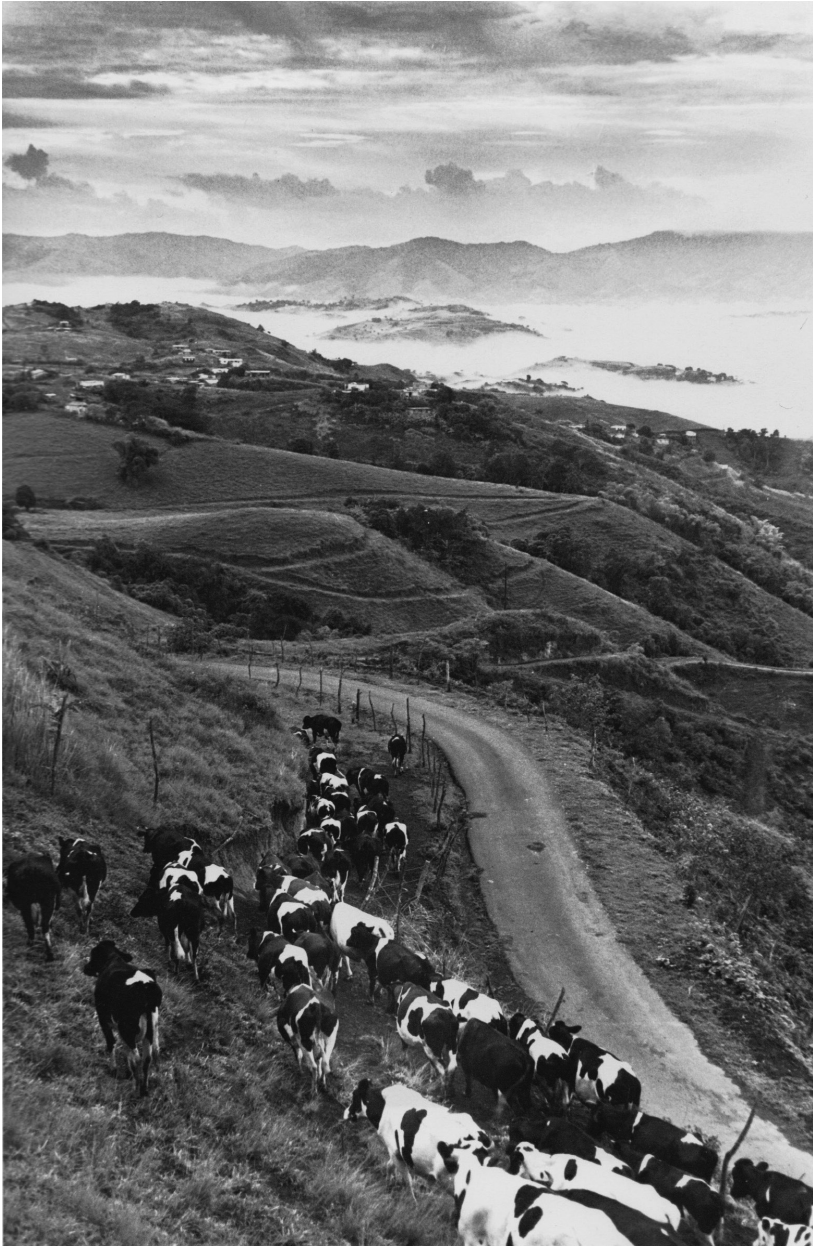
(Opposite Page)

(Left)

Fig. 3 Landscape in Barrio Rabanal, Cidra, Puerto Rico,
1982.

(Right)

Fig. 4 View of the Condado area of San Juan, Puerto Rico,
1989.



one
uno



Fig. 5 Map of the Caribbean Region

(Opposite Page)

(Top)

Fig. 6 Political cartoon implying that U.S. President William McKinley (1897-1901) planned to acquire more foreign territories as he effortlessly acquires new suits.

(Middle)

Fig. 7 U.S. troops invade Puerto Rico, 1898

(Bottom)

Fig. 8 Invasion of Puerto Rico, New York Times Front Page, July 27, 1898.

My Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico Mío

Measuring Uncle Sam for a New Suit

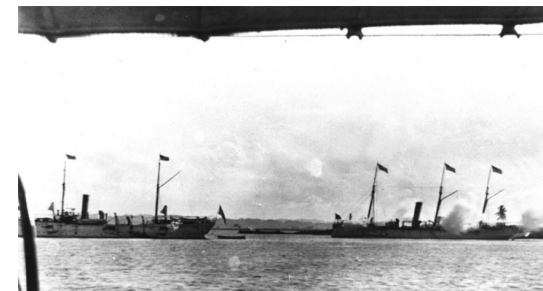


Accompanied by 3,000 men, General Nelson Miles landed in Guánica, Puerto Rico on July 25, 1898. Aspiring to become independent from Spain, from which they had been under restraints for more than five centuries and had just been granted a charter of autonomy, Puerto Ricans believed the United States of America would assist in the transition that would lead to their freedom. Thus, their arrival was a joyful occasion.

The enthusiasm with which many islanders greeted American troops disappeared when they came to realize the United States, with its superiority complex and hunger to expand its imperial power ignoring its Constitution, its Declaration of Independence, and the promises to protect, promote prosperity, and bless the island with their liberal ideologies had never intended to free Puerto Rico.

European nations expanding into the Western Hemisphere threaten U.S. national security, thus the Monroe Doctrine policy was established. The island had been in the U.S. sphere of interest for its geographical location, which was considered convenient for military use and surveillance. On August 12, 1898, the Treaty of Paris was executed. For twenty million dollars, Spain ceded the islands of Guam, Philippines, Cuba and Puerto Rico to the United States.

Puerto Rico, an archipelago located between the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, includes the main island and two smaller island municipalities, Vieques and Culebra, and three uninhabited cays, Mona, Desecheo and Caja de Muertos. The island is the home of almost four million Puerto Ricans. Within eighteen months after the U.S. usurped the island from under the islanders' feet, and despite many demands for their withdrawal, U.S. Congress passed the Foraker Act and sealed the island's fate. The military rule was converted into a civilian government with all federal laws applicable to the island. Puerto Rico became the first unincorporated territory of the United States; a colony full of people "incapable of self-governance."¹



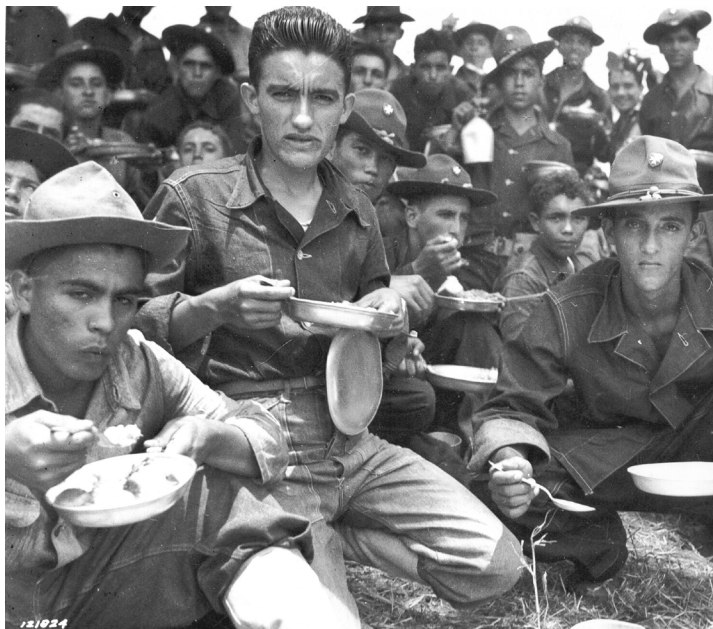
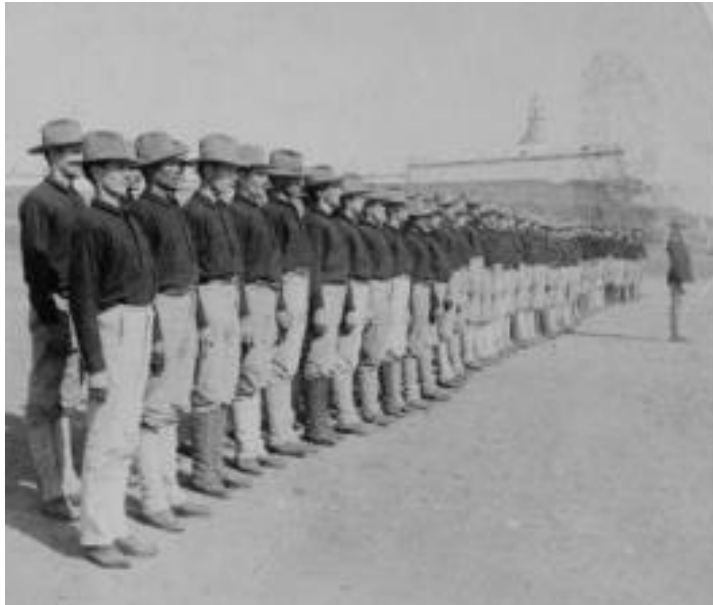
The New York Times.
 NEW YORK, WEDNESDAY, JULY 27, 1898.—TWELVE PAGES.
 5,146.

OUR FLAG RAISED IN PUERTO RICO
 Four Spaniards Fall In The First Fight of the Invasion.
 AMERICANS ESCAPE UNHURT
 Scarcely on the Southern Coast.
 ENEMY IS SUPPRESSED
 Spanish Destroyer Sunk South of San Juan. 100 Other Spanish-Sized Vessels Done by the Americans.

MAP OF THE ISLAND OF PUERTO RICO.

SPAIN ASK TREAT
 Requests the Agree to a FORMAL French Ambass Message to th NOTHING AT Our Answer to President Har Old Pro

WARNSHIPS GO TO GUANICA
 Arrived from various ports...
GRANT'S BRIGADE IS MOVING
 The 15th Infantry...
OHIO TROOPS TO SEE SERVICE



On March 2, 1917, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Jones Shafroth Act to replace the Foraker Act. It restructured the government of Puerto Rico into three branches: the executive, led by a governor, the legislative, made up of a Senate and a House of Representatives, whose decisions could be vetoed by the President, and the judicial branch. Furthermore, the Jones Act granted Puerto Ricans United States citizenship; allegedly intended to repress the dissatisfaction about the colonial status and, in context of the World War I, secure islanders could join the armed forces. In 1947, the Jones Act was amended to have islanders elect their own governor. Three years later Congress approved the creation of an autonomous constitution for the island, which resulted in the present Commonwealth of Puerto Rico of July 25, 1952.

The current denomination of territory has prohibited almost 4 million American Citizens to vote for the President of the United States and the only representation Puerto Rico has in Washington is a Commissioner Resident, who only has voice but not a vote in issues concerning the Puerto Rican people. Puerto Rican soldiers have been sent to fight in wars by leaders they did not have the right to choose; to defend the nation and its people who, in a political sense, do not consider us to be equal. Furthermore, "The popular view of the current legal status is that Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the United States, although constitutionally, this term really has no substance. The Supreme Court has ruled that Puerto Rico is, in fact, a non-incorporated territory. This means that although the island remains a possession of the United States and is subject to U.S. laws, Washington never intended Puerto Rico to become a State of the Union." ²

Ever since the United States took possession of Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans have become slaves of the political status debate. Discontent for this colonial relationship not only has trumped pushing forward major issues on the island, but it has divided Puerto Ricans who have different ideologies about the island's destiny. Many people gravitate towards statehood, others, in less numbers, towards independence, but the compromise between the two, being the present commonwealth, *Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico*, includes maintaining ties with the United States without losing our identity.

It is exactly our identity that suffers by remaining in this limbo. Albert Memmi in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* mentioned, "By choosing to place themselves in the colonizers service to protect his interests exclusively, they end up by adopting his ideology, even with regard to their own values and their own lives. Having been fooled to the point of accepting the inequalities of his position, even at times profiting from this unjust system, the colonized still finds his situation more of a burden than anything else. Their contempt may be only a compensation for their misery." ³

The uneasiness people constantly feel about the long-standing colonial dilemma has challenged the reliability of the status quo on four occasions. In previous plebiscites, the basic question regarding this issue is whether Puerto Rico



Fig. 12 Luis Muñoz Marín, first democratically elected Governor of Puerto Rico, signing the approval for the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, February 6, 1952.

(Opposite Page)

(Top Left)

Fig. 9 First Company of native Puerto Ricans enlisted in the American Colonial Army, Puerto Rico, 1899.

(Bottom Left)

Fig. 10 Soldiers of the 65th Infantry, also known as the "Borinqueneers", the-all Puerto Rican Regiment, after an all day schedule of maneuvers at Salinas, Puerto Rico, August, 1941.

(Right)

Fig. 11 'Not allowed to vote for President' - 3,000 crosses representing the soldiers that have died in the war in Iraq (Santa Barbara, 2008). "Being from Puerto Rico, Specialist Lopez-Feliciano was not allowed to vote for president. But as a soldier reporting to the commander-in-chief, he was allowed to die for the president."



And then governor Fortuño said...



Seremos el estado #51!!

We will become the 51st state!!



LOL

should remain a U.S. territory, become a U.S. state or become an independent country. In 1967 and 1993, the majority of Puerto Ricans voted in favor of the Commonwealth. In the 1998 plebiscite, two more options were included: Free Association, which would “establish Puerto Rico as a sovereign nation separate from, but legally bound (on a terminable basis) to the United States,”⁴ and the fifth option of ‘none of the above’. More than fifty percent of the voters favored ‘none of the above’, not offering a clear direction on how Puerto Ricans would like to proceed. On June 2011, the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization passed a resolution calling on the United States to expedite a process “that would allow Puerto Ricans to fully exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence.”⁵ President Barack Obama pledged his support to the Puerto Rican people no matter the outcome, “I am firmly committed to the principle that the question of political status is a matter of self-determination for the people of Puerto Rico... I am committed to work with Congress to ensure that a fair, clearly defined, and transparent process is available for the people of Puerto Rico to decide on their future for themselves.”⁶

On November 6, 2012, the referendum posed two questions. Voters were asked first whether they agreed that Puerto Rico should continue to have its present form of territorial status. Regardless of how voters answered that question, they were then asked to express their preference among the three non-territorial alternatives to the current status: statehood, independence, or sovereign nation in free association with the United States. First, by a 54% to 46% margin, voters rejected their current status as a U.S. commonwealth. On the second question 61% voted for statehood, 33% for the free association and 6% for outright independence. But 472,674 voters left the second question blank by recommendation from politicians from the Popular Democratic Party who favors the current commonwealth. People who wish Puerto Rico became the 51st state of the Union, celebrated a victory, but if those blank votes were assumed as anti-statehood votes, the true result for the statehood option would be less than 50% and the U.S. Congress will immediately disregard the results. What is certain is the frustration with the colonial situation; the direction the Puerto Rican people want to take is still indefinite.

Regardless of how soon or how violent the colonized rejects his situation, he will one day begin to overthrow his unlivable existence with the whole force of his oppressed personality.⁷

Albert Memmi



Fig. 18 ‘Freedom Now!’ The fist, a symbol of resistance in the independence and nationalist movements in Puerto Rico.

(Opposite Page)

(Top Left)

Fig. 13 A supporter of Alejandro Garcia Padilla, candidate for governor of the pro-commonwealth Popular Democratic Party, gestures during his closing campaign rally in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Sunday, Nov. 4, 2012.

(Middle Left)

Fig. 14 Puerto Ricans from the Independence Movement protesting against colonialism, 2010.

(Top Right)

Fig. 15 Supporters of the Popular Democratic Party cheer while waiting for the arrival of their candidate for governor as the first tallied votes mark a tendency in his favor on Nov. 7, 2012 in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

(Middle Right)

Fig. 16 Pro-annexation supporters demanding Puerto Rico becomes the 51st State of the Union on Nov. 7, 2012.

(Bottom)

Fig. 17 ‘Meme’ showing President Obama and other U.S. politicians mocking the Puerto Rican Governor Fortuño (2008-2012) for his ludicrous expression.



“ Si quis
ESTA
ESCOGE

ERES **vivir** **en un**
ADDO, **hay** **50**
uno **y Vete ...**

Fig. 19 Bumper Sticker 'If you want to live in a State, there's 50. Choose one and leave...'

LAS IDEOLOGÍAS EN PUERTO RICO:

Estadidad

E.L.A

Independencia

Soberanía



La eterna chilla que sueña casarse con "su hombre", para que este la mantenga permanentemente. Su autoestima no es muy alta ya que cree que su vida depende de otro para ser feliz.

Una mujer que lleva muchísimos años en una relación abusiva pero que vive de el miedo al cambio para no dar ningún paso y seguir en lo mismo... por los siglos de los siglos.

Loca de divorciarse y probarle al mundo de que ella puede hacer las cosas por sí misma. Pero nadie le hace caso porque siempre está metida en problemas y no confían en ella.

Ella quiere el divorcio pero sin embargo quiere mantener una relación de amistad con su ex- esposo... whatever that means.

Statehood

Commonwealth

Independence

Sovereign Free Association

The eternal mistress who wishes to marry "her man", so that he can financially maintain her permanently. Her esteem is not too high and believes her life depends on another person to be happy. *

A woman who has been for years in an abusive relationship but lives with fear of change, without stepping forward continuing in the same place... for ever and ever. *

Crazy to get divorced and prove to the world she can do well on her own. But, everyone ignores her because she is always in trouble and no one trusts her. *

She wants to get a divorce but be able to keep a friendly relationship with her ex-husband... whatever that means. *

* My own translation.

Fig. 20 The Political Ideologies in Puerto Rico. In the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, Puerto Rico is portrayed as the woman, and the U.S. as the man.

Independence will not create in Puerto Ricans the past they lack; statehood, should it ever be granted, will not automatically create the self-respect they seek; the present commonwealth status of "association" will continue to symbolize the uneasiness that must persist so long as the people do not know what to hope for- or the direction from which their hope is to come.

Alfred Kazin
In Puerto Rico
1960

Second Anecdote

Segunda Anécdota

It was mayhem. Thrilling. On a Tuesday morning, university students from around sixteen Latin American countries shared a bus with a group of enthusiastic Puerto Rican architecture students. We were on our way to visit the Historic Center of San Salvador, El Salvador. No one was quiet. The noise was magnificent. I could distinguish so many different Spanish accents. And after talking to so many people mine got somewhat distorted. I sounded funny. People starting chanting at the back of the bus. Everyone who was in front immediately turned around. There was some clapping and shouting. Then students from Venezuela began to sing in unison: “Gritemos con brío: ¡Muera la opresión! Compatriotas fieles, la fuerza es la unión...” It was their national anthem, “Let us shout with courage; Oppression must die! Loyal countrymen, strength is in the union...” I remember that part because they sang it with so much passion. I felt jealous. I wished all Puerto Ricans were that fierce. After some other students sang their anthem, it was our turn. I am not sure why we were the last ones... But we proudly sang La Borinqueña as if it was a contest and we knew we were going to win.

The land of Borinquen where I have been born.
Is a flowery garden of magical splendor.
An ever-clear sky serves as her canopy,
And placid lullabies are sung by the waves at its feet.
When at her beaches Columbus arrived,
full of awe he exclaimed: “Oh! Oh! Oh!
This is the lovely land that I seek.”
Borinquen is the daughter,
the daughter of the sea and the sun.
of the sea and the sun, of the sea and the sun,
of the sea and the sun, of the sea and the sun.*

*La tierra de Borinquen donde he nacido yo.
Es un jardín florido de mágico esplendor.
Un cielo siempre nítido le sirve de dosel.
Y dan arrullos plácidos las olas a sus pies.
Cuando a sus playas llegó Colón,
Exclamó lleno de admiración: ¡Oh! ¡Oh! ¡ Oh!
Esta es la linda tierra, que busco yo.
Es Borinquen la hija,
la hija del Mar y el sol.
del Mar y el Sol, del Mar y el Sol,
del Mar y el Sol, del Mar y el Sol,*

“It is so romantic...” said a Venezuelan girl. I didn’t understand where she was going with her comment. She then continued, “Isn’t odd that all the other national anthems are yearning for independence and talk about how people have shed blood for their country and yours is, well, not?” We all looked at each other hoping someone had a clever answer. I was anxious that no one had spoken up. I felt the same anxiety when I was cross examined about our U.S. citizenship, our U.S. passport and why we switched from Spanish to English so easily every time we talked. I had never thought about this, even less to compare it with other anthems. Romantic? I had proudly put my hand in my chest and never questioned it before. If I knew then that the first version of La Borinqueña was a love proclamation, a forbidden love of a Spanish man for a Puerto Rican woman I would have said something. Instead we decided to sing Lola Rodríguez de Tió’s unofficial revolutionary version.

Wake up Borinqueño, the signal has been given!	<i>¡Despierta Borinqueño que han dado la señal!</i>
Wake up from that dream	<i>¡Despierta de ese sueño</i>
because it’s time to fight!	<i>que es hora de luchar!</i>
For that patriotic call, doesn’t your heart burn?	<i>A ese llamar patriótico, ¿No arde tu corazón?</i>
Come!	<i>¡Ven!</i>
The sound of the cannon we will find sympathetic.	<i>Nos será simpático el ruido de cañón.</i>
We want freedom	<i>Nosotros queremos la libertad</i>
Our machete will give it to us...	<i>Nuestro machete nos la dará...</i>
Let’s go Borinqueño, let’s go now,	<i>Vámonos Borinqueño, vámonos ya,</i>
It anxiously waits for us,	<i>que nos espera ansiosa,</i>
Anxious the freedom.	<i>ansiosa la libertad.</i>
Freedom, freedom,	<i>¡La libertad, la libertad,</i>
freedom, freedom! *	<i>la libertad, la libertad!</i>

People turned euphoric and I immediately felt that energy rush through my body. I wanted to stand up and proclaim our freedom, scream it so that in the island they would hear me. They would follow me. At the end of the day I went to sleep feeling proud of being Puertorriqueña and hoping I would never forget that feeling.

Ultimately, the subject responds to how are we or what are we, Puerto Ricans, considered globally?. We try to collect the scattered elements that palpitate at the bottom of our culture, and surprise the highlights of our collective psychology. But note that if is difficult to define a single man, for the many facets that come into his personality, it is much harder to define a people. The difficulty increases when you try, as in this case, define a set of beings that have not been able to delineate comfortably their collective life. *

“A la larga, el tema responde a un ¿cómo somos? o a un ¿qué somos? los puertorriqueños globalmente considerados. Intentamos recoger los elementos dispersos que laten en el fondo de nuestra cultura, y sorprender los puntos culminantes de nuestra psicología colectiva. Pero téngase en cuenta que si es difícil definir a un solo hombre, por las múltiples facetas que entran en su personalidad, es mucho más difícil definir a un pueblo. La dificultad sube de punto cuando se intenta, como en este caso, definir un conjunto de seres que todavía no ha podido delinear a gusto su vida colectiva.”⁸

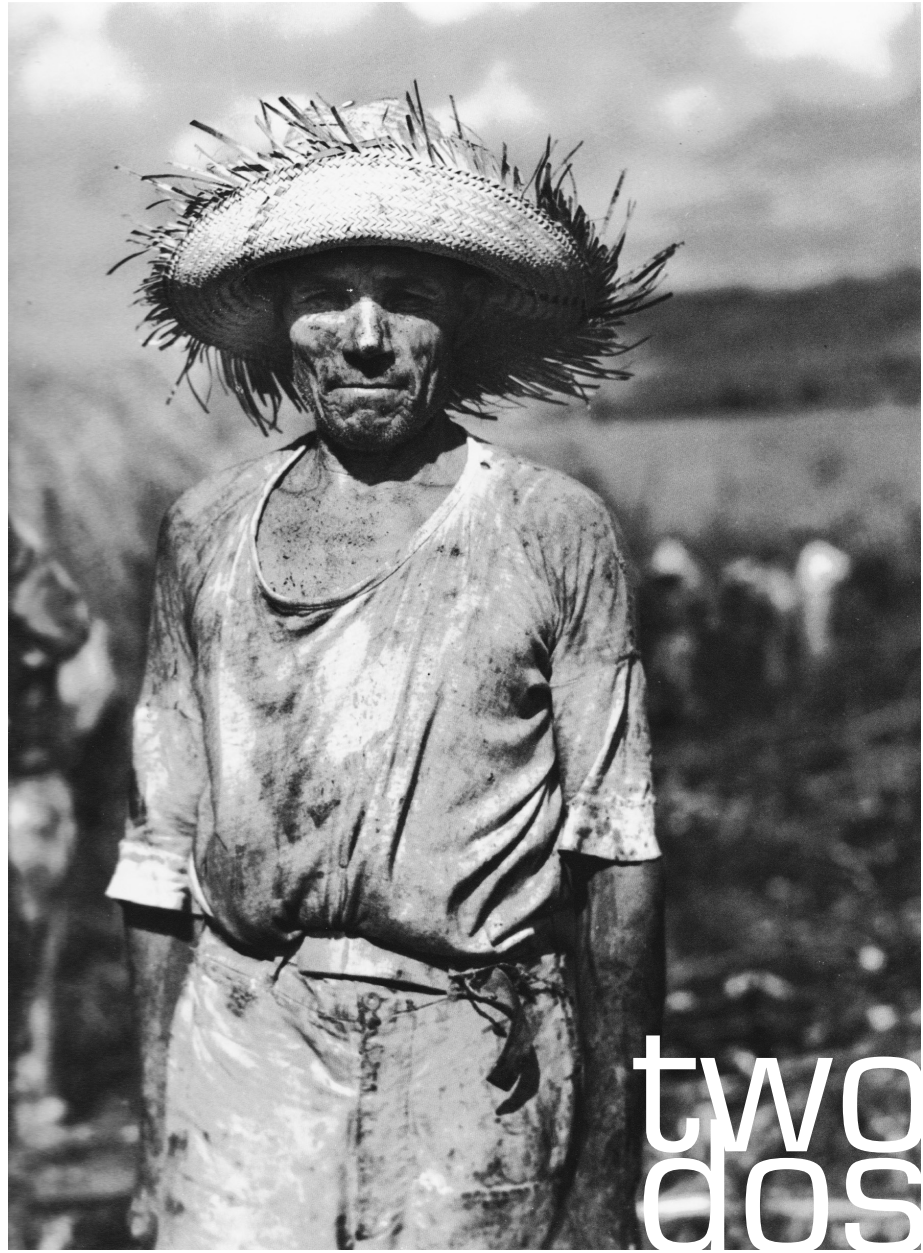
Antonio S. Pedreira

Insularismo: Ensayos de Interpretación Puertorriqueña

* My own translation.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 21 Sugarcane cutter working in a field that had been burned, near Guánica, Puerto Rico, 1941.



Puerto Rican Identity

Identidad Puertorriqueña

A person can be defined by his character, subsequently the setting and circumstances in which a person develops influences who that person will become and even how as a collective a people is portrayed. Clearly not all Puerto Ricans are the same, but there are some common factors that we have and have experienced that make us call ourselves a collective and make us be defined as one, leaving individualism on a second plane. By being born and growing up in a delimited geography, certainly that of an island, we have developed a distinctive identity that could never be compared to a person from another part of the world. But since the political status of Puerto Rico is very unique and the relationship with the U.S. has tried to blur our sense of a collective separate from them, how genuine is our national identity? Who are we? Are we considered a nation if we are not a sovereign country? Even if we are considered a territory of another one? Can a national identity be built even when powerful empires have been threatening to destroy its natural process throughout history?

Ernest Renan mentioned, "A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form."⁹ Even though some Puerto Ricans dream the island will become the 51st State of the Union, do not give our heritage the importance it deserves or do not mind exchanging our traditions and language for those of the colonizers, we are a collective living together in a 100 x 35 piece of land with a common history and culture, therefore my immediate reaction to Renan's definition of a nation is to consider Puerto Rico as an independent one, my heart says it is.

A common memory I must underline for the purpose of this thesis, is when Puerto Ricans tolerated the “Trauma of ‘98”; a pinpoint in our development as a nation where the continuity of our identity was numbed and up to today has threatened to divide us as a people. In 1898 Spain conceded Puerto Rico to the United States of America, in times when we were starting to discover our independent possibilities. Antonio S. Pedreira, an influential Puerto Rican writer explains,

We got out of a transplantation to get into another one without finishing designing our expression, [referring to our identity] which we have not completely lost, but its found transient in the historic moment we are living in.*

“Salimos de una transplatación y nos metimos en otra sin acabar de diseñar nuestro ademán, que no hemos perdido por completo, pero que se encuentra transeúnte en el momento histórico en que vivimos.”¹⁰

Since then, the Yankee conventions have been filtrating in our essence as Puerto Ricans. Moreover, the ongoing colonial dilemma with our unresolved political status condition has brought confusion to a collective struggling with the pressures of being forced to belong to the imposed side. From this dilemma comes the urgency to “create nation” in the early 20th Century. This concept may not be recent, but it is current since the socio-political problematic in the island has not ceased to exist.

To “create nation” was to build a national sentiment to fight the imminent changes that the “other” was going to bring our people and our country. People feared as a collective we would lose our essence when by osmosis we started assimilating the new ideals of living, it would be inevitable. For decades Puerto Rican literates, historians, anthropologists and other intellectuals had been recreating a historic memory in order for the people to retain their collective identity. We needed then, and still need today to be a strong collective in order to remember our past, but prevent our present from transforming who we are to the extent of having our essence disappear. The strategy that would surpass our fragmentation was the reinforcement of our collective identity through the Puerto Rican culture.

Some people might think that a collective that lives in a nation that is not sovereign do not have a particular identity, or that the collective don’t even have the right to call it a nation for that specific reason. These people are mistaken. Puerto Rico is a nation maybe not by political means, yet, but undeniably by cultural means. The island’s rich culture sets her aside from any other country and especially from any State of the Union.

* My own translation.

(Opposite Page)

(Top)

Fig. 22 Mural ‘*Tres Razas y Una Cultura, La Puertorriqueña*’ *Three Races and One Culture, The Puerto Rican*, San Germán, Puerto Rico, 2011.

(Middle)

Fig. 23 In the cathedral of San Germán, Puerto Rico, 1946.

(Bottom)

Fig. 24 The first meeting between the Tainos and the Spaniards.

The Puerto Rican culture is a fusion of different races that came together after the Spaniards claim to have discovered the island in 1493. From the miscegenation of the native Taíno, the white European, and the black African, came the essence of our collective character. Each race brought significant qualities that when combined produced a memorable outcome; one that we have preserved and feel overprotective of still.

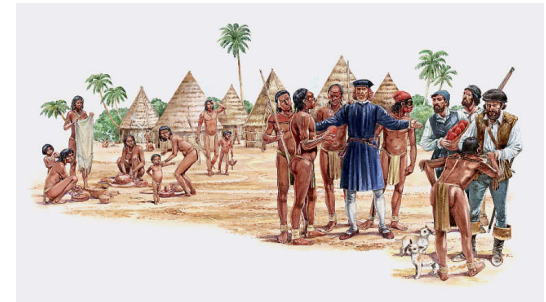


When the Spaniards arrived at Borikén, native name for the island, we received the most important elements of our culture, the Spanish language and the Catholic Religion. They gave us beliefs, festivities, traditions, flavors, architecture, but I find the spirit embedded in our essence that comes out and alludes to the nostalgia that connects us to the rest of Latin America is the most valuable. The sense that we belong to something bigger than us, that we are related to the many people that even though have different accents, share the same language and ideals; with the hope that we share the same strength and courage they had when they fought for their independence. Understanding that even though I am grateful for the Spanish inheritance, I am fed up with having our people continue to be colonized.

Even though the Borikén native population, the nonviolent Taínos, rapidly decreased as a result of natural calamities, cruel treatment, hostility and diseases brought on by the colonizers, migration to nearby islands or to the center of Borikén, and due to interracial mixing, their influence has endured. While the Spaniards enslaved the taínos to work in mines seeking for gold, the first economic industry of the island, they appropriated the Taíno expertise on modest living such as navigation skills, fishing and agricultural techniques with produce like cotton, tobacco, annatto or cassava bread made from the yucca root; knowledge and techniques applied even now.



We can also thank the Taínos for objects such as the hammock and the bohío, a native thatched hut, symbols typical of the tropics and the unpretentious manner in which to dwell in a place where the climate doesn't demand much; because as Pedreira mentions, the soil provided everything else. Another object that we have inherited from the Taínos, and its use is now considered a tradition is the indispensable güiro, a notched hollowed-out gourd played by scraping a stick with tines along its surface; currently used in salsa music. If you hear this instrument, there's a fiesta going on.



However, their biggest contribution is found in the Spanish language. The Taínos spoke Arawak and despite their extinction as a race, our vocabulary has been enriched by their contribution of words regarding toponymy and anthroponymy, flora and fauna, objects and food. The Spaniards incorporated almost 200 words and names of Caciques or tribal leaders, to the Spanish language that give name to our rivers, mountains, bays, and towns; honoring the intimacy the first real settlers of the island had with nature.



Fig. 25 Sequence of movements of Bomba Puertoriqueña at Plaza de Recreo de Loíza, Puerto Rico, 2010.

(Opposite Page)

(Top)

Fig. 26 Musicians at the patron saint's festivities in the town of Loíza Aldea, Puerto Rico, 1981.

(Bottom)

Fig. 27 Rosin Casillas in her house in Cidra, making *pasteles* for Christmas, 1981.

By the 16th Century sugarcane production replaced the gold mine economy due to depletion of the metal; and when the Taíno labor force became insufficient for the Spaniards' ambitions they relied on the slave trade for free labor. The Spaniards brought to Puerto Rico slaves from different African countries, from north of Senegal to the south of Angola. The plantation owners took advantage of this situation and combined slaves that had different dialects so they couldn't communicate easily to strategize a revolt against them or to escape. What these Spaniards didn't consider was that they would communicate in a different manner, through rhythm and corporal movements that were common in many regions of Africa. The slaves, needless to say, were exploited. They felt infuriated but helpless and the only way they would release this sentiment of resentment after a week of arduous physical labor was with sing, dance, and rhythm, known as bomba.

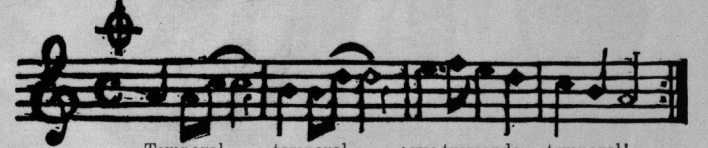
On Saturday nights, many of them would sneak out into the coastal plantation to commemorate their African heritage; it was also a response to the aristocratic music and dance. There are more than twenty rhythms of bomba where traditionally there's two types of leather barrels or drums, the *buleador* with a constant base rhythm where there could be as many drums as desired, and the *primo*, only one drum that has to follow as a challenge the movements of the dancer; the dancer flirts and dictates the beat, it is a dialogue between them. The bomba also incorporates instruments such as the *cuá*, two sticks to be banged on the side of the rum barrel, and a single *maraca*, a musical instrument made out of the fruit of the calabash tree; a handle perforates a hollow sphere that is filled with small rocks or seeds to later make its memorable sound.

The African contribution is also felt in the lexicon incorporated into the Spanish language, particularly in the Puerto Rican vocabulary. African words give name to fruits, plants, food, drinks, musical instruments, dances, adjectives and verbs that describe who we are and how we act. When the African slave was introduced to the island, they came with a strong identity. Even though the Spaniards baptized them during the voyage to the Caribbean and were not allowed to practice their religion, they didn't substitute their beliefs that easily instead they preserved them to the point that it currently plays an important role in Puerto Rican Folklore. Such a belief is the *Santería*, they would do their rituals and adore their gods that were disguised under the Roman Catholic saints figurines. We also inherit from them the act of worshiping the dead, to pray for them and to ask for their protection. In Puerto Rican cuisine you can taste the African influence in dishes that are deep fried and in ones that include different type of roots and plantains, brought from Africa, such as the *pasteles*; a type of tamale wrapped in a banana leaf but the *masa* is made out of green plantain, green banana, taro and pumpkin seasoned with annatto oil and filled with chickpeas, raisins, olives, pork or chicken. It is hard work, an art; not everyone in the island knows how to make it but especially at Christmas time everyone eats it. It is a tradition.





TEMPORAL



Temporal, temporal, ¡que tremendo temporal!
San Felipe San Felipe ¡que te-rr-i-ble temporal!



¿Qué se-rá de Pto. Rico? ¿Qué se-rá de mi Borinquen
cuan - do pase el temporal? Cuando pase el temporal

Another traditional dance still practiced in Puerto Rico is the Plena; and even though it is not completely influenced by the black race as the bomba, instead by slaves and non-slaves who were born in the island, we always mention them together as if it were a marriage of classic rhythms that depict where Puerto Ricans came from. The musical genre emerged in a context of *arrabal* [the squalid outskirts of the town] where poverty was the norm. It was commonly known as “the sung newspaper” because the majority of people were illiterate and its lyrics would be the only way to learn local and foreign events, to later spread the song or news all over the island. Plena was danced to release the stress poverty brought them. It was a way to make a joke out of their reality; they would rather laugh even when the circumstances were extremely unfortunate. The instruments used, an excellent example of our racial influences put together, are the güiro, the maraca, accordion, the cuatro, our traditional string instrument, and the pleneros, three portable drums that contribute to the spontaneity of many of our social gatherings. When three Puerto Ricans are simultaneously hitting the pleneros, on different rhythm each, what I can only call the sound of the island emerges from that animal skin and compels me to identify with my ancestors. Even though plena is currently performed more so to showoff our culture rather than as a quotidian activity, I believe we also dance it with such sentiment of longing to make sure we don't forget our past. Every step is nostalgic. While in adversity, we still rather laugh.

From the rich heritage of this Afro-Caribbean music came Salsa. And the Danza, a Puerto Rican expression of the assimilation of the three races, which can be compared to a North American fox trot, is a manifestation of our national soul.

In dance, as in his art and his poetry, the hallmarks of a collective nature are delivered with full eloquence. Although the dance is universal, said Federico de Onís, each people has a particular way of dancing and their dances constitute one of the many manifestations most characteristic and most inimitable of the national soul.*

*“En el baile, como en su arte y en su poesía, se entregan con elocuencia plena las notas distintivas del carácter colectivo. Aunque el baile sea universal- ha dicho Federico de Onís- cada pueblo baila a su manera y sus bailes constituyen una de las manifestaciones mas características y mas inimitables del alma nacional.”*¹¹

I give dance and music so much importance when describing our culture because for centuries that has been one way to deal with our colonial situation. Puerto Ricans are fiesteros by nature; we like to get together to celebrate who we are even if our political situation has never been desirable.



(Top)

Fig. 29 *Plena* in the streets of Puerto Rico as a way to learn about our cultural heritage, to participate in its preservation, and to pass it along to next generations.

(Bottom)

Fig. 30 Adicted to Plena, *Plena Callejera*.

* My own translation.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 28 Before hurricane San Felipe lashed Puerto Rico in 1928, the *plena Temporal* was written to warn people about the incoming storm. Print *Temporal* by Rafael Tufiño, 1954.



"1873-1973"

106/115

José Ros 0'73

By the 18th century the pure Taíno race had disappeared completely leaving the white and black as predominant races. At the beginning of colonization whites would not contemplate mixing with the blacks, it was inconceivable because they consider themselves to be righteous therefore superior, plus they wanted to maintain their pure race and the privileges that came with it; but this was not true for the white impoverished sector who later on ended up mixing with the blacks. From this fusion came our confusion explains Pedreira in his essay *Biología, Geografía, Alma*. Who we are today, our character, our identity, is a blend of qualities given to us by the miscegenation of both races. According to him, these diverse qualities Puerto Ricans possess are the reason we are still a colony today.

In his notorious book *Insularismo: Ensayos de Interpretación Puertorriqueña* (1934), Pedreira passed judgment on both races and their descendant, concluding in the definition of our collective personality, as if Puerto Ricans hadn't evolved; this hypothesis might be relevant in present time, but I won't agree that our misfortunes are fault of one discriminated race. I agree that we have traits of all the races that were present in the island, positive or not. He believed the whites were the intelligent race that came up with proposals and presided them and the blacks followed orders and executed them. The blacks didn't have to even think, just obey; the whites were owners of their every thought even their most intimate feelings.

From the inevitable fusion of the white and the black Puerto Rican came the mestizo or mulatto. The mulatto suffered from being eternally in limbo, in an eternal incertitude. He is in a constant struggle between the white and the black in him but he is neither. All the positive attributes that he gets from his white side are reduced to a mere aspiration or a brief heroism because the African blood that runs through his veins impedes him to take action. And since we [Puerto Ricans] all have something of the mulatto, we as a collective are stuck in that eternal state of incertitude. Incertitude I can only declare is rooted from the colonial tragedy we are still living in, that we keep accepting.

The master and servant that live in us refuse to level their differences, so even with our master condition we rather assume the sad situation of being perpetual tenants.*

"El señor y el peón que viven en nosotros no logran limar sus asperezas y aparejamos a nuestra condición de amos la triste situación de inquilinos perpetuos." ¹²

* My own translation.

Pedreira in his blame game added to his theory of our biological constitution, our collective personality, the insufficiency of territory in the island, its geographical position, the weary tropical climate, and our perpetual colonial state to be at fault for our submissive behavior, which he called *aplatanamiento*.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 31 "We don't want reforms for the whites if the blacks are not freed." Print 1873-1973 by José A. Rosa Castellanos, 1973.

“Aplatanarse, en nuestro país, es una especie de inhibición, de modorra mental y ausencia de acometividad. Es seguir, sin enfocarse, cómoda y rutinariamente, el curso de la vida, sin cambios ni inquietudes, cabeceando nuestras aspiraciones y en cuclillas frente al porvenir. Es aclimatarse a la molicie tropical y tener ideas pasivas en forma de piraguas para refrescar la siesta de nuestra civilidad. La musa paradisiaca, nombre inefable y científico del plátano, es un símbolo retórico de nuestra vegetación anímica.”¹³

Denomination exclusive to our people, that comes from the word plantain, “a rhetoric symbol of our anemic vegetative state”. Aplatanamiento in the Puerto Rican psyche means “being indolent in our country is a form of inhibition, a mental lethargy and a lack of initiative”. It forces us to feel unable to act in favor of our aspirations. It is a feeling of impotence and laziness, but since this state of mind is known for a lack of aggressiveness, we accept whatever happens, instead of making things happen. Though it is incongruous that Pedreira bluntly expressed the black race as inferior over the white, but believes the greatest characteristic of our national personality is being apatana'o, which according to him would definitively come from the black race. Regardless, Pedreira's ideologies were accepted without any challenge as the absolute truth about us and up to today his work is considered a definition of our character that by its present reaction and acceptance seems hasn't changed at all. The adjective apatana'o has been embedded in our collective psyche since childhood, hence we believe this is whom we are, our “historical inheritance”, making it difficult to decide to disagree with what we have been labeled and change our collective negative attitude of being an underachiever and a lazy person often sinning of omission.

“The Thirties Generation” was a literary movement in the island, from which Pedreira was the most prominent writer and his Insularismo has been considered the generation's voice. The movement took place in the context of the 1929 Great Depression, “in a climate of discontent and social deterioration and under the influence of nationalism though not linked to it.” The economic crisis that came with the stock market collapse in 1928 struck the island when most Puerto Ricans already lived in extreme poverty. In these circumstances different union workers, especially from the sugar cane industry, started protesting and participating in strikes around the island with the Massacre of Ponce in 1937 being the most remembered; these triggered radical responses among the young local intellectuals of the time. These writers were concerned with the serious problem of the “alarming North American political, economic, and cultural penetration” and sought the answer of two main questions in order to oppose the predicament: Who are we? And, why are we?

The Generation of the 1930 helped to define the contemporary discourse on the Puerto Rican nation, based on five ideological premises. First, this discourse considers the Spanish language the cornerstone of Puerto Ricanness, as opposed to English, which it typically views as a corruptive influence on the vernacular. Second, the Island's territory is the geographical entity that contains the nation; beyond the Island's borders, Puerto Ricanness is threatened with contamination and dissolution. Third, the sense of a common origin, based on place of birth and residence, defines Puerto Ricans. Fourth, the shared history of a Spanish heritage, indigenous roots, and African influences offers a strong resistance to U.S. assimilation. Fifth, local culture—especially folklore—provides an invaluable source of popular images and artifacts that are counterposed to icons of U.S. culture, avoiding unwanted mixtures.¹⁴

They were in search of our identity in order to rescue it from the social changes the new colonizer from the north would bring; I believe what they didn't realize was that they had turned to the influences of our prior colonizer in order to safeguard our character. These writers were opposed to the new colonizer suddenly forgetting the miseries the Puerto Rican people suffered from while being a colony of Spain. Juan Angel Silén explains the movement in his book *We, the Puerto Rican people*, "Its greatest mistake was seeking our roots not in the people themselves but in Spain."¹⁵

"Revaluation seems to be the key words of those years."¹⁶ In an attempt to awaken the collective conscience of their people, these writers from *La Generación del '30* were urgent to "create nation" and they did by turning to patriotic ideals such as the fight for our independence, the defense of the Spanish language and our cultural heritage through love for the flag, use of patriotic songs and other signs of chauvinism. The revival of a national sentiment, drawn from the entrails of our collective soul, was going to stimulate our collective consciousness. They felt they were the only people who could make the Puerto Ricans really understand what was happening on the island, "The intellectual lives more in cultural anguish, and the illiterate person is simply walled into his language and rechews scraps of oral culture. Those who understand their fate become impatient and no longer tolerate colonization. They only express the common misfortune. If not, why would they be so quickly heard, so well understood and obeyed?"¹⁷ Silén explained about Pedreira's work that no one challenged his theories that were "misconceptions transmitted from generation to generation."¹⁸

These types of arguments did not cease when the decade ended, many intellectuals came to define the Puerto Rican idiosyncrasy with similar rationale. One of them was Alfred Kazin, an American literary critic and cultural historian from Brooklyn who in 1960 lived in Puerto Rico while teaching American Literature a semester at the University of Puerto

Rico, and published in Commentary Magazine and subsequently in the local English written newspaper The San Juan Star, an article entitled *A critical view at Puerto Rico*. In his article, Kazin expressed his feelings towards the Puerto Rican people and our almost unemotional behavior. I must say, reading his article made me uncomfortable. Okay, it bothered me and I am not sure his comments would be less polite if he were talking about the present, maybe that would be more unpleasant. It was too negative towards the Puerto Rican people, and coming from an American I found it more demeaning, as if he didn't have the right to think this way because he is part of the problem, even though he might be right in some of his remarks.

I don't mind that he said our ice cream was tasteless, that "in truth these people are lamblike" and that he called us docile ("Are they docile because someone has always taken them over- or are they just docile?"), since actual Puerto Ricans said we were prior to his arrival to the island. What I did not appreciate was that when he pointed out that Richard Morse, head of the institute at the University for regional studies of the Caribbean, said that there was less transplantation of Spanish society in Puerto Rico than anywhere in Latin America, Kazin then added, "This explains why even the most ignorant foreigner somehow senses the lack of any real cultural tradition here, of any firm national identity."¹⁹ He then added that what troubled him about Puerto Ricans, "If there is no strong local tradition on the part of migrating groups, if there is no articulated and positive ideal in their own history for which they seek expression and fulfillment in the new country then it follows that some of these "newcomers," as Oscar Handlin calls them, will not consciously seek any real attachment with American culture."²⁰ It seemed he is not worried about the Puerto Rican people and the allegedly lack of culture and identity, he is worried about what's going to happen to his country when these seemingly ignorant people migrate there, hence expressing his fears but not offering solutions. He switched the issue as if everything revolved around the Americans, as if we should change who we supposedly are just because we have a U.S. citizenship. He believes we are docile but then expects us to confront our supposed lack of culture and history, change radically so when we migrate to the Saviour country we have something to offer them.

Needless to say, Kazin failed to investigate prior to writing his article, instead he decided to be oblivious to the rich literature, without neglecting to mention theater and plastic arts and other forms of culture, with a similar air of pessimism common of the time; hence proof that Kazin, with his brutal honesty, wrote from his impressions on our behavior and not with facts, but most importantly proof of a present national culture. Even though his impressions on how some Puerto Ricans behave are true, one semester in another country doesn't give a foreigner a complete panorama of a people. René Marqués, Puerto Rico most prominent contemporary writer, would've probably said about my reaction to Kazin's article that it was my "intense guilt complex latent in every colonial society came spectacularly to the surface."²¹ I took it personally.

René Marqués expressed in *The docile Puerto Rican* (1962), “Mr. Kazin’s bitter dosage of truth has been not only refreshing but also healthy for a people he rightly characterizes as docile and bewildered. Granted that docility and bewilderment are common traits of many contemporary Western societies including to a great extent that of the United States (a fact Mr. Kazin failed to mention), they are especially detrimental and self-destructive when deeply rooted in a colonial people. Knowing and facing this fact with fortitude would always be healthier and more patriotic than hypocritically ignoring it.”²²

In his writings, Marqués wants to rationally prove that docility is part of the Puerto Rican personality instead of uncovering the causes for this trait, if by weakness, ignorance or due to many complexes we might possess, in hopes that the common islander would stop denying that as a collective the Puerto Rican people are in fact docile, a trait that has repercussions in our life that we cannot continue to let reside in us, and wake up from the illusion that his surroundings will magically change due to an external source of effort. This is a good reason why he applauded Kazin’s bluntness, they both called out the negative trait they perceived in the people without feeling pity for their possible indignation, this could be what they both wanted all along, a reaction from the people. Puerto Ricans had been accustomed to be criticized in a cautious manner, with the use of euphemisms from peaceful and tolerant, to democratic. “Thus the Puerto Rican is praised as “democratic” when he tolerates, with asinine docility, what no civilized person would dream of tolerating in any modern democracy. If “aplatanado” was a stinging ethical barb in the stagnant colonial soul, its newest synonym -democratic- is a narcotic drug mercifully administered to quiet the conscience of the docile Puerto Rican so that he may accept, without scruple, his abject condition.”²³

Contrary to Pedreira’s racial hypothesis, Marqués believed our docility did not come genetically from the black African or the mulatto, instead it came from how the Spaniards treated the Tainos and the Africans, forcing them to be obedient to their every command. According to Marqués, the Spaniards that arrived at the island were “a handful of modestly laborious or frankly indolent people who had learned docility in Spain, given their inferior social condition within the rigidly stratified European society of the period.”²⁴ But I believe the Spaniards who stayed in the island after all their ambitious compatriots flee to Mexico and Peru in search of gold and riches were the actual docile ones. What Pedreira thought of biological and geographical circumstance that led to our behavior, Marqués thought of being psychological: “Docility is, of course, primarily an acquired rather than an inborn trait. Puerto Ricans are today docile simply because they have been, since the beginnings of their history, a colonial people.”²⁵ Since we are also very suggestible people, this psychological issue has been infiltrating in our consciousness since children and the writer blames the educational system for it.

Undeniably, the Puerto Rican collective consciousness has been planted with the seed of doubt as to our alleged necessity of colonialism. A future without colonialism has always been regarded as uncertain and insecure. Since I can remember, we have been fed with the fear that Puerto Rico is nothing without the United States; that we would cease to exist because we cannot sustain ourselves, we would literally starve to death. The United States has been portrayed as our Saviour, “ Any positive accomplishment or action carried out individually by a Puerto Rican or collectively, when it is not belittled or denied, is always attributed, directly or indirectly, bluntly or subtly, to the fact that we belong to (more recently and hypocritically the expression is “we are associated with”) an all-mighty, all-powerful, and infallible nation, as generous as God himself (once Spain, now the United States). The schoolchild soon learns to develop a very adequate and proper inferiority complex. According to what he is taught, Puerto Rico is doomed for eternity to be a part of something bigger than the island itself. Puerto Rico is not and never will be something by itself: only a dot, a fly speck on the map of the world.”²⁶ Marqués then asked, “Raised and educated to be docile, why should the Puerto Rican be otherwise?”²⁷

When these children grow up the “inferiority complex” Marqués talks about, can be recognized in many of them through their outspoken political ideologies. The three major political ideologies in the island are Annexation, Commonwealth and Independence. The pro independence Puerto Rican is viewed as a hopeless romantic who will never live to see his dream realized. He is an obsessed patriot; a revolutionary without sufficient support and his vote is futile. The rest of Puerto Ricans are divided between the other two major parties and will never give him a chance out of fear, even though they know the island needs a fresh look at its politics. The annexation party has been in power many times and we are not a U.S. state, I’ve never understood why not give the independence party a chance to see what they can do for the well being of the country, its not like Puerto Rico will be Independent in four years just because they are no longer minority in power. The pro annexation islander is “a man self-condemned to destroy himself slowly as a Puerto Rican without ever achieving his goal. He cannot totally destroy his Puerto Rican being while he still lives and breathes. The annexationist’s pathetic state of eternal self-condemnation explains the degree of self-betrayal, humiliation, and servility which he can on occasion achieve in his suicidal determination to annul or destroy his Puerto Rican personality.”²⁸

What upsets me about this type of Puerto Rican is the insufficiency of the island in his mind and his cowardly behavior to not fight to have the many positive elements he desires from the U.S. brought into the island. This attitude is not needed in the country. There are fifty states to choose from if they want to bail on us. But the Commonwealth ideology “is, in fact, the authentic expression of compromise, the embodiment of euphemism, the finish product of the spurious art of sugar-coating the pill; in other words, it is the psychological synthesis of the weak, timid, and docile man.”²⁹ These hypocritically love their country but secretly do not have faith in its people and its possibilities, so they lean on the U.S. government

to give us a hand and have a say on our destiny. They conveniently want a dependency relationship with the empire because they are too scared of the unknown, the United States out of the Puerto Rican affairs.

“However, “docility” may in some cases, be the result of a “practical” decision after examining other choices and finding them either suicidal or wanting in efficacy. In 1891, when Luis Muñoz Rivera (father of Luis Muñoz Marín, first governor elected by Puerto Ricans and founder of the Popular Democratic Party) proposed a pact with Spain, he wrote: “We are not bent on fighting useless battles or pursuing the impossible.”³⁰ With this attitude Puerto Ricans have grown up to believe and behave, therefore Puerto Rico continues to be a colony of the United States of America.

Albert Memmi in his book *The colonizer and the colonized* (1965) gave an extensive portrayal of both roles in a colonial relationship. We, the colonized, are docile, aplatana’o, pacific, or democratic when “...by choosing to place themselves in the colonizer’s service to protect his interests exclusively, they end up by adopting his ideology, even with regard to their own values and their own lives. Having been fooled to the point of accepting the inequalities of his position, even at times profiting from this unjust system, the colonized still finds his situation more of a burden than anything else. Their contempt may be only a compensation for their misery...” And I believe our misery is their refusal for our freedom and our lack of cojones to demand it.

It is true that the U.S. has made us believe that we are weak; therefore we desperately need their protection indefinitely. This is how they deceived the Puerto Ricans the first time they stepped into our lands. General Miles in 1899 expressed “We have come not to make war upon the people of a country that for centuries has been oppressed, but on the contrary, to bring you protection... to promote your prosperity, and to bestow upon you the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government.”³¹ And, even though under their Constitution they cannot govern permanently our island as a colony, they’ve made everyone believe we need protection even against ourselves. This so-called protection is nothing but a euphemism for oppression, not a surprise to anyone who knows U.S. international relations. But, as Memmi so truthfully wrote, “it is not enough for the colonized to be a slave, he must also accept his role.”³²

And so since 1898 we have accepted this prosperity and protection in exchange for our many liberties. René Marqués wrote: “This is really a schizophrenic society. Puerto Ricans has two languages, two citizenships, two basic philosophies of life, two flags, two anthems, two loyalties. It is very hard for human beings to deal with this ambivalence.”³³ Being a territory of the U.S. we face many issues that have influenced our identity, which is the case of language to mention one. The importance of a collective to communicate in a repressed society has been overlooked by many islanders, as if the



threat to our language is not a threat to our idiosyncrasy. For almost fifty years the U.S. imposed their English language in our school system to use it as an instrument “to absorb Puerto Rico into the American governmental system”³⁴ and to “destroy the Puerto Rican nationality through education”;³⁵ playing with the Puerto Rican students and their future and being inconsiderate of the teachers who did not understand even a single word of it. I wonder if the support of many islanders for this measure was innocent as to understanding bilingualism to be a useful tool for the children’s future, or if they just had a hidden agenda to further political ideals such as annexation, like in present times. Either way, after many decades, this strategy failed because it was causing the Puerto Rican children to be illiterate in both languages and it was causing a national identity crisis. “In the colonial context, bilingualism is necessary. It is a condition for all culture, all communication and all progress. But while the colonial bilinguist is saved from being walled in, he suffers a cultural catastrophe which is never completely overcome. The difference between native language and cultural language is not peculiar to the colonized, but colonial bilingualism cannot be compared to just any linguistic dualism. Possession of two languages is not merely a matter of having two tools, but actually means participating in two physical and cultural realms. Here, the two worlds symbolized and conveyed by the two tongues are in conflict; they are those of the colonizer and the colonized. Furthermore, the colonized’s mother tongue, that which is sustained by his feelings, emotions and dreams, that in which his tenderness and wonder are expressed, thus that which holds the greatest emotional impact, is precisely the one which is the least valued.”³⁶

In 1949 the Spanish language was restored to its normal course, English is still taught as a separate class from preschool up to university, we are not blind to the fact that being bilingual is an advantage in modern society. The problem we’ve seen is that it should not be preferred over our vernacular language, I agree when Pedreira said we have to avoid stagnation, not to attack the English language just for purism, but to defend Spanish in name of our vocabulary. The present resistance of many young Puerto Ricans, as well as older ones, to dominate the foreign language proves the consistency to defend who we are as a people.

Tomás Blanco, a member of the *Thirties Generation* who in 1935 wrote *Prontuario Histórico de Puerto Rico*, explained that Puerto Rico, “lives disorganized by the economic and moral evils inherit by colonialism; controlled by foreign norms, often in conflict with the island reality; disoriented by the lack of concrete and immediately obtainable goals in which it might have faith; incapacitated by the mission of its will to a group of foreign interests... We must either serenely and firmly take our destiny into our own hands, or submit ourselves, like the mentally retarded, to a slow death agony, prolonged by palliatives and orthopedic apparatus, until we reach the limits of physical misery and mental prostration.”³⁷

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 32 Pledging allegiance to the flag, in a school in Corozal, Puerto Rico, 1946.

Like the fight for language, we have fought for many other intrinsic rights in an effort to take our destiny into our own hands. This is the case of Vieques, Puerto Rico where the people woke up to national consciousness and fought the most powerful military in the world, that of our own colonizer. In a movement that was called to be chauvinistic at times, but it was only “an ambition and a form of mob psychology which appeals to passionate motives”³⁸, the Puerto Rican people took off the label of docility that had been paralyzing us and with dignity, continued to defend, value and protect our nation.

* My own translation.

But the eagerness to make a worthy and laborious people cannot be useless. [In this eagerness] We throw to roll down the slope of history the dearest hopes of being first of all Puerto Ricans. In the process of our collective misery we painfully pound the process of the nation's culture. Through religious, educational, political, economic, artistic, and social zones we filtered the most worthy of our affirmation's purposes. And that's what we want for now. "The culture –Spengler definition- is a set of the expression of the soul in gestures and works ... historical drama, image in the image of the universe history, set of major sentimental and intellectual symbols, is the only language through which one can express the sufferings of a soul. *

*"Pero las ansias de formar un pueblo digno y laborioso no pueden ser inútiles. En ellas echamos a rodar por la pendiente de la historia los mas caros anhelos de ser antes que nada puertorriqueños. En el proceso de nuestra desgracia colectiva amasamos con dolor el proceso de la cultura patria. A traves de las zonas religiosas, educativas, politicas, economicas, artisticas, y sociales fuimos filtrando los mas dignos propositos de nuestra afirmacion. Y eso es lo que nos interesa por ahora. "La cultura –definicion de Spengler- conjuntos de la expresion del alma en gestos y obras... drama historico, imagen en la imagen de la historia universal, conjunto de los grandes simbolos sentimentales e intelectuales, es el unico idioma por medio del cual puede un alma decir lo que sufre".*³⁹

Antonio S. Pedreira
Insularismo: Ensayos de Interpretación Puertorriqueña



Fig. 33 Sergeant José Ramón Hernández Barreto (1938-2011) from the Puerto Rico National Guard. Best known as Cheo or Abuelo Ché, my grandfather.

Third Anecdote

Tercera Anécdota

It was Friday 24th of June 2011. I was standing next to my uncle. His face was all swollen. Mine too. I had been crying for days. It was a hot, humid day in Bayamón. We were standing under a white tent on a green plain. There were people as far as my eye could see. Abuelo Ché was a charismatic man. People loved him.

He had been sick for a while. He knew that day was coming sooner than he had hoped. Only a month before family and friends were celebrating with him and abuela their 50-year anniversary. The morning of the party he woke up not feeling well. Even though he was dressed as sharp as always, he couldn't hide the fatigue written on his face. But when grandma came out of their room with a stunning gown, his face lit up. "¡Estás más linda que el día que nos casamos!" [You look prettier than the day we got married.] She was overjoyed.

It was a beautiful day. Before cutting the cake, everyone was taking pictures and started asking for a kiss. "¡Beso! ¡Beso! ¡Beso!" He wasn't shy to kiss her in front of everyone. I was amazed since I rarely saw them kiss. I remember when he got home from work he always gave her a kiss on the cheek, that never failed. My grandma had asked me to arrange a surprise for him, Mexican Mariachis. You could see he loved it. I had carefully chosen all seven songs accordingly to their lives together. They were holding hands, appreciating the moment, when he suddenly stands up and with a hand gesture asked her to dance. She gracefully accepted. After everyone cheered, we stood quietly looking at them. Tears came down people's faces. We just knew.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

My body jumped every single shot. I had to force myself not to cry out loud. I will never forget the sound that came out of that bugler either. Abuelo wanted a military funeral. I recognized his handwriting. On a yellow page, he left instructions on how we should proceed after he passed away. He was a Sergeant who served proudly for 32 years in the Puerto Rico National Guard and he wanted those last honors. Six men in uniform meticulously folded the flag of the United States of America and present it to my grandmother. We said our goodbyes and then those men took him away.

While I left for a family get-together at my grandparents' house, an old friend from his Company picked up all nine shells from the ground.

[This book tells] the story of a grassroots movement against the U.S. Navy's live-bombing exercises on a small Puerto Rican island municipality. Although Vieques Island is the site of the navy's key military installations in the Western Hemisphere, it is simultaneously the home of nearly ten thousand American citizens. The navy asserts that the Vieques installation plays a crucial role in naval training and national defense. The civilian community of Vieques argues that the military control of land and live-fire exercises have caused severe ecological destruction, cancer and other health problems, and overwhelming social and economic crises. The community struggle is also a more fundamental story of power and resistance, of ordinary people in conflict with global forces. The story of Vieques is one of a people struggling to maintain a viable community where they can work, live and raise children. This most basic story is at the heart of a more complicated tale involving the strategic requirements of the most powerful military in the world and the colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico.⁴⁰

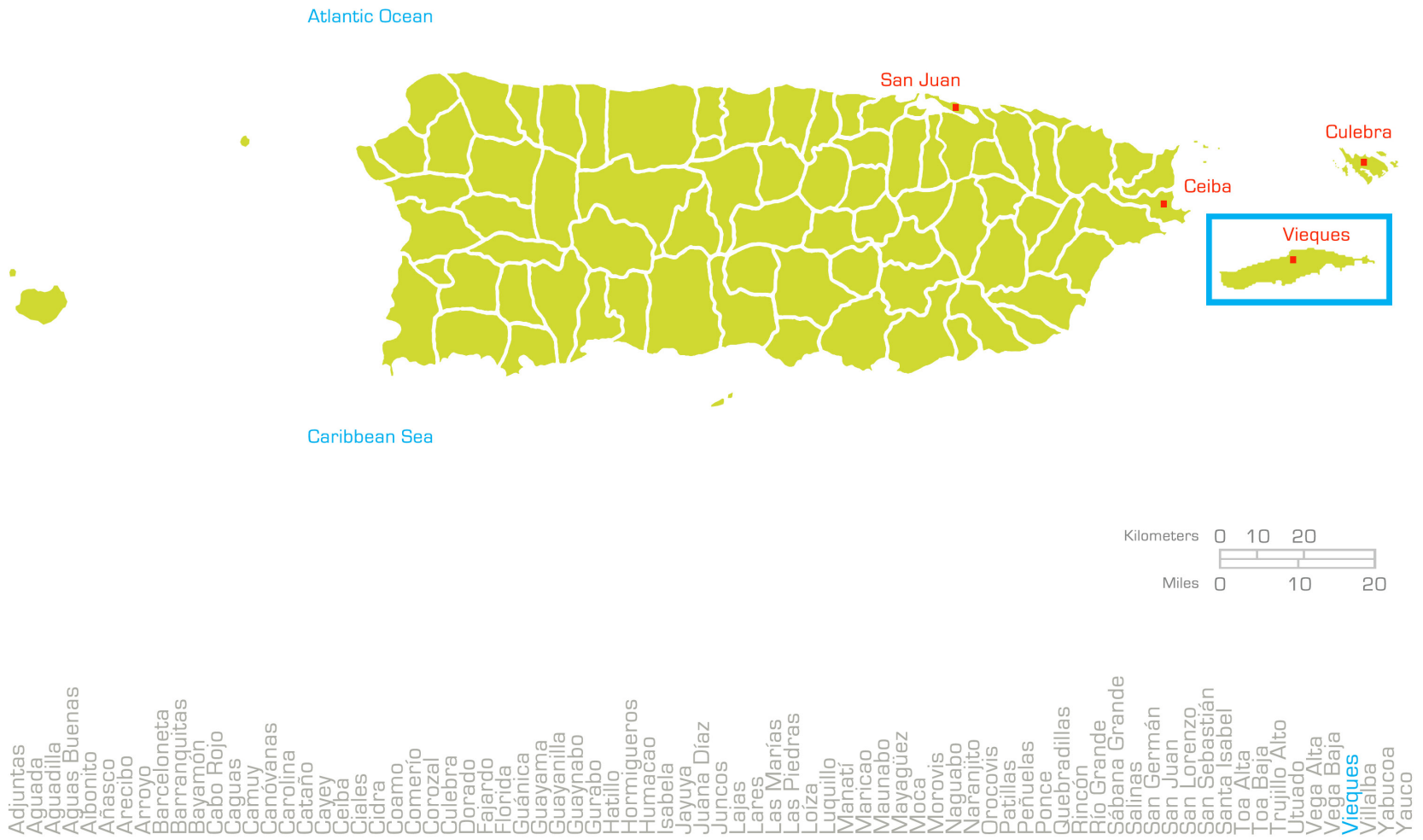
*Military Power and Popular Protest:
The U.S. Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico*
Katherine T. McCaffrey

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 34 Poster 'Vieques Libre' by Dave Buchen



three
tres



Vieques: A story about Resistance and Solidarity

Vieques: Una Historia de Resistencia y Solidaridad

Political and Military Strategy

A threat to the Caribbean region and the Panama Canal was imminent. The German presence had been confirmed ever since the Anglo-German blockade in Venezuela in 1902; the threat was still existent with the confrontation in 1939 of British and German warships off the coast of Brazil. The United States feared Germans were interested in the Western Hemisphere, thus military presence in the region, especially in the Caribbean, needed to increase. The U.S. reinforced its bases in Latin America, and the islands of Bermuda, St. Lucia, Trinidad, and then secured access in Jamaica and British Guiana. However, military bases in Puerto Rico, the only site designated “of immediate strategic importance”⁴¹ in the Atlantic, became indispensable in response to the global conflict, World War II.

San Juan’s Isla Grande and Punta Borinquen in Aguadilla were re-developed into major airfields, but it wasn’t enough to secure the region. Franklin Roosevelt’s Administration considered building a major fleet base in the Eastern Municipality of Ceiba, that would provide anchorage, docking, fuel and repair services for 60 percent of the Atlantic Fleet. Furthermore, it could provide service and refuge for the entire British Fleet if needed. The Roosevelt Roads Naval Station included facilities in the Puerto Rican municipality of Ceiba, and in the island municipalities of Vieques and Culebra. In order to build a base of this scale, it would need to acquire a substantial amount of land, thus dislocating thousands of Puerto Ricans. “The navy’s focus was preparing for war and building a base, not the fate of thousands of homeless.”⁴² Under any circumstance the United States of America would give priority to the well being of almost 10,000 Puerto Ricans, being American citizens were of less significance, over national security.



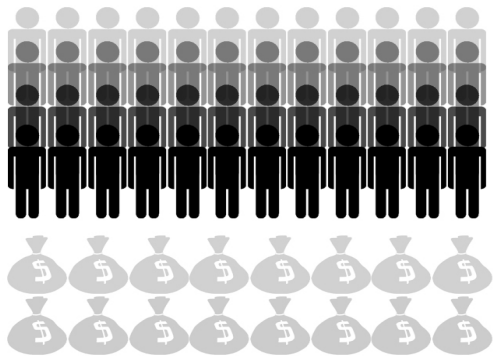
Fig. 36 Aerial View of former Roosevelt Roads Naval Station.

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 35 Puerto Rico's 78 Municipalities and the location of Vieques in the archipelago of Puerto Rico.



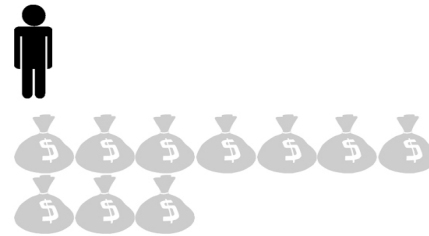
40° 43' 42" N 73° 59' 39" W
Manhattan, New York City

area: 61.4 km² [23.7 sq. mi]
population: 1,611,581 people
per capita income: \$100,000



44.178° N 76.383° W
Wolfe Island, Ontario, Canada

area: 124 km² [48 sq. mi]
population: 1,400 people
per capita income: \$61,024



Scale Comparison

Comparación de Escala



18.13° N 65.40° W
Vieques, Puerto Rico

area: 135 km² [51.7 sq. mi]
population: 9,351 people
per capita income: \$6,562



Fig. 37 Scale, population and income comparison between Vieques, Puerto Rico, Manhattan, New York City, and Wolfe Island in Ontario, Canada.

A lifetime of grievances: The story of Trine and Taso

Trine Rodríguez, like most Viequenses, suddenly one day received notice stipulating she had 24 hours to pack everything she owned before the U.S. Navy seized the land where she lived. Trine was a strong proud woman like her father, an agregado⁴³ who worked his whole life for that piece of land before his daughter inherited it. She decided to ignore the warning. Trine would never leave her patrimony, the land where she was born and where she raised her children, along with a small wood and zinc shack that had been destroyed many times by hurricanes to later be put back together because she didn't have the resources to build a new house.

The next day Trine went on with her daily routine, ironing clothes for neighbors in exchange for food; it was a poor neighborhood so families tended to help each other exchanging goods and favors. There was a true sense of community in the small island of Vieques. Suddenly she heard a frightening noise that seemed to get closer very rapidly. When she realized what it was, she only had time to pick up her 4-year-old boy, Taso, the clothes she was ironing and the letter she received the night before. The bulldozer didn't hesitate to minimize its velocity and started to tear down the shack. Inside were the typical belongings that portrayed her modest life.

As a grown man Taso, leader of the fishermen movement in Vieques, remembers the influential experience:

My mom put me down, I took her hand and I felt her tremble. I remember I looked at her and she was crying. I remember that big machine and my mom trembling and crying. Everything else about the expropriation I never forgot because she repeated it for years until I grew up, because she wanted me to never forget that there were bad people, that the Navy abused people. Since that moment of the expropriation I started to feel the weight of the military, of the unconsciousness, of the inhumane side that the Navy has always used against the people of Vieques.*

“Mi mamá me soltó y yo le cogí la mano y la sentí temblar. Recuerdo que la mire y estaba llorando. Yo recuerdo esa máquina grande y a mi mamá temblando y llorando. Todo lo demás de la expropiación nunca lo olvidé porque ella me lo repetía por años hasta que crecí, porque ella quería que nunca olvidara que había gente mala, que la Marina abusaba de la gente. Desde ese momento de la expropiación comencé a sentir el peso de la bota militar, de la inconciencia, de la parte inhumana que siempre ha utilizado la Marina contra el pueblo de Vieques.”⁴⁴

After the shack was demolished, Trine remembered the letter had specified she could relocate to a small parcel that the Navy had indicated across Vieques, in the Santa Maria ward. At that point she felt helpless and with a little boy to take care of, she had no choice but to leave behind her little piece of land; leaving any means of economic sustainability since she would no longer be able to exchange goods with her well-known neighbours. A concerned neighbour approached Trine, who felt overwhelmed and lost, and he humbly offered her his barbershop, an eight by eight structure with one door and one window, similar in conditions to her shack.

It was a moonless night. In that complete darkness neighbours took the barbershop and transported it to the other side of Vieques, on the way it lost its only window and door. When they arrived at the ward they found out the parcels the Navy was offering were a malodorous high pasture that wasn't ready to receive families; the stakes that delimited the parcel weren't even completely visible. After hard work they put the yellow open structure on the ground. It was a nightmare. They had to start from zero. It was desolated; Trine realized she was the first to be expropriated.

* My own translation.





Fig. 38 Jaime Annexy (in pit helmet), with unidentified agregado, inspecting the cattle in Vieques, Puerto Rico.

Municipal Land Ownership - Wards 1940

Propiedad de terrenos municipales - Barrios 1940

Punta Arenas

Mosquito

Florida

Isabel Segunda

Puerto Diablo



Llave

Puerto Real

Puerto Ferro

Expropriations Notice

Ramón Rodríguez said he saved his letter in order to remind his children about the way they were treated by the Navy. The letter, dated June 3, 1943, with a heading that said "Officer in Charge of Construction, Naval Air Station, San Juan, Puerto Rico," read:

Vieques, Puerto Rico

The house and land which you occupy in the Municipality of Vieques was acquired by the United States under judgment (sic) of the Federal Court which granted the right of immediate possession.

You will be required to vacate this property within ten days from the date of this notice.

Should you wish to move to another site on Federal Property you will be assigned a suitable area by the Officer-in-Charge of the project upon execution by you of an agreement setting forth the terms upon which your occupancy of the site is permitted.

Yours very truly,
For J.C. Gebhard
Captain (CEC) U.S.N.

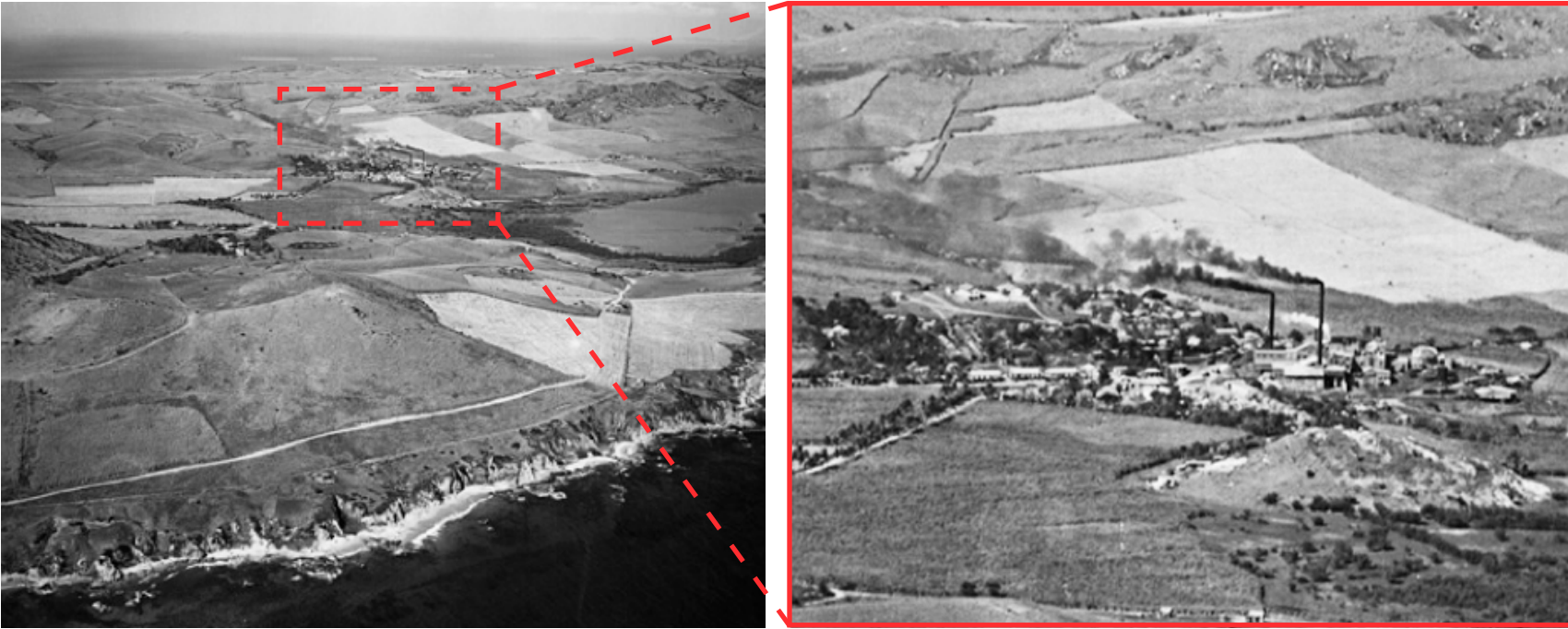
Form VB (English)⁴⁵



Fig. 40 Housing conditions of agregado families in Vieques, 1940's.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 39 Vieque's eight Wards in 1940 before the U.S. Navy expropriated its lands.



(Left)

Fig. 41 Southwestern coast of Vieques, showing Playa Grande Sugar Central in operation, smoke billowing from its twin stacks, and cane fields as far as the eye can see. March, 18, 1941. Closer view on the right photo.

(Right)

Fig. 42 Closer view of the Playa Grande Sugar Central in operation, smoke billowing from its twin stacks, March, 18, 1941.



(Left)

Fig. 43 Both views of Northwestern coast of Vieques, showing Colonia Arkadia. Looking Southeast, smoke from the sugar factory is seen in the upper left quadrant of photos. The cattle, trucks and houses can be seen in the lower half of the photographs. March 18, 1941.

(Right)

Fig. 44 View of the Northwestern coast of Vieques, showing Colonia Arkadia, March 18, 1941.

Expropriations - Phase One

The people of Vieques were evicted from their own land. The United States Navy was to blame for this appalling event that changed their lives forever when the Puerto Rican municipal island of Vieques was converted into a theater of war for more than six decades.

Vieques is a 51-square-mile island municipality, roughly twenty miles long and four and a half miles wide at its widest point. Commonly known as “la Isla Nena” or “Girl Island” alluding to its perception as Puerto Rico’s little sister, it lies about 7 miles southeast of the main island of Puerto Rico. In the 1940’s, in context of the Second World War, Vieques had a population of nearly ten thousand people, and in two different rounds most were expropriated and forced to relocate to specified parcels owned by the navy in the center of the island.

Prior to the navy obtaining territory from the Viequenses, these fertile lands were dedicated to agriculture, especially to the harvest of sugar cane; thus the majority of Viequenses worked for this industry. Since the 19th Century, most of the working class did not possess titles to the lands they lived and worked in; instead there were only a few affluent families and corporations that owned the lands. The municipality of Vieques represented the third most extreme case of agricultural land polarization after the Municipality of Guánica with the South Puerto Rico Sugar Company, a U.S. corporation, and the Aguirre Sugar Company in Santa Isabel. According to the official census of 1899, 85.9% of the population did not own land, and by 1935 the number had risen to 94.9%. Consequently the process of expropriation of that 95% of Viequenses became easier for the navy who acquired more than 80% of lands from only two landowners, the Benítez family and the Eastern Sugar Associates; small farmers sold them the rest.



Fig. 45 Sugar Plantation Owners with children from *agregado* families, 1930's.

In 1940 landowners like Carlota Benítez y otros owned 3,082 cuerdas, almost 3,000 acres, in Punta Arenas barrio, with 62 houses in its land. Francisco and J. Benitez also had 62 houses in his 558 cuerdas in the same barrio. These 124 families that lived West of Vieques, out of 700 families, were expropriated and relocated. These landowners sold their land to the navy without giving any legal rights to the people who worked in their plantations. The navy did not have to deal with the many generations of families who had built their houses in these lands. If they have had to expropriate every small piece of land directly from these families, they would have encountered disapproval against the navy’s destiny for the island, at least with full entitlement.

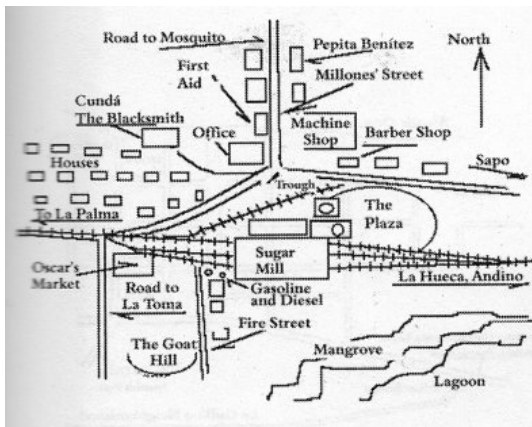
Even though the majority of Viequenses did not legally own the grounds where they built their houses, and where they used to harvest small amounts of produce to consume or to exchange with neighbors, they understood they had a verbal agreement with the landowners. They acknowledged the land was under usufruct since the day they were allowed to build their houses; it gave them a sense of independence. Houses that the navy ordered to destroy without remuneration, more importantly without concern for human life and for basic necessities like shelter. The eviction meant their reality went from bad to worse.

The sentiment of eviction was felt at a personal level; the Viequenses felt impotent as they believed they were personally thrown out of a property that in a sense belonged to them, instead of the navy buying land that they did not own in the first place. Katherine T. McCaffrey explains:

One of the most important elements of the expropriations experience is the way in which people have internalized it. When people talk about the expropriations in Vieques, they speak of themselves as having been expropriated. Technically, the navy expropriated Vieques's land. Yet in Vieques, residents say "me expropriaron," or "they expropriated me." Phrases in these terms, the act of usurping property is identified as a viscerally felt personal experience and a deep-seated grievance. At the same time, the use of the passive voice expresses people's feeling of victimization and powerlessness in the face of forces beyond their control. ⁴⁶

However, the discontent of the evicted Viequenses did not translate into any type of resistance. In those times, most were uneducated and with the added factor of intimidation, they understood the navy's orders as indisputable, therefore they had no choice but to obey and leave the central. "Viequenses did not rally against the navy in the 1940s, or have a sense of their collective identity or power to resist." ⁴⁷

That first expropriation wave lasted from November of 1941 until September of 1943. Barrios or wards completely vanished, that was the case of Barrio Punta Arenas in the West of Vieques. The navy also took 95% of barrio Llave's lands, 91% from barrio Mosquito and 76% from barrio Puerto Ferro. By the mid 40's, 89% of the population had to live in an area of 27% of Vieques. The barrio Florida duplicated its population due to its proximity to Isabel Segunda, the only formally founded town in Vieques, when U.S. Navy relocated many families who were expropriated into designated parcels, razed cane fields the navy denominated "resettlement tracts". Others moved to the main island of Puerto Rico or even moved to nearby islands, like the almost 3,000 Viequenses that moved to Saint Croix by 1947.



Playa Grande
(Before 1940)



By 1930, out of four sugar mills in the island only one remained, central Playa Grande, which operated until 1942 when the navy expropriated most of its cultivation lands, therefore the mill could no longer survive. The sugar cane industry was already in decay in the 1940's before the navy bought lands, since in 1920 sugar prices dropped drastically. Cultivated acres of lands decreased from 7,621 in 1935 to 4,586 in 1940. Viequenses were not pleased with the unexpected eviction, but hunger and poverty was exacerbated by wartime food shortages and rising unemployment in the municipality; they were on the brink of starvation. These unfortunate facts helped ease the air of indignation and anger the locals felt, hence the The Viequenses' outlook on the navy changed from being an organism that took their land and economic substance, to one that could mitigate their situation when offered a better paying job, primarily in construction.

In 1940 the construction of Mosquito Pier, meant to connect U.S. Naval Station Roosevelt Roads with Vieques, began. The navy hired 1,700 Viequenses along with 1,250 workers from the main island to build the causeway and to build the Naval Ammunition Support Detachment (NASD) which covered 8,200 acres on the west side of the island where the best cane lands were. In 1942, one hundred and twenty-eight concrete weapons storage warehouses called magazines or bunkers, camouflaged by a covering of grasslands, plus other support facilities for Atlantic Fleet training, were built. During construction Viequenses were working 24 hours a day, three shifts a day, but they were thrilled with the monetary compensation after many decades of hardship. They were earning an average of \$2.25 a day, which was 40% more than what they made working the cane fields; furthermore the sugar cane industry was seasonal, opposed to the navy which employed them year-round.

They worked 24 hours a day. There was no rest. There were no objections to allowing this flow of North American money. This money, for the most part was collected by contractors from the United States and San Juan. Employees came every week from different sections of Puerto Rico. But a good part of the profits remained in Vieques. For two years the town swam in gold. Rents went up three to four times that which was normally paid. People bought fine clothing and treated it without due consideration. Alcoholic beverages were consumed without measure. There were those who would wash their floors with beer and those who would buy a \$35 dollar suit on Saturday and wear it on Monday to mix concrete and it would be ruined after two hours. 'The base is here, and it will bring more', they would say. ⁴⁸

However, by 1943 the U.S. government ceased construction of the pier, which by that time was about one mile long, leaving most Viequenses unemployed once again. Military interest in Vieques subsided when German submarines

stopped operating in the Caribbean; the focus was then transferred to North Africa and Europe. That summer Viequenses were desperate and rallied demanding to re-open a sugar mill in Vieques. Thus 1943 became the year of “the severest crisis in its (Vieques) history”.⁴⁹

For a number of years after the initial expropriations, the population expected the restoration of the land to private owners and the re-establishment of a sugar mill in Vieques. Things would return to their prewar state, or so it seemed, at the signing of the peace. It was not clear that the Navy needed Vieques or that it would use it for anything at all.⁵⁰

(Opposite Page)

(Top)

Fig. 46 Central Playa Grande map.

(Middle)

Fig. 47 Mosquito Pier in Western Vieques, Puerto Rico.

(Bottom)

Fig. 48 Three Arch type bunker used to store ammunition in Western Vieques, Puerto Rico.



BARRIO
PRRA.
QUEREMOS
UNA
CENTRAL

U.T.M.
QUEREMOS
UNA
CENTRAL

BARRIO
MOSCU
QUEREMOS
UNA
CENTRAL

BARRIO
PUERTO REAL
QUEREMOS
UNA
CENTRAL

UNION
AGRICOLA
QUEREMOS
UNA
CENTRAL

U.T.M.
QUEREMOS
UNA
CENTRAL

BARRIO
MONTE SANT
QUEREMOS
UNA
CENTRAL

BARRIO
ESPERANSA
QUEREMOS
UNA
CENTRAL

VE
QU
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CE



Fig. 49 Vieques' workers demand a Sugar Mill - 'Trabajadores de Vieques piden una Central', 1943.

Land Ownership during 1940s

Propiedad de terrenos durante los años 40s

Martineau
Tract

Monte
Santo
Resettlement
Tract

Santa
Maria
Resettlement
Tract



|||| Excessed in 1944. Assigned by War Assets Administration to the Department of Interior for disposal. Licenced to Government of Puerto Rico by Federal Works Administration. Santa Maria Resettlement Tract recalled and use permit revoked in 1947. Montesanto Resettlement Tract and Martineau in 1944 remained in effect. Martineau Tract used by the Puerto Rico Agricultural Company.

■ Non-Navy owned land

≡ Temporary grants to the Department of Interior issued July 1944 and January 1946 and revoked September 1947.

❖ Acquired from 1941-1943

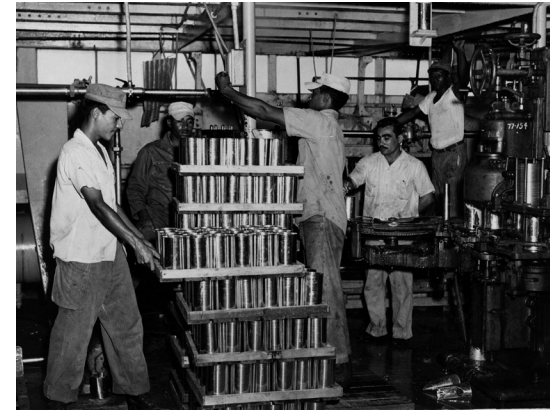
⊘ Occupied pending acquisition as of 1947-48; Acquired 1950.

Expropriations - Phase Two: The “Cold War Expropriations”

The end of World War II encouraged the sudden interruption of the construction in Vieques and Ceiba. The U.S. military in 1941 experienced first hand the risks of concentrating a fleet in one massive installation when the base in Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii, was attacked by the Japanese military. Thus, Roosevelt Roads was never completed as its original master plan was conceived, and the Caribbean region never became the setting of war as it had been anticipated by the U.S. government. By cancelling construction contracts, once again the government of the United States neglected the well being of almost 10,000 American citizens.

In 1944, the Puerto Rican government, concerned for the people of Vieques, pressured the navy to lease some lands to the insular government in order to ameliorate the social and economic disaster of the expropriations and the setback of the construction paralysis. The Puerto Rico Agricultural Corporation (PRACO) was created for the agricultural reinstatement on the municipal island, with programs such as a pineapple- processing factory and cattle raising. PRACO became the main employer in Vieques between 1945 and 1948, when it subleased 13,000 acres of land from the Interior Department of the United States. “Within three years however, the navy would reevaluate Vieques and find new strategic purposes for the island in a shifting geopolitical context,”⁵¹ McCaffrey explains.

The United States did not conform to the policy of disarmament after World War II ended, instead their military strategies focused on the fight against communism. The Americans feared the Soviets would extend their rule to the Western Hemisphere; the danger required the Caribbean region to be ready for a possible attack from overseas. The Truman Doctrine, with its tactics for the containment policy to stop Soviet expansion, led to the initiation of the Cold War; which had major impact in the island Municipality of Vieques and its people for many generations, up to present day. Furthermore it gave the U.S. a justification to keep possession of two-thirds of the Municipality. “[T]he uncertain status of Guantanamo and the prospective loss of military installations in Panama by the year 2000 meant that the Puerto Rican installations, especially Roosevelt Roads, had become more important than ever in protecting the sea lanes between the Venezuelan oil fields and the refineries of the Gulf Coast as well as the Atlantic sea routes north of Puerto Rico sailed by oil tankers from Saudi Arabia too large for Suez.”⁵² Vieques became a crucial strategic position in the region; others believe it became a *hostage of the cold war*.



(Top)
Fig. 51 Employees working in the pineapple cannery in Vieques, 1955.

(Bottom)
Fig. 52 Calves in the stables of the Puerto Rican Agricultural Company in Vieques, 1949.

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 50 Vieques land ownership in 1940.

Land Ownership from 1948 - 2003

Propiedad de terrenos de 1948 - 2003

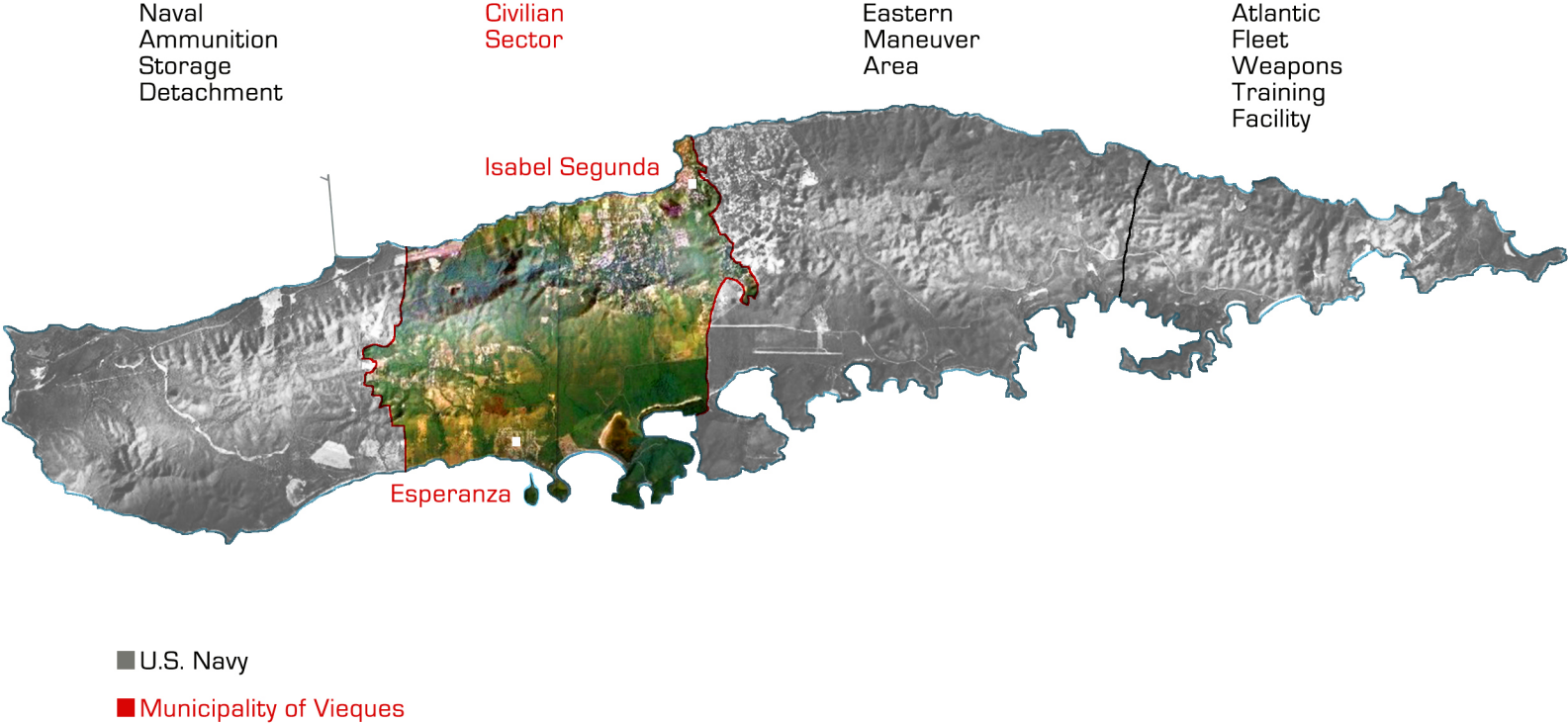




Fig. 54 Vieques land under barb wire fences, symbol of the struggle against the U.S. Navy for access to the land.

(Opposite Page)

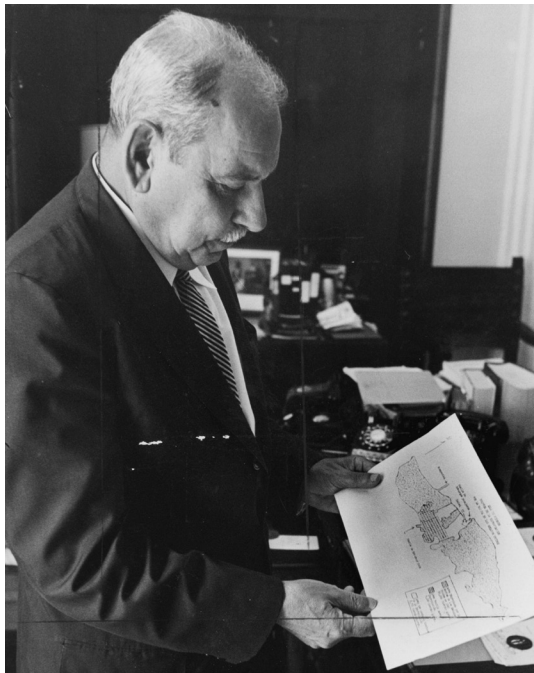
Fig. 53 Land ownership from 1948 when the navy started the maneuvers, until 2003 when the navy withdrew from Vieques.



The navy's new strategic purposes implicated, not only cancelling the lease on the lands the government of Puerto Rico was using to boost Vieques' agrarian economy, thus losing its 1.9 million investment, but expropriating more land in eastern Vieques. "Therefore, the 8,000 acres currently under navy ownership, plus the 13,000 acres it planned to retake from PRACO, and the additional 4,500 acres it planned to expropriate would amount to navy ownership of 25,500 acres- 77 percent of the island. The population of around 10,000 would be forced to live on 23 percent of the remaining land, sharply curtailing their chances for economic prosperity."⁵³ In 1947, the navy announced the interest in these lands were for amphibious training. The U.S. needed a location to practice and test weapons to compete for technological superiority against its current rival, thus "Roosevelt Roads assumed new strategic significance as a place to test missiles, and Vieques was a perfect bull's eye."⁵⁴

Puerto Rican officials like Rafael Picó, a member of a planning committee, were filled with indignation. He wrote in an internal memo:

The first real effort to rehabilitate the people of Vieques was progressing in a highly satisfactory manner, with their cooperation and support, and with the cooperation of Navy officials until Admiral Barbey came to Puerto Rico. He has refused to cooperate with the established Insular agencies, humiliated their representatives whenever possible, caused them to loose money and in particular, has made every effort to wreck the Insular program of the rehabilitation of Vieques. Admiral Barbey should be recalled immediately and the Navy lands should be released for the development of their fullest potentialities. The people of Puerto Rico and Vieques are too poor to give up 28,000 acres of land in order that the Navy use it one month a year for maneuvers.⁵⁵



Knowing it would be detrimental for the island municipality of Vieques, the government of Puerto Rico disapproved of the navy's intention for further acquisition of land stating the navy could retain possession of the western lands already in use, but should not have access to the eastern part of the island. This opposition, in particular from Governor Jesús T. Piñero, took place in a unique national context: "the Resident Commissioner of Puerto Rico in Washington, Antonio Fernós Isern, was lobbying for a bill to allow Puerto Ricans to elect their own governor, and the island needed to renegotiate the sugar quotas that had regulated overproduction in the industry since 1934."⁵⁶

Nevertheless, on July 19th 1947 the Governor was summoned by navy officials to meet in the battleship USS Iowa, not in San Juan, “a clear symbolic representation of the power structure in these negotiations”⁵⁷, where the navy shamelessly reminded the Governor that the Puerto Rican economy depended on the sugar sales to the U.S. market, and these in turn depended on a tariff and a sugar quota; meaning they had control over the island’s economic fate. The navy had just made a threat to the main representative of the Puerto Rican people with no worries since “Vieques was a perfect spot to practice war, and, with Puerto Rican residents not allowed to vote on national elections, political fallout would be minimal.”⁵⁸

Objections from the insular government were considered trivial compared with the necessity for national security, thus were overlooked. In a closed-door meeting on November 23rd, 1947, Governor Piñero, Vice Admiral Barbey, the coordinator of Insular Affairs, Elmer M. Ellsworth, and the Executive Director of the Puerto Rican Housing Authority, César Cordero, agreed that the navy would expropriate 4,500 additional acres of privately-owned land. The Department of Interior’s recommendation on how to deal with the people who were going to be evicted from East Vieques was to relocate them to the neighbor island of St. Croix, including the island’s deceased. The government of Puerto Rico did not support the suggestion and settled on building housing in a new resettling tract; the Housing Authority was authorized to buy 84 acres to be divided into lots. Governor Piñero insisted the navy should pay expenses for the relocation of the 75 affected families; the demands were not met. The only compromise the Puerto Rican government could get from the navy, unreasonable when compared with what the people of Vieques had to give up, was for them to provide the construction materials for housing. The navy also rejected demands for compensation of loss of tax revenue; by then the insular government had to subsidize the municipality in order to keep basic services running.

In February 1948, the United States Navy began with the maneuvers as planned, while Viequenses got wedged in between an ammunition depot and a fire range zone. The navy had taken control of two-thirds of the island, squeezing a residential civilian community into its center. They took control over Vieques’ air, land and sea. This expressed the utter dominance the U.S. had over Puerto Rico; the phenomenon that is the relationship between colonizer and colonized.

Military strategy and colonial politics have turned Viequenses’ home into a surreal battlefield, an inhabited island doubling as an international theater of war. In Vieques, the navy rehearses amphibious landing exercises, parachute drops, and submarine maneuvers. It conducts artillery and small arms firing, naval gunfire support, and missile shoots. The navy bombs the island from air, land, and sea. Vieques is the Navy’s declared “university of the sea,” a small island target range situated next to 195,000 square miles of ocean and airspace controlled by the military for so-called integrated training scenarios.⁵⁹

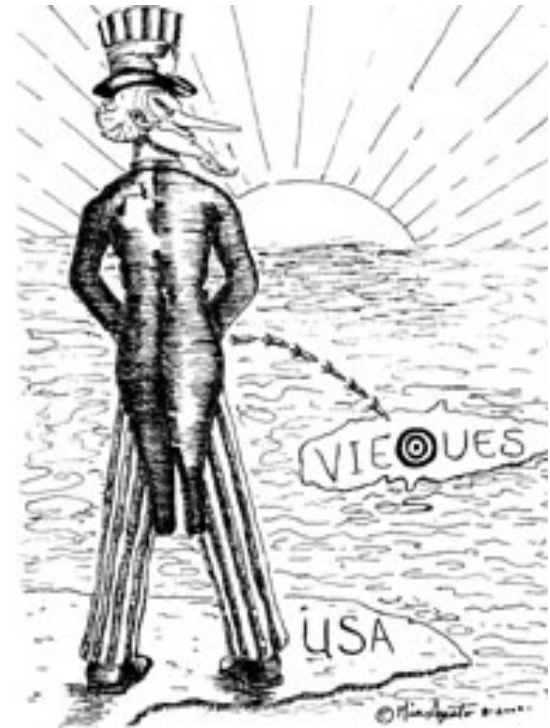


Fig. 57 Political satire exposing how the United States is using Vieques as toxic landfill for their military interests; always benefiting at the expense of others.

(Opposite Page)
(Top)

Fig. 55 Drawing expressing how the Viequenses and Culebrenses’ fate was in the U.S. Navy’s hands, 1989.

(Bottom)

Fig. 56 Governor Muñoz Marín in his office examining the map that represents Vieques’ expropriated lands and what is left for civilian use, 1964.



Fig. 58 A Venezuelan submarine pulling into Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, Puerto Rico.

The Roosevelt Roads was re-appointed as a naval operating base. Western Vieques confines the Naval Ammunition Facility (NAF), while Eastern Vieques is divided into two zones: the Eastern Maneuver Area (EMA) and the Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility (AFWTF). It is in the Eastern side of Vieques were amphibious practices took place.

Meanwhile the U.S. Navy rented the island to allied countries part of NATO, as well as other Latin American and Caribbean countries; Vieques, nor Puerto Rico for that matter, never saw even a dime. It was later uncovered by the navy's own website that they were allowing other militaries use the island to test new weapons systems.

Puerto Rico in general and Vieques in particular played important roles in American foreign policy throughout the Cold War. Vieques was used extensively for training during the wars in Korea and Vietnam. Before dropping napalm on the forests and people of Indochina, the U.S. military tested the defoliant on El Yunque rain forest (the only tropical rain forest in the U.S. National Forest system and a federal reserve for over a century) on the main island of Puerto Rico. Vieques was also used as training facility in several noteworthy episodes in Latin America: the overthrow of Guatemalan President Jacobo Arbenz in 1954, the Cuban Bay of Pigs operation in 1961, the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965, the overthrow of Chilean President Salvador Allende in 1973, the invasion of Grenada in 1983, and the invasion of Panamá in 1989. In the 1980's the United States used Puerto Rico to train the Contras fighting Nicaragua's Sandinista government, as well as members of El Salvador's armed forces in their war against the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). Roosevelt Roads Naval Station served as stopover for the British Royal Navy in the 1982 Malvinas/Falklands War between Argentina and the United Kingdom. During the early 1990's American troops trained in Vieques to prepare for war in the Persian Gulf. The American invasion of Puerto Rico in 1989 was prompted by its military premise. A century later that potential was ardently harvested.⁶⁰

Bombings and other types of military practices were conducted year round since 1948 and lasted for almost five decades. These practices have had repercussions not only in the environment, but they have been at the expense of the Viequenses' health.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 59 Aerial bombardment on the Eastern tip of Vieques.





Fig. 60 USS Suffolk County on Red Beach, Vieques for amphibious landing exercises, 1969.

(Opposite Page)
(Top Left)

Fig. 61 The U.S. Navy bombing Vieques from air. 'In the next few days five Navy warships will fire up to 500 rounds at Vieques. Their aircrafts will drop between 550 and 830 dummy bombs', 1999.

(Bottom Left)

Fig. 62 Hand grenade explosives and dodge bullets simulation, 1949.

(Right)

Fig. 63 View from tank deck of USS Suffolk County on Red Beach, Vieques during amphibious landing exercises, 1969.





Viequenses vs. the U.S. Navy Men

Military presence on the island was perceived as an invasion. Tens of thousands of sailors and marines rehearsed their maneuvers in Vieques during the 1950s and 1960s. When the first navy exercises took place in 1948, over 60 ships, 350 planes, and 50,000 troops from all branches of the military participated in the war games. By 1951 it was reported that around ninety thousand servicemen joined forces in Vieques for large-scale maneuvers. Meanwhile, Vieques' economy changed dramatically into a service economy having direct impact on the relationship between the servicemen and the civilian population. The sale of alcohol to American troops increased exponentially and the local economy started to depend on bars. Shoe shining and washing and ironing clothing became a popular line of work. Prostitution also escalated on the small island. Incidents between servicemen and locals started to occur, instigating discord between them.

Most sailors and marines would get liberty passes to go to town in the evenings. Often they would get drunk, orchestrate strategies not to pay the bar owner, start fights and riots, harass women, engage in illicit sex, and/or other activities which made Viequenses afraid of being out at night, especially the young women who would lock themselves in their houses. On April 4th 1953, intoxicated marines beat Pepe Christian, known as Mapepe, a 69 year-old owner of a local bar, to death when he refused to sell them more rum and he tried to defend the honor of a woman the marines were harassing. That night Julio Bermúdez, a 73-year-old man, was severely beaten as well. A marine and a sailor arrested for the killing were acquitted in a military hearing. Offenses by servicemen generally went unpunished.

Incidents like that would enrage the civilian population, but instead of instigating an antimilitary movement, people were still worried about their income if the navy would stop allowing servicemen to spend their money when visiting the town. Furthermore, McCaffrey explains, "Viequenses' participation in the armed forces and social relationships with navy personnel militated against the development of coherent anti-American sentiment. People's direct experience with the U.S. military, whether through service, marriage, or family relations, bifurcated their sense of loyalty and belonging."⁶¹ For many others the navy's animosity towards the civilian population intensified their sentiment of community, of land ownership, and their sense of duty for its protection.



(Top)

Fig. 65 Cartoon representing the relationship between navy men and locals.

(Bottom)

Fig. 66 The presence of navy men was rejected at some establishments in Vieques.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 64 U.S. Marines landing on Vieques, 1984.



(Left)

Fig. 67 *Operation Portrex*, the largest airborne and amphibious maneuvers ever staged by the U.S. armed forces during peacetime, Vieques, Puerto Rico, 1950.

(Right)

Fig. 68 The operation's scenario called for "the Aggressor Forces, which had captured Vieques and enslaved the inhabitants, to defend the island. The Liberating Forces from the United States would conduct a seven-day air campaign, followed by an airborne and amphibious assault to drive the aggressor back into the sea and reestablish order in this Western-oriented republic."



(Opposite Page)

Fig. 69 The maneuver phase of *Portrex Operation* began on February 25th, and lasted until 11 of March, 1950.







(Left)

Fig. 71 Around 80,000 men from the Army, Air Force and Navy participated in the exercises; with its primary objective to train the three services in the latest techniques involved in joint operations.

(Right)

Fig. 72 The 65th Infantry (the aggressor), mostly all Puerto Rican soldiers, was able to halt the offensive forces on the beaches of the island. Their success led their deployment to Korea.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 70 U.S. Navy parachute jump demonstration, Portrex Operation in Vieques, Puerto Rico, 1950.



Fishermen's Retribution

No other group of Viequenses that fought the navy for a dignified livelihood and their rights to the island, more than the fishermen. "In Vieques, one element of Puerto Rican rural identity, fishing, emerged as a vital expression of the community's resilience in the face of the growing hardship of life under the navy."⁶² The fishermen never let the U.S. Navy intimidate them and with humble boats were the first to confront the most powerful navy in the world in the only real battle that took place in Puerto Rican waters.

Many Viequenses turned to fishing when the sugar cane season was dead, and after the industry crashed, fishing was an obvious option for the men in order to ameliorate their financial situation and sustain their families. But fishing became popular and crucial when the navy expropriated agricultural lands and lands used for raising animals, thus, becoming the portrayal of a working class in Vieques that was eager to find financial as well as physiological independence. McCaffrey explains,

Residents' access to the land was of not only material but cultural importance. People's relationship to the ecology was fundamentally connected to their understanding of the world, their sense of freedom and autonomy, their identity. The navy's restrictions on land created both economic hardship for and resentment from Viequenses who increasingly described themselves as caged in, imprisoned, and sandwiched by the boundaries of the base. In a context where the navy sought to evict people from the land, the importance of this connection was heightened. When the navy curtailed everything else- subsistence plots, animal raising, coconut gathering, crabbing- all that was left was fishing.⁶³

When the navy started practicing in Vieques' waters, thus controlling where and when the men were to be able to fish, that independence became threatened. But most importantly, the fishermen were able to identify the repercussions of navy practices on the ecology. The navy destroyed coral reefs and coconut groves, which were the second largest export crop of Vieques. Mangroves and lagoons dried out because of the bombings, crabs became hard to find; but the fishermen witnessed first hand how the marine life deteriorated when the waters became contaminated and the fish started to become scarce.

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 73 Carlos 'Taso' Zenón defying the U.S. Navy during the halt of maneuvers.



The navy with its indifference once again threatened the livelihood of the civilian population, but the fisherman would not surrender for a change. The fishermen would defy the navy in a crusade that would change the people's mentality, even in mainland Puerto Rico, about how the U.S. Navy did not have the right to dictate the lives of Puerto Ricans.

During the 1960s the Navy was using the neighbour island municipality of Culebra for target practice as well, but after years of disapproval and demonstrations from the Culebrenses, the Asociación de Pescadores de Culebra (Culebra Fishermen Association), and the support from political parties, especially support from the Independence Party, the navy withdrew from the island in 1971. It was a victory for the local population of Culebra and the ongoing fight for Puerto Rican Independence, but as a consequence the navy intensified maneuvers in Vieques, who had already suffered bombings for three decades. The U.S. Navy would not be defeated or leave the Caribbean region, much less when the Pentagon in the 1980s and 1990s had arranged a new purpose for keeping Roosevelt Roads operating, with a stronger grasp over Vieques, to defend the U.S. Mexican Border fighting the "War on Drugs."



The successful movement in Culebra was an overt action condemning the colonial relationship with the U.S. The case of Vieques seemed to be a more difficult situation since many people were in favour of a political and financial relationship with the United States, hence the difficulty to unite against its military. People did not want to be associated with a movement that might seem anti-American. After failed local committees, it took a grassroots movement led by the fishermen of Vieques encouraging people to unite against a common evil. The fishermen strategy was simple: abandon political polarities that have divided Puerto Ricans for decades, and canalize those energies to the fight against grievances caused by the U.S. Navy.

The navy controlled access to the waters where the fishermen used to find the best catch in Vieques. And when they would be allowed to enter, many times they would find navy boats had destroyed buoy lines from the traps they had marked, the loss could be up to 300 pounds of fish in 15 days, making difficult the task of catching fish and potentially jeopardizing that night's dinner. The fishermen joined forces under the Asociación de Pescadores de Vieques (Vieques Fishermen Association), and with Carlos Zenón [Taso] as its president, they took the complaint to the federal court. Four fishermen with much sacrifice were able to be present in court and prove the U.S. Navy had destroyed a hundred and thirty-one buoy lines. The Federal Court ruled in favour of the fishermen and assigned twenty thousand dollars for their loss. It was the fishermen's first victory against the navy, who were confident the decision would have been in their favour.

(Top)

Fig. 74 Vieques' fishermen interrupt navy exercises.

(Bottom)

Fig. 75 The fishermen defy the navy and decide not to leave the waters of Vieques (Taso in the middle).

The fishermen constantly felt personally attacked by the U.S. Navy, but on February 6th 1978 the fishermen for the first time would physically challenge them, altering the conception that Puerto Ricans forever will be a subjugated people. The navy had scheduled an international training program with countries from the NATO to engage in warfare practices that would last up to thirty days. It was arranged to deny access to the waters for that period, an unreasonable demand for people whose livelihood depended on fishing. Taso decided to visit Admiral William Flannagan in Roosevelt Roads to discuss the repercussions of fishermen not being able to work for a month and the existing unemployment crisis in the island. The Admiral's response, "Do you have food stamps in Vieques? Well you people can go to the food stamp line because we are bombing here for the war games." Taso looked at him and said, "Usted se equivoca con mi pueblo y van a tener problemas [You are wrong about my people and you will have problems]." ⁶⁴ Ninety-five fishermen of Vieques decided to interrupt the international military maneuvers instead.

The navies had eighteen-foot boats while the fishermen operated their humble wooden boats. But the fishermen had two advantages; they knew the waters like the palm of their hands and they were confident in their skills. They positioned themselves in the line of missile fire. They threw buoy lines that had chains attached by the ends so it would get caught in the boat's propeller and the motor would stop functioning. They would also throw stones at helicopters and servicemen in boats. Together they were able to confront the Navy and its allies with success. From 1978 to 1983 the fishermen were able to improve their strategies and stop many more practices, thus fishing became a symbol of resistance for the local community as a whole. "No student of history-military, revolutionary history- ignores what an effect a resounding victory has in fortifying a people's will to fight." ⁶⁵



Fig. 76 Navy helicopters harassing Vieques' fishermen by getting within a few feet to their small boats. The fishermen fight back throwing rocks.



Vieques' Grassroots Movement

The anti-navy position, not to be confused with an anti-American or anti-colonial rhetoric, benefitted from disregarding political partisan inclinations that potentially would have sabotaged its unity and ideology. Moreover, the entire population of Vieques could easily relate to the fishermen. They were hard workers and family men whose livelihood was disrupted by the military practices imposed in their land and waters like many other people; in addition, everyone was affected by the environmental injustice consequence of decades of bombing the island. Vieques struggle was defined in terms of local material claims and the fishermen became the perfect spokesperson. Local and national support started to intensify; a grassroots movement was born.

The fishermen's influence over different types of people became the catalyst for the Crusade to Rescue Vieques (La Cruzada Pro Rescate de Vieques), a community based organization that expanded on fishermen's claims to include the eviction of the navy from Vieques. The crusade was emphatic to make people understand there were "authentic" problems that affected everyone; support across the island and beyond its waters was needed. It embraced the nonpartisan approach, even people who were pro-statehood got involved in the coalition. Meanwhile, the fishermen continued to blockade dozens of navy maneuvers, the Crusade to Rescue Vieques directed the protest inland.

To recuperate Vieques' land, the crusade needed the navy to take the movement seriously and understand people were committed to the cause. Many different organizations emerged, like the case of the National Committee in Defense of Vieques in 1978 (Comité Nacional pro Defensa de Vieques), whose main achievement was organizing support groups around the main island. Through media, spread the movement's objectives to people who were ignorant about what was really happening to the Viequenses, establishing connections with other communities, especially from Puerto Ricans in the diaspora and from those around the world that were subjugated by the same enemy and suffering the same injustices, and proposing the Vieques' case should be analyzed by the United Nations Decolonization Committee. The National Committee was openly pro-independence, and they were pushing their political agenda at expense of the movement; the members of the Crusade to Rescue Vieques were not pleased.

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 77 Carlos 'Taso' Zenón (in the middle) and other fishermen celebrate with their families after successfully halting military maneuvers.



On the national level, in the big island there were some who didn't approach the struggle as a socioeconomic one of the island of Vieques. They approached it as a political problem. We had a different vision. The large majority of us in the struggle, especially the leaders, considered and believed that Puerto Rico should be free, but that this struggle was our struggle. It is not a political issue. It is a matter of recovering Vieques. Because we want Vieques for our children. And many of them didn't understand this.⁶⁶

The crusade continued organizing pickets and rallies, and many other demonstrations of pacific civil disobedience. From over a hundred people camping in a navy beach and planting coconut palms where they used to grow before the navy took them down as symbol of the environmental harm the maneuvers caused, as well as a declaration that they would take the land back, to a hundred people sneaking in the middle of the night into navy camps and startling soldiers to demonstrate the navy was not prepared to protect the region even from civilians, as they persuaded people to believe.

The demonstrations started to get national and international media attention, particularly on May 19, 1979 where twenty-one people were arrested for trespassing in a pacific picket that turn hostile. Around one hundred-and-fifty people were holding an ecumenical service in a restricted beach in the south of Vieques, fishermen had transported them from the dock in Esperanza, when navy boats arrived. Fishermen attempted to stop them from reaching the shore, but failed, and a navy boat disembarked with armed federal marshals. It was reported that the marshals let Catholic Bishop Antulio Parrila finish service and then proceeded to arrest people. A scuffle started, protestors did not surrender quietly. Out of all the twenty-one demonstrators arrested, two were Viequenses: Ismael Guadalupe, leader of the crusade and fisherman Ivan Davis. Angel Rodríguez Cristóbal, a Puerto Rican from Ciales was arrested for being a threat to U.S. national security, and died in a federal penitentiary in Tallahassee, Florida on November 11, 1979. His death was declared a suicide by strangulation, but a private autopsy ordered by his family suggested he was beaten to death. In retaliation, the Puerto Rican Independence Movement of Los Macheteros, considered a terrorist organization by the U.S. government, attacked a navy bus, killing two servicemen.

In the 1980s the congressional committee investigating the navy's training facilities in the municipal island recommended to the Pentagon to find a replacement for Vieques. Military practices did not come to halt, neither did protest against it. In 1983 the "Memorandum of Understanding regarding Vieques' future", also known as the Fortín Accord, was signed under pressure from the Congress of the United States and a lawsuit against the navy filed by then Puerto Rican pro-statehood governor, Carlos Romero Barceló. In an effort to improve the economic condition of the municipality it was stipulated, "the Navy recognizes its obligation to be a good neighbor to the people of Vieques and will continue to strive to improve the welfare of the island's people." One of its strategies was the navy's commitment to bring industries to Vieques, in

exchange the lawsuit was dropped, but high costs and efforts to work from a detached municipal island were impractical; after a few attempts, the accord failed to meet its promises. The navy was not interested in developing the island to later deal with an increased population in the opposition.

The Fortín Accord also reassured people the navy would protect the environment. Its devastation was evident after decades of bombing and other military exercises, but the navy took pride in denying Vieques from being developed, hence keeping its “natural” state. The navy did not take responsibility for harm done to the environment, but pretended to care when more than half a million dollars were spent in relocating sea turtles eggs away from beaches they practiced on, building wooden beach shelters, or planting 150 acres of mahogany trees. The navy also put up signs prohibiting capturing crab, suggesting the decline of the species was due to local consumption instead of military maneuvers endangering their natural habitat. After the accord Viequenses were weary from so many failed promises from the navy and federal and insular government, hence the decline of the local movement and political activism.

During the decade of the 1980s some subtle but positive events did occur. The navy shut down Camp García’s marine installations and turned over the resettlement tract lands, where locals were living without titles, to the Government of Puerto Rico; however, it didn’t even scratch the surface of the land ownership issue. In 1987, the navy tried to evict Carmelo Félix Matta and his family from navy owned lands where they had illegally built their house. More than a hundred neighbors and protestors, who couldn’t stop the eviction, got media attention when they set fire to a navy truck. The family returned to their house a few days later with support from the local community who resented the navy for its constant disregard for their welfare. Viequenses felt it was a victory for the “land rescue” issue and declared the hilltop homestead, Monte Carmelo. When hurricane Hugo hit in 1989 illegal settlements were destroyed and the navy took the opportunity to build a fence and reclaim jurisdiction.

A decade later, President Clinton ratified the White House would not interfere with the Pentagon’s determination on keeping Vieques as a military training site. Two events in 1993 would suggest otherwise: the emergence of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques (Comité Pro Rescate y Desarrollo de Vieques), and a navy fighter accidentally dropped several quarter-ton bombs a mile away from the civilian sector. As consequence, the anti-navy movement started to reactivate, drawing local and national interest once again. In addition, the House Subcommittee on Insular and International Affairs conducted congressional hearings where it was stipulated the federal government would transfer the eight thousand acre Naval Ammunition Facility (NAF) lands to the municipal government. However, neither the full House nor the Senate ever voted for the proposal of transferring lands. Both federal and insular governments continued with their political agendas, which excluded interest in Vieques.



Fig. 80 The artwork of a child from Vieques with the statement, *The navy should not stay; I want them to go.* The drawing expresses the impossibility for children to differentiate between war and exercises to prepare for war.

(Opposite Page)
(Top)

Fig. 78 A protest in front of the White House in Washington, D.C.

(Bottom)

Fig. 79 Protests against the navy have united the Puerto Rican people.



(Top)

Fig. 81 The ROTHR Installation in Western Vieques, 2008.

(Bottom)

Fig. 82 ROTHR aerial view.

(Opposite Page)

(Top)

Fig. 83 'Todo Puerto Rico por Vieques' (All Puerto Rico for Vieques) mobilized 50,000 people in a civil march at the gates of Roosevelt Roads Naval Station in Ceiba, Puerto Rico, 4th of July, 1999.

(Bottom)

Fig. 84 A protester with a sign expressing feelings of indignation and demanding that military exercises be moved to Martha's Vineyard, in the U.S., where many politicians own vacation homes, 4th of July, 1999.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked a change in the U.S. military base structure at the international level. Many bases became obsolete, thus the United States government commenced with a closure schedule that included bases in the Philippines and Hawaii. The people in Vieques saw an opportunity to ensure the installations in the island were taken into consideration. The Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques petitioned the Federal Base Realignment and Closure Committee to add Vieques into the list of bases that would eventually be shut down. The Committee went door-to-door collecting signatures to show the federal government that the civilian population endorsed their motion; they collected only 3,750 signatures. The motion was ignored.

Years later, Carlos Romero Barceló, Puerto Rican resident commissioner in Washington, who in 1983 while being the Governor of Puerto Rico failed to see the Fortín Accord succeed, introduced a new bill that would make Viequesens believe the insular government was prepared to ameliorate the relationship between the civil population and the navy. The Vieques Land Transfer Act of 1994 intended the transfer of lands to the Municipality of Vieques for public use. The navy controlled Vieques' western land, approximately eight thousand acres which contained 102 ammunition bunkers, 40 of which were on disuse. The navy had estimated the ammunition facility could be accommodated on 646 acres of land. The navy had been greedy by expropriating more than seven thousand extra acres of land that were unnecessary, but it was common knowledge that shortest route between the main island of Puerto Rico and Vieques was priceless. The bill was denied. Admiral Ernest E. Christensen expressed:

I believe the issue which is before you today is not the absolute value of the land of Vieques to the United States Navy, nor to the Nation, nor is it the issue of the eastern side of Vieques where significant training occurs. I believe that the issue here today is rather the western side of the island, which comprises somewhere between 7,600 and 8,000 acres, and whether the ammunition which is stored on the western side is worth more than the municipality of Vieques to this Nation than to the Nation in its national defense. It is my firm conviction it is worth more to the United States Nation and to the national defense.⁶⁷

Puerto Rico and the well being of its people are secondary, if not worthless, to the Government of the United States, represented by Admiral Ernest E. Christensen, who openly confirmed popular speculation when he spoke.

Support to movements and organizations in Vieques and the main island was not consistent. People were involved one day and the next they weren't; they felt they were always being let down by the navy, the federal government, even their own government, so the intensity in the movement fluctuated constantly. Nonetheless, the committee in alliance

with other organizations, including the Fishermen's Association, who were successful in the seventies, continued with its pickets and acts of disobedience. Many of these groups wanted to expand the significance of Vieques' struggle to address the colonial situation of Puerto Rico, but the likelihood of disagreement suggested once again the overall movement that called for lands to be surrendered, should focus on national sentiment."...The importance of the cultural realm for reinforcing identity and political consciousness." 68

The opportunity to rise came in the spring of 1994 when the U.S., with its latest war on drugs, expressed their need for an antidrug radar system to be built in Vieques. The "Relocatable-Over-The-Horizon-Radar-Installation" (ROTHR) consisted in three parts: a transmitter located in Vieques, that would include 34 vertical towers up to 125 feet in height, a receiver in the Municipality of Lajas, and an Operation Control Center in Norfolk, Virginia. The Committee immediately objected to the installations advising the community about the health risks electromagnetic radiation would involve. During public hearings, where the Committee was protesting, potential neighbors to the installations were concerned about not only the threat of cancer, but about the energy requirements of the station and the aesthetic appearance that would visually contaminate the lands people hoped would be developed for ecotourism in the future. In Lajas the opposition movement, with Vietnam Veterans in its frontlines, turned in favor of the conservation of agricultural lands. "The navy was depicted as usurping the Puerto Rican agricultural heartland, at the center of national identity". 69 Protests against the ROTHR lasted for over two years before the Navy adapted their plans and built the receiver in another municipality.

"But the ROTHR struggle ultimately laid the foundation for the mobilization that erupted in 1999. Through the radar struggle the Committee had successfully organized and mobilized Viequenses' concerns about health and safety, called upon their intense emotions and attachment to the island, and built linkages to a wide web of supporters in Puerto Rico." 70



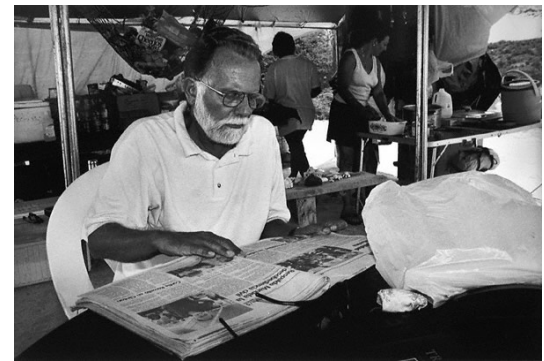


David Sanes Rodríguez: Vieques' Martyr

On April 19, 1999 the U.S. Navy was conducting maneuvers in the Vieques Passage aboard the aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy, when two F-18 jets missed their mark and dropped two 500-pound Mark 82 bombs that wounded four civilians and killed thirty-five-year-old civilian security guard for the navy, David Sanes Rodríguez. Never before had Puerto Ricans simultaneously felt outraged and felt an aggressive patriotism. The U.S. Navy had been inconsiderate for decades, many people had been injured before, but enough was enough. April 19, 1999 marked the day where all Puerto Ricans united to declare the navy's immediate withdrawal from Vieques; from independence party leader, Senator Rubén Berríos Martínez, to Representative Luis Gutiérrez of Illinois and, Representative José Serrano from New York. Furthermore, Puerto Rican legislature demanded the navy to stop using live shells in Vieques.

Hundreds of people attended David's funeral mass in Vieques. In his memory, the Committee, anti-navy activists and members of David's family penetrated military lands and erected a twelve-foot white cross on a hill in the center of the live impact zone, which was christened as Monte David. That night Albert de Jesús, commonly known as Tito Kayak, known throughout Puerto Rico for his notorious acts of civil disobedience in support of the environment, stayed in Monte David to make a statement against the navy and personally block any of its maneuvers. The next morning, Carlos Zenón's sons decided to support Albert's decision to stay in the target range bringing food, water and supplies. The first anti-navy encampment was established.

Former Senator Rubén Berríos Martínez, president of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP) set up another encampment where he stayed for a year. For the pro-independence movement the struggle in Vieques "is a symbol of national oppression and must be rescued from the Navy as part of the process of achieving full national self-determination."⁷¹



(Top)

Fig. 86 Fisherman Carlos 'Taso' Zenón taking food to the disobedients in the encampment *Monte David*. The crosses on top symbolize the many casualties the U.S. Navy has caused, including environmental pollution.

(Bottom)

Fig. 87 Former Senator Rubén Berríos Martínez in the camp he established on the firing range, acting as a human shield to ensure the navy would not be able to conduct its maneuvers.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 85 *Monte David*, the first civil disobedience camp established within the firing range, April 19, 1999.



(Left)

Fig. 88 One of the fourteen civil disobedience camps next to a 500 pound bomb.

(Middle)

Fig. 89 An encampment at *La Yayi* beach on the naval bombing zone. A fisherman ferries members of the media and other protestors to the site, May 3, 2000.

(Right)

Fig. 90 Reverend Jesse Jackson arrives at Vieques to visit the civil disobedience encampments.



(Left)

Fig. 91 Bishop Alvaro Corrada del Río arrives accompanied by other priests to protest in peaceful resistance. Throughout the year hundreds of people visited the camps to show support for Vieques.

(Middle)

Fig. 92 People attending a Mass in one of the two chapels built on the firing range; both structures were later demolished by the navy.

(Right)

Fig. 93 Civil disobedients hailing at a navy helicopter flying over the encampments.



(Left)

Fig. 94 Puerto Ricans with different political and religious ideologies came together to demand 'Peace for Vieques' and 'Not one more bomb', San Juan, Puerto Rico, February 21, 2000.

(Right)

Fig. 95 Entire families participated in the demands made to the U.S. Navy for an immediate cease of fire.

Protest erupted in Puerto Rico with support from Puerto Rican communities in the diaspora. There were fourteen encampments in total, where people from different political ideologies, but a common goal, challenged the navy by halting military maneuvers for almost a year. During that period thousands of people stopped by and showed their support with monetary donations, a word of encouragement, or even a contribution of rice and beans. To get to the target zone, people had to climb the fence or ride a boat into restricted waters, but everyone had to behave cautiously in navy lands assuming they could contain live ordnance. For many people staking a white cross in Monte David in honor of a loved one that had passed away due to cancer was worth the risk. In Vieques everyone knows someone who has cancer or another pollution related disease; a family member, a neighbor, a friend. They attributed it to the navy; it was a widespread belief that water and trade winds carried toxins produced by decades of bombing into the civilian population. Currently Vieques has a cancer rate twenty-seven percent higher than the main island of Puerto Rico, after sixty years of military use, including the use of depleted uranium, napalm, and other pollutants. Navy has denied such allegations, brushing aside any responsibility.

The catchphrases '*Ni una bomba más*' [Not one more bomb] and '*Paz para Vieques*' [Peace for Vieques] encapsulated the convictions and the determination of the many people who were willing to sacrifice their lives with this "act of defiance". These encampments congregated women, teachers, students, veterans, politicians, different religious figures, community leaders, artists, environmentalists, lawyers, fishermen and many other groups of people, that by rallying together had a tangible impact on the navy's exercises for a year. During the encampment period, two Atlantic Fleets, aircraft carrier U.S.S. George Washington and U.S.S. Eisenhower, scheduled for some maneuvers in Vieques' waters had to turn around and take their training elsewhere. Demonstrations in the main island were essential for the cause and essential in provoking the international media to pay attention; such as a protest that gathered 50,000 people in front of the main gates of Roosevelt Roads base; with the irony that it was summoned on July 4th, United States Independence Day. Furthermore, on February 21, 2000 history was made; a mass protest in the streets of San Juan mobilized more than 150,000 Puerto Ricans demanding '*Ni una bomba más*'.

Puerto Ricans, perhaps without fully realizing it, are telling the United States: Vieques is our territory, not yours, Americans... It is possible that from now on things between the United States and Puerto Rico will never go back to being the same. What is interesting about this Vieques issue is that Puerto Ricans reacted the same as any Latin American: they jumped with indignation upon feeling that another country, another government, another one different from me, was appropriating its territory.⁷²



Fig. 96 An estimated 150,000 Puerto Ricans marched along *Las Americas Expressway* to support Vieques and the Puerto Rican Nation against the U.S. and its military, San Juan, Puerto Rico, February 21, 2000.



Meanwhile, a referendum was held in 1999 where 56 percent of Puerto Ricans wanted the navy to withdraw completely from Vieques; 80 percent of Viequenses voted in favour of that option. 58 percent of Puerto Ricans voted the navy's withdrawal in two to three years were unacceptable; 83 percent of Viequenses agreed. The referendum also asked if they supported the continuation of civil disobedience against the navy, 56 percent of Puerto Ricans favored the demonstrations; 76 percent of Viequenses declared were in favour. Despite the clear voice of Puerto Ricans in this issue, President Clinton announced the navy would be able to resume their maneuvers in the spring of 2000, with the agreement that maneuvers would be reduced from 180 to 90 days for up to five years, and in exchange the municipality was to receive 40 million dollars. The navy never before had paid Vieques for using the municipality as a target range, not even when the U.S. government was paid millions for renting the island to allied countries to be trained.

A year had passed when federal marshals and FBI agents were sent to Vieques to dismantle the encampments and arrest protestors on May 4, 2000. Approximately 224 protestors were arrested and sent to Roosevelt Roads, to later be released with no charges. Among those arrested were the president of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, Senator Rubén Berríos Martínez, several congressmen from the U.S., and six clergy men. All 224 people arrested were asked to sign a form accepting a number of conditions, including to not re-enter restricted navy lands; not even one person signed. Days after the arrests, Rubén Berríos and many others were rallying in encampments once again. More than fifty people were arrested for a second time challenging the court system, but many judges from the insular government were sympathetic with the case and it showed when it came to verdicts of only a few months of jail time. Many protests arose from the arrests mobilizing people in Puerto Rico and the diaspora.

While gathering in the Vatican to celebrate the beatification of the first Puerto Rican, Carlos Manuel Rodríguez, hundred of Puerto Ricans shouted '*Paz para Vieques*' [Peace for Vieques]. Soon after Denise Quiñones was coronated as Miss Universe and Félix "Tito" Trinidad won the world middleweight boxing title, they announced their yearning for peace in Vieques. The U.S. military establishment failed to understand the depths of Puerto Rican commitment to this cause.⁷³



(Top)
Fig. 98 Isabel Rosado Morales, heroine from the Nationalist Party of Puerto Rico, arrested on May 4, 2000.

(Bottom)
Fig. 99 A protester is carried off by law enforcement personnel at Camp Yayi in the former Live Impact Area, Vieques, Puerto Rico, May 4, 2000.

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 97 More than two hundred people were arrested for civil disobedience acts that prevented the navy to carry out their war practices, May 4, 2000.



(Left)

Fig. 100 A sign at the entrance to the military base marked the time (8 hours) until the navy would leave, April 30, 2003.

(Middle)

Fig. 101 People celebrating the withdrawal of the U.S. Navy in Vieques at 12:01 am, May 1, 2003.

(Right)

Fig. 102 People waving the flag of Puerto Rico celebrating the victory at 12:01 am, May 1, 2003.



(Left)
Fig. 103 The banner on the gate of Camp García reads, *Only the people who struggled will open this gate.*
(Middle)
Fig. 104 People tear down the barbed wire fence surrounding the base, May 1, 2003.
(Right)
Fig. 105 People hammered and tore down the military checkpoint, a symbol of Navy repression in Vieques, May 1, 2003.



(Left)

Fig. 106 In the morning, thousands of activists marched 4 kilometers from the town of Isabel II to the former military base to celebrate the navy's departure. The banner leading the march proclaims "We stopped the bombing. Vieques Triumphed. The struggle continues..."

(Middle)

Fig. 107 The march arrived at Camp García, now denominated 'Zona Libre 1ro de Mayo' [May First Zone Free].

(Right)

Fig. 108 Anti-U.S. Navy and environmentalist activist Alberto DeJesús Mercado, also known as Tito Kayak, placing the Vieques' flag on top of the U.S. Navy practice bombing observation tower in Vieques, Puerto Rico, May 1, 2003.

The beginning of the end

In June 2001, President Bush, after much litigation and alleged apprehension about losing the Latino support, announced his decision to terminate all navy maneuvers by 2003. The truth was, the struggle of Vieques had been a headache for Washington after many decades of active opposition against the navy, and also the grassroots movement and its commitment kept growing stronger.

Furthermore, expressions by navy veterans have argued that training in Vieques is “neither unique nor necessary for contemporary amphibious warfare.”⁷⁴ There was no longer need to keep a civilian population exposed to severe health risks and to continue destroying the environment from which this population, and all living beings for that matter, have been dependent on.

In May 1st, 2003, the United States Navy withdrew from the municipal island of Vieques, Puerto Rico.

Instead of returning lands to the municipality of Vieques, Congress returned 4,00 acres to the municipality, 3,100 acres to the Federal Department of the Interior, and 700 acres to the Puerto Rican Department of Natural Resources; the navy kept the 200 acres used for the Radar installation. Military exercises were moved to Florida. In March 2004 the Roosevelt Roads Naval Station was closed, Atlantic Fleet Admiral Robert Natter expressed, “without Vieques there is no way I need the Navy facilities at Roosevelt Roads- none. It’s a drain on Defense Department and taxpayer dollars.”⁷⁵

This victory symbolized the ability we Puerto Ricans have to decide our own destiny if we just mobilize in the same direction focusing our efforts into acquiring justice for all. We do not have to agree on the political future of the island to acknowledge the present relationship of colonized- colonizer is preventing us from writing our own history.

The fight is not over. Now it is up to us to ensure the U.S. Navy takes responsibility for more than six decades of bombing the island by guaranteeing the cleanup phase is completed, to later develop the island for public re-use where all Viequenses and the rest of Puerto Ricans can be proud of calling it our own.

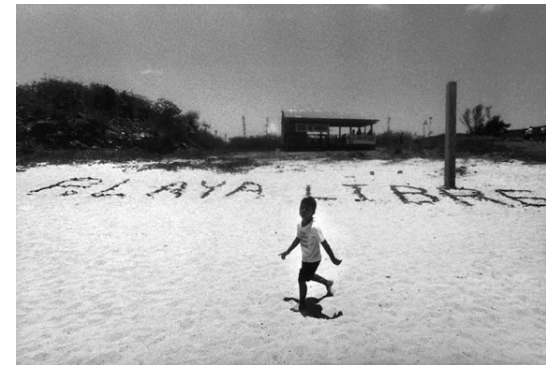


Fig. 109 A child walks on the shores of a 'Free Beach' at Vieques, Puerto Rico.



Fig. 110 Fireworks on July 4th, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Fourth Anecdote

Cuarta Anécdota

Fireworks, parades and barbeques across the United States. It is 4th of July, the day the Americans celebrate their nationhood with pride. In Puerto Rico, it is also a holiday. I find it absurd to celebrate your colonizer's Day of Independence. I am also resentful. How cynical it is for the colonized to have a "work-free day" because the colonizer is celebrating their freedom and ours has never been granted. For them, this day symbolizes liberty, equality, and the right of people to pursue happiness. For many Puerto Ricans the day is an excuse to go to the beach or catch up on errands. I do not feel any connection to this day. For me, it is just another sad day to realize we are still under colonial rule.

The small community of Vieques with the support of the Puerto Rican Nation, in the archipelago and in the diaspora, without firing a single shot defeated the most powerful military force in the history of humanity. ⁷⁶

Robert Rabin

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 111 Aerial view of Vieques, Puerto Rico, 2007.





Fig. 112 *Playuela* beach in Vieques, Puerto Rico, 2012.



Land Ownership 2003 - Present

Propiedad de terrenos 2003 - Presente



▨ Vieques National Wildlife Refuge

▨ Municipality of Vieques

▨ PR Conservation Trust

■ Restricted Area

A Post-Navy Vieques

Un Vieques Post-Marina

Poisoned Paradise

For six decades, the United States Navy repressed the Vieques civil community in between a bombing practice range and an ammunition depot, not only preventing Vieques development then but also threatening the island's future after their departure in 2003. The Navy's withdrawal from the island was not equivalent to the end of the conflict; the military left an ecological disaster that after almost a decade have not yet fully rectified. This has been a setback for all plans for the development of the island and the return of lands to the Vieques' people. The current battle, considered by some as more critical than the Navy's removal, is the battle for the cleanup process that will determine if the Viequenses will someday be able to freely enjoy their island.

U.S. Military sites around the world are considered to be extremely toxic and a threat to the environment and the civilian population that live in its vicinity. However, using the issue of national security and the current conflict in the Middle East as shield, the U.S. military has evaded responsibility for contamination of soil and groundwater by being exempted from some environmental laws that find them not liable to decontaminate these sites after bases close. Billions of dollars are spent in some cleanup, but it is not enough. Certainly, that is the case of Vieques, Puerto Rico were the Navy for half a century rehearsed to prepare for war by bombing the island with depleted uranium, napalm, mercury, agent orange, petroleum products, and other heavy metals and toxic substances that have had a repercussion in the environment and the health of thousand of Viequenses. The Navy's "university of the sea" dropped more than 17,000 tons of bombs in Vieques from 1983 to 1998.

In November 2000, President Clinton authorized the Navy to transfer about 4,000 acres [out of almost 23,000 acres they owned] of the Naval Ammunition Support Detachment [NASD] in the western lands of Vieques, to the Puerto Rican municipality. Also, 3,100 acres were transferred to the U.S. Department of the Interior, and around 800 acres to the Puerto Rico Conservation Trust for use as Conservation Zones. The Navy retained around 100 acres, where the ROTH radar transmitter and the radio and communications complex atop Monte Pirata are located. Subsequently in 2003 when



(Top)
Fig. 114 An unexploded bomb on the Yayi Beach, Vieques, Puerto Rico.

(Bottom)
Fig. 115 Bomb shells removed from the wildlife refuge, Vieques, Puerto Rico.

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 113 Map of Vieques' land ownership since 2003 when the navy left the island, until the present.



Fig. 116 A technical team visits the 'Bombing Range Cleanup Project' zone.

the Navy finally withdrew, they transferred an additional 14,671 acres to the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife. Those 14,671 acres and the previous 3,100 acres were designated as a wildlife refuge. Moreover, 980 acres of land from the Live Impact Area in Eastern Vieques, former Atlantic Fleet Weapons Training Facility [AFWTF], were classified as a "wilderness preserve", by definition a pristine place untouched by men, is now inaccessible to civilians.

Katherine T. McCaffrey explains, "The main problem with identifying the land for "conservation" purposes is not only that it continues to estrange islanders from the majority of the island, but it allows the military to evade any responsibility for decontamination of the land. Land designated for "conservation use" would require only a superficial cleanup since presumably no humans would inhabit the land." ⁷⁷

The task of decontaminating sites in the east of Vieques is different from that of west Vieques. West Vieques, mostly undeveloped land covered with trees, low-lying brush, and tall grasses, contained offices, a transportation shop, a carpentry shop, a sewage treatment plant, and more than a hundred scattered bunkers part of the NASD and its mission to "receive, store, and issue all of the ordnance authorized by Naval Station Roosevelt Roads for support of U.S. Navy Atlantic Fleet activities." ⁷⁸ Despite western Vieques not having to endure relentless bombings, 17 sites were found to be potentially contaminated. Around 2 million pounds of military and industrial waste were disposed in mangroves and wetland areas; also there was an open pit used to burn old munitions, bomb components and flares. Fourteen out of the seventeen sites are located in lands that were transferred to the Municipality of Vieques, thus remaining under Navy control until cleanup.

However, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has added Vieques bombing range on the National Priority List of the most hazardous waste sites in the United States, a "Superfund" site. As expected after almost six decades of bombing, East Vieques has gotten most of the attention as a case of extreme military contamination. The navy claimed Vieques was bombed an average of 180 days a year, with more than 20,000 bombs containing live explosives per year; that's more than a million bombs dropped in the island since 1948. Currently access to the Live Impact Area is restricted due to the many unexploded ordnance that remain in the land. As time passes, the live ordnance sinks deeper into the ground, requiring the removal of surface and subsurface soil in order to be decontaminated. That process is not only time consuming, it's expensive. Thus, the navy has opted for an open detonation strategy, the cheapest method to get rid of the ordnance, but the most toxic as well. The environment keeps getting contaminated as if the navy continued their military exercises. Prevailing trade winds continue to blow all the toxics into the civil community were the rate of cancer and other diseases has escalated, as well as the number of deaths.

Contamination in Vieques is not easily perceived. At a closer look, the moonscape [bombing impressions in the land], the abandoned unexploded ordnance now dangerously camouflaged underwater and under scrub vegetation, and the munitions debris, become proof of an overlooked reality. For many people, especially the locals, contaminated lands being classified as “preservation” lands under the control of an environmental agency is a joke; not amusing when it happens to alleviate the navy’s burden of decontaminating the lands for civil use. For others who ignore the history of the island and its battle with the navy, Vieques is perceived as a tropical paradise; “the last untouched place in the Caribbean”. Despite the obvious relation between the military and contamination, some people are grateful that the Navy kept Vieques undeveloped, keeping it in its “natural unspoiled state”.

Locals and newcomers and tourists have different readings of the landscape. While locals have a deep connection to the landscape, a connection of belonging after fighting for the right to possess the land under circumstances less fortunate, most cannot seem to forget the ongoing struggle that now lies on decontamination. Whereas newcomers and tourists are delighted with an unblocked view of the beach, the aesthetics they believe an island, a place of retreat and maybe retirement, should aspire to. And that is exactly how the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife is selling the island to foreigners:

No matter where you come from, you will definitely leave relaxed and wanting to return again and again to these beautiful refuge areas... What can I do? From mountain biking on the dirt roads to swimming in the turquoise waters, Vieques National Wildlife Refuge offers all types of recreational opportunities. Playa Caracas and Playa La Chiva are an escape from reality. There’s no high rise, no hustle or bustle just a quiet destination where you become one with nature. Sometimes you can find a few others. The swimming and snorkeling are fantastic. The waters are crystal clear and the variety of colors found in the undersea life is astounding... The dirt roads leading to Laguna Kiani or the surrounded beaches are excellent for biking, jogging or hiking. The lagoon is close to several secluded beaches, such as Punta Arenas (Green Beach). Kayaking is great, especially from glimpses or rare birds and a chance to snorkel, especially to the south. The view of the main island is fabulous. Take your camera... Playa la Chiva and Punta Arenas all have renovated shelters with picnic tables, trash cans and composting toilets. Remember to keep your beaches clean and beautiful... Vieques National Wildlife Refuge offers more than just swimming, snorkeling, hiking, biking, bird watching. It’s a place where family and friends can eat “arroz con gandules” (rice with green pigeon pea), play Puerto Rico’s national pastime- dominoes or a place to lounge under a palm tree and see no one. Summer is coming! So, make Vieques National Wildlife Refuge your destination. An escape from the everyday life; a place to revive your soul and bond with loved ones! ⁷⁹



(Top)
Fig. 117 Eastern Vieques’ new landscape is full of craters like this one from a 2000 pound bomb.

(Bottom)
Fig. 118 A perforation in the metallic shield of this war tank serves as evidence that the navy used bullets coated with depleted uranium in their maneuvers at Vieques, Puerto Rico.



(Left)

Fig. 119 *Esperanza* beach at Vieques, Puerto Rico.

(Middle)

Fig. 120 Bioluminescent Bay at *Puerto Mosquito*. This unique bay contains up to 720,000 single-celled bioluminescent dinoflagellates per gallon of water. These half-plant, half-animal organisms emit a flash of bluish light when agitated at night. The high concentration of these creatures (*Pyrodinium bahamense*) can create enough light to read a book from.

(Right)

Fig. 121 A child leaps off a pier in the town of *Esperanza*.



(Left)

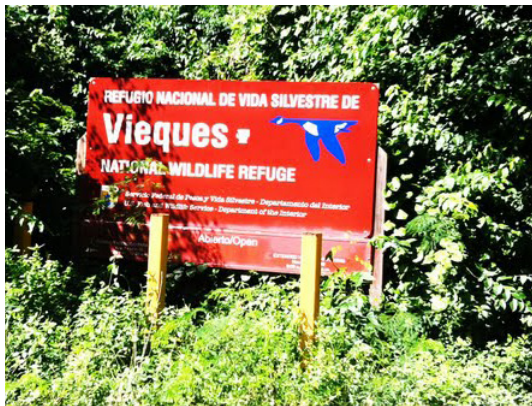
Fig. 122 The method chosen by the U.S. Navy to get rid of unexploded bombs in Vieques National Wildlife Refuge is open detonation; the cheapest method that continues to contaminate the island.

(Middle)

Fig. 123 During a research trip to Puerto Rico, James Porter, marine ecologist and associate dean of the Odum School of Ecology at the University of Georgia, took samples from underwater nuclear bomb target USS Killen, May 2, 2009.

(Right)

Fig. 124 Heaps of destroyed military hardware at a processing area of the former naval training range on Vieques, Puerto Rico, 2008.



(Top)

Fig. 125 Sign warning the dangers within the former U.S. Training Range, Vieques, Puerto Rico.

(Bottom)

Fig. 126 Vieques National Wildlife Refuge welcome sign.

(Opposite Page)

(Top)

Fig. 127 An inert 500 lb. bomb, the size of which killed David Sanes.

(Middle)

Fig. 128 Shells presumed to be filled with depleted uranium.

(Bottom)

Fig. 129 Bomb sweepers wield metal detectors in a several-thousand acre area littered with unexploded ordinance, at the live impact area of the former U.S. Naval Training Range, on Vieques, Puerto Rico, January 25, 2007.

It sounds amazing, but only if you conscientiously forget Vieques' past and with blinkers, decide to look only to its future. Yet, the new "national park", that is under U.S. federal control, is a mockery to the civilian community of Vieques and the grassroots movement that for decades fought for access to the land. Furthermore, it may seem the U.S. Government, especially its navy, out of spite for having to relocate their war games out of Puerto Rico, are not willing to take responsibility and fully decontaminate the land, but rather "preserve the contamination". These are different opinions :

Under the Wilderness Act, you know, that means those are places that have been untouched by human hands... So we really need to keep this place completely pristine by fencing it off. [But] they killed all the pristineness many years ago... Fish and Wildlife did absolutely nothing for decades while the Navy destroyed the fish and wildlife, they completely reneged on their responsibility. Just as the EPA did and other federal and Puerto Rican agencies, and allowed the destruction to the natural environment, to people's health, etc... It has been the people of Vieques that have defended the environment here and got the Navy to stop bombing, not Fish and Wildlife. So, it is insulting, it is incorrect, it is damaging, and it is part of a Navy plot not to clean up that has Fish and Wildlife here.⁸⁰

- Viequense Activist

The idea is that as soon as the Navy [finishes] cleaning, the beaches and the areas... then Fish and Wildlife will allow the people to enter to those [restricted] areas and enjoy the resources. But we don't enter the areas to do any management, because I am not an expert in contaminants, and I am not an expert in unexploded ammunition. So, I would love and manage sea turtles. I would to go and manage birds and forests and you know, but I can't. That is not my business right now, because there are very serious contaminants in those areas, and there is only one [group] responsible for that contamination. And that is the agency that produced it [the Navy].⁸¹

- U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife employee

People fought for the land, and now it's inaccessible to civilian re-use and development. Many have complained that the new federal agency, FWS, has restricted even more some traditional uses of the land such as horseback riding, livestock grazing, crabbing and coconut gathering, but the agency considers these activities are endangering the public and interfere with their job. Therefore, to recuperate the lands for the Viequenses, a thorough cleanup must take place. And despite fear that the Navy will eventually evade its duty, Viequenses are committed to see the cleanup process completed making the U.S. Navy accountable for environmental and health damages. If the Puerto Rican people came together once, they are capable of making their voice heard once again. As McCaffrey explains about Vieques's significance, "It speaks to the much larger issue of the relationship between the military and the civil society. In a world increasingly dominated by military power and defined by the flagrant trampling of human rights, Vieques's struggle asserts the values of civil society over military encroachment."⁸² The case of Vieques, Puerto Rico has been of great inspiration for other communities around the world that have common grievances, as well as common goals.



Contemporary art and architecture's task is not only to reveal ignored socio-political territorial histories and inequalities within this polarized world, but also to generate new forms of sociability and activism.

Teddy Cruz

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 130 Aerial view of the former Naval Ammunition Storage Detachment in Western Vieques, Puerto Rico, 1981.



five
cinco



(Left)

Fig. 131 Members from the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques in front of their office at the Justice and Peace Camp across the street from the gate of Camp García.

(Right)

Fig. 132 Sign of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques and its main initiative, the 4 D's: Demilitarization, Decontamination, Devolution (return of the land), and Sustainable Development of Vieques.



The Design Proposal

La Propuesta de Diseño

The Navy is gone. Now what?

For decades the people of Vieques demanded the U.S. Navy to halt military exercises and to surrender lands the navy had previously acquired in a manner they considered to be unjustifiable. People needed to be optimistic and fully committed to the anti-navy movement in order to overthrow the most powerful military in the world. Thus, activists not only focused in strategies to do so, but they also considered a long-term plan of action on how to tackle the challenges for a post-Navy Vieques.

In the early 1990s a group of Vieques' activists got together and established the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques (CRDV) were they launched initiatives like '*La Protesta con la Propuesta*' (The Protest with the Proposal) that advocated the demands "4 D's: Demilitarization, Decontamination, Devolution [return of lands] and [community-based, sustainable] Development" for the Municipality of Vieques. Interested in a better quality of life, defending the environment and promoting social equity, Viequenses took part in workshops and public forums proclaiming their views on how the island should proceed, after 2001 when two-thirds of Viequenses voted in a referendum in favor of the immediate end of military practices, cleanup and return of lands for sustainable development. After three years of hard work by planners, scientists and economists, other professionals, and the input of locals, the Master Plan for Sustainable Development of Vieques was created.

To implement this master plan, it must be understood that the four “D’s” are intertwined. In order to Demilitarize the island, not only does the Navy has to withdraw fully from Vieques, taking their ROTHF radar transmitter and the radio and communications complex off the island, but also the Decontamination phase must occur. Some people fear as long as the Navy does not put their efforts into decontaminating Vieques, not only the Live Impact Area in the Eastern tip of the island, but its surrounding waters and even the “civilian areas” where studies have shown were also polluted, Demilitarization will not be completed. After that happens, Viequenses will be able to Develop the island however they see fit, as consequence of their involvement, lands will have been properly returned to its people [Devolution]. It would be counterproductive to start dividing the land for personal agendas; instead with a democratic and organized process the master plan compiles the needs of the Viequense society as a whole.

Contemplating Vieques’ Demilitarization and Decontamination phases to be successfully completed, this thesis focuses on strategies for the last two “D’s”. With the community-based sustainable Development of Vieques, were spatial, social and psychological barriers can be transcended, I not only intend to return lands [Devolution] for civilian re-use, but their dignity as well. My design proposal takes the Master Plan for Sustainable Development of Vieques into consideration because for the first time Viequenses were involved in planning the future of their own island, and I believe in the will of the people who while grieving, were strong enough to compile a set of demands that would benefit everyone. I happen to also agree with the plan’s principles:

1. Give preference to strategies that promote participation and not exclusion.
2. Encourage strategies and projects that reduce the cost of living, increase income and promote its integration to the rest of the Puerto Rican economy.
3. Promote the maximum economic diversity that is compatible with the reduced scale of the municipal island.
4. Favor economic models based in small or medium sized businesses, cooperatives and community-based companies in order to properly distribute the benefits of the development.⁸³

After confronting a toxic evil such as the U.S. Navy, the people of Vieques support a sustainable development for their island; one that will not waste natural resources or degrade the natural surroundings. It has to be understood that for Vieques' development, the growth or expansion should not mean privatization of beaches or other resources, blocked views, or excessive construction. In order to democratize the process, the Master Plan offers a list of Urban Design Guides. Some suggestions include:

1. Demolish or rebuild only when it is not practical or economically feasible to reuse, adapt or expand an existent construction.
2. Take advantage of all the benefits that the site has to offer, using the particular microclimate, prevailing winds, weather patterns, and solar orientation and the immediate urban environment.
3. All buildings must be designed so as to minimize the cost of maintenance, as well as minimize potential environmental impacts that could cause throughout its life.
4. All construction must incorporate appropriate techniques and technologies to maximize energy efficiency and water. Simultaneously reduce all harmful fumes into the air or ground water.
5. When possible, locally produced materials should be used to avoid travel costs.
6. The construction quality, shape, and terminations of materials used should be considered in order to extend the life of the construction.
7. In all constructions, it should prevail constructive rationality, flexibility, adaptability and climate advantage over any aesthetic or stylistic positioning of the designer.⁸⁴

It's not a surprise that the people of Vieques, in hopes to boost their economy, would push for a different kind of tourism than the rest of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean in order to correspond with the suggestions mentioned in the Master Plan for Sustainable Development of Vieques. Apart from eco-tourism, the master plan also has recommendations on issues like transportation, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, environmental awareness, and the need for public spaces, which I explore in this thesis.

To San Juan

Humacao

15 minutes

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 133 Current transportation from main Puerto Rico to the island Municipality of Vieques.

Current Arrival at Vieques

Actual Arribo a Vieques

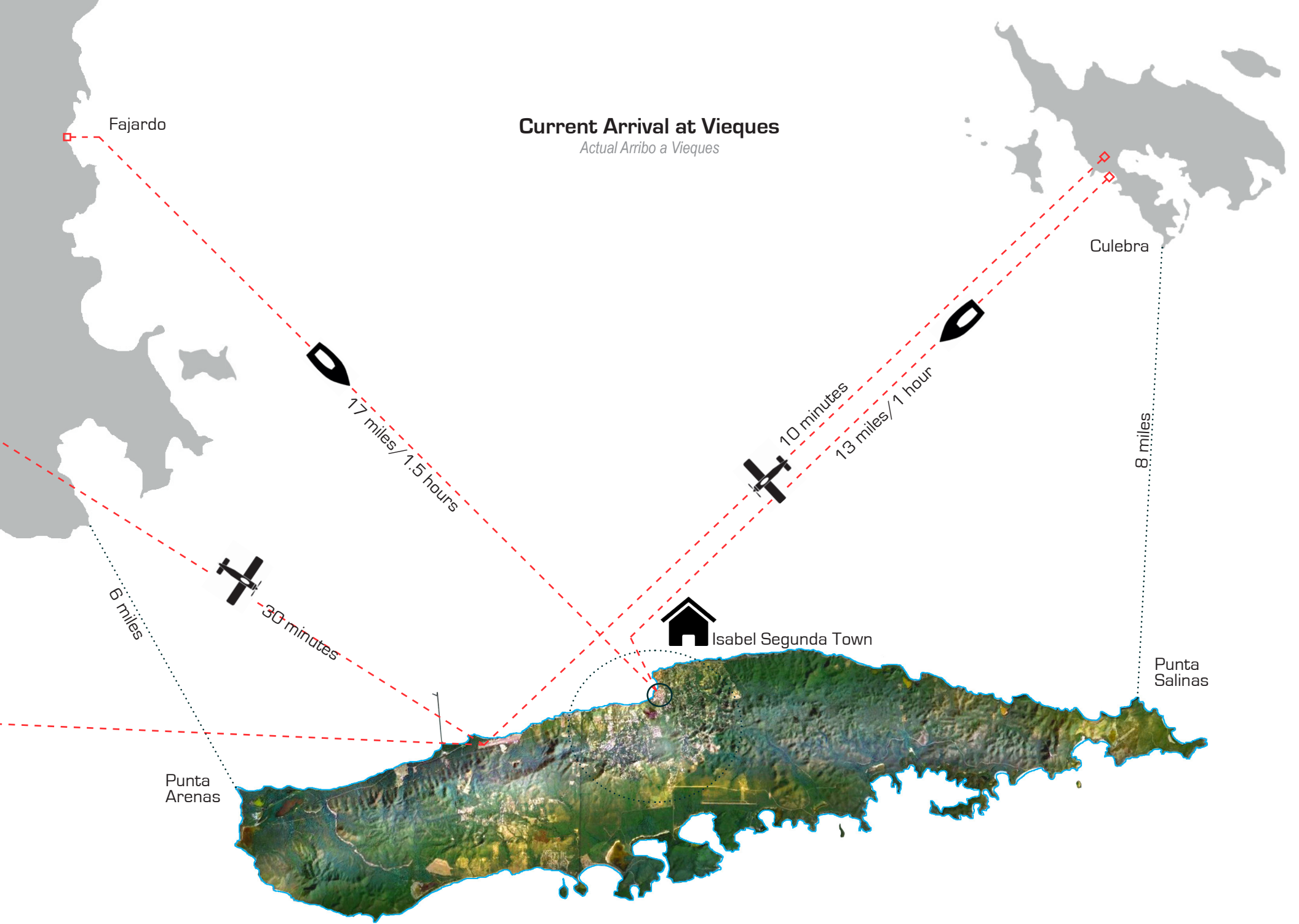




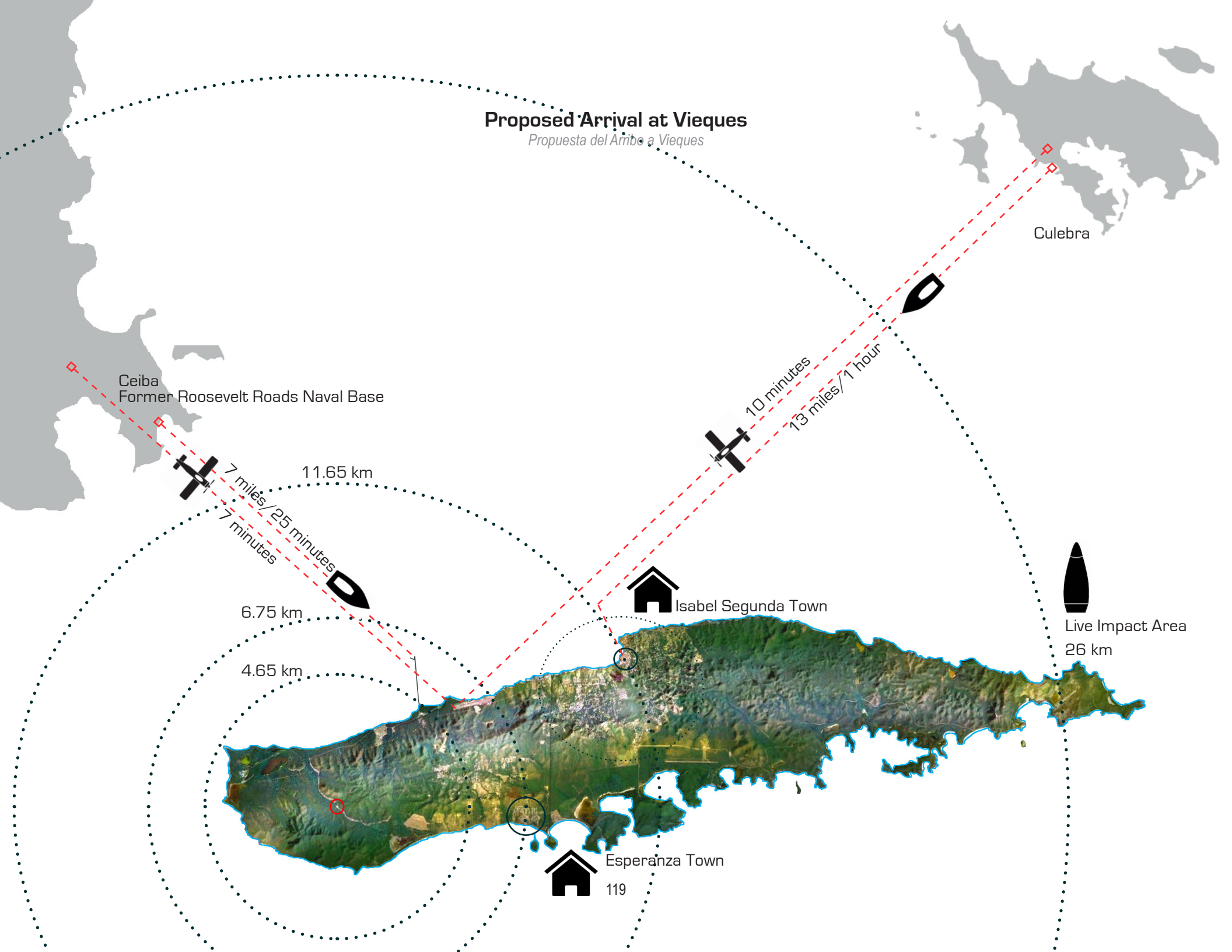
Fig. 134 Pedal carts, a sustainable and cost effective method of transportation that could be implemented in Vieques, especially for people who go to Vieques for a day and do not need to rent a car. It offers the opportunity to explore the island once people step off the ferry terminal (white building at backdrop).

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 135 Proposed transportation from main Puerto Rico to the island Municipality of Vieques.

Proposed Arrival at Vieques

Propuesta del Arribo a Vieques



Culebra

Ceiba
Former Roosevelt Roads Naval Base

11.65 km

7 miles / 25 minutes
7 minutes

6.75 km

4.65 km

Isabel Segunda Town

Esperanza Town

119

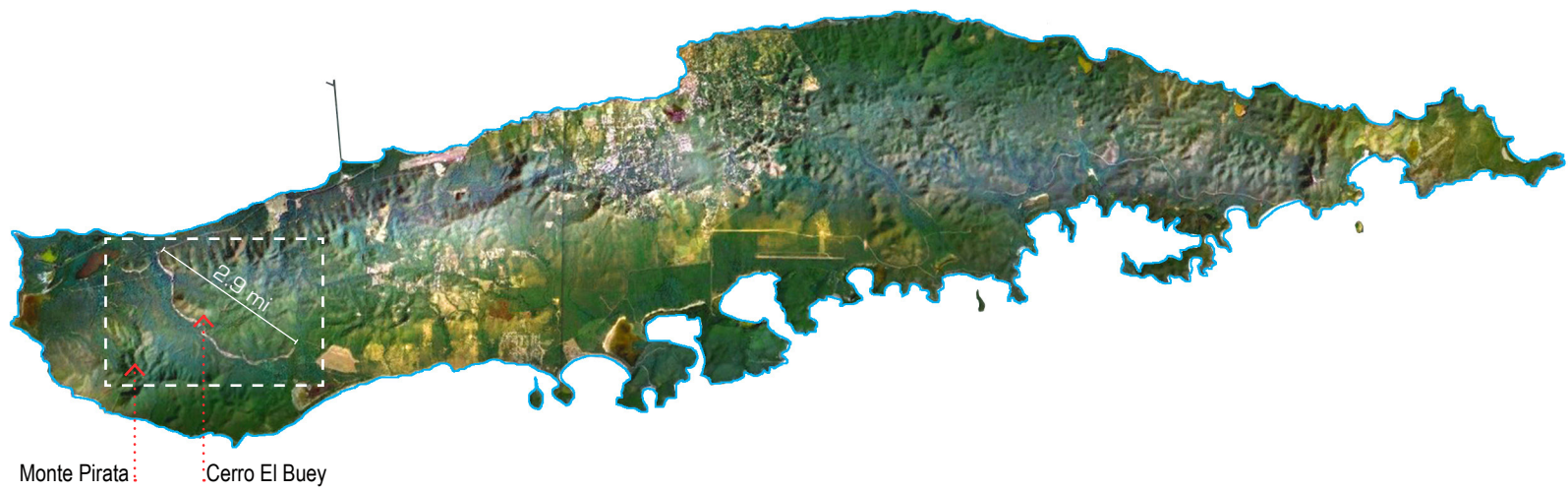
Live Impact Area
26 km

10 minutes
13 miles / 1 hour



Site Location

Ubicación del sitio



Ammunition Bunkers - Former NASD

Depósitos de Municiones - Previo NASD

One hundred and two concrete bunkers, formerly used to store ammunition for war exercises, sit camouflaged under man made hills in West Vieques where wild horses roam freely. The 'scar' made in the landscape perceived only from above, is 2.9 miles (4.67 km) long and it lays at the skirt of two peaks, between Cerro El Buey and Monte Pirata, the tallest point in Vieques elevated at 936 feet.

There are five types of bunkers in the Former Naval Ammunition Storage Detachment, currently under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Trust of Puerto Rico and the Municipality of Vieques. These bunkers vary in shapes and functions. From canon vault, single-arch to triple-arch type bunkers, to canon vault with loading dock on either side excavated into mounds. Used to store high explosives, fuse and detonators, smokeless powder, inert ordnance, small arms and pyro, or even Red Cross provisions. Nearly all bunkers sit empty, only two have a new purpose; one is a pub and the other is used for research as a cave of bats.

Most of the bunkers are covered under vegetation pretending to become one with the landscape. Some are even inaccessible due to vegetation overgrown onto the road. Yet, these bunkers are the only visible evidence of the Navy's presence in the island. If some people choose to ignore the environmental degradation on East Vieques, this site is not easily hidden. Even though Vieques was not the stage of a war, the Navy practices felt like a real battlefield to nearly ten thousand residents. Now these bunkers quietly rest as a reminder of a traumatic past.

“Can the bunker become a ruin? It was easy for castles to do so, to become picturesque. This did not really happen to the vast majority of artillery fortifications: they have either been dug up or ignored. Mass concrete is difficult to dispose of. Many of the biggest structures are still there because in an urban environment their demolition would be noisy and inconvenient. But this does not mean that bunkers will become 'ruins'. They remind us of war that was far from heroic. As Virilio says, most people find them sinister, as if they give off an 'aura' of fear and dictatorship. Bunkers obviously fall into disuse and disrepair, but they don't really become ruins. They are, as blocks of mass concrete, still there, just as they were.”⁸⁵

Some might believe these bunkers symbolize the subjugation of Puerto Rico under the United States. To me these abandoned bunkers symbolize the triumph of the Puerto Rican people over the defense institution of the colonizer. To emphasize this conviction of mine, these bunkers will not become ruins. They will not be ignored. They will be adapted and reused, thus taking back the land that never belonged to the other.

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 137 Design proposal site within the 'scar' left by the group of abandoned bunkers.

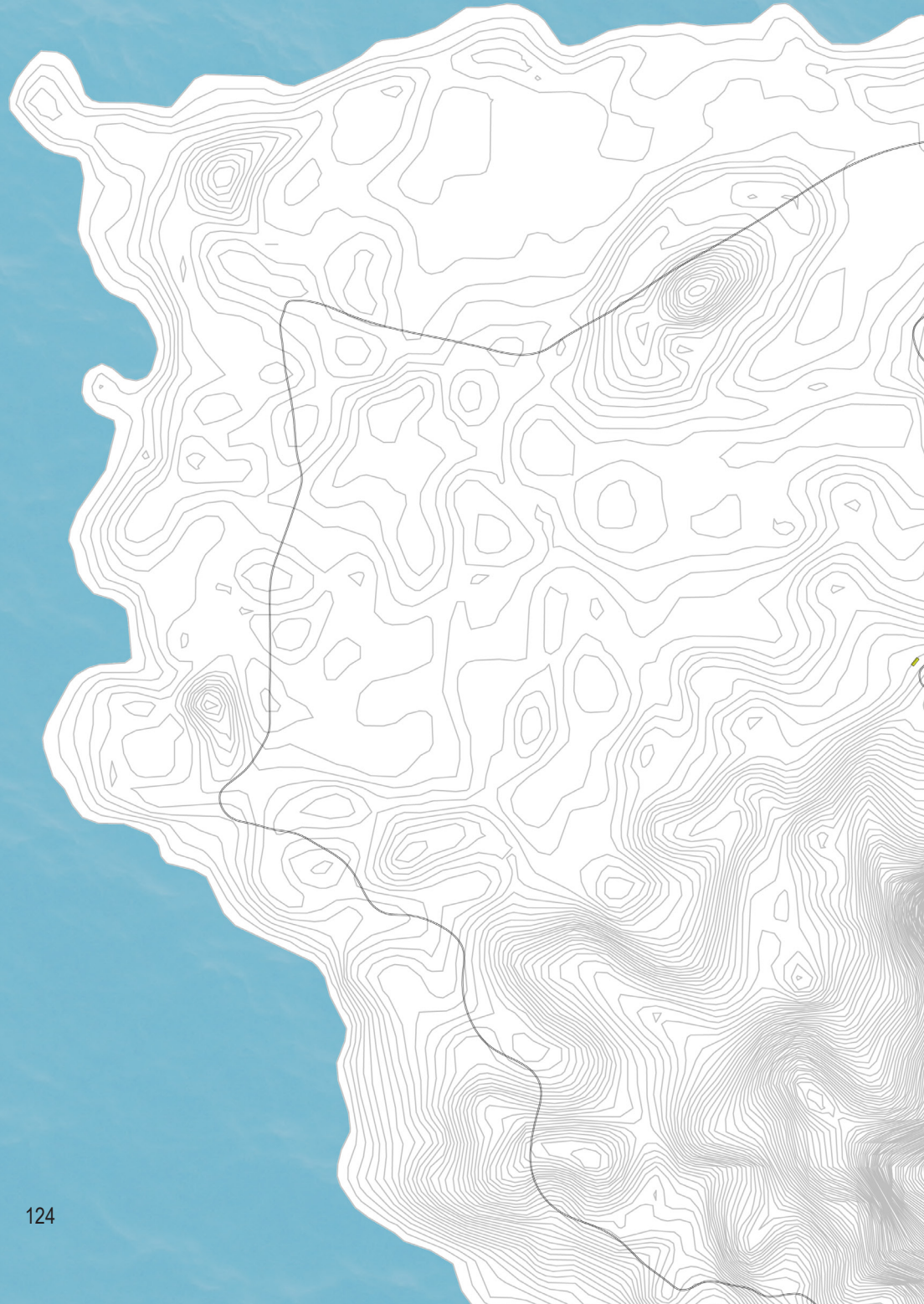
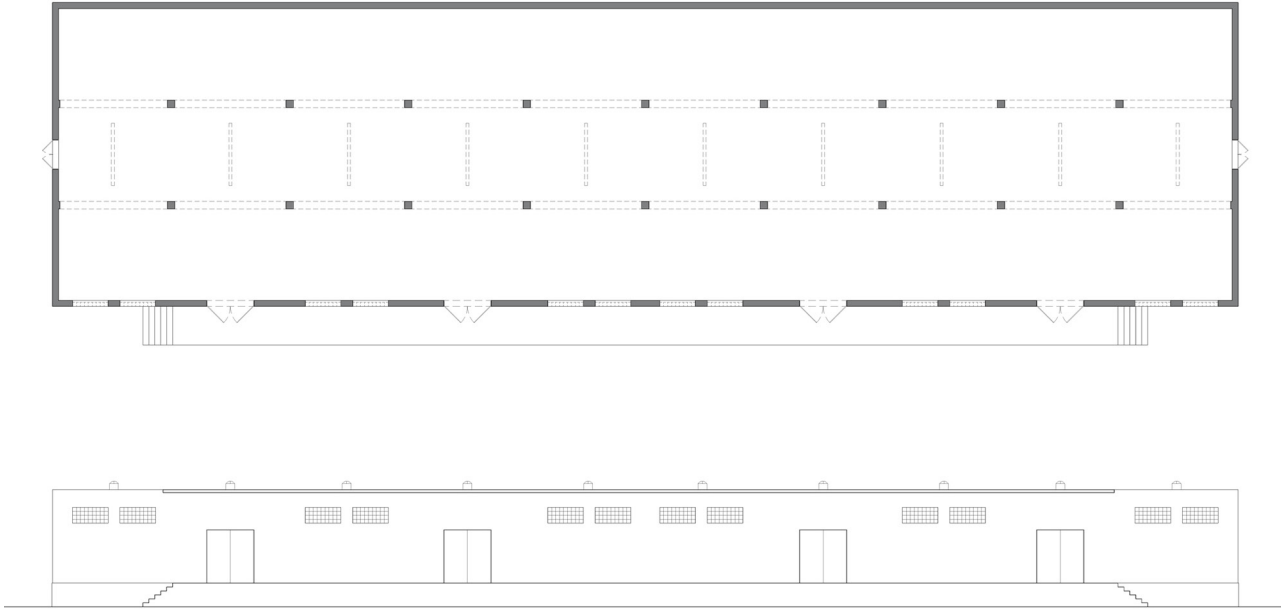
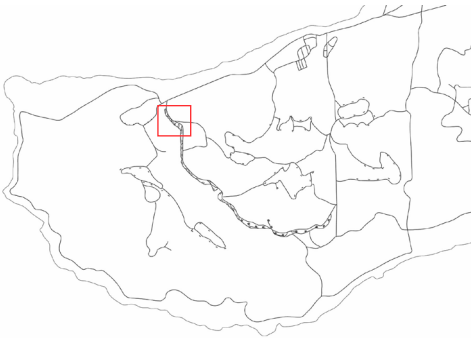


Fig. 138 Location of different types of bunkers. The green area emphasizes the site for this thesis.



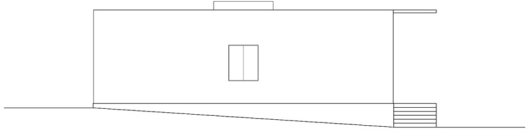
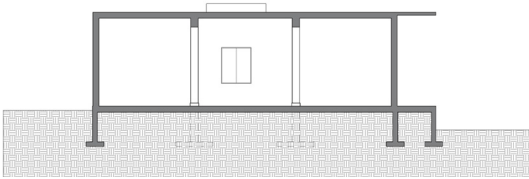
Bunker Type A

Tipo A



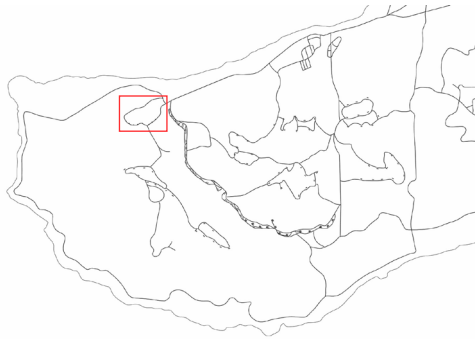
(Top Left)
Fig. 139 Bunker Type A Location.

(Right)
Fig. 140 Bunker plan, front elevation, transversal section
and side elevation; scale 1/32" = 1'.



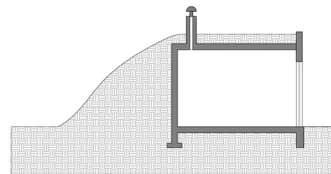
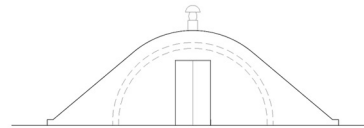
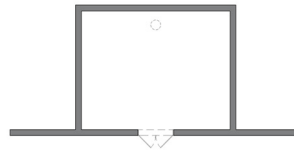


(Left)
Fig. 141 Inside view of Bunker Type A.
(Right)
Fig. 142 Front elevation of Bunker Type A.



Bunker Type B

Tipo B



(Top Left)
Fig. 143 Bunker Type B Location.

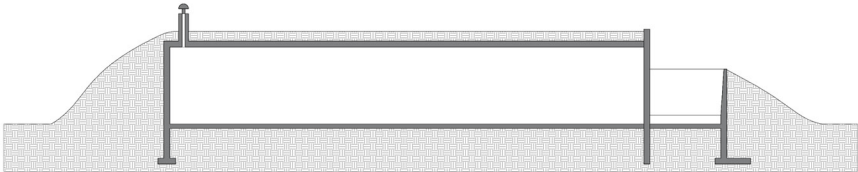
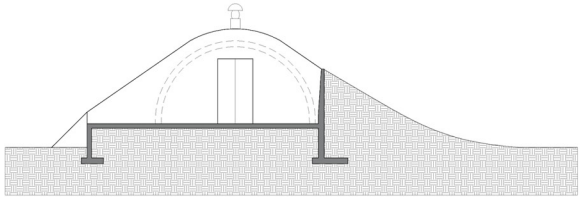
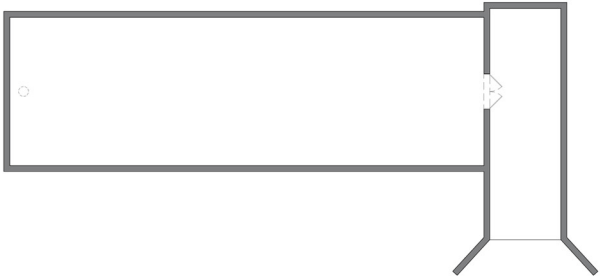
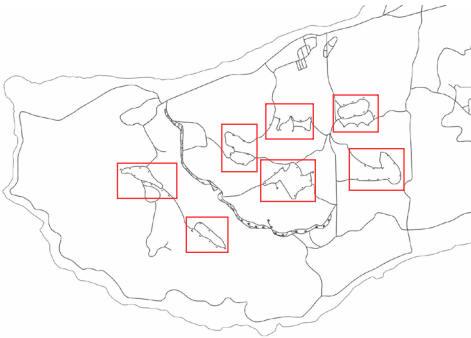
(Right)
Fig. 144 Bunker plan, front elevation and transversal section;
scale $1/32'' = 1'$.



(Left)
Fig. 145 Front elevation of Bunker Type B.
(Middle)
Fig. 146 View from inside Bunker Type B looking outside.
(Right)
Fig. 147 Inside view of Bunker Type B.

Bunker Type C

Tipo C



(Top Left)
Fig. 148 Bunker Type C Location.

(Right)
Fig. 149 Bunker plan, front elevation/ section of loading dock and longitudinal section; scale 1/32" = 1'.

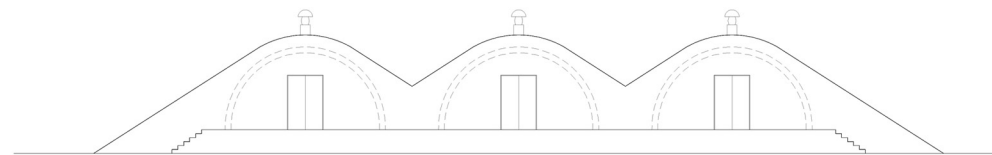


(Left)
Fig. 150 View of the Loading dock and entrance of Bunker Type C.
(Right)
Fig. 151 View from the inside of Bunker Type C looking at the loading dock.



Bunker Type D

Tipo D



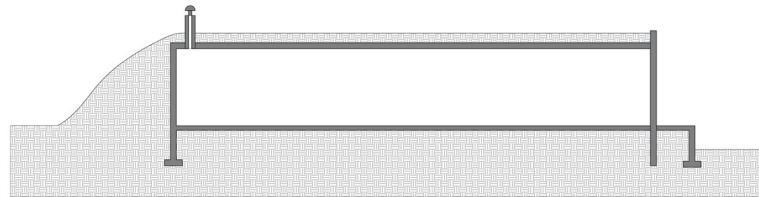
(Top Left)
Fig. 152 Bunker Type D Location.

(Right)
Fig. 153 Bunker plan, front elevation and longitudinal section; scale 1/32" = 1'.

(Opposite Page)

(Top)
Fig. 154 View of front elevation of Bunker Type D

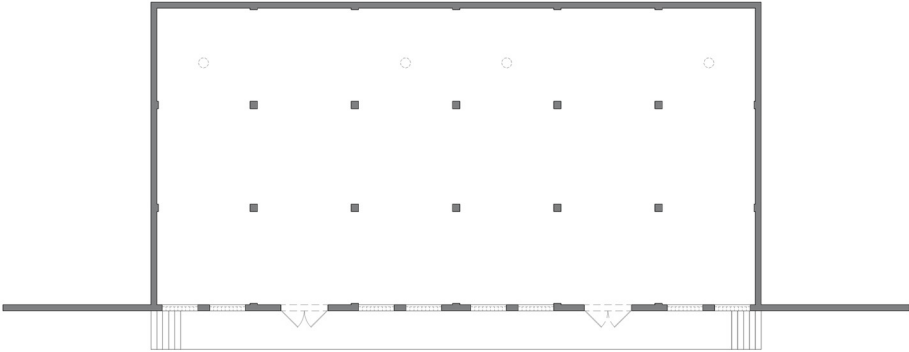
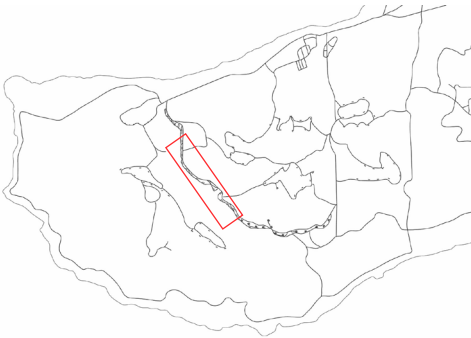
(Bottom)
Fig. 155 View of landscape around two of the Bunkers Type D.





Bunker Type E

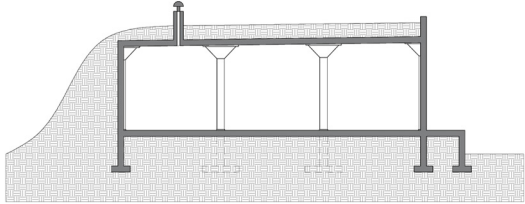
Tipo E



(Top Left)
Fig. 156 Bunker Type E Location.

(Right)
Fig. 157 Bunker plan, front elevation and transversal section;
scale 1/32" = 1'.

(Opposite Page)
(Top)
Fig. 158 Landscape around of Bunker Type E
(Bottom Left)
Fig. 159 View of front elevation of Bunker Type E.
(Bottom Right)
Fig. 160 Inside view of Bunker Type E.





Proposed Master Plan for Western Vieques
Plan Maestro Propuesto para el Oeste de Vieques



ACT OFG 00-04

NOV. 1

Understanding the historic context of the island and what the community needs, openly expressing their desires for the future development of Vieques, I came up with the design proposal divided into three spaces: an Agro[ECO]Hostel, a Commemoration Space and a Wind Park. These proposals will be the starting point for the sustainable development in three dimensions that the people of Vieques seek: the economical, the social and the environmental sustainability.

Using the existing infrastructure of the ammunition bunkers, the Agro[ECO]Hostel will activate the local economy through eco-tourism while supporting the preservation of the natural environment. The landscape proposal in between the hostel bunkers brings agriculture back to the Vieques scene. Rice harvesting not only will serve as an opportunity to employ the people of Vieques, but as symbol of emancipation and the need for food self-sufficiency.

A Wind Farm situated in the eastern tip of the island where the bombing practices took place, would not only offer them a renewable source of energy, but it would symbolically blow clean air into town for the first time in decades.

And lastly, in a different type of bunker I propose a Commemoration Space, a memorial dedicated to all the people that one way or another have had their life changed by the presence of the Navy and its practices; with an open plaza intended to not only to be the entrance site for the memorial, but it will also serve as a gathering space where people can commemorate the withdrawal of the Navy in May 2003.

All these proposals will contribute to realize the Viequenses wish of becoming the protagonists of their own sustainable development.

Fig. 161 Aerial view at the site for this thesis in West Vieques. Photograph taken November 10, 2000.

Commemoration Space

Fishermen's
Gallery

Vieques' Memorial

Public Plaza

Hammock Park

Rice Storage Silos

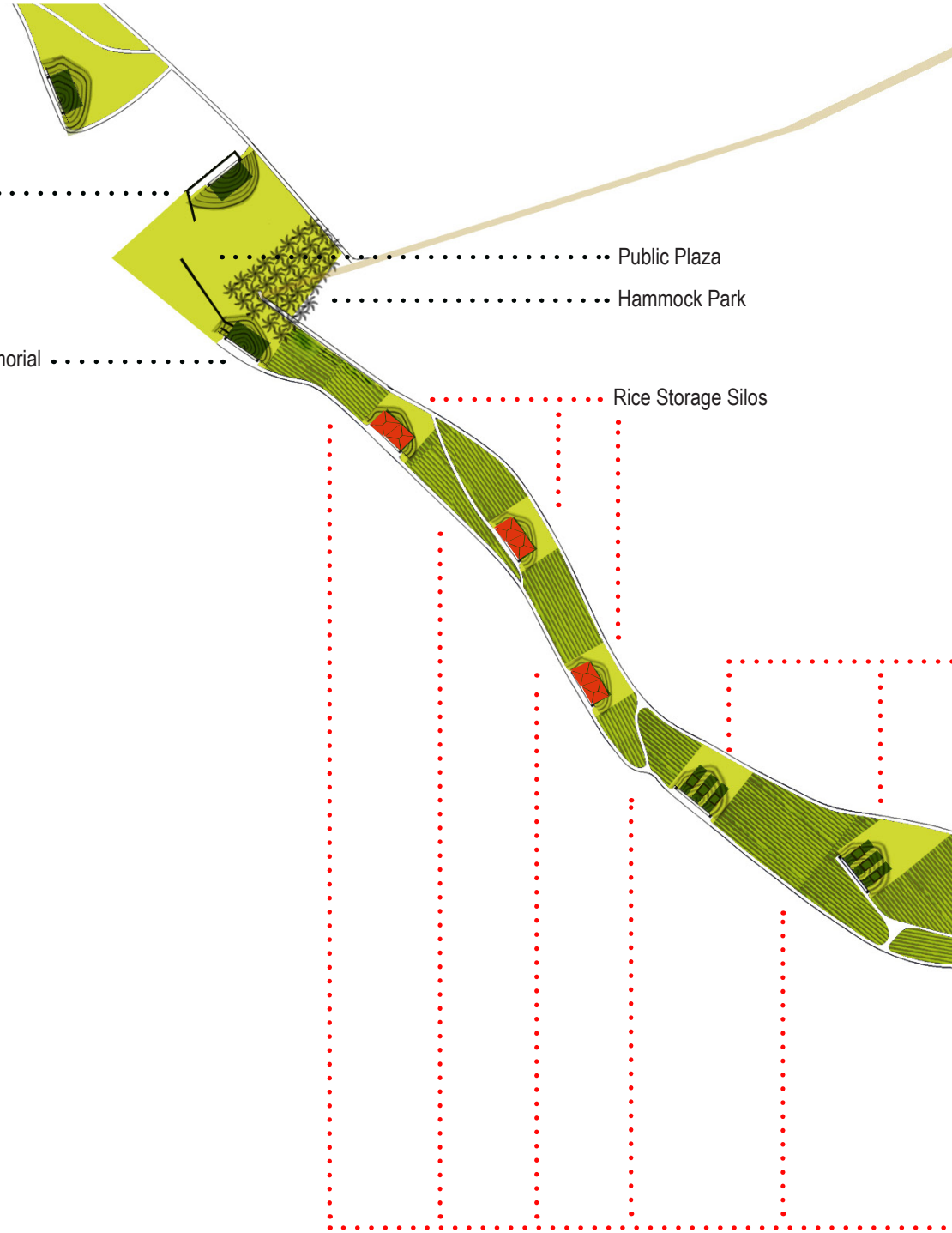
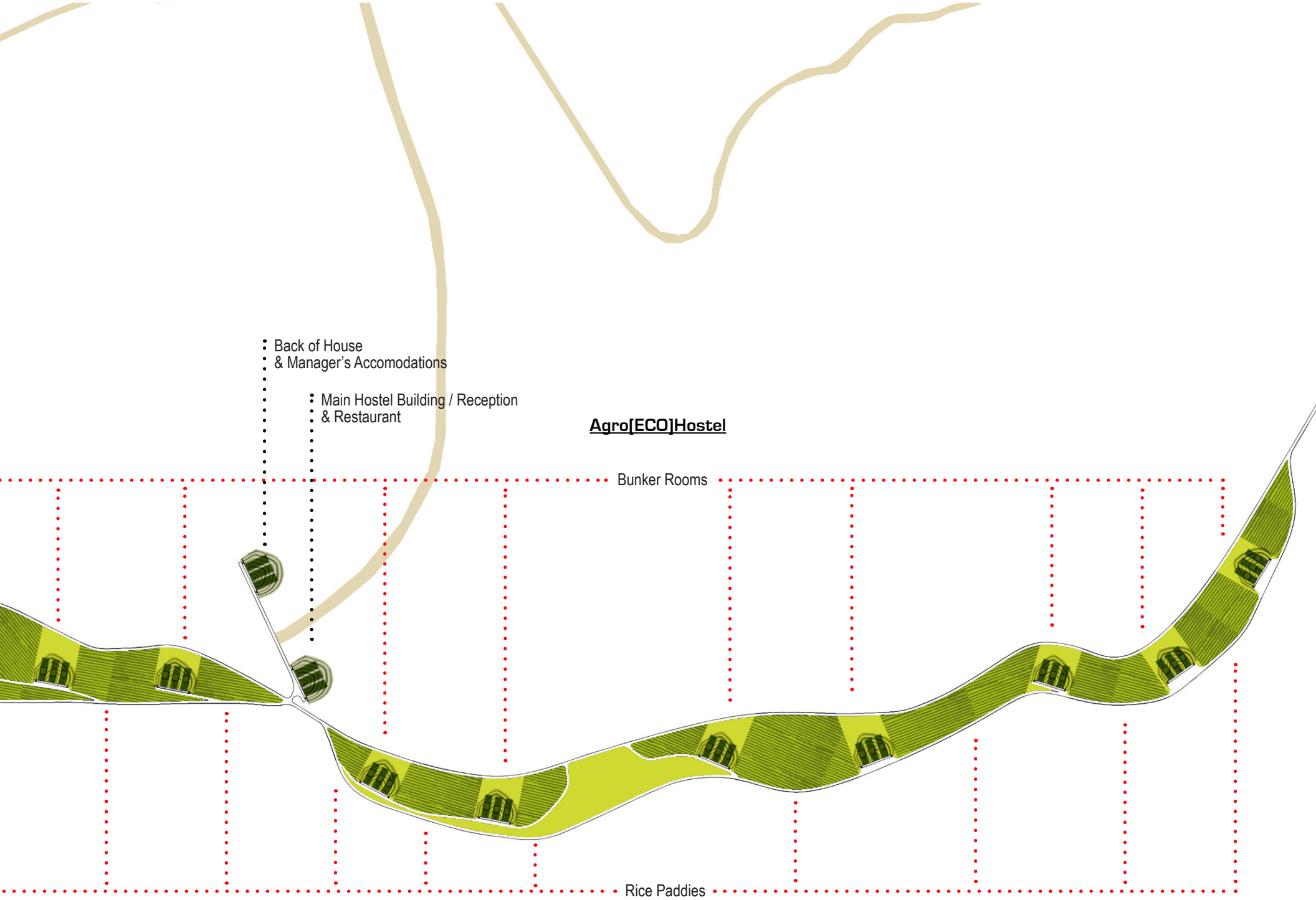
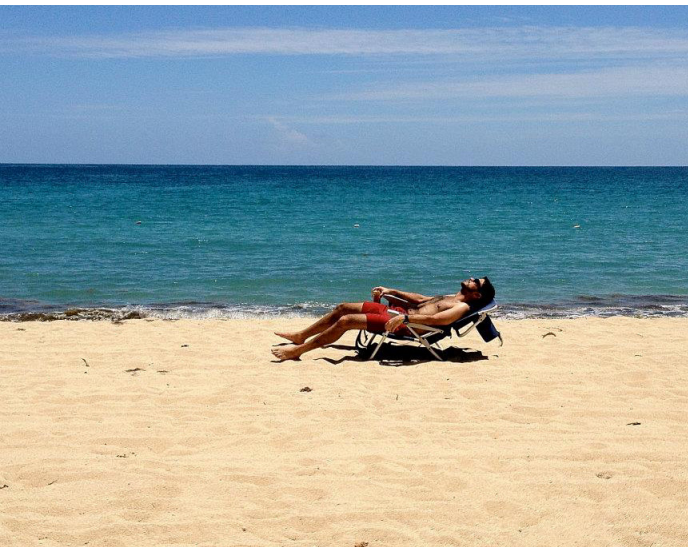


Fig. 162 Design Proposal Master Plan.



Ecotourism

Ecoturismo



(Left)

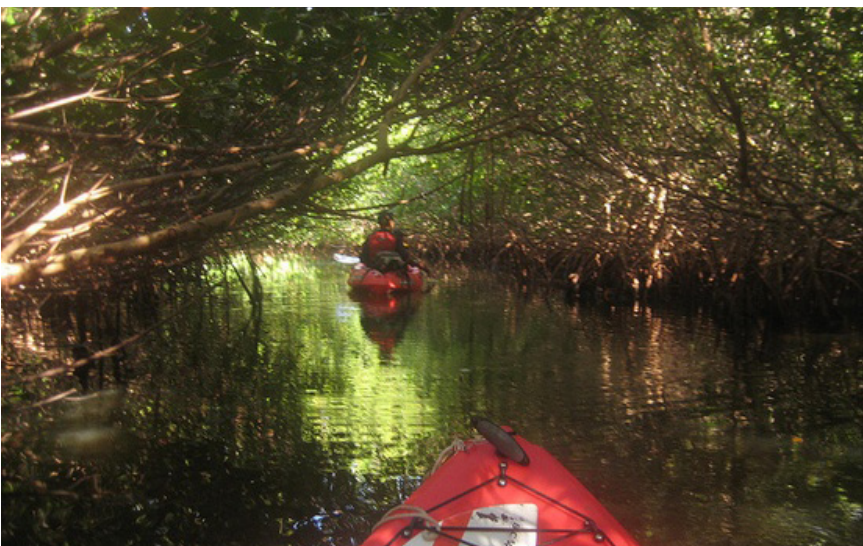
Fig. 163 Sunbathing at Vieques' beaches.

(Middle)

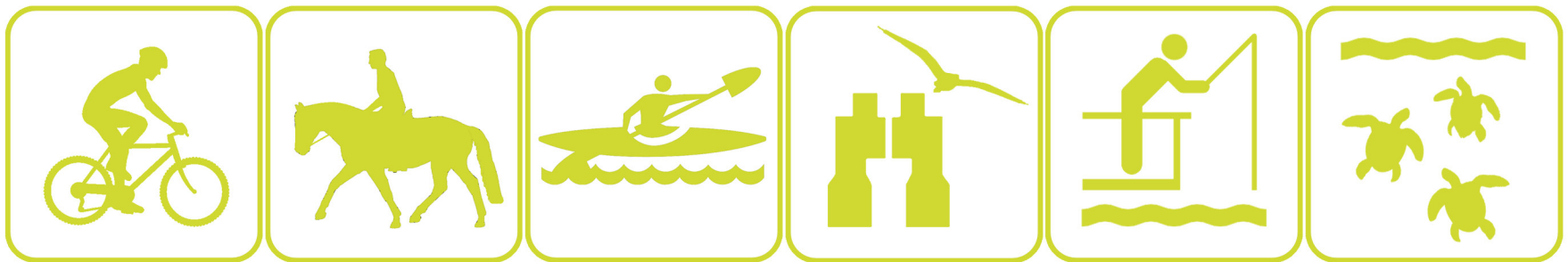
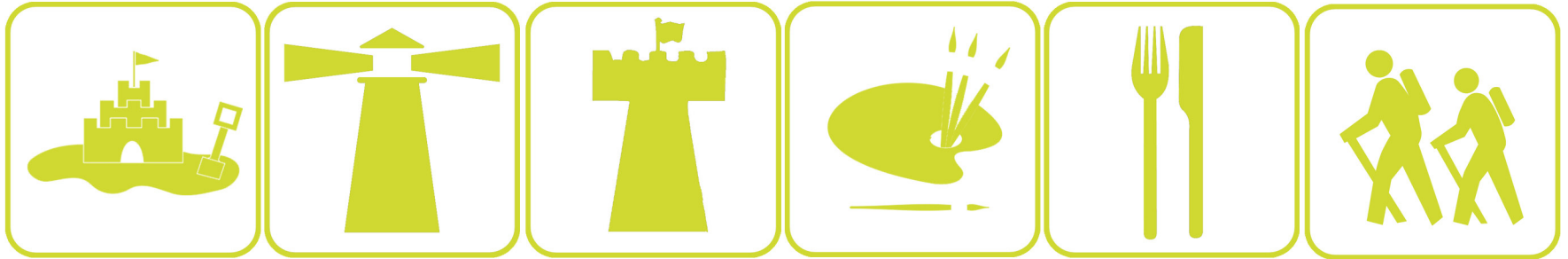
Fig. 164 Horseback riding through high pastures can be an adventure.

(Right)

Fig. 165 Bird watching at Vieques, Puerto Rico, 2004.



(Left)
Fig. 166 Kayaking through Vieques' mangroves, 2010. Kayaking in the Bioluminescent Bay at night is a must.
(Middle)
Fig. 167 Exploring the Ruins of Playa Grande Sugar Mill; one of the many places to visit and learn about Vieques' history.
(Right)
Fig. 168 Wandering Vieques' boardwalks.



A managed approach by the host country or region which commits itself to establishing and maintaining the sites with the participation of local residents, marketing them appropriately, enforcing regulations, and using the proceeds of the enterprise to fund the area's land management as well as community development.⁸⁶

The Master Plan for Sustainable Development of Vieques emphasizes in promoting Ecotourism as a form of sustainable tourism appropriate for the island. It is intended to attract people who are interested in contemplating and experiencing tropical scenery year-round, while raising environmental awareness. Promoting community owned, cost accessible, eco-hostels and bed & breakfasts instead of massive hotels and "all inclusive resorts" that deprive the visitor from a full experience of the country's culture, while promoting the visitor to buy locally and enjoy local experiences outside of the resort's walls. Ecotourism in Vieques has the potential to reap benefits from differentiating its approach to tourism from the rest of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean.

For many people ecotourism means merely environmental preservation that is associated with touristic travels. There is however some level of deeper recognition on the part of some environmental specialists, tourism developers, academics and social institutions who view the notion of ecotourism differently to include the role of social responsibility and local community benefit.⁸⁷

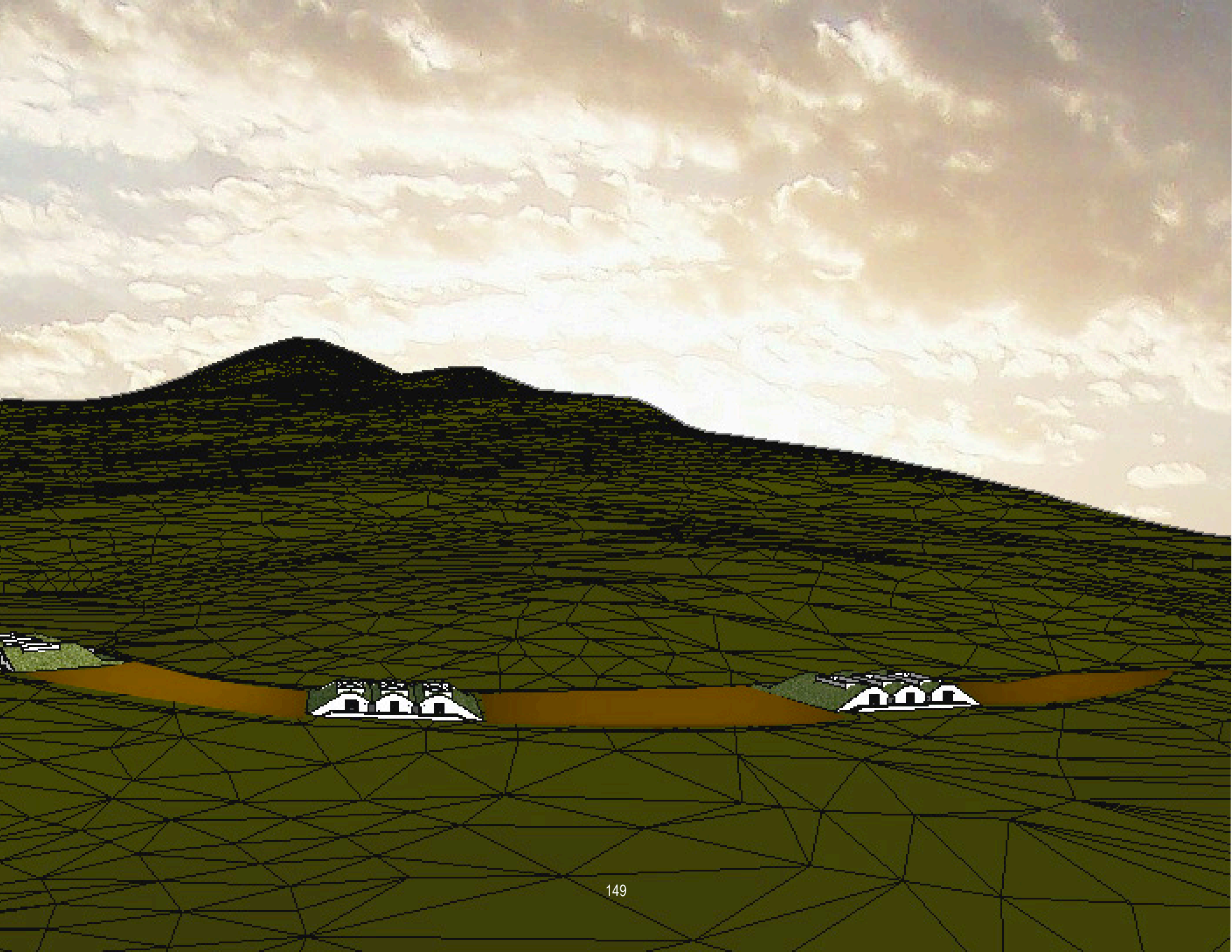
These benefits of ecotourism for the Viequeses would include: community pride and empowerment, employment, and to raise awareness about political, environmental and social climate for locals and visitors. For Vieques to invest in ecotourism means that locals and tourists, consciously or not, will be able to contribute to the struggle of decontamination of the areas in need and to maintain clean the rest of the island for the enjoyment of many generations to come.

These are some of the places and activities to be enjoyed at Vieques, Puerto Rico: Bioluminescent Bay, white sand beaches, snorkeling, scuba diving, kayaking, bird watching, hiking, trekking, biking, turtle nesting, horseback riding, fishing, museums and galleries, lighthouse, Fortin Conde de Mirasol, ruins of Playa Grande sugar mill, and experience the local cuisine.

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 169 A symbol palette for eco-tourist activities in Vieques.



Fig. 170. Perspective view of the design proposal for the Agro[ECO]Hostel in Vieques, Puerto Rico.





Agro[ECO]Hostel

Agro[ECO]Hostal

“An ecolodge is a two- to seventy-five room, low impact, nature-based, financially sustainable accommodation facility that helps protect sensitive neighborhood areas; involves and helps benefit local communities; offers tourists an interpretative and interactive participatory experience; provides a spiritual communion with nature and culture; and is planned, designed, constructed, and operated in an environmentally and socially sensitive manner.”⁸⁸

Hitesh Mehta, an architect expert in ecolodges, then suggested some standards to determine if an ecolodge is authentic or not. According to him it should embody three main principles of ecotourism: “nature should be protected and conserved, the local community must benefit through community outreach and educational programs, and interpretative programs must be offered to educate tourists and employees about the surrounding natural and cultural environments.”⁸⁹ He then added a list of eight additional criteria, from which at least two must be present.

1. Use alternative and sustainable means of water acquisition and at the same time reduce overall water consumption.
2. Meet its energy needs through passive design and renewable sources.
3. Provide for careful handling (reduce, refuse, recycle, reuse) and disposal of solid waste.
4. Use environmentally friendly sewage treatment systems.
5. Fit into its specific physical and cultural contexts through careful attention to form, landscaping, and color as well as through the use of vernacular architecture.
6. Use environmentally friendly building and furnishing materials.
7. Have minimal impact on the natural surrounding and utilize traditional building techniques during construction.
8. Endeavor to work with the local community, including community members, wherever possible, in the initial physical planning and design stages of construction.⁹⁰

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 171 The current state of many of the empty bunkers where nature has taken over.



My proposal for the Agro[ECO]Hostel focuses in the southern area of the site where the triple-arch poured concrete bunkers are concentrated. There are thirteen bunkers, eleven contemplated for rooms, one for back of house and the managers' accommodation, and another for the main building, which includes reception and restaurant.

Each of the three-canon vaults of the bunker measures 80 feet long by 25 feet wide [approximately 24 x 7.6 meters]. Each vault is divided in half, creating 6 rooms per bunker; therefore the proposal accommodates 66 rooms. In order to let natural light and ventilation in each room, I decided the best strategy would be to create patios in the center of the vaults for each room; allowing the guest to be in contact with nature throughout the stay. The patios are possible by breaking a section of the ceiling, which is a foot wide, and also part of the concrete slab. A wooden box is later attached to the opening for the patio to not only give privacy, a dividing wall between same-vault patios is also contemplated for this reason, but to offer a softness the bunker typology lacks. Besides, from the facades it's not completely obvious the bunkers have been modified; the box activates the curiosity of outsiders as to what is happening inside these bunkers.

The compound does not have fences or walls to provide security and privacy. Instead every patio has a dense foliage tree that act as a first layer of privacy. In order to avoid people climbing up the slopes to look through the patios into the rooms, I propose vegetation instead of technology such as cameras or motion sensors. The bougainvillea is an evergreen plant full of thorns, native to South America and ideal for warm-climate year-round, which will serve as a barrier when planted throughout the slopes that cover the bunkers preventing people from trying to climb up. The bougainvillea grows from 1 meter up to 12 meters and its flowers bloom almost year round. Its high salt tolerance makes this plant ideal for coastal regions like Vieques. The bougainvillea will eventually grow and fall to cover the sides of the patio, painting its walls with bright colors like pink, purple, magenta, red, orange, yellow, or white. A third layer of trees at the skirt of the slopes will enforce further matters of privacy and security.

As an alternative to the use of chemicals present in insect-repellent sprays that affect the environment and people's health, I propose to also plant catnip and lemon grass in all patios. Both perennial plants will serve as organic repellent for mosquitoes that are abundant in the area. Lemon grass is a tropical, clumping ornamental plant that grows 5 to 6 feet tall. Catnip grows up to 3 feet tall and blooms clusters of white and purple flowers during summer. Studies have shown that Catnip is many times stronger than DEET, the most common ingredient in mosquito repellent. In addition, all beds will be covered with nets as the hostel is designed to be ecological, so there won't be any type of artificial air conditioning; thus the room can remain open to the patio during the night or leave the shutters open to let the breeze in.

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 172 Floor Plan, Proposal for the Three-arch type D Bunkers. Each of these bunkers contain 6 rooms of the Agro[ECO]Hostel; scale 1/16" = 1'.

Cross-ventilation is contemplated for all six rooms of each bunker. The breeze will enter the bunkers through the patios and travel across the rooms. For the three rooms located in the front façade, the breeze will also enter or exit, depending on which bunker since all eleven bunkers are oriented differently, from the patio and travel to the front window or vice versa. For the three back rooms that lack this window, I propose a wooden lattice to be located above the entrance door expecting the air will enter from the patio and leave through that opening or vice versa. The flowers growing on top of the bunkers will provide a pleasant aroma that will be blown into the rooms and throughout the hostel.

The entrances to the rooms depend on whether the guest enters from the main façade or from the back of the bunker where the soil and vegetation start to cover its vaults. I propose the entrance of the back rooms by cutting into the soil and making an opening. The backdrop of the opening has a bench to sit down; the entrance of the room is on the sides, never visually direct. On the main façade where the existing doors of the bunker are located, I penetrate the concrete to make two similar openings. The three existing doors are removed and replaced by wood shutter doors, typical of warm climates, and turned into windows. A piece of glass serves as obstacle between inside and out; the view will not be blocked if the shutter doors are open. There is no excessive alteration to the bunkers, making the proposal economically feasible.

The dividing wooden walls between the room and the bathroom are low to always expose the arch shape of the bunker. I propose a low wall in front of the existing curved one not only to place the bathroom built-in furniture, but also to hide all plumbing installations. Compost toilets are installed to be environmentally conscious and reduce the consumption of water. A glass door divides the shower from the patio, if closed it still offers a sensation of showering outside.

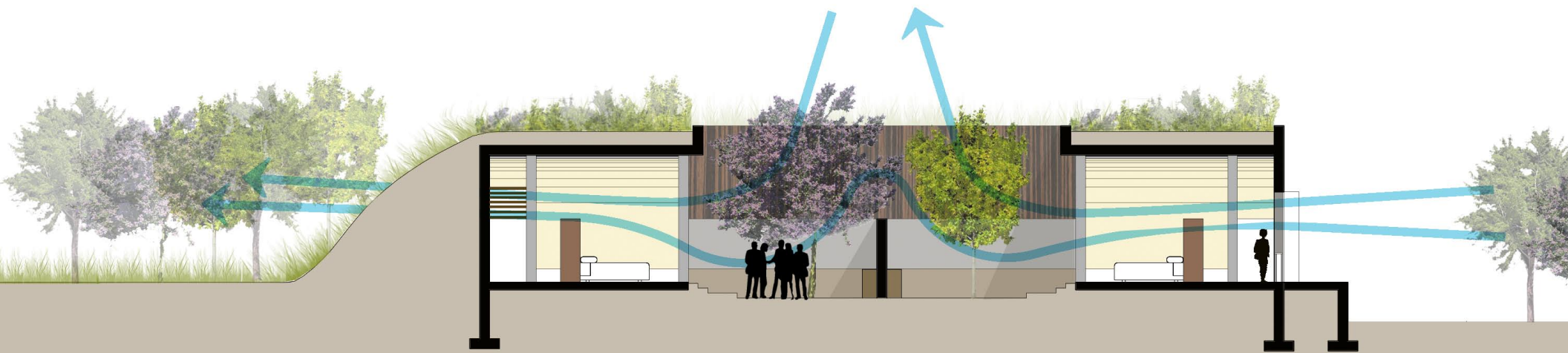


Fig. 173 Section A with cross-ventilation flow. Scale 1/16" = 1'



Fig. 174 Perspective showing Front Elevation of the Agro[ECO]Hostel.

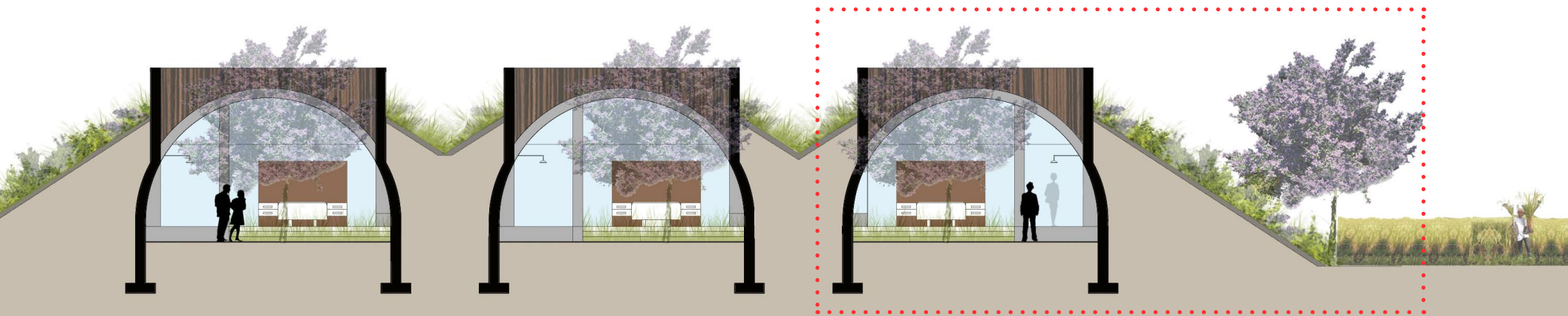


Fig. 175 Section B showing layers of privacy. Scale 1/16" - 1'

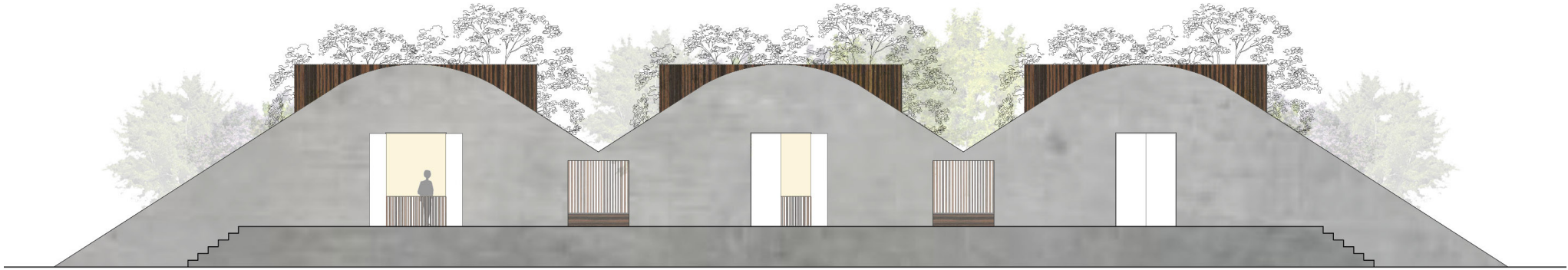


Fig. 176 Front Elevation 1/16" - 1'



Fig. 177 Back Elevation 1/16" - 1'

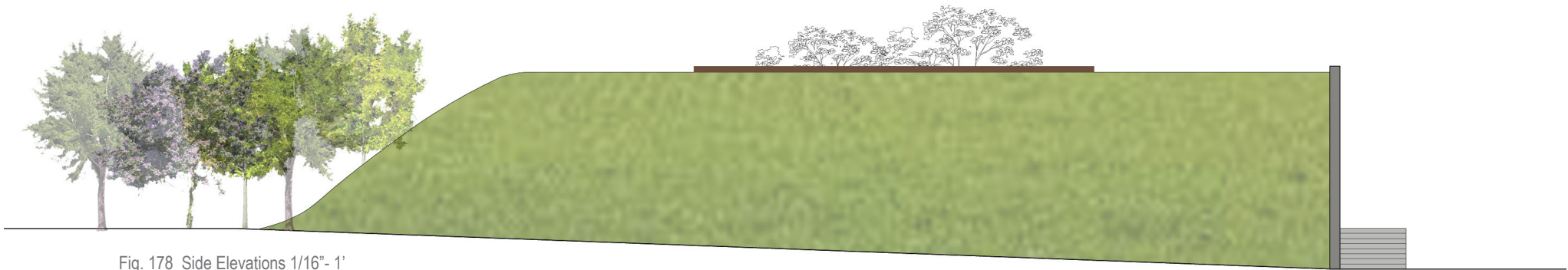


Fig. 178 Side Elevations 1/16" - 1'

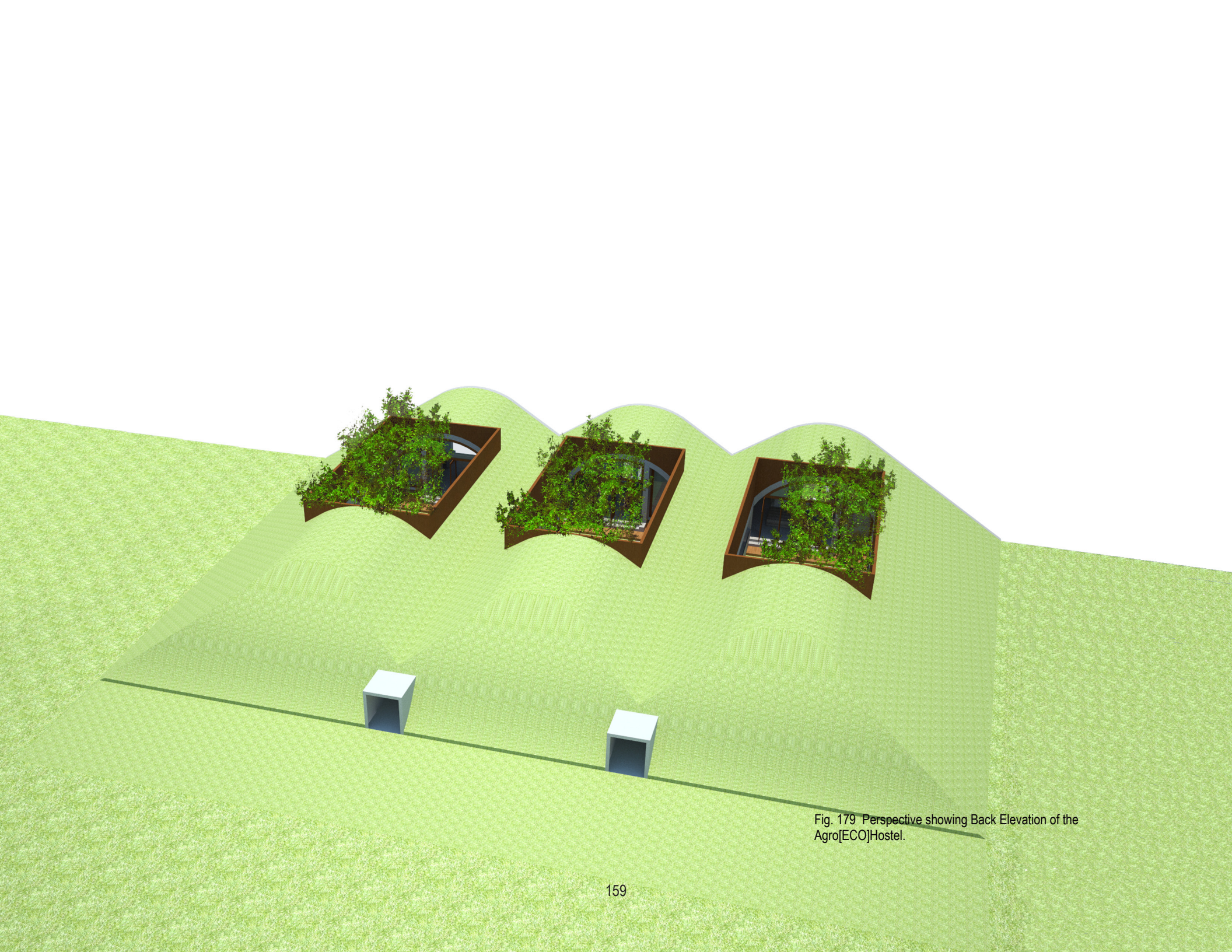


Fig. 179 Perspective showing Back Elevation of the Agro[ECO]Hostel.



Fig. 180 Perspective from the patio looking into the room.



Fig. 181 Perspective from the room looking into the patio.



Fig. 182 Aerial view looking into the patios.



Fig. 183 Perspective view of Agro[ECO]Hostel.



Agricultural Landscape

Paisaje y Agricultura

Rice is the most important grain Puerto Ricans consume. Every day we eat rice at least once, but ironically we do not cultivate it. In terms of food we are not self-sufficient, the majority of produce is imported from elsewhere. People tend to believe this is due to the geographical limitations that come with living in a relatively small island, but Puerto Rico used to be a major sugar exporter once. Our soil is fertile and the Viequenses are in need of job creation. Harvesting rice is not impossible. Fear of cultivating in Vieques' land can be mitigated after proper studies.

My landscape proposal intends to use the space in between the hostel bunkers, already delimited by the roads, to create the rice paddies. The paddies in between these bunkers will attract tourist to participate during seasons of planting, transplanting or harvesting, and give them the opportunity to engage in agriculture in order to create awareness, both visitors and locals, of the hard work necessary to put food on the table. It is much more than the act of buying a bag of rice at the supermarket.

Rice traditionally has been planted in water-flooded paddies, but the threat of increasing water shortages all over the world has given the space to create new technologies to change the process of rice cultivation. It is estimated that rice needs about 3000-5000 liters of water to produce 1 kg of the grain. In order to enhance the water supply, conserve water, and increase crop and water productivity, I propose to employ a sustainable method, System of Rice Intensification, known by its acronym SRI. SRI was developed in Madagascar in the 1980s with the notion of more rice and less water; it has been successfully applied in 40 countries around the world.



Fig. 185 Agricultural Landscape surrounds the hostel bunkers.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 184 Perspective showing the rice paddies in between hostel bunkers were locals and guests can join in the harvest of rice.



Fig. 186 Inside the rice silo bunker.

This method involves planting single and young seedlings instead of the traditional method of multiple and mature ones from the nursery. They are later transplanted in wider spaces at a shallow depth where the soil is kept well aerated with diverse microorganisms, instead of continuous flooding of rice fields. It also uses less seeds and chemicals, but more compost and organic manures. The SRI International Network and Resources Center at Cornell University explains, “Only a minimum of water is applied during the vegetative growth period. A 1-2 cm layer of water is introduced into the paddy, followed by letting the plot dry until cracks become visible, at which time another thin layer of water is introduced. During flowering a thin layer of water is maintained, followed by alternate wetting and drying in the grain filling period, before draining the paddy 2-3 weeks before harvest. This method is called ‘intermittent irrigation’ or ‘Alternative Wetting and Drying’ (AWD). Some farmers irrigated their fields every evening, other leave their fields drying out over 3-8 days, depending on soil and climate conditions.”⁹¹

This intermittent irrigation method can be supported by rainwater. The average amount of precipitation in Vieques is about 45 inches a year. The western part of the island receives a higher amount of rainfall (about 50 inches a year) than the eastern part (about 25 inches a year). The rainy season is from August through November while the remainder of the year is drier. Rainwater can be collected and stored in cisterns to be distributed along the paddies when needed.

With the future of food being uncertain and the issue of importing to the main island every consumable to later be transported to Vieques, food production needs to become a priority. Three bunkers are contemplated to store rice for the 10,000 Viequesenses for at least a year, with hopes that the rest of Puerto Rico realizes this idea for food emancipation can be translated into a greater symbol. A metaphor of rejection to the colonial condition we live under where the majority of consumables come from the United States, when we could produce some of our food and the rest could come from other parts of the world instead of being always looking up north desperate for goods.

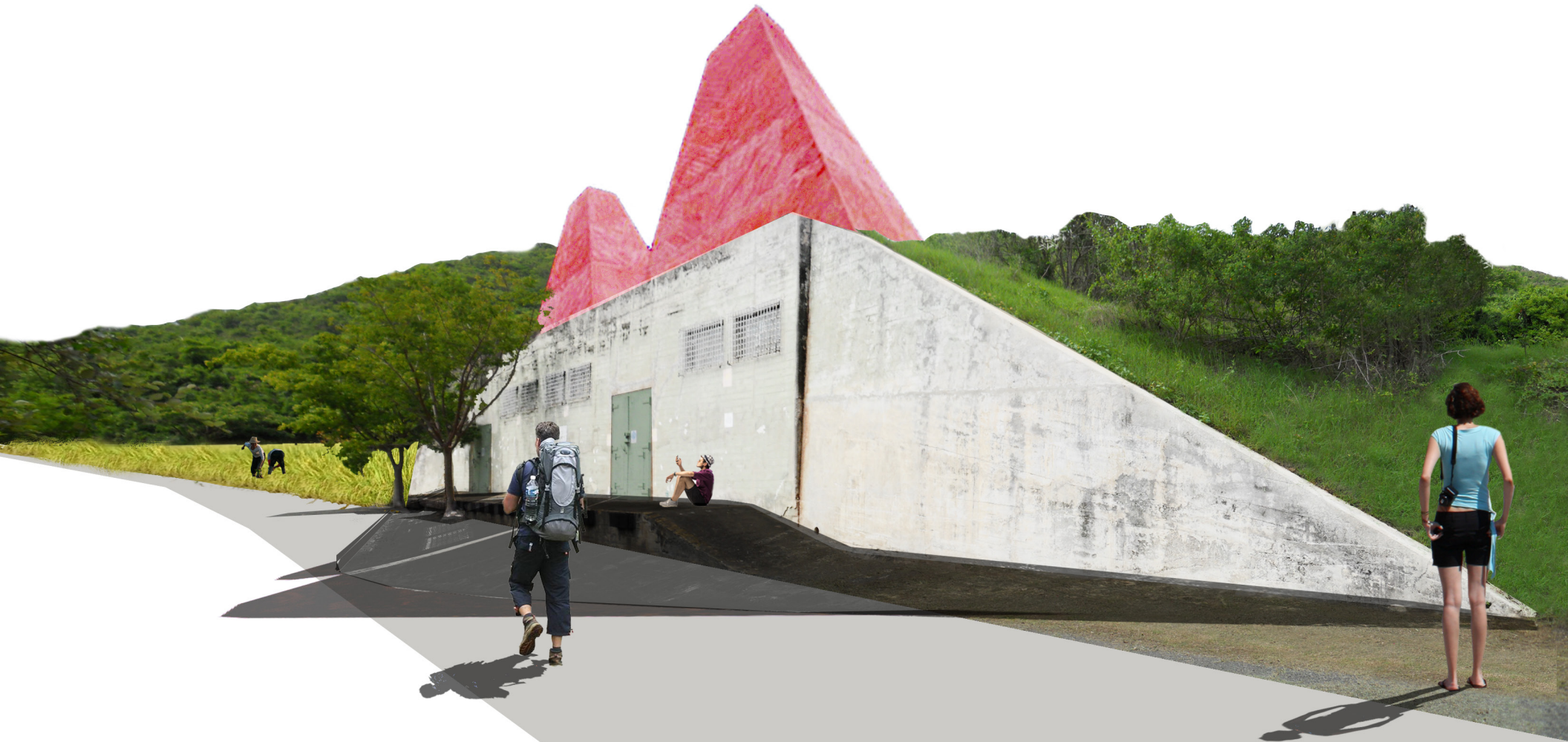


Fig. 187 Rice silo bunker, type E.



Fig. 188 'Arroz con Jueyes'

Fifth Anecdote

Quinta Anécdota

Recipe

Puerto Rican Yellow Rice with Crab

Arroz con Jueyes

Ingredients:

4 tablespoons annatto oil

12 crabs, cooked, or 1 pound lump crabmeat

1/2 cup basic *sofrito* (blend of cilantro (coriander), culantro, green pepper, sweet pepper, onion and garlic)

1/2 cup manzanilla olives, chopped

1 cup tomato sauce

3 cups parboiled long-grain rice

4 to 4-1/2 cups boiling water (You can use the same water used to cook the crabs.)

Procedure:

Heat the oil in a large pot with a tight-fitting lid. Add the crabs or crabmeat, *sofrito*, olives, and tomato sauce. Sauté over medium heat for 2 to 3 minutes. Add the rice and water; bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for 20 minutes, or until the rice is cooked. *Tostones* (fried plantains) are a great sidedish for any Puerto Rican meal.

¡Buen Provecho! Enjoy!

Wind Farm
Campo Eólico

Site Location

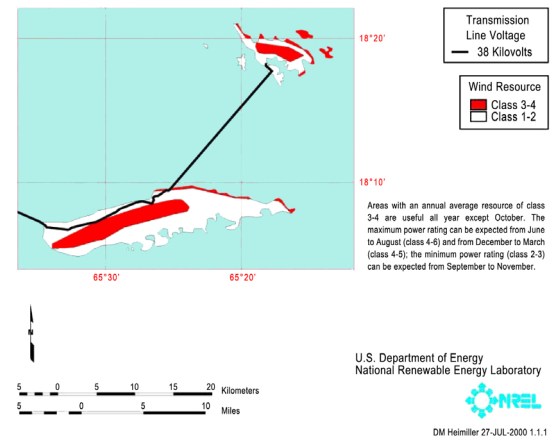
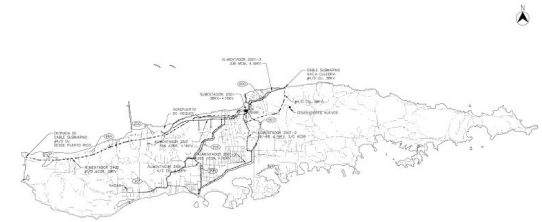
Ubicación del sitio



In 2012 two wind farms were established in main island Puerto Rico, in the municipalities of Santa Isabel and Naguabo, as part of the Energy Diversification Act of 2010 that, among other requirements, stipulated that in order to reduce the island's dependency on oil, by 2015 12% of Puerto Rico's electricity should be provided by renewable energies.⁹²

Electricity in the island Municipality of Vieques is transmitted from the main island through an underwater copper cable of 38kV from Punta Lima, Naguabo to Punta Arenas in West Vieques. From this point electricity is extended along the North side of the island to reach Substation 2501 in Las Marias sector in Isabel Segunda town, which transmits electricity through aerial cables to its 5,600 subscribers (residential, commercial, and industrial) at a 4.16 kV voltage. Subsequently, the island Municipality of Culebra receives their electricity from Substation 2501 in Vieques.⁹³ The average cost of electricity for the people of Vieques and Culebra in 2004 was \$0.13/kWh, adding up to six million dollars a year.⁹⁴ In November 2012 the average cost of electricity in Puerto Rico was \$0.21/kWh for residences, \$0.26/kWh for businesses, and \$0.24/kWh for industries⁹⁵, more expensive than in the U.S. with an average of 11.74¢/kWh for residences.⁹⁶

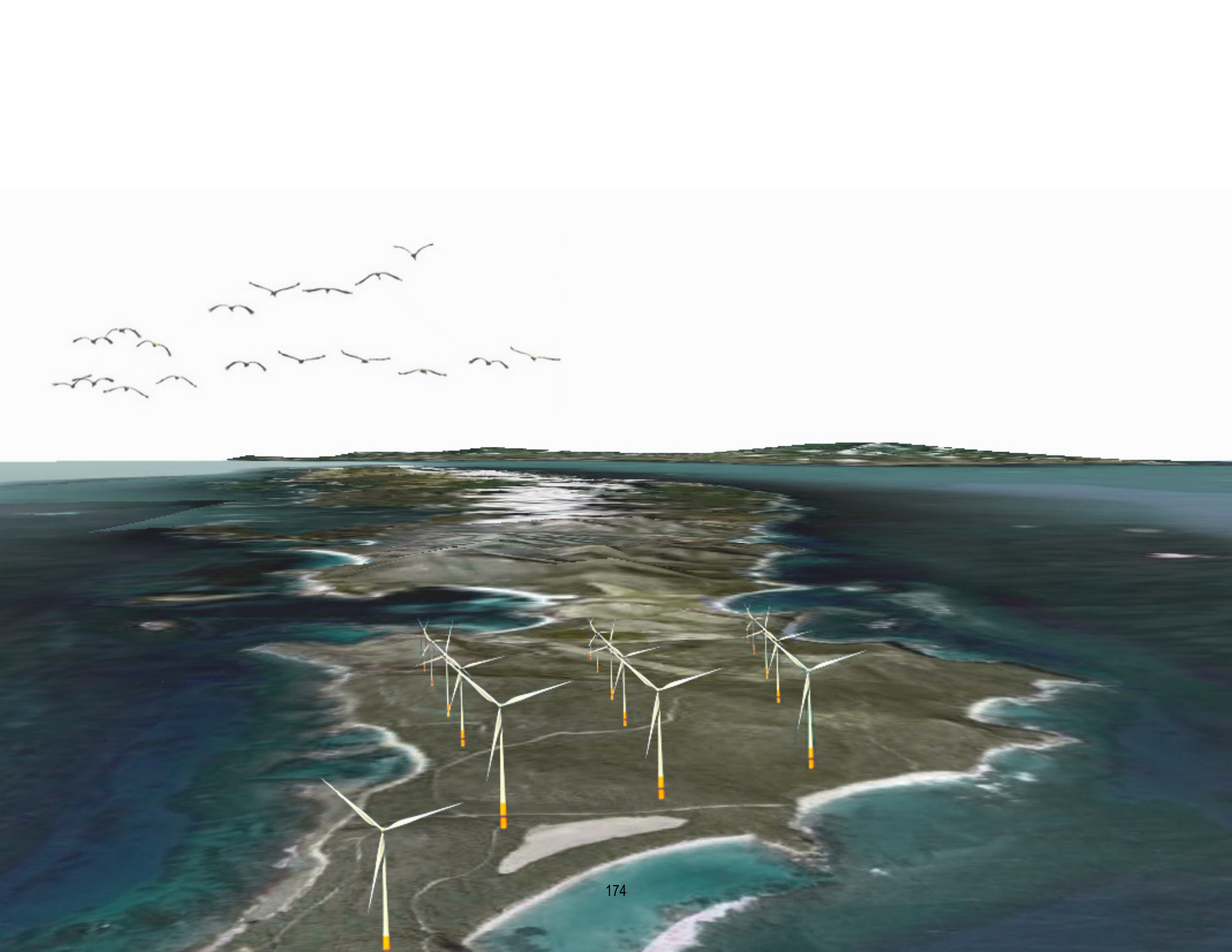
The high cost of electricity has opened the debate for renewable energies to be considered for Vieques. Renewable energies, solar power and wind power in particular, would offer many socioeconomic benefits for the people of Vieques, including many well-paid job opportunities for locals. The island would no longer rely on fossil fuels and its fluctuating high prices; electricity costs would be substantially reduced after five to ten years when the price of the production and storage units have been met. Viequenses could be paying around \$0.05/kWh if a Wind Farm is installed in the island.⁹⁷ This project would reinforce the people's aspiration for Vieques to become an ecotourism destination. Naturally, the energy supply for the Agro[ECO]Hostel, the production and storage of rice, and the Commemoration Space I propose in this thesis would be provided by the Wind Farm.



(Top)
Fig. 190 Electric Service System in Vieques, Puerto Rico.

(Bottom)
Fig. 191 Wind Resource and Transmission Lines in Vieques.

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 189 Location for the renewable source of energy proposal.



Located onshore Northeast Vieques, where wind power has been classified as class 3 with 6.4-7.0 m/s (14.3-15.7 mph) at 50 meters high, on the lands formerly occupied by the U.S. Navy to practice their maneuvers, currently administered by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The installation would have a capacity of 18MW, with a cost of approximately \$18 million dollars, that would satisfy the annual energy consumption of 46,500,000 kWh of not only Vieques, but also the island Municipality of Culebra; electricity could even be exported to the main island for \$0.07/kWh. The Wind Farm would consist of ten turbines of 1.8 MW, with a height of approximately 110 meters, designed to sustain winds up to 140 mph, equivalent to the force of a category 4 hurricane (Saffir-Simpson Scale).⁹⁸

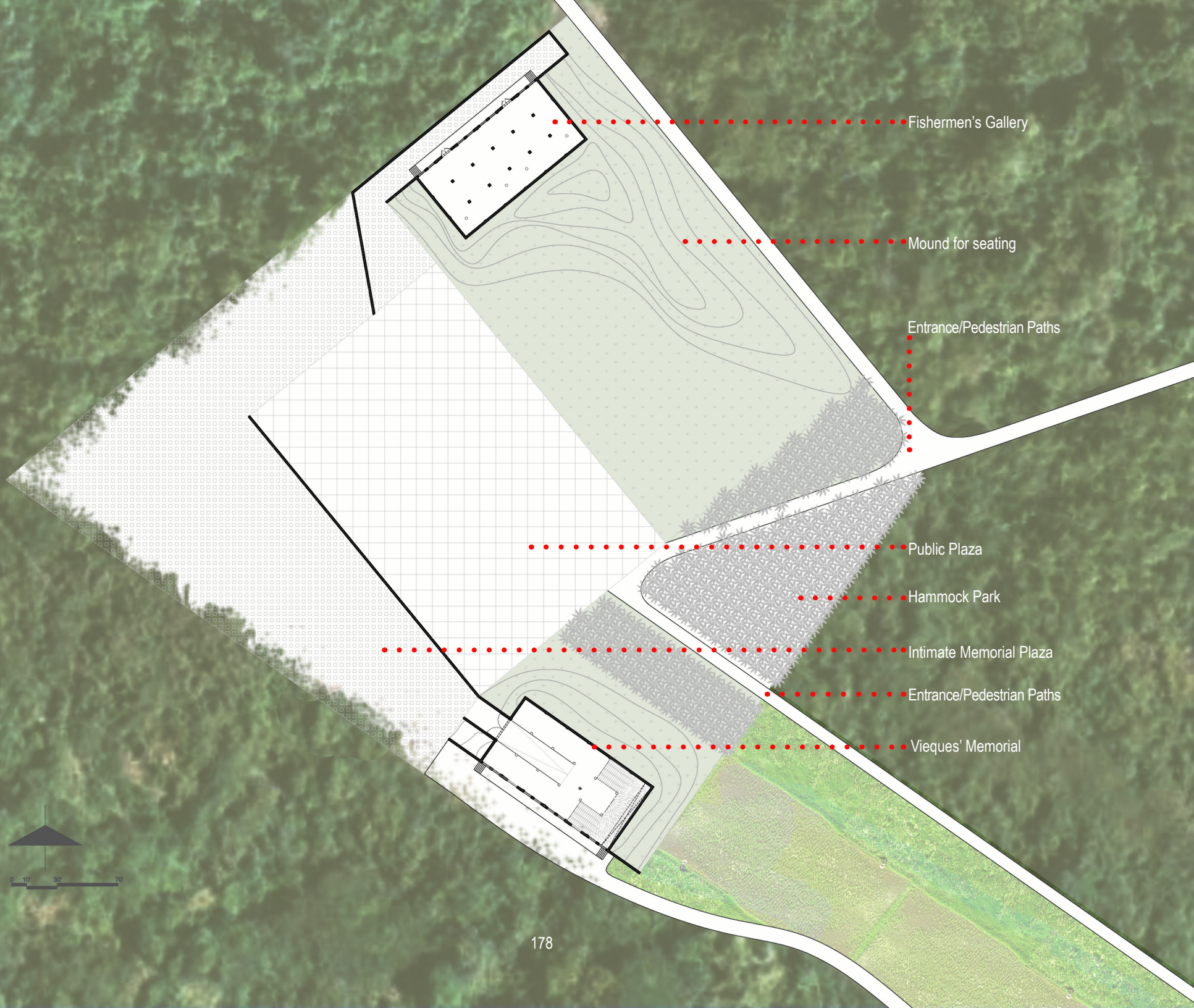
This Wind Farm gives the contaminated land a chance for a new purpose; give hope to the Vieques' people. The Eastern part of the island was bombed for fifty-five years and the prevailing winds took contaminants to both towns of the municipality; a big percentage of the community has suffered from cancer and other diseases related to navy practices. The Wind Farm would not only offer them a renewable source of energy, therefore a more reasonable energy bill and the creation of new jobs, it would also symbolically blow clean air for the first time in decades. This Wind Farm would return the dignity back to the land of Vieques and its people.



Fig. 193 The navy had all trees removed for the Live Impact Area in Eastern Vieques; the landscape would never be the same.

Fig. 192 Perspective of the renewable source of energy proposal.

Commemoration Space
Espacio Conmemorativo



Fishermen's Gallery

Mound for seating

Entrance/Pedestrian Paths

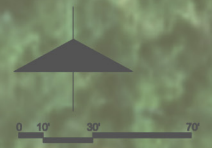
Public Plaza

Hammock Park

Intimate Memorial Plaza

Entrance/Pedestrian Paths

Vieques' Memorial



Other than to return lands to the Vieques people and provide alternatives to enhance their quality of life, the objective of this thesis is to have Vieques' greatest achievement, the withdrawal of the U.S. Navy from their lands as a precedent for the rest of Puerto Ricans to acknowledge the power of mass mobilization as a reaction to critical issues that affect all of us; from community participation to national unification. Vieques should become a symbol of national affirmation once again.

To establish an identity of self-assurance and confidence in our abilities and our character as a people, Vieques needs to accommodate a place that encourages the outsider to remember. In the book *Places of Commemoration*, Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn explains that identity is probably inconceivable without history and its remembrance and commemoration. Therefore, I propose for Vieques a commemoration space shared by four areas: A public plaza or open space, a hammock park, an exhibition space to honor the fishermen, and a memorial; enclosed by the existing vegetation on site.

The public plaza, delimited by the memorial bunker in one side, and the exhibition bunker at the other, is intended to be the threshold of the commemoration space. The plaza is conceived as a loose space; a space that people appropriate for their own benefit recognizing not only 'the presence and rights of others', but the possibilities of the space, thus becoming an active creator or participant. "Loose spaces give cities life and vitality. In loose spaces people relax, observe, buy or sell, protest, mourn and celebrate. Loose spaces allow for the chance encounter, the spontaneous event, the enjoyment of diversity and the discovery of the unexpected." ⁹⁹ It does not have to be a permanent activity, it can occur only once or on a regular basis; for the enjoyment of locals, the rest of Puerto Ricans, and tourists. It can hold thousands of people in the event of a procession that starts in the town Isabel Segunda every May to commemorate the exit of the navy, or a festival to celebrate Vieques's patron saint, la Virgen del Carmen, in July. "People's belief in the general freedom of public space is an essential prerequisite to their acting out that freedom through use" ¹⁰⁰, thus confirming the return of lands to the Vieques people if they start

(Opposite Page)
Fig. 194 Proposed Plan for the Commemoration Space.



Fig. 195 Public Plaza overlooking the Fishermen's Gallery



Fig. 196 People marching through the Public Plaza that overlooks at the Vieques' Memorial.





Hammock Park

Parque Hamaca

Hang your hammock.
Relax and enjoy.

*Cuelga tu hamaca.
Relájate y disfruta.*

Fig. 197 Perspective view of the proposal for the Hammock Park in Vieques where people can bring their own hammock and relax under the palm trees' shadow after a day of exploring the island.



“The appearance of spaces can also directly communicate a variety of religious and political beliefs and commercial and artistic agendas. Symbolism can either stimulate or inhibit actions by affecting potential users’ interpretations and feelings, persuading them that a space is sacred or accommodating or private, that it provides or denies roles to certain individuals, that it is a place for escapism or grieving or work or protest.”¹⁰¹ To promote the plaza as a symbol of nationhood, not only for leisure, a Puerto Rican flag is erected in the hilltop of Monte Pirata, with full view from the plaza, even from the most Eastern tip of main island Puerto Rico. An exhibition bunker on one side dedicated to fishermen and a memorial in the other dedicated to the people who have died in the hands of the navy also promote the site as sacred.

However, to keep the space of the memorial and its entrance as solemn as possible, I propose a wall that will act as a barrier between the memorial bunker and the public plaza, hence creating another one. This second plaza will be secluded and more intimate. It is enclosed by towering trees and shrubs on one side, and on the other a wall that turns from solid near the bunker, to more permeable at its most distant point to capture the curiosity of people to walk towards the memorial. The idea behind this wall is not only to divide the plazas, but the space becomes the preamble to enter the memorial, as well as its exit pathway. it gives the visitor the opportunity to have two reflective moment

“Public commemoration, when effective, solicits reactions of proximity and participation from its audience. It invites us to confront our own values, to reflect on how we will integrate the loss of other’s lives as we live the remainder of our own. It incites us to commit to the values we understand as marked by this discourse, to construct ourselves and our communities as holders of the values we see exemplified by it. Successful commemoration spaces engage us by asking us to think. Rather than telling us what to think, they invite us to think, to pose questions, to examine our experiences in relation to the memorial’s discourse.”¹⁰²



Fig. 199 Proposed Puerto Rican Flag atop Monte Pirata, highest mountain in Vieques, seen from the main island.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 198 Perspective of the Fishermen’s Gallery in Vieques.



Vieques' Memorial

El Memorial de Vieques

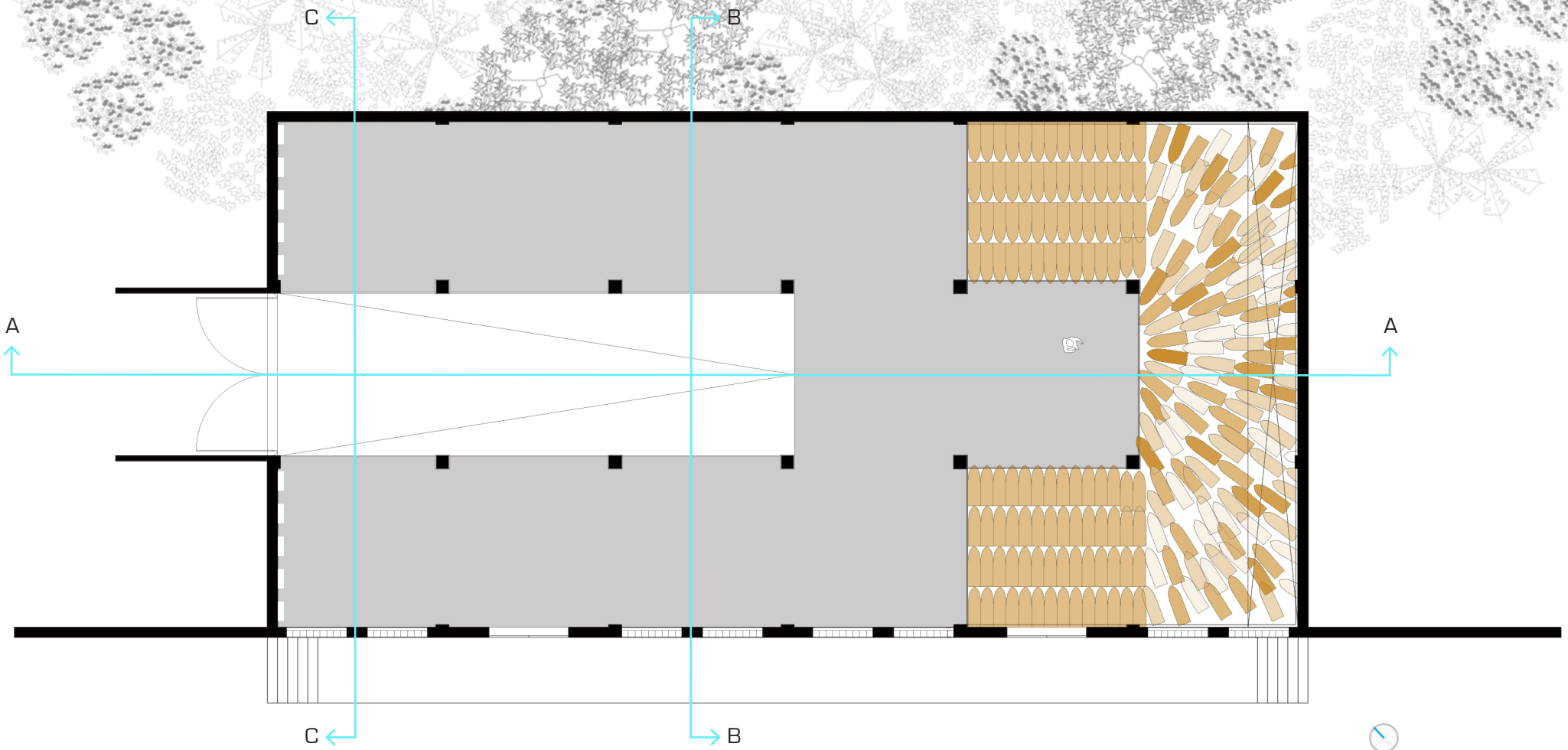
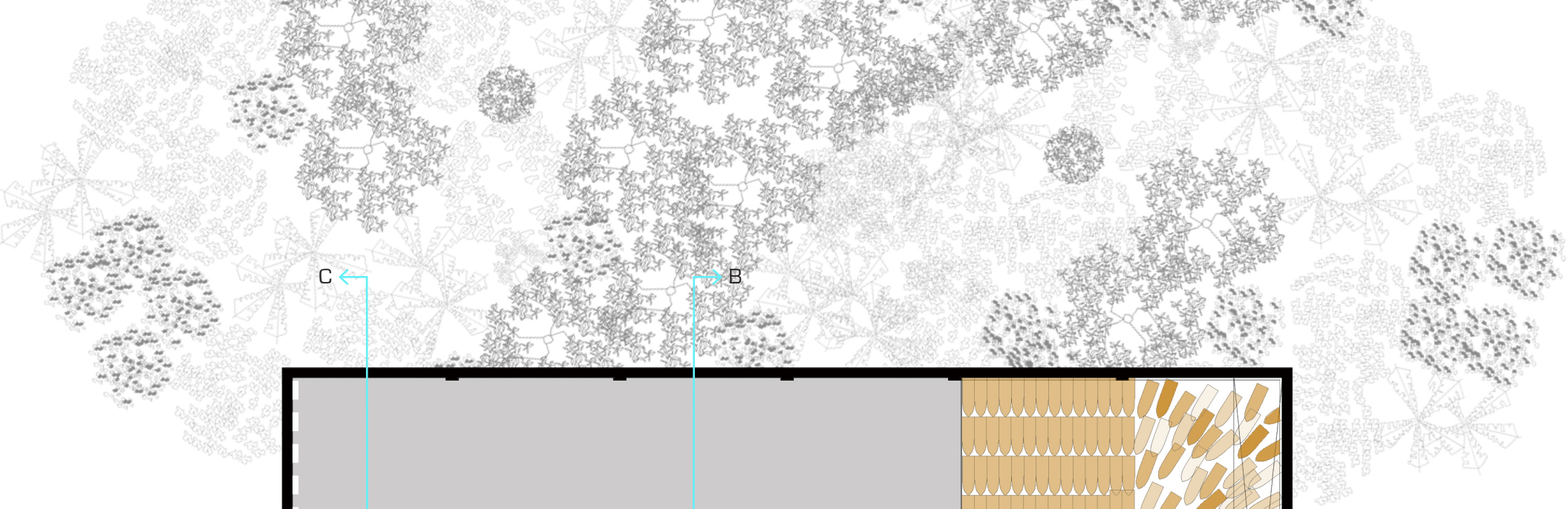
The Vieques' Memorial is intended to honor David Sanes Rodríguez, the local guard who was working at the Navy base when an errand bomb exploded outside the limits of the maneuvers area, and to pay respect to the hundreds of Viequenses who have died of cancer; believed by many to be the consequence of the military presence in the island. Intended to be located in the only bunker in West Vieques currently labeled as a "solid waste management unit site". Before being transformed into the memorial, the bunker and its surrounding area should be decontaminated.

I am assuming all bunkers in the future will be reused for different activities, therefore there's a great probability that many of the bunkers eventually will be transformed, maybe to a state where the prior structure will not be recognizable. This is one reason why I decided the memorial bunker should remain as intact as possible. I want the visitor to have a clear reading that this was an ammunition bunker since the 1940's. Its facades will remain intact, except for the side where the plaza is located. I propose the entrance from the Northwestern side of the bunker for the visitor to have a different experience than the soldiers who entered this bunker and to create a direct link with the plaza.

The bunker is presently covered by vegetation on the sides. The entrance will seem as if part of the vegetation was bitten off and replaced with a wooden element that will serve to retain the remaining soil around the entrance. The doors will be made out of a reflective material. I want the visitor to be in a contemplative state of mind before entering the memorial. It will be darker and feel chillier than outside. A ramp leads the visitor towards the light at the end of the bunker. As the visitor gets closer, he/she realizes there's an installation made out of bombshells used to bomb Vieques since 1948.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 200 Perspective for The Vieques' Memorial.



0 2'-0" 4'-0" 6'-0"

Vieques was bombarded an average of 20,000 bombs per year, approximately 180 days of the year. During the 55 years the navy used Vieques, more than 1 million bombs were used to practice for war. My intention is for people to feel overwhelmed with hundreds of artillery shells pointing at them; 1,666 bombs that represent a month worth of navy practices. A plate on the floor slab will indicate these calculations for people to grasp the severity of the impact these military practices had on the island and its people. The intention is for people to feel intimidated or anxious; as if the bombs were attacking the person and in his/her contemplation, understand the United States was attacking our people under the pretext of national security.

The light that filtrates in between the bombshells comes from an opening in the roof. The intention of leaving the opening exposed is for the rain to come in and make a spectacle pouring onto the shells, rusting them with time. It will become a symbol of how Puerto Rico, being the water, will eventually overcome the United States regime, when their bombs eventually corrode completely. The water that pours in will end up in the excavated area in the bunker to later be led out to the soil. During night time, the sections of the back wall, sidewalls and the floor slab that are covered by the bombs will have light fixtures to emulate the daylight filtering through the shells.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 201 Vieques' Memorial Floor Plan; scale 1/16" = 1'.

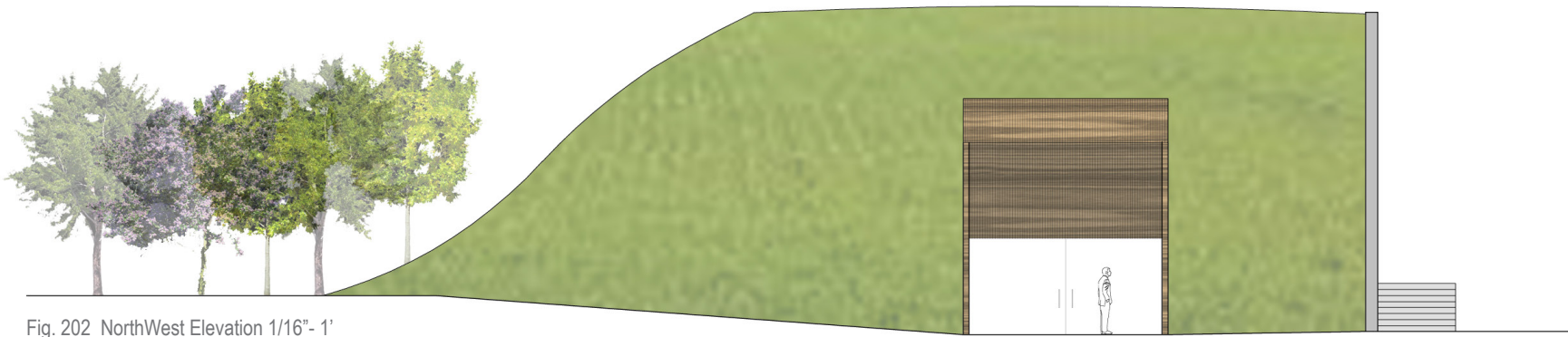


Fig. 202 NorthWest Elevation 1/16" - 1'

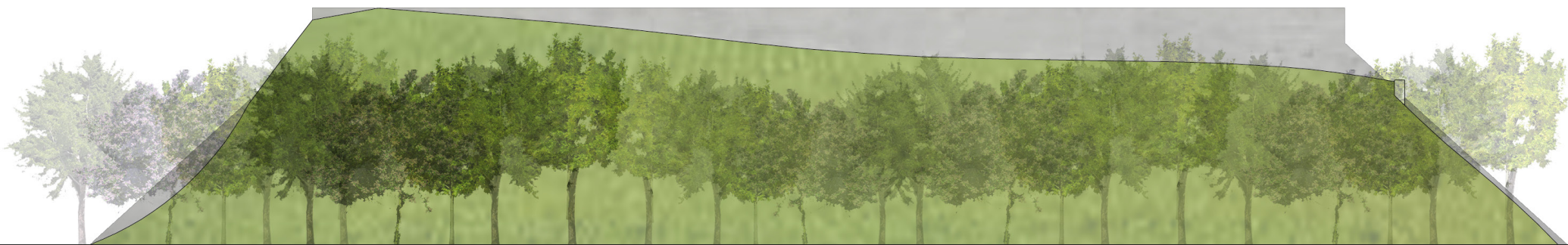
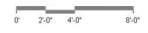


Fig. 203 NorthEast Elevation 1/16" - 1'



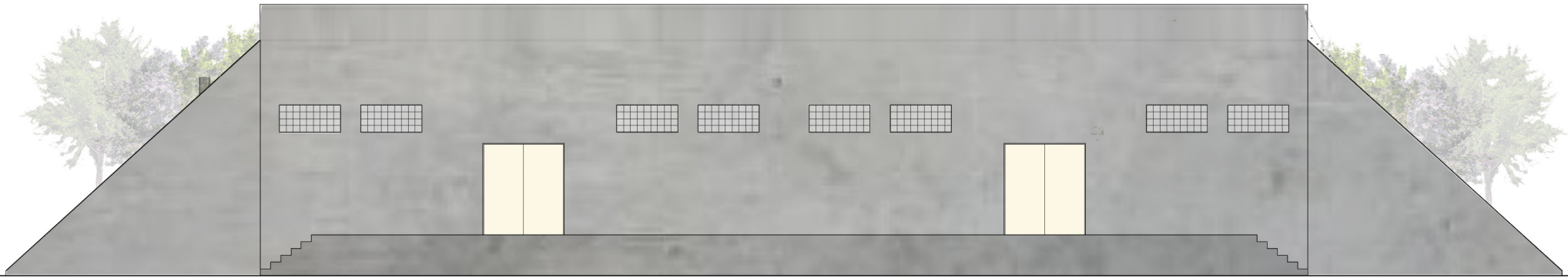


Fig. 204 SouthWest Elevation 1/16" - 1'

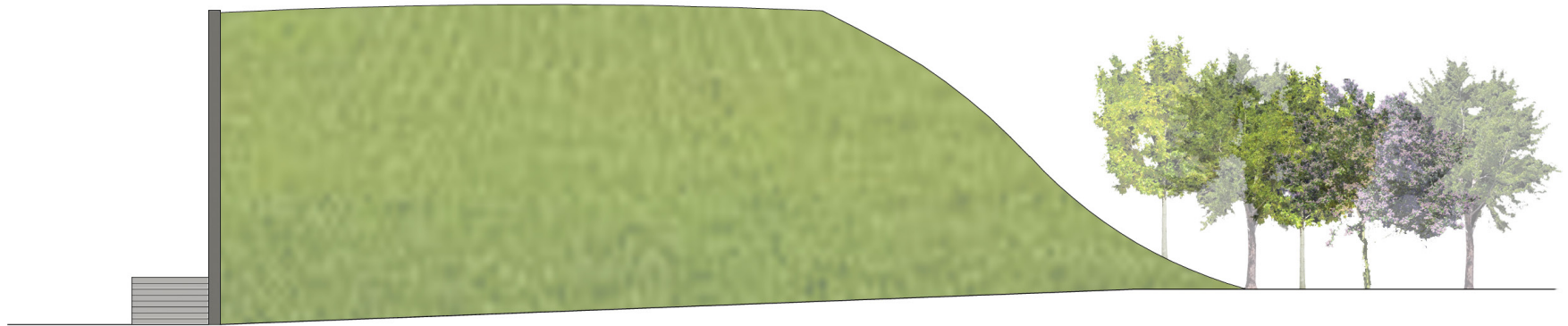
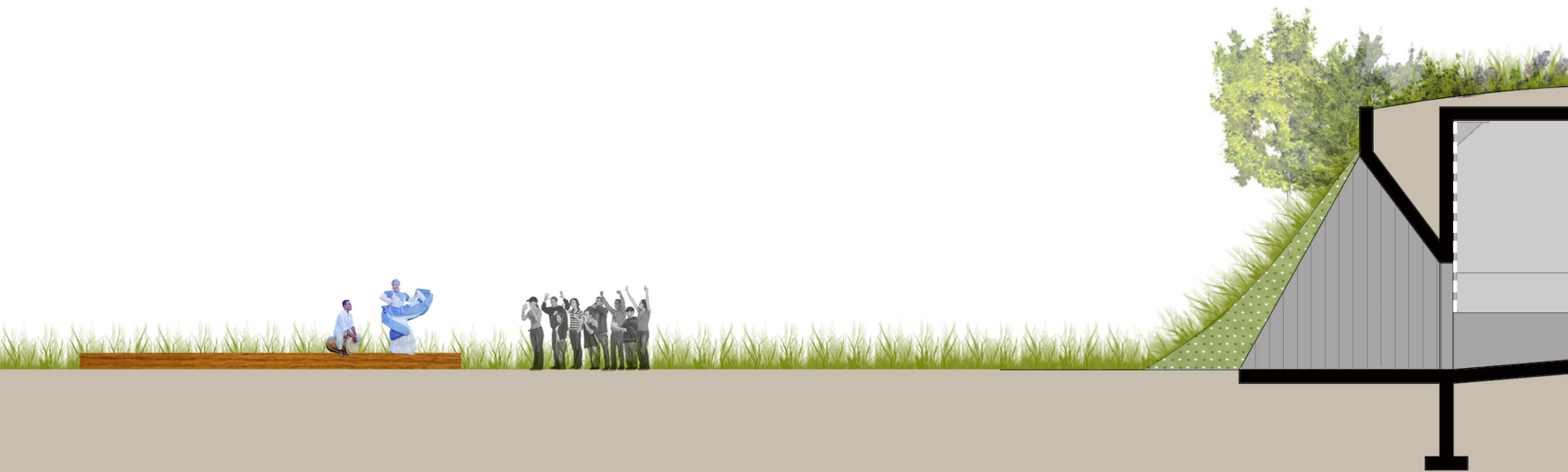


Fig. 205 SouthEast Elevation 1/16" - 1'



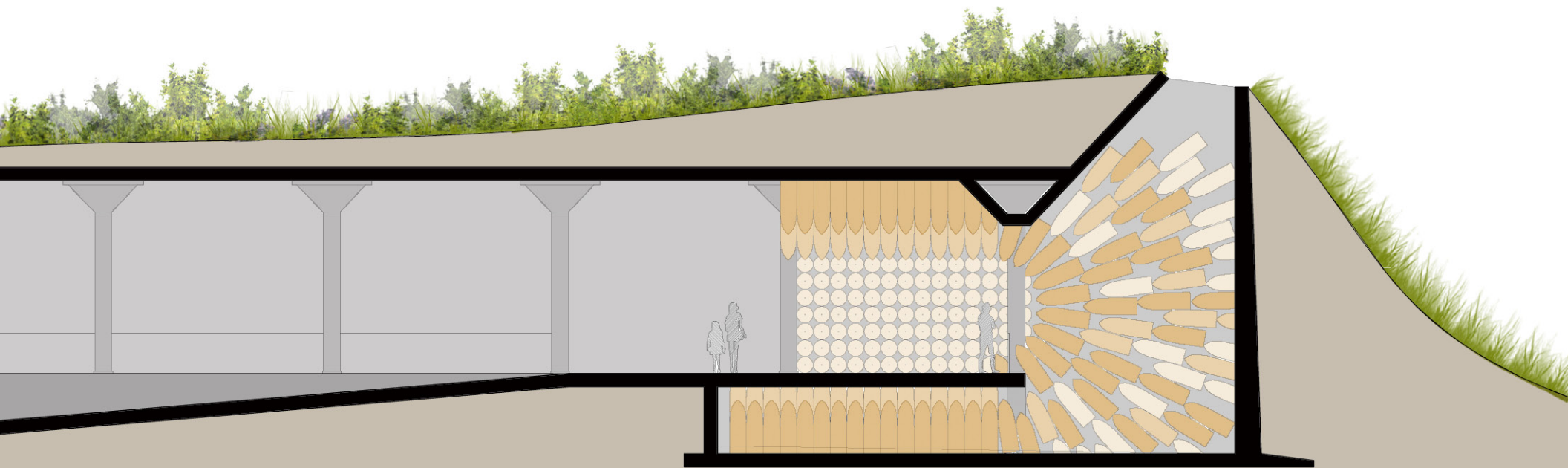


Fig. 206 Section A 1/16" = 1'

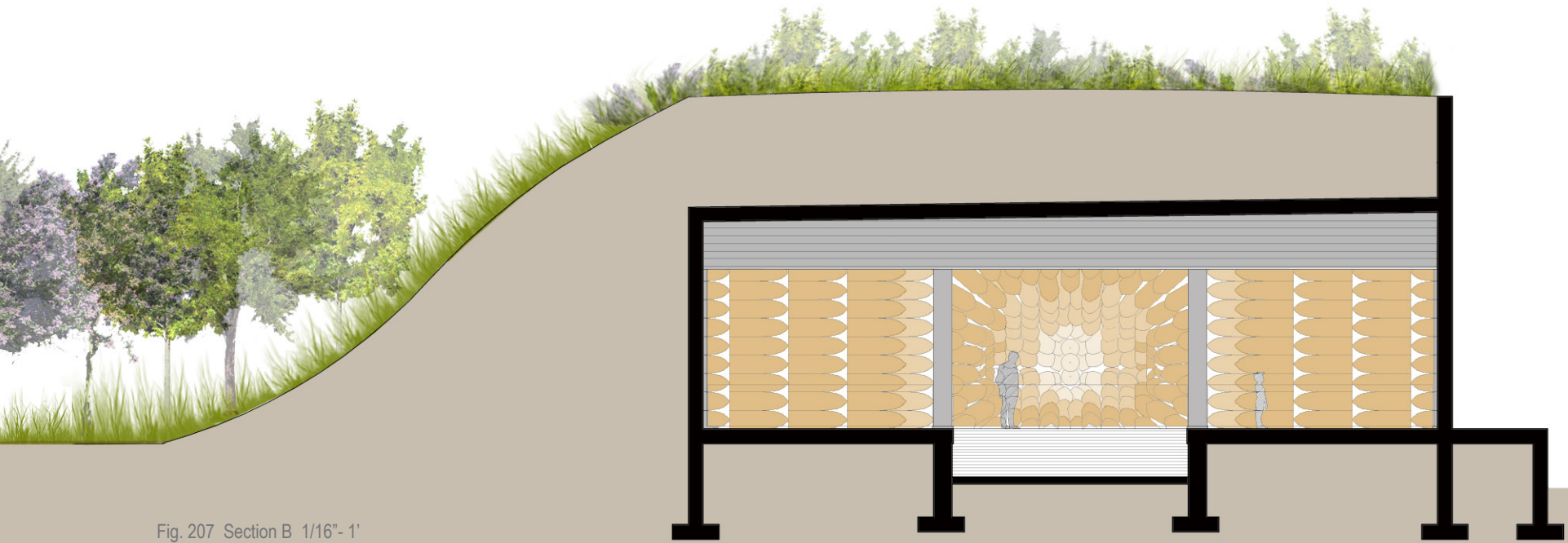


Fig. 207 Section B 1/16" = 1'



Fig. 208 Perspective of the installation made out of bomb shells left in the Live Impact Zone, The Vieques' Memorial.



Fig. 209 Perspective of the crosses that represent the people who have died of cancer by the hands of the navy.

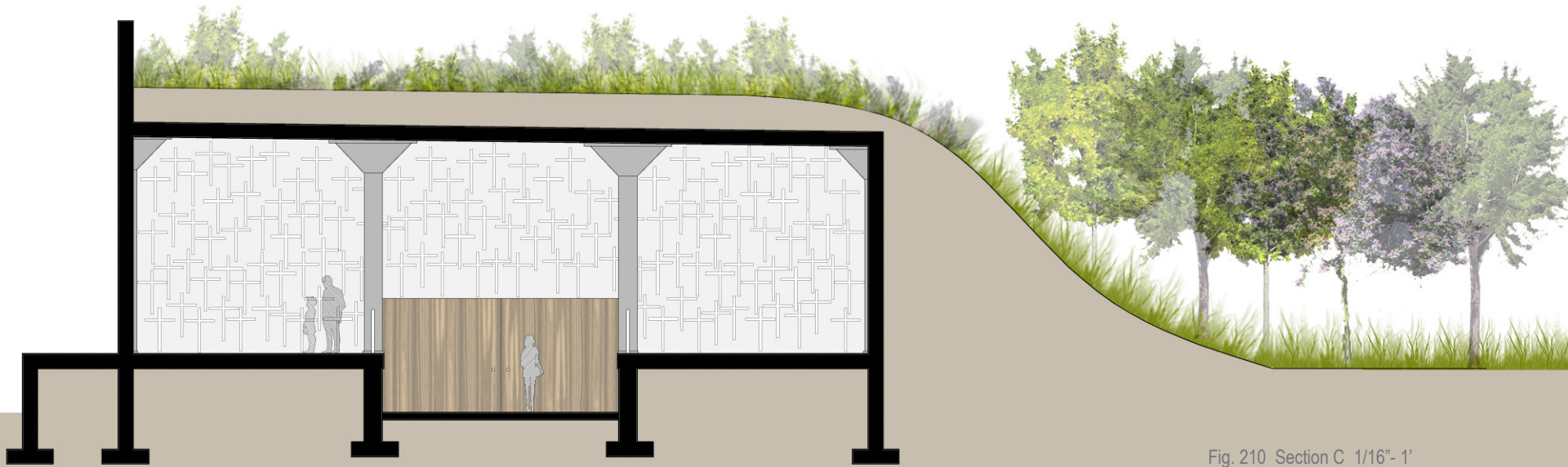


Fig. 210 Section C 1/16" - 1'



Vieques Si
MARINA
¡NO!

Emiliano Ramirez Lopez

Mineva Bermudez

Jose Rodriguez

Milivy

STOP KILLING
OUR
Children!

LeLo Rosado

Lula Tinoco

Anastasio Acosta
Augustin Rodriguez

Marciana Serrano

STOP
TERRORIZING
VIEQUES

Ismael Rodriguez

Maria Acevedo

Alfonso Martinez

MARINA
CRIMINAL

Incriminating Crosses

Cruces Incriminatorias

The erection of a white cross in memory of David Sanes Rodríguez in Monte David, the first encampment during the struggle against the navy, memorialized the martyrdom and the sacrifice of a Viequense by the navy's wrongdoing. It also opened an opportunity for people to express their feelings about the health effects due to military contamination, such as cancer. Many people started placing white crosses in Monte David, the gates of Camp García, and carrying them in rallies to represent the victims who had died or where sick. Statistics from the Puerto Rican Department of Health concluded the incidence of cancer from 1985 to 1989 was 26.7% higher than in the main island and in 2000, Dr. Rafael Rivera Castaño, a retired epidemiologist and anti-navy activist, estimated it had increased up to 52%.¹⁰³

The white crosses symbolized the shift in the anti-navy movement from local claims to claims of justice, human rights and peace. In the Vieques' Memorial these crosses are present to express incrimination since the U.S. Navy has never taken responsibility over the many people who have died of cancer. The crosses that were at the gates at Camp García would be attached to the entrance wall of the bunker, opposite the bombshells installation. To position them face to face with the bombshells I am denouncing the navy's implication in these tragedies. History cannot be blurred; we should not forget people are still battling this fatal disease. Someone should be hold responsible. For a national memorial to have this type of discourse, especially from a colonized people condemning the colonizer, means to regain our dignity as a people.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 211 White crosses along the fence of Camp García with the names of the people who have died of cancer.

Canción para Vieques

*Cuenta una Isla su historia
Envuelta de olas de fuego
Todo el camino que da su memoria
Va cubierto con un velo de miedo.*

*Sesenta años despiertos
Por "Bombas de Paz" en la noche
Acurrucando a los niños con salmos
Al ritmo de detonaciones.*

*Sesenta años con lluvia
De uranio y de municiones
Limpiando ventanas con pólvora sucia
Esperando que el cáncer reaccione.*

*Y por eso los pescadores
En nombre de sus ilusiones
Anclan sus botes sin camarotes
Al frente de los portaaviones.*

*Y así fue, que su voz, se creció, con tu voz
Y por amar las mismas cosas
Hoy nos tenemos en canción.*

*Pregunta la Isla en su historia
Por que han rezagado sus sueños
Tanques en tierra y buques de guerra
Han vuelto su cielo pequeño.*

*Sesenta años de insomnio
Por entrenar ciudadanos
Que van a luchar por una paz mundial
Disfrutada por otros seres humanos.*

*Y por eso mujeres y hombres
Se vuelven escudos de vida
Y pueblan las playas prohibidas y encallan
Con todas las verdades unidas.*

*Y los latidos de un sueño, se levantan así
La razón y el respeto, se levantan así
Las visiones de un pueblo, se levantan así
La fe y el amor propio, se levantan así
Los cuentos milagrosos, se levantan así
Los futuros valiosos, se levantan así...*

Tito Auger - Ricky Laureano

Song for Vieques*

An island tells her story
Wrapped in waves of fire
The path given by her memory
Is covered by a veil of fear.

Sixty years awake
By "Bombs of Peace" at night
Cuddling children with psalms
At the rhythm of detonations.

Sixty years with rain
Of uranium and ammunition
Cleaning windows with dirty gunpowder
Waiting for the cancer to react.

And so the fishermen
On behalf of their dreams
Anchor their boats without cabins
In front of the aircraft carriers.

And so it was, that their voice was raised, with your voice
And by loving the same things
Today we have ourselves in a song.

The island asks in her history
Why have they lagged their dreams
Tanks on ground and ships of war
Have turned their heaven small.

Sixty years of insomnia
For training citizens
That will fight for a world peace
Enjoyed by other human beings.

And so women and men
Become living shields
And populate the prohibited beaches and anchor
With all the truths united.

And the beatings of a dream, rise like this
The reason and respect, rise like this
The visions of a people, rise like this
The faith and pride, rise like this
The miraculous tales, rise like this
The valuable futures, rise like this...

* My own translation.




(Opposite Page)

Fig. 212 Hundreds of bomb shells used to bomb Vieques will point at the visitor expressing it could have happen to them, asking to empathize with the Viequense people.



Conclusion

Conclusión

GRANDE ES EL IMPERIO QUE
DESAFIAMOS, PERO MAS 
GRANDE QUE ESE IMPERIO ES
NUESTRO DERECHO A
 LA LIBERTAD 

In May 2003 the U.S. Navy withdrew from Vieques, Puerto Rico. The historic event was a triumph for the people of Vieques and the rest of Puerto Ricans who fought for decades to make it happen. Unfortunately, many people [especially in the main island] have forgotten the importance of the struggle and its success, and the current fight for decontamination. Over the years people's attention has shifted to other issues, such as the increase in criminality in the main island, forgetting that the impotence they feel to stop the violence was the same impotence that was once felt about the U.S. Navy and their exercises. My intention with this thesis has always been to make Puerto Ricans realize we can apply the same strategies of mass mobilization used to fight the navy in Vieques, to fight other issues that disturb our society, such as colonialism. My thesis is an exploration on how architecture can not only change the physical environment of a place, but it can also change the psychological environment by encouraging the Puerto Rican people to believe in themselves, get together, exchange ideas and start implementing them.

Decolonizing Architecture: Vieques as a Symbol for a Post Colonized Puerto Rico is a thesis that promotes the end of colonialism for my country, an inconceivable idea for many who believe we are incapable of making it on our own, giving as an example the milestone of the Vieques people when they forced the navy out of their lands. Vieques is an example that shows that we have a say in our nation's destiny and we should not have to accept an outsider dictating how we should live. If the Municipality of Vieques, with its 10,000 people, could stop its military power, Puerto Rico as a whole, with its almost 4 million inhabitants, can definitively stop the United States to pursue colonialism in this era. As Albert Memmi explains, "...one day he [the United States in this case] will be forced by the colonized to give in" and to do so we would need "not only a revolt but a revolution".¹⁰⁴

But if Vieques is going to stand for the integrity of our identity, its dignity must be restored entirely. Lands must be decontaminated and returned to the Viequesenses, the economy must be stimulated and the community's new vision for the island's sustainable development must be executed. This thesis' design proposal focuses on those ideals. The Agro[ECO]Hostel promotes ecotourism, environmental awareness and protection, and provides new job opportunities for Viequesenses. The agricultural landscape promotes food self-sufficiency and the Wind Park promotes energy self-sufficiency. Both are metaphors for emancipation from the United States. And most importantly, the Commemoration Space suggests we should never forget, nor suppress our history. We cannot move forward if we don't know where we came from or if we decide the steps we took together as a nation are not significant enough to remember or to emulate.

(Opposite Page)

Fig. 213 A sign on a wall in Vieques that has become a public displays of sentiments against the U.S. and its navy, 'Great is the empire that we defy, but greater than that empire is our right to freedom.'

This thesis is a confrontation first with myself and then with my people. It could be perceived as an *insolent provocation* or a *flag to which to rally*, but it is meant for Puerto Ricans to ask themselves if our country really needs to keep being a colony. It raises a big question, which I try to answer first as a Puerto Rican who loves her island and believes in the capacity of her people to be emancipated and lead their own country successfully, and secondly, as an architect who tends to believe the solution to many problems lie in how spaces are conceived and how people react to them once built.

“Having reconquered all his dimensions, the former colonized will have become a man like any other. There will be ups and downs of all men to be sure, but at least he will be a whole and free man.” ¹⁰⁵

Albert Memmi

Endnotes

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