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The Chimalapas Ecological Campesino Reserve: The golden gourd of conflict and its role in protected area management

Stream: Multiple Commons - Forestry
Discipline: Conflict Management

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CONFLICT AND PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT

A recent shift in protected area management strategies includes the involvement of local people in the planning and management of protected areas (cf. Wells, Brandon and Hannah, 1992; West and Brechin, 1991; Zube and Busch, 1990).¹ This change includes respecting prior land-use practices of protected area residents (Fox, Yonzon and Podger, 1996). Involving people in conservation necessitates a constant iterative process of reconciling the inevitable conflicts that arise from differences in values and land and resource tenure regimes. With this community-based shift, many conservation practitioners and researchers have begun to recognize that conflict and its management is crucial to conserving biodiversity and maintaining the livelihoods of residents in and around protected areas (Bidol and Crowfoot, 1991; Fisher, 1995; Pendzich, 1993). Protected areas have a long history of conflict largely because of exclusion to access to natural resources or forced relocation of resident communities. Whereas, conflict is often described in protected areas, authors neither offer suggestions for resolution, describe local decision-making processes, nor detail how communities resolve disputes related to forest management. Despite the recognition that conflict management² is important for reconciling diverse stakeholder interests in the protection of natural areas, it has rarely been applied on a large scale.

The Chimalapas Ecological Campesino Reserve (CCER) in Oaxaca, Mexico is a complex arena of conflict, governance, common property resources and organizational relationships. Chimalapas is uncommon in Latin America since it is managed by local indigenous populations, primarily Zoque native Americans, with the assistance of the non-governmental organization Maderas del Pueblo del Sureste. Maderas del Pueblo's mission is to provide community-based development and extension assistance under the aegis of sustainable resource use and conservation of the Reserve. Lessons from the CCER are vital to future conservation efforts throughout the world because it has a community centered focus on conservation, it is the largest

remaining protected tract of rainforest in North America and because it has a concomitant high degree of biodiversity and endemism (Biodiversity Support Program, et al., 1995).

This study explored the links between conflicts and effective management of the CCER and documented conflict and conflict management mechanisms in Chimalapas. This was accomplished by developing a conflict typology, stakeholder analysis and a stepwise management model. More specifically, we hypothesized that effective conflict resolution mechanisms facilitate improved management outcomes for protected areas. Utilizing negative case analysis,³ the original hypothesis was revised so that all known cases from the field study were included. The revised hypothesis was management of conflicts is a prerequisite to any type of management of the CCER.

THE CHIMALAPAS CAMPESINO ECOLOGICAL RESERVE

The 528 km² (1.2 million acres) CCER is ensconced in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the southeastern corner of the state of Oaxaca, contiguous with the state borders of Veracruz and Chiapas (Figure 1). Elevations in the Reserve range from 180-1,200 meters above sea level. The average annual precipitation is 1,500 mm/year, but rainfall varies between 700-6,000 mm/year according to the location (Oaxacan Census, 1993). Vegetation cover is varied and includes chaparral, espinas, pine/oak scrub forest, tropical rainforest, montane forest and cloudforest. As a result, Chimalapas contains an exceptional amount of floral and faunal diversity and is the largest tract of rainforest in North America. The Reserve supports 145 mammal, 316 bird and 445 butterfly species representing 31.3, 32.3 and 44.5% respectively of the total number of species in Mexico--one of the world's most biodiverse countries (De la Maza, et al., 1989).⁴

Approximately 17,000 residents, known as Chimas, inhabit the region, primarily at its borders. Three thousand residents live in Santa María and San Miguel de Chimalapas. The region hosts 18 ethnic groups including populations of Zoque, Zapotec, Mixtec, Chinantec, Tzotzil and Mixe Indians (Altamirano, 1990). Politically, the Reserve is sub-divided into the municipalities of Santa María (which comprises 77% of the total area) and San Miguel de Chimalapas. Resident populations generally depend on subsistence agriculture and logging for their livelihoods. Farmers practice agriculture along valley floors and in riparian areas, although significant amounts of upland areas are farmed, especially in the more mountainous areas. The staple crops are maize (*Zea mays*) and beans (*Phaseolus vulgaris*). Typical production for maize is 1.5 tons/ha and for beans 0.5 tons/ha. Subsistence cattle grazing is also practiced. The principle hardwoods logged are mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla*) and cedar (*Cedrela mexicana*), although *bejuco* (*Guarea glabra*), *nopo* (*Guarea excelsa*) and *Pinus strobus*, var. *chiapensis* are economically important. Local residents harvest non-timber forest products, such as *palma camedor* (*Chamaedorea* spp.), and *maguay* (*Agave* spp.).

Chimalapas is primarily threatened by land tenure conflicts, cattle ranching and encroaching populations. These primary threats are largely due to land tenure being communal in the entire area of Chimalapas and thus vulnerable to legal titling. Secondary threats to protection exist from illegal poaching, logging and drug trafficking. Table 1 provides a brief description of the long history of conflicts in Chimalapas. Additionally, government acceptance⁵ hampers *de facto* community management of the CCER. This stems primarily from reluctance of the state to relinquish control over the region, especially in light of recent uprisings in the neighboring states of Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca.

METHODS

This study explored the links between conflicts and effective management of the CCER and documented conflict and conflict management mechanisms in Chimalapas. This was accomplished by developing a conflict typology, stakeholder analysis and a stepwise management model. More specifically, it was hypothesized that effective conflict resolution mechanisms facilitate improved management outcomes for protected areas. Utilizing negative case analysis (cf. Patton, 1990), the original hypothesis was revised so that all known cases from the field study were included. The hypothesis was revised to: management of conflicts is a prerequisite to any type of management of the CCER. Community participants and Maderas del Pueblo were involved in identifying research questions and objectives of this study so that the results could be useful to meeting community needs, assessing potential threats and programming future management activities.

During the course of one nine-week (June-August, 1994) and one 12 week visit (June-August, 1995), 49 interviews chosen by purposive sampling of key informants were recorded, transcribed and analyzed. Conducting the study during the course of two years established a sufficient amount of trust with the villagers which increased the reliability of the data collected. An additional 70 interviews supplemented the data collected from the 49 interviews, but were not analyzed due to their informal or preliminary informational content. Three group interviews were also conducted, which utilized participatory rural appraisal methods such as community mapping, conflict analysis and natural resource transects. In addition, 19 community and organizational meetings were observed with the objective of analyzing community decision making processes. These qualitative methods focused on definitions of conflict and management, descriptions of community problem solving processes, analysis of management and conflict and community utilization of natural resources in Chimalapas.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Lederach (1995) advocates that conflict management approaches must be adaptable and respectful of how cultures outside the United States codify and resolve conflicts. The processes of conflict resolution in different cultures must be “elicited” or directed from the participants themselves in addition to using Western models of conflict resolution. During interviews, for example, the Chimas described their decision-making process for town meetings, known as *asambleas* (Table 2). A comparison to a composite Western model is shown, and is actually quite similar. In fact, conflict management processes in Chimalapas show a striking similarity to those advocated in the literature (see also Susskind and Cruikshank, 1987), but seem to be based on an oral tradition. However, compared to Western models, the process in practice is more circular, where different stages are revisited and reiterated. This Chimas decision-making process has proven highly effective in uniting some of the villages of the Reserve and serves as a consensus building tool in the management of the area. Beyond the village level, communities have also developed a graduated conflict management process that involves larger spheres of local governance authority and community decision-making bodies (Table 3). Note that with each successive step, the decision-making falls into more outlying authorities or groups of *comuneros*.⁶ This structure gives strong incentive for disputants to quickly resolve conflict given the knowledge that the alternative could be loss of control of decision-making and financial burdens to pay for travel to the municipal office.

Conflict and Community Organization

Conflict is often an overwhelming force within the Chimalapas. At times it hinders resident livelihood efforts, as was the case in Benito Juárez when a forest fire started by a neighboring cattle rancher prevented *comuneros* from planting their maize crops at the appropriate time. But this conflict also rallied two neighboring villages, Benito Juárez and San Antonio, to extinguish the forest fire, ask for government fire fighting assistance and then protest government inaction by blocking the Panamerican Highway. The communities eventually garnered fire fighting assistance, captured the perpetrators and negotiated a non-violent solution to the problem. This action helped to build formal ownership for the Reserve and subsequently empowered those who participated. The process which resolved the conflict—protest, organization and negotiation—is a combination of advocacy, social justice⁷ and alternative dispute resolution. It indicates that creative and productive solutions can emerge from seemingly intractable problems and that conflict resolution involves more than just mediation.⁸

A primary example was that described by a resident of Benito Juárez (BJ) community process to address a resource use problem centered around a conflict that arose from a forest fire, but underlying tensions originated from threats to land tenure. The dispute is illuminating to this research since it involved community mobilization, organization, protest, decision-making and negotiation to peacefully, but firmly, resolve a potentially violent conflict. The forest fire prevented BJ villagers from planting their crops on time. BJ partnered with a neighboring village, San Antonio when a rancher set fire to the accompanying pine forest which consumed 5,000 ha of pine/oak forest before it was controlled. I have chosen to use the voice of one of the town members who eloquently described the conflagration. His depiction was consistently supported by other town members from BJ and nearby San Antonio during the interviews that was conducted there:

“This year presented us with a really bad problem, I think it was the 8th of April that the forest started burning, a fire started by a property owner, or supposed property owner, that lives within the common lands of San Miguel de Chimalapas. When this happened we asked the government for help and they did not respond. So we went to the highway [the Panamerican highway some 60 km away from BJ] and constructed a roadblock at [the town of] Jícaro and asked the government to support us in fighting the fire. We were already three or four days fighting the fire and there was not anything else we could do other than block the highway.

“So then the government sent us the army and about 150 soldiers, more or less, came and they also sent a helicopter to take people to and from the fire. The helicopter did two or three trips and the rest of us walked. So we went back and forth fighting the fire and we had already extinguished it or we were thinking we had already extinguished it, but the cattle ranchers started the fire again. We were already really tired and we did not know what to do. [They knew who had started the fire since a BJ]...a villager was walking through an area where this rancher was with a cowboy where we had already put out the fire for at least one or two kilometers above. So the ranchers having just passed by the fire began again before his very eyes and we knew one of them was Mr. Fulano and the other was Walter del Pino. So since we had seen them start the fire we decided to apprehend them once and for all at sunrise. We made the plans and the next day in the

morning at 6 in the morning we arrived at the ranch and we apprehended him and brought him to the community [BJ]. So we brought him to the town assembly, which people from San Antonio attended and we decided to take him as a prisoner to San Miguel de Chimalapas so that the municipal president could send him to Tehuantepec (the district capital).

“But then we decided that it was not convenient to take him to San Miguel because he asked that we carry out justice in BJ so that he wouldn’t have to be dealt with there. It occurred to me...that it was not convenient to take him there since the authorities were going to make a deal with him where they would take money from him and then let him go free and so he would continue doing the same thing and I also realized that it would cost us time and money to have to take him to San Miguel. So he said that he could resolve the problem here nothing more than we should tell him how much the fine was and it was there that the assembly decided and said that it was 30 million pesos (approximately U.S \$5-6 million at the time) that was going to be charged to him.

“We discussed it well. He was outside on the basketball court at the time and when we sent for him and we told him what we were going to do that we were going to resolve his problem here, but only if he agreed to pay 30 million pesos. He said that was a little high but he was ready to give us 15 head of cattle, but the people in the assembly said that was too low and that 20 would be good, with that we would be done. He agreed and signed a receipt for us. We divided the cattle with San Antonio, 10 head for us and 10 for them. We also agreed to write into the agreement that his ranch was in common lands [of Chimalapas] and that he would leave the place in 15 days. He left and never returned. It was there also that it was decided that we would evict six other ‘property’ owners and we made them leave and they never returned.” (ACR1)

The combination of action, negotiation and community justice indicate several significant points. First, this is not just an example of alternative dispute resolution. It is community action, protest, mobilization of resources, social justice and non-violent negotiation to a mutually beneficial outcome. This suite of actions is very different from Western notions of alternative dispute resolution, although these actions show that a community must be organized and come to the “table” as an equal in particularly dangerous and contentious disputes.

Conflict management such as this is not often practiced in protected area management and certainly does not model many environmental conflict management or collaborative problem solving efforts in the Western world (see Potapchuk, 1991). It more closely resembles the actions of social activists, such as Saul Alinsky, who made issues of social justice and negotiation a part of social protest (Alinsky, 1971). This indicates the value of social organization in community-based conservation. Community processes such as this show that in addition to the *asamblea* decision making process, the Chimas incorporate different solutions for different problems.

Conflict has served to mobilize many villages in the CCER, which concurs with the findings from a similar study in the Wombat Reserve of Victoria, Australia (Kellas and Maclean, 1995). Despite the mistrust of the government, the study found a contradictory dependence by the communities on the government to resolve conflicts. To some extent, this also was reported by Wells (1994) who noted that conflicts may often be beyond the scope of communities or

stakeholders groups to resolve. Perhaps this explains the Chimas' dependence on the government to resolve land tenure conflicts since it confers legal ownership and legitimacy of the Chimas desire to legalize their status as a communal reserve without outside invasion. Conflicts are often difficult to resolve because of the uncertain nature of land tenure and the government's unwillingness to allow complete autonomy in the region which would signal less governmental power during a period of increasing civil unrest and rebel activity. Similar findings were reported by Vazquez and Padoch (1993) showing the importance of government involvement.

Conflict and Management

Processes to develop community organization for the management of the Reserve are crucial, but still raise the question of "Who ultimately manages the Reserve?" since regional authorities change often, with sometimes detrimental effects to forest management. The link between conflict and management is indicated by a comment from a Benito Juárez farmer: "There are many ways and many ideas [to conduct management], but we have received many blows and are scarred from a big problem, this land problem. Others have made us see many things and methods that are not possible right now." (bj/manejo/defn4) Many villagers mentioned an "if-then" contingency about the Reserve (e.g., if land tenure conflicts are resolved then community management of the Reserve will happen). Another villager said "While there is no resolution of land tenure conflicts, Chimalapas [CCER] does not happen." (smc/hyp4537) In fact Chimas residents often defined conflict as land tenure problems. Furthermore, conflict directly impedes community participation in the management of the Reserve, as emphasized by one villager:

"When these [conflicts] are defined...swiftly ending the agrarian problem, then we could do some small timber harvesting because right now we cannot since the conflicts continue and there are clashes. I for my part do not want to [log] until after all of this has been resolved." (bj/hyp5831)

and another Chimas resident noted

"Once the problem is resolved...we are already thinking about conserving, about protecting soils, to not contaminate the land more...I think there are many more things to do...I believe that when we resolve the agrarian problems we are going to think about a lot of other things." (bj/hyp8028)

Continuously arising conflicts in Chimalapas indicate that conflicts will continue and conflict management systems must be in place to address conflicts as they arise (Maser, 1996). Managing conflict, in fact, should be a crucial part of overall management (Lee, 1993). In addition to conflict management, the study also found that successful implementation of the Chimalapas Reserve depends on social justice, community organization and economic alternatives. Brown, et al. (1995) also reported that social justice must be a part of conservation efforts.

Most of the conflicts that do occur in the CCER can be characterized by "us (Chimalapas) versus them (outsiders)," although conflicts do exist among villages and political divisions within the Reserve. Chimalapas is different from many protected areas in that the government does not play a custodial role within the Reserve, but has been a necessary party for negotiating land

tenure, establishing CCER boundaries and providing legitimacy for the Reserve. The government is not directly involved in Chimalapas because the community's strong lack of trust resulting from a long history of deception and broken promises and the Chimas strong desire for autonomy. In effect, this makes the Reserve somewhat similar to an autonomous indigenous nation, although it is really a community-run common property resource. Nevertheless, partnerships and networks, such as the National Committee for Defense of the Chimalapas, are important components of the practical aspect of the Reserve's management for information sharing, conservation experiences, institutional development and influencing policy at local and national levels.

Conflict often has a negative effect in the CCER and certainly has had a negative effect on conservation in that it has taken precedence over management efforts to conserve biodiversity. However, some collaborative processes have begun to emerge that combine social organization, conflict resolution and future management of natural resources. The *Ordenamiento Comunitario Participativo* is a participatory and community-driven form of land use planning employed as a pilot project in the village of San Francisco de la Paz. The process consists of a combination of participatory rural appraisal, geographic information system (GIS) mapping and edaphological and ecological inventories in which a team of community members and extensionists from Maderas del Pueblo facilitate workshops together with villagers. After a participatory rural appraisal workshop, the *Ordenamiento Comunitario Participativo* team collected soil and vegetation data in the field which was entered into a GIS. The sketch maps, "ground-truthing" and GIS are compared and a land use plan is negotiated among community members with technical assistance from Maderas del Pueblo.

The *Estatuto Comunal* is an institutionalization of Chimas village laws through a series of community workshops. Many of the laws are related to decision-making and natural resource use. They previously only existed verbally. The workshops consisted of community members and the Maderas del Pueblo social program's coordinator eliciting a "brainstormed" response to a number of categories, such as hunting regulations, requirements for community membership and land tenure. Communities were already implementing many natural resource use regulations at the time this research took place and before the final *Estatuto Comunal* consensus workshop.

Both the *Ordenamiento* and *Estatuto* are vital to future management of the CCER's resources since they include conflict management mechanisms and are institutionalizing community involvement and adaptability for managing the CCER. By conducting *Ordenamientos* in strategic watersheds throughout the Reserve, communities will define their own land use zones since the resulting CCER map will show contiguous spheres of land use practices in close proximity to the communities. This master map will define a core protection zone as well as agricultural production, forest extraction and other land use zones.

The *Estatuto Comunal* will simultaneously be a regulator of natural resource use and serve to organize communities throughout Chimalapas. Participation in the *Estatuto* workshops has given the communities ownership of their own laws, and thus a willingness to enforce them as well as educate people about their rights, traditions and appropriate uses of their natural resources. The *Estatuto* experience has important implications for decentralization and community-based conservation efforts as indigenous nations become organized and implement locally determined natural resource use regulations.

LESSONS

The study found the following:

- Management of conflicts is a prerequisite to any type of management of the Chimalapas Campesino Ecological Reserve (CCER).
- Conflict management is not solely mediation but can include advocacy, social justice, protest, negotiation and community organization.
- Implementation of the CCER is a stepwise process that most basically involves balancing secure land tenure, conflict management and social justice, extraction of natural resources, agricultural and economic opportunities, community ownership of the Reserve, technical support by Maderas del Pueblo.
- Conflict can act as a stimulus to building social capital and empowerment in communities but unless managed appropriately it will degrade social capital.
- Dependency of communities on judicial and government authority is necessary to legitimate conflict agreements, land use rights and the overall *de facto* management of the reserve by Chimas communities.

Findings from this study suggest that conflict prevents management of the Campesino Reserve; but when conflicts are resolved, villagers, who have organized their communities to begin conservation efforts. Researchers who have studied conflicts affecting conservation efforts have reported similar findings in Ecuador (Fiallo and Jacobson, 1995), Kenya (Castro, 1995) and Indonesia (Peluso, 1992). The study also found that conflicts prevented conservation and sustainable programs and decreased social capital (see also Ostrom, 1994). Conflict decreases trust among parties in dispute. Therefore, social capital, through organizational strengthening and building relationships, is as important as financial capital in community development of and establishment of the CCER. Conflict management in Chimalapas differs sharply from strictly defined Western alternative dispute resolution including elements of social justice, protest and negotiation under extreme crisis.

The Chimalapas Ecological Campesino Reserve provides an example of the challenges and opportunities faced by multiple partnerships to implement community-based conservation. Experiences gained managing the Reserve indicate that conflicts can severely hinder optimistic conservation interventions, but also can serve to organize communities and balance power to catalyze action. The CCER case also shows that despite decentralization or autonomy of regions, governmental institutions, such as the judicial system, are still needed for legitimacy of land tenure and *de jure* existence of the Reserve. More experiences will add to the adaptive learning involved with campesino reserves and assist in efforts of community-based conservation and sustainable development. Such efforts include agricultural extension, community organization, capacity building, health and conservation oriented programs that can lead to the conservation of natural resources.

Community-based reserves, such as the Chimalapas Ecological Campesino Reserve, could represent the next generation of Integrated Conservation and Development Projects, extending beyond development activities to mitigate natural resource degradation, build community organization and constantly address conflicts through and iterative conflict management process. However, this concept must reach beyond protected areas to include management of forests and other natural resources (e.g., watersheds or community forests) where much of the world's biodiversity is found or be included as a part of a conservation regime in a greater managed landscape to be truly effective from both conservation and sustainable development perspectives.

ENDNOTES

¹ One example of involving people in conservation are Integrated Conservation and Development Projects, which advocate development projects in areas such as buffer zones adjacent or within protected areas.

² Although much debate exists on the definitions related to conflict, we use conflict management to describe a process or ongoing conflict resolution, whereas conflict resolution normally implies that the conflict has ended and the parties are satisfied with the outcomes. Collaborative problem solving is yet another description of a process to resolve conflicts and also implies parties working together to reach a mutually agreeable solution.

³ Negative case analysis from interpretivist inquiry has the objective to revise each hypothesis until one hypothesis includes the broad range of all known or suspected cases, identifying trends as new data emerge and triangulating data using various sources and methods (Patton, 1990; Pretty, 1994).

⁴ Although Mexico has 60 protected areas covering 9.9 million hectares, it has protected only 5.1% of its land base. The Nature Conservancy ranks Mexico fourth in the world in overall biodiversity behind Indonesia, Brazil and Columbia (Mansour, 1995). However, a specific biodiversity indicator of plants/km² shows that Mexico has 4,569 vascular plants/10,000 km² which ranks it 8th in the world (As a comparison, Columbia has 10,735 plants/10,000 km² (World Resources, 1994).

⁵ Although the CCER and Maderas del Pueblo have had support from Julia Carrabias, the head of the Protected Area and Natural Resources Secretariat (SEMARNAP).

⁶ *Comuneros* are common property land holders in Chimalapas. They are primarily male heads of households, although widows can become *comuneros* as well.

⁷ Social justice in this case is a community controlled means of decision-making related to issues such as property. It may be common in areas where the judicial system is weak and be more formal than other traditional alternative dispute resolution processes.

⁸ For a more detailed account of this case see Russell (1996).

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Figure 1: Map of the Chimalapas Campesino Reserve.

[still to be scanned electronically]

Table 1: History of the Chimalapas Campesino Ecological Reserve

1687—Zoques buy their own lands from the Spanish crown with gold. Chimalapas literally means “gourds of gold.”

1850—Land recognized as being owned by Zoques by the government.

1850-1967—Period of 117 years of invasions mostly from the Veracruz and Chiapas sides. Some foreign influence—one map that says “Hearst Estate” where Chimalapas lies—and Zoques suffer from not colonizing the eastern side when it is settled and exploited by Chiapas colonists and loggers.

1957—Colonias Cuauhtémoc, Progreso, Ramos Milán and Las Vegas were created in the region for agriculture and cattle production after legally declaring “without forest value” the surrounding rainforest. Cuauhtémoc occupied 40,000 ha of Chimas land in the same year.

1967—Recognition of two municipalities Santa María de Chimalapas and San Miguel de Chimalapas.

1967-92—Physical border measurement, more invasions of drug dealers, ranchers, and absentee landlords. Conflicts begin to emerge with Chiapas and Oaxaca states about their border. In 1990 approximately 1/3 of land in Chimalapas’ territory was in dispute.

1975—Pressure was put on the Chimas to create a communal forest organization to produce wood for a government paper mill. Communal authorities were forced to sign an agreement, but the Chimas assembly vetoed it. A civil protest was launched, roads closed and the government was forced to send in the army to reestablish order.

1979—The Chimas attempted to organize their own forestry enterprise, but it failed due to external pressure and internal corruption. A few years afterward, it was controlled by SARH, the Ministry of Agriculture.

1980’s—Pacto Ecológico then Maderas del Pueblo form and start working in region. Subsequent resolution of many land conflicts, especially San Isidro la Gringa. Programs in social organization and agricultural extension are effective but limited.

1985—SARH planned a large logging project that proposed to produce 200,000 m³ /year for domestic and international markets. In the same year, the biosphere reserve is proposed for Chimalapas, which was resisted by the Chimas.

1986—Chiapas state begins promising Chimalapas land to landless Chiapans.

1991—“Agrarian conciliation process” is promoted by the Chimas, governmental and non-governmental organizations

1992—Death threats, disappearances and intimidation increase in the regions. Chimalapas negotiation process reaches a high point then fades away under resignation of its leader. The idea of the Campesino Reserve is solidified.

1994—40,000 hectares of Chimas land from San Isidro la Gringa is legally and physically repatriated to San Francisco la Paz. Workshop to determine management of this area is held in San Francisco la Paz. The Ministry for Social Development, (SEDESOL) begins to work in the region. Divisions between San Miguel and Santa María worsen when SEDESOL begins to give money to San Miguel. SEDESOL is thrown out of Chimalapas, when it is discovered that its director is trying to subvert the Campesino Reserve.

1995—Implementation of the Estatuto Comunal, Ordenamiento Comunitario Participativo, and Chalchijapa community forestry plan. Maderas del Pueblo also expands staff members. Land tenure conflicts in the Eastern Zone decrease when Benito Juárez and San Antonio evict several cattle ranchers.

1996—Conflicts worsen when a *comunero* from San Francisco de la Paz is wrongfully jailed and accused of murder and a *comunero’s* truck is burned in the eastern zone of the Reserve. New election of officials in Santa María strains relationship with Maderas del Pueblo and San Miguel becomes the focus of Maderas del Pueblo efforts.

1997—*Foro Comunal*—An international meeting is held in the village of Benito Juárez to further publicize the plight of the Chimalapas residents and rainforest.

Table 2: Comparison of decision-making processes.

Benito Juárez Consensus Process	Multi-Party Mediation Process
1. Talk, dialogue and the situation unfolds	1. Understand the Nature of the Conflict
2. Analysis of Problem Consensus Building	2. Design the Process
3. Write down initial agreements	3. Promote Dialogue
4. Further dialogue, refinement of agreements	4. Generate Alternative Solutions
5. Agreements—final draft	5. Facilitate the Agreements
6. Action	6. Institutionalize the agreements
(This study)	(Fisher, et al., 1994)

Table 3: Chimalapas Conflict Process As Proposed by the *Estatuto Comunal*. The names used below are changed from the original.

Process	Case of Nuevo San Juan
1. Conflict	1. Manuel is killed in a family feud
2. Participants meet	2. Manuel's brothers go to Benito Juárez to Antonio
3. Deputy commissioners of two communities meet	3. Brothers then go to Santa María to denounce crime and talk with Emilio, the commissioner
4. General Assembly between communities	4. Meeting in Matías Romero (a neutral territory where the two sides attempt to come to an agreement. At this meeting they decide that four people have to leave the town
5. Commissioner's assistants investigate	5. n/a
6. Commissioner visits and investigates, negotiates decision	6. n/a
7. General Assembly	7. If the forced exodus does not work the process will pass on to the Santa María general assembly. During the meeting in Matías, the commissioner said "I am sure that if it goes to the assembly they (villagers) are going to banish them from Chimalapas." (ZL1)