What the Tides May Bring: Political "Tigueraje" Dispossession and Popular Dissent in Samaná, Dominican Republic

Ryan A. Mann-Hamilton

Graduate Center, City University of New York

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WHAT THE TIDES MAY BRING: POLITICAL “TIGUERAJE”, DISPOSESSION AND POPULAR DISSENT IN SAMANÁ, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.

by

RYAN MANN-HAMILTON

Dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2016
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by

RYAN MANN-HAMILTON

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology to satisfy the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Dr. Donald Robotham

Date

Chair of Examining Committee

Dr. Gerald Creed

Date

Executive Officer

Dr. Julie Skurski

Dr. Herman Bennett

Dr. Ismael Garcia Colon

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

WHAT THE TIDES MAY BRING: POLITICAL “TIGUERAJE”, DISPOSESSION AND
POPULAR DISSENT IN SAMANÁ, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.

by
Ryan Mann-Hamilton

Adviser: Dr. Donald Robotham

My dissertation is a historical and ethnographic project that delves into the conflictive
relationship between the development of the Dominican state and the formation of the
community of the port city of Samaná. The African diasporic community of Samaná has actively
constructed the local space throughout shifting political projects, while sustaining their collective
voices against the waves of dispossession crashing on their shores. Using a combination of
archival research, participant observation, oral history and ethnography, I document multiple
instances of state intervention to understand how the Samaná community has been coerced over
time to consent to these processes. I juxtapose the autonomous development of the Samaná
littoral space to the formation of the Dominican state, which required the incorporation of this
African Diasporic community into the national imaginary through forceful sociocultural,
political, economic and infrastructural manipulations. This interdisciplinary project seeks to
explore the contradictory ways the Dominican state represents itself, and excavate the economic
and sociocultural practices of modern nation making that it engaged in so as to examine the
concrete realities of the concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ in Samaná.

My ethnographic work engages with the unequal relationship between state actors and the
population of the DR, which has led to the entrenchment of an authoritative mode of governance
that disenfranchises and displaces many communities for the sake of continued accumulation of
capital. I argue that this new round of capital circulation, spearheaded by the Dominican tourism economy, though presented as positive by the state and media, is increasingly displacing the members of the community of Samaná through the manipulation of land titles, the privatization of coastal lands and the dismantling and cooption of civil society institutions. The residents of Samaná have learned to maneuver the multiple modalities of power present in the space and are deciphering new ways to intervene, create spaces of organizing and reclaim agency through a reengagement with local and regional history.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the uneasy souls who sought freedom and arrived on the shores of Xamana and whose story I tell today. As I reflect upon this long process two images stand out in my mind, that of my grandfather Ezra Hamilton and my grandmother Altagracia Coplin, who continue to watch over me. Writing these pages has been a cathartic experience and being able to spend a year in Samaná sharing with my grandmother before her passing was the best gift that one could get in this life. To my mother Leonora Hamilton who constantly asked me whether I was satisfied with my work and though I kept avoiding the answer, I can now say I am. It is because of your struggle and prodding that I am who I am. To my sister Jaelle and my incredible nephews Julian, Mathew and Nicolas who I got to share time with while at the Grad Center, making me feel at home in the big city.

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**Introduction**

“This land has been in my family for over 150 years, but I want something different. If I could just get my brothers and sisters to sign the papers, I could make some money, maybe travel, and have a better future for my family. We have worked these lands for generations, but agriculture doesn’t pay anymore.” By referring to “the papers,” Cha-cha referenced the title of the plot of land his family owned adjacent to the ocean. His family was of the few in rural Samaná who held legal title to the lands they had accrued through years of struggle. This was the last remaining plot of family land; the rest had been sold to pay off debts and provide economic assistance for the ever-growing family. Its sale required the signature of all children of the marriage between his parents. Cha-cha had been approached many times by interested buyers, but there was always one or two siblings who refused the offer. Most of the family preferred selling the land to use the funds accrued to improve their immediate livelihood, but there were two brothers who refused to sign the paperwork. The two were the only ones who didn’t live on the land, and perhaps understood that without it, the family would have nothing.

The price of land in Samaná, Dominican Republic (DR) has substantially increased in the last 30 years in response to rising real estate and tourism interests and the growing entrance of capital in the region. Until the 1940s, Samaná could only be accessed by maritime connections. Once the first paved road and other infrastructural projects were constructed in the 1970s, it became an important national tourist destination. As a result of the increase in the price of land, many locals are opting to sell these lands in order to receive immediate monetary compensation. The sale of these lands alongside the displacement of the community by Dominican state tourism and infrastructural development projects has created a new generation of landless Samaneses.

Samaná is a departmental region in the northeast of the DR; it is sometimes described as a peninsula, and is also the name of the town, which is the capital of the region. In the
department of Samaná, there are approximately 150,000 people, the majority of whom live in rural areas of the peninsula. Many of the youth in Samaná are requesting herencia en vida (inheritance while alive) in hopes of gaining access to the land owned or occupied by their families.\(^1\) The sale and appropriation of many of these lands has shifted the way that the population views, values, and relates to the land and the region. Disconnected from structures of political representation, and economically destitute, many are enticed to participate in an economic system that benefits from the increased inequality within Dominican national spaces and the continuous dispossession of its at-risk populations.

This dissertation is an exploration of the persisting struggles that the emigrant community of Samaná has waged while seeking freedom, equality, and inclusion. The town of Samaná was a cosmopolitan and semi-autonomous region prior to the formation of the Dominican nation state.\(^2\) My project is an attempt to understand how, under specific historical circumstances, this heterogeneous population created a community, over the course of the formation of the Dominican nation-state in the 19\(^{th}\), 20\(^{th}\), and 21\(^{st}\) century.\(^3\) I investigate the multiple interventions into the region of Samaná by different “projects of rule,” which have initiated processes of dispossession and disenfranchisement for a large section of the community.\(^4\) In response to this dispossession, local tactics and processes of dissent have been mobilized within the community and have developed over time as a place-making tool. The increase in local processes of

\(^1\) This process of herencia en vida reflects the desires of the local population to participate and gain from tourist-related endeavors.

\(^2\) Samaná is located in the northeastern portion of the Dominican Republic and is described as a peninsula, a region, and the capital city of the department. For the most part, when I refer to Samaná I am speaking of the town unless otherwise indicated.

\(^3\) In response to the many silences in the historical record, I focus on shifts in the daily practices of the African American descendants in Samaná. These perspectives are supplemented by interviews with other immigrant families of Syrian, Haitian, Afro-Caribbean, and European descent that have historically made the peninsula their home and have actively constructed their world, in spite of these forces.

\(^4\) I adapt Scott’s use of “Projects of Rule” to understand the multiple political interests that were present and manifested within the space of Samaná. These projects of rule showed no concern with the existing population and instead centered on the region’s strategic location and the resources available for exploitation in the space of Samaná.
dispossession has been inflicted over time through the dismantling of various civil society institutions and the dislocation of Samaná’s regional power by the Dominican state.

To better understand the obstacles and threats to autonomous community formation in Samaná, I juxtapose this early phase with the development of the Dominican state and the methods through which the state has intervened in the region. In order to provide a critique of the Dominican state’s forms of unequal incorporation, I investigate the Samaná community’s ambivalent relation to the state, as its members simultaneously challenge and reinscribe state power in their daily interactions. Local actors continue to wage local struggles as they strive to relate to Dominican society on equal terms.

My intention is to highlight the ways in which the residents of Samaná—as agents of their own futures—over time have participated in, resisted, or been coerced by multiple elite and corporate efforts to control the region. Through the maintenance of their ethnic and regional identities, the actions of the people of Samaná defy simplifying dominant narratives of nation and race. Through their actions, they are formulating a new perception of the state that has the potential to shift the unequal relationship of power between the two. This historical ethnography enters into the anthropological debate over how the past enters into the present and the various ways in which the past is transformed and invoked. It ultimately speaks to the question of human agency in African descendant communities in the Americas; the use of the imagination to create structures of dignity; and the dialogic formation of consciousness informed by the trauma of re-enslavement (Sweet 2009, Bennett 2009, Dubois 2004, Trouillot 1995).

Oral history accounts by members of the Samaná community clash with the official Dominican national narrative of the peninsula’s isolation. This official narrative of isolation and peripheral history has been used to contain and conceal the local and transnational histories of
Samaná, which in and of themselves challenge the prevailing Dominican and scholarly narratives of the nation. It was not isolation, but, rather, constant movements, exchanges, and networks of resistance that were integral in the early development of Samaná. As suggested by Lorand Matory’s work on Brazil, a perspective of trans-Caribbean exchange allows for an understanding of the members of the region as active agents in the construction and development of the local space (Matory 2006).

During the community’s early formation, Samaná’s inhabitants were able to consolidate decision-making power and governance in the hands of local actors through the establishment of autonomous educational, religious, and political institutions. These institutions were used as structures for local organizing and served as the foundation of Samaná’s civil society. For this project, it is therefore necessary to reconceptualize the history of Samaná and trace the multiple ethnic, political, and economic networks that traversed the local space.

Beginning in the 1930s, Samaná as a region needed to be incorporated by the Dominican state into the national sphere through the dismantling of regional power structures in what the state deemed a national project of unification. This was an attempt to consolidate power over the nation’s geographical territory, determine the nation’s political boundaries, and establish a notion of unity within the Dominican population. These projects of unification and nationalization resulted in the forceful dismantling of Samaná’s institutions by an authoritarian Dominican state. I argue that the dismantling of these institutions functioned as a strategy that aimed to make the population invisible, and therefore expendable, so as to separate it from their land and resources. The dismantling of Samaná’s civil society has hindered processes of organization and contestation in an attempt to significantly control local political consciousness.
The incorporation of Samaná into Dominican society occurred under violent conditions that forced the population to succumb to the whims of the Dominican state. This incorporation required Samanese to be integrated into the nation in a subordinate position, and, if required, by force. At the center of my analyses are the social, political, and economic processes that have led to displacement and dispossession in the coastal community of Samaná. Prior to the development of the Dominican state, many regions of the country controlled their own resources and government structures, and therefore had the ability to use them for the benefit of local populations (Yunen 1985:66). The centralization and consolidation of the Dominican state and the incorporation of the different regions into that state through the destruction of their political and economic autonomy have had dire effects for many of these regions and their people. State-led efforts to control and incorporate the local space are a central aspect of the Samaná region’s history that has resulted in important spatial transformations across time. The multiple transformations of place—whether natural, man-made, or state-induced—bring to the surface the impact of these centralization processes on the community’s formation, cultural inheritance, and economic wellbeing, as well as on their definition and pursuit of freedom (Holt 1992).

**Placemaking**

Although much academic interest has turned towards the global, there remain strong links between the global and local. Place, therefore, continues to play an important role in understanding local agency and resistance. The understanding of “global” and “local” requires a joint analysis that observes the relationship and articulation between the two. Arturo Escobar calls this “global constructedness and local specificity” (Escobar 2008:147). This local specificity is helpful in unearthing the processes and participants involved in the practices of dispossession. For scholars like Escobar, an analysis of “place continues to be important in the
lives of many people, perhaps most, if we understand by place the experience of a particular location with some measure of groundedness, sense of boundaries, and connection to everyday life, even if its identity is constructed, traversed by power and never fixed” (Escobar 2008:140). My intention is to use the place of Samaná both to bring attention to the spatial- and place-based struggles emanating from and evolving in the DR and by extension, to critique the development of the authoritative Dominican state. Placemaking endeavors in Samaná were primarily practices of homemaking, which were later subsumed by state- and nation-making practices. The incorporation of the region was the first step in achieving dispossession of the local inhabitants and relied on state-inflicted economic manipulations and high modernist projects. This place-based analysis describes ways that locals have intervened in these state-driven processes, and the solutions they are offering in hopes of producing change within the larger Dominican society.

In Samaná, control has been exerted by various “first world” nations through geographical and space-based initiatives. Unevenness over space is not a mere sidebar to how capitalism works, but is fundamental to its reproduction (Hadjimichalis 2011:255). This unevenness is produced as a result of both internal and external factors and the relations between the two (Hadjimichalis 2011:257). To intervene in the governance of the region, it is necessary to work against this unevenness and trace the processes that allow for its maintenance: “Place making is always a cultural as well as a political-economic activity,” and just as capital transforms place, capital is also transformed by place (Tsing 2005:338). The interest in the region of Samaná has centered on its rich natural resources, pristine beaches, and fertile land, with little emphasis on the development of the population. Dominican historians have seen Samaná as an abnormality as a result of the patterns of migration, linguistic practices, diverse
religious spaces, and its historically Black population. This marginal status continues to affect its relations to the state and the elite ideological forces of nation building.

**Why Samaná?**

The Samaná community has actively constructed the local space throughout shifting political projects, while making choices and employing strategies to sustain its collective voice against the waves of dispossession crashing on its shores. An analysis of the community of Samaná provides the opportunity to explore state interventions into the spatial configurations and processes of community autonomy and identity. The story of Samaná reveals the struggles persisting over time between the community and the Dominican state and the continued implementation and entrenchment of a national project through authoritarian rule. The community response to these incursions has not been one of outright revolt, but, rather, a constant endeavor entailing a demand for rights to education, freedom, and religious belief; the struggle for equality; and an ability to maneuver within a shifting political sphere.⁵

Tracing the story of Samaná is a methodological enterprise that draws upon stories of individual family life to observe the Caribbean entanglements that scholars have avoided. Residents have constantly adjusted their daily lives to these impositions, while continuing to engage with structures of power on their own terms: “As cultural products grounded in histories, identities are always shifting and emerging and aspects of identity are variously denied, suppressed, mobilized, celebrated and given organizational and institutional expression” (Peteet 1984). These entanglements suggest the power of individuals in deciding their own identities based on needs and desires rather than accepting impositions from afar.

---

⁵ This was a continuing concern in a community that fled the US and was contemplated later by authorities as a North American foothold on a potential US territory.
In the late 1800s Samaná was a free port in the Caribbean and a point of circulation of all kinds of objects and people, many of whom made it their home. As a result of the difficulty in policing littoral zones, borders remained porous for much of the early history of the region. Because of its central geographic location in the Caribbean, many European nations competed for representative control of Samaná. These interests rarely developed into a constant presence and were usually concentrated in the town and not the adjacent agricultural communities. It was not until the development of the modern Dominican state beginning in 1930 that Samaná encountered the increasing state interventions and economic and political transformations that it faces today.

**Economic Formations: From the Plantation to the Beach**

The geographical space of the Caribbean has been claimed, controlled, and used for the benefit of various empires wrestling for power in the region. Beginning in the 16th century, each project of containment adopted particular strategies of development that were the result of “political struggles and, more importantly, of which social groups or classes emerged victorious and assumed political control” (Pantojas-Garcia 1990). This containment was partly achieved through the control of land and people and the appropriation and exploitation of local resources. In the 21st century, containment continues to be a vital part of the control and exploitations of the space and its population and is now being directed by global actors in conjunction with the state.

Although claimed as individual islands, these territories cannot be viewed or described as isolates. These islands historically have been linked through maritime exchanges, nation building, and subject-forming processes (Torres-Saillant 1998, Benitez-Rojo 1992, Matory 2006, Inoa 1999, Trouillot 1992). As a result of historic processes of colonization, the Caribbean has been theorized through the economic and social models of the plantation and the *hacienda*. In

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6 A littoral zone is an area near the coastline of a body of water.
their early work, anthropologists Sidney Mintz and Eric Wolf understood the plantation and *hacienda* systems as a kind of social organization through agriculture that were different because they responded to “different levels of capital investment and market development” (Wolf and Mintz 1957:381). These work regimes were central in the social organization of societies, the accumulation of wealth, and the establishment of hierarchies in different island populations that were divided by racial, gender, and class lines. These social and economic systems also created “distinctive webs of social relationships” that have been significantly transformed through the transition to a service-based economy with an emphasis on tourism (Wolf and Mintz 1957:380).

Many peasant communities in Caribbean societies became the focal point of interest for political actors as they attempted to modernize their respective island nations. In the Dominican Republic, the regime of Rafael Trujillo, who gained power in 1930, focused its efforts at gaining consent from Dominican peasants: “Trujillo envisaged a critical place for the peasantry in the nation’s identity and modernity” (Turits 2003:1). The regime secured peasant support by changing property relations on the island, implementing land distribution programs, and passing property rights laws, thus assuring allegiance from peasant groups that felt indebted to the regime. The regime was able to sustain control for decades, which can be explained by the strong relationship between the state and the peasantry. This relationship continues to be manipulated by Dominican political actors.

The collapse of these economic and social models in the Caribbean has led to the exploitation of another natural space: the ocean and littoral zones. New strategies of capital investment in Caribbean economies increasingly have brought changes in the social conditions, organization, and spaces of representation for these island populations. In recent years, the promotion of tourism by most Caribbean economies has opened the way for powerful forces to
appropriate land and other resources. Tourism will continue to play a major role in Caribbean economies and serves as a means to accumulate capital in the hands of only small segments of island populations. The shift towards tourism has only enabled and amplified the dispossession of coastal communities that has, in turn, resulted in an increase in the migration of people from littoral communities to urbanized areas.

What are the consequences of embracing tourist-related endeavors over endeavors that prioritize the environment, the local inhabitants, and civil society? Are there alternatives to the way tourist-centered economies are organized and implemented? One mode for understanding the effects of these economic transitions is through David Harvey’s theory of “accumulation by dispossession.” For Harvey, “accumulation by dispossession” includes “a wide variety of processes such as the commoditization and privatization of land, the forceful expulsion of peasant populations, the conversion of various forms of property rights, and the suppression of rights to the commons” (Harvey 2005:148). Harvey’s model assumes that these processes of dispossession are occurring in response to global forces and interests, and he proposes that forms of accumulation have arisen that are “new ways of ‘enclosing the commons’” (Harvey 2005:149). For Harvey, multinational elements are central to these processes of dispossession, but in Samaná and the rest of the DR, national elements have been the driving force behind these endeavors.

The Dominican state is one of the main agents of dispossession; it is therefore a crucial player in providing support for these extractive endeavors. This state-led dispossession is not a totalizing endeavor because it relies both on the possession and incorporation of certain

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7 It should be noted that there are positive dimensions to developing a tourist economy, such as the improvement of infrastructure and extension of basic energy, water, and sanitation services to rural areas. Yet, these services are often accompanied by a slough of detrimental effects, such as an increase in poverty, violence, inequality, and criminality. In the context of these contradictory effects, some communities have begun to ask questions and develop innovative ways to organize individually and collectively to improve their conditions.
individuals and groupings. This incorporation relies on self-enrichment from the control, division, and transformation of local spaces and allows for the concentration and accumulation of capital and resources. Therefore, some sectors of Samaná and Dominican society gain from and are empowered by the workings of dispossession. As a result of their relations to the Dominican state and links to transnational interests, many are able to benefit from the dispossession of their neighbors.

While these processes of dispossession have benefited and strengthened elite segments of the DR’s population, they nevertheless have adversely affected segments of the population who do not fit neatly within the elite-established discourse of Dominican racial formation. This dissertation therefore examines the validity of the concept of “accumulation by dispossession,” as well as the lived, concrete realities that this concept seeks to describe, in the community of Samaná. By using this mode of understanding, my intention is to go beyond the focus on communities that are dispossessed in order to understand who is doing the dispossessioning and to identify the political actors benefitting from this dispossession. I use the experiences of Samaná residents to show how local communities confront these state-led processes.

Rethinking the State

Over time, the state has been theorized in multiple ways and been described as a “multilayered, contradictory, translocal ensemble of institutions, practices and people” (Sharma and Gupta 2007:6). It is therefore necessary to construct a working definition of the state. Since

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8 Processes of globalization have challenged the sovereignty of nations, the control of territory, and the boundaries of the nation state. In an increasingly globalized world, the function of the state has shifted and thus requires us to think about and analyze the state in different ways. Much recent scholarship around the state describes less intervention and a retreat from its presence as it becomes weaker under an increasing neoliberal form of governance. Other recent discussions around the state focus on the non-state actors that have substituted for the state in the governance of national populations. Yet, in many sites the state has not receded and instead has found alternate roles and ways to consolidate its power.

9 The two traditional schools of thought regarding the state are the realist and nominalist camps. The realists view the state as the most important actor and understand the state as self-interested and acting to maintain power. The
every state is founded on force, one can define the state by the means peculiar to the state, as the authorized use of force within a territory (Weber 1919). The modern state can be seen as a “compulsory association which organizes domination” that has been successful in seeking to monopolize the legitimate use of physical force as a means of domination within a territory” (Weber 1919:4). Although the relation between the state and violence is an intimate one, violence is not utilized solely by the state. The state cannot be sustained only by coercion and thus remain a terrain of struggle played out in its lands/territories/boundaries/spaces. As a site of struggle, the state may sometimes act in contradictory ways that defy explanation. Although it should not be understood as separate from society, the state many times works against the ideas of the society it claims to serve (Mitchell 2006:185).

The state as a real decision-making entity has the power both to liberate and also incarcerate the dreams of future populations and generations. States are messy, yet through their actions, they can appear consistent and centralized. How communities imagine the state shapes how they engage with it, how they resist it, and how they push back against it. Rather than accept the state as real, a focus on analyzing the terms, tactics, and effects of state power helps us to identify the functions of the state and how it is felt by those it claims to govern.

For Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci, the state is composed of both political society and also civil society. Gramsci develops a useful distinction between civil society and political society in which political society is achieved through force and coercion, whereas civil society is achieved through educational means and leadership rather than force (Hoar and Smith 1971). For Gramsci, the relationship between civil and political society is never stable or predictable. Civil state is seen as a rational actor that acts upon the people. It is not disconnected from society and is always a forceful actor searching for and consolidating power. The nominalist vision is in opposition to the realist and does not see the state as an institution, but, rather, more abstractedly. The nominalist cannot name the state as an actor, for if it can act, then it must exist.
society can be thought of as a buffer zone between the economic structures and the state. Participation in the institutions of civil society relies on lower levels of coercion and aims to consolidate consent. Therefore to understand the actions of the state and the processes it engages in requires “an examination of the relationship between state and civil society” (Trouillot 1994:18).\(^\text{10}\) This relationship is constantly being worked on, manipulated, transformed, and reimagined (Trouillot 1994:18).

Because the objective of every state is to maintain power, the state is never static and is always transforming. The state exists in the midst of many tensions that require it to look inward and outward and therefore may appear as fractured, inconsistent, and malleable. At times, people on the ground can identify “the state” as an obstacle and other times as a partner.\(^\text{11}\) While these everyday interactions show people how to view the state, they are also useful for devising strategies of resistance against the state. Understanding the inner workings of the state is a necessary step in order to intervene in it and shift some of its practices to become more egalitarian, inclusive, and participatory.

Gupta and Ferguson (G&F) argue that not enough discussion has been given to the ways in which the state is spatialized, how it makes itself known, its representative practices, and therefore, how it is felt and experienced by the population.\(^\text{12}\) The spatializing tendencies of states help to “secure their legitimacy, to naturalize their authority, and to represent themselves as

\(^{10}\) Trouillots analyzes the economic development by which the Haitian state extracts labor from the peasantry. His work is useful to understanding the dynamics of state power within the DR as the neighboring countries have shared many details.

\(^{11}\) The shape of the state is contingent upon the shape of power dynamics. The push and pull of the state’s presence is a direct representation of the social climate under which its power is shaped.

\(^{12}\) Two more recent approaches to the study of the state have been the systems and the statist approach. Systems theorists have argued for abandoning the study of the state for the study of broader political systems (Sharma and Gupta, 2006:8). The statist camp, in opposition to the systems approach, has brought back the interest in studying the state. In the statist approach, “the state is viewed as a clearly bounded institution that is distinct from society and is often portrayed as a unitary and autonomous actor” (Sharma and Gupta, 2006:8). Others have attempted to describe how states come into being and how they are constructed over time rather than assume the state as a given (Trouillot 2003, Mitchell 2006:99).
superior to and encompassing of, other institutions and centers of power” (Gupta and Ferguson 2002:982). In attempting to explain the spatial dynamics of the state, G&F illustrate their argument both theoretically and ethnographically by using the principles of verticality and encompassment. Verticality refers to “the idea of a state as an institution somehow above civil society, community and family” where decisions are made from the top down (Gupta and Ferguson 2002:982). Encompassment, then, refers to scale, which produces “a taken for granted spatial and scalar image of the state that both sits above and contains localities, regions or communities” (Gupta and Ferguson 2002:982). Therefore a “focus on the practices and representation of the state allow us to see their central role in the perpetration of exploitation and inequality” (Gupta and Sharma 2006:18). An analysis of the processes of state formation can shed light on the multiple variables that help to constitute the state. By discerning these variables, one can attempt to understand the workings of power and the ways the state mobilizes and makes itself felt through everyday actions and practices.

I am interested in how people imagine, understand, and perceive the state. My work delves into what some scholars would call the “cultural constitution” of the state (Gupta and Sharma 2007:11). Comprehending the cultural constitution of the state is necessary in order to reflect on the everyday practices of the state “as the primary arena in which people learn something about the state” (Gupta and Sharma 2007:11). Some of these everyday interactions are comprised of bureaucratic practices, urban planning projects, and public performances by state representatives. Through proceduralism and mundane bureaucratic activities “the primacy of the state is reproduced […] and social inequalities, such as class and gender are produced and maintained” (Gupta and Sharma 2007:13). Techniques and practices like mapping and surveying are part of making the community legible to authorities in hopes of controlling the planning and
construction of these new spaces. The state also represents itself to the public through such forces as subsidized food and gasoline programs, official motorcades, and official identification documents. Representations of the state can be analyzed through a textual analysis of newspapers, TV reports, government reports and plans, and other aspects of how the media engages the state and are a key modality through which state power is enacted (Gupta and Sharma 2007:19). These everyday practices and representations are processes that are mutually constituted and that help frame how people understand and interact with the state.

**The Dominican State**

In the Dominican Republic (DR), the state is perceived of as an entity controlled by a specific sector of peoples, out of reach from the majority of its citizens. The Dominican state is referenced, referred to, and imagined as an overseeing entity without limits that plays a central role in the shaping of local communities. The Dominican population has few modes and structures to make claims on the modern state; they are therefore seen as recipients of state projects. This project of political domination is one that I seek to understand in the context of the DR through the lens of rural Samaná.

A focus on state spatial characteristics sheds light on the function and actions of an authoritarian Dominican state. These spatializing dynamics provide the perception that communities and their perspectives have little relevance for the decision-making elements of the state. Local populations are instead seen as obstacles in national development. The spatializing tendencies of the Dominican state help to develop a notion of transnational governmentality. This notion helps to understand how these state practices produce new forms of politics that exclude different segments of society from the decision-making process. The Dominican state
relies on the marginalization and dismantling of civil society institutions and the cooptation of local political representation to achieve this exclusion.

Scholars of the DR agree “the country’s dramatic economic and social changes since the late 20th century have not gone hand in hand with comparable political reconfigurations. This is perhaps the most readily evident paradox of the Dominican political landscape” (Horn 2014:19). The terms available to describe the Dominican state are inadequate and should be scrutinized because the terms themselves may also obscure the multiple processes through which the Dominican state has governed, aptly manipulating public sentiment and mobilizing nationalist rhetoric at specific moments (Horn 2014). Although classifying the Dominican state as authoritarian may presume certain things, it responds to scholarship that speaks to the different iterations of the Dominican state and its project of governance. The Dominican state continues to mobilize violence as a means to condition the population, yet the use of violence has now shifted to specific moments. As a result of its authoritarian practices, new mobilizations against the state and its partners are occurring around the country. These mobilizations are a long-awaited response to years of repression and disenfranchisement.

Dominican political scientist Rosario Espinal asserts that what needs to be investigated is “if and how references to democracy have impregnated authoritarian discourses and practices and what the implications of such experiences are for the vitality of authoritarianism or for the success of democratic consolidation” (Espinal 1987:15). The effect of this authoritarian rule has been to erase struggles over local history and therefore to give all agency and power of action to the state. As a result, much of the history of Samaná is being lost as the community is constantly under assault.
An overarching question of this dissertation is how Samaneses develop inclusive modes and spaces of local governance that respond to and are driven by local desires and needs in order to construct a participatory democracy in the Dominican Republic.

![Public graffiti in Samaná](image1.jpg)

Figure 1: “The government steals, the police kill, and the media lies.” Public graffiti in Samaná. Photo by Ryan Mann-Hamilton

**The Modern Dominican State**

The modern Dominican state emerged after a long process of US intervention and control in the Caribbean. To recover from US intervention, “the state turned inward to consolidate its control, and the urban elites who gravitated around that state pushed the rural majority into the margins of political life,” much like in Haiti (Trouillot 1995:16). As a result, the state and elite actors associated with state power have been the driving forces in the displacement and dispossession of marginal communities in the DR. The consolidation and centralization of the Dominican state apparatus required the dismantling of most regional civil society institutions because they could interfere with the efforts of the state. This centralized governance structure has become the model for subsequent Dominican governments.

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13 The US occupation of the DR and Haiti in 1915 centralized state power and brought a newly-formed constabulary in collusion with state power. Alongside the formation of the new constabulary came the disarmament of forces of opposition.
In its early stages of development, a disjuncture between political and civil society was the preferred mode of operation by the Dominican state. Access to the state and state power was a privilege of urban elites who dominated spaces of political control. During the early stages of Dominican nation state formation, class and racial ideologies helped to constitute the new Dominican subject. Elite-formulated ideological constructions of the nation deeply influenced the economic, social and political policies of the Dominican state. These racialized ideologies linked many of the prominent Dominican political leaders with the elite sections of the country and have facilitated the unequal treatment of specific populations within the national space.¹⁴ The role of these racialized ideologies on national geographical imaginings and sponsored acts of rural planning is immense. The practices and consequences of Dominican state actions are deeply influenced by these racialized ideologies that continue to play an important part in the definition and control of the national space.

These racialized ideologies have resulted in an uneven geographic development that has increased dispossession in rural areas and exacerbated inequality and stratification across the country (Pulido 2000). The effects of this dispossession—achieved through economic, political and social means—are used as a tool to dismantle communities as a necessary national project to overtake regional power. I argue that the Dominican state has been the main actor in the dispossession and marginalization of its at-risk populations from its urban centers of surveillance and power. The Dominican state has not relinquished the role of the strong state and continues to centralize power in the hands of the executive branch and to legislate and enforce moral and cultural practices. This pattern reflects a strong relationship and ancestry to the colonial model of

¹⁴ I compare and contrast the projects of rule of Rafael Trujillo, Joaquin Balaguer, and the more recent neoliberal regime of Leonel Fernandez to understand the development and effects of these practices.
governance, which later transformed into caudillo politics and dictatorships and is now reflected in the organization of political parties.

The elite-owned Dominican media outlets and the Dominican state currently present tourism as the only solution to the country’s economic woes as well as an important strategy of national development. The growth of tourism as an economic force has been accompanied by the marginalization of a large segment of the Dominican population resulting from the accumulation of capital by small segments of Dominican society (Yunen 1985:61). The state retains its productive power by leasing, rather than selling, land and establishing long-term agreements with multinational corporations that allow for the exploitation of the local population and its surrounding resources.\(^ {15}\)

In order to justify the continued expansion of these tourism endeavors, many state-disseminated studies assume that benefits accrue. But in Samaná, the increase in tourism has led to the overdevelopment and privatization of coastal areas for use in tourist-related endeavors. This privatization is achieved through the exclusion and dispossession of local inhabitants. I aim to understand the tourism-development model as it unfolds in Samaná and the role of the multiple levels of the state apparatus in facilitating this transition that has polarized large segments of local society.

**Research Design**

The scholarly work that exists on Samaná has not yet been organized into a coherent longitudinal account of the community’s struggles.\(^ {16}\) My dissertation intends to rectify this, and to do so in ways that generate a novel perspective on state development practices and the struggles for freedom and autonomy in the Caribbean. This research was guided by an

\(^{15}\) There is an unwillingness to share the gains of tourism with local populations.

\(^{16}\) Most work on Samaná has explored the African American migration to the island without delving into the economic circumstances that led to their 19th-century emigration.
interdisciplinary approach that analyzes strands of history and shifts in economics, culture, and identity, as well as tactics of governance and transformations of place, in order to account for political and social upheavals. It relied on a combination of archival research, participant observation, oral histories and ethnographies of local residents, businesspeople, and government representatives in order to uncover how these forced transformations have manifested locally.

As a descendant of members of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) congregation that arrived in Samaná in 1824, I have strengthened my kin-based connections to the community over time. I have been involved in multiple community development and resource conservation projects in Samaná and have regularly visited the region for the last 30 years.17 In 2009, I was asked to participate as a facilitator for the Hostos Community College Summer Abroad program, which includes a focus on Samaná’s history and development.18 During the trips, I was able to further familiarize myself with the community and make institutional, academic, and community-based contacts. These connections have been central to developing an historical viewpoint and ethnographic plan. In the last few years, I have been active in the organization and development of the Samaná Cultural and Historical Center, which has provided me the opportunity to continue engaging with local perspectives.

The links I have developed over time to Samaná society have facilitated my access to many of the subjects with which I engage throughout this dissertation. Once I mentioned my last name, most Samaneses would speak of my grandparents and how they knew my family. This

17 Prior to this research I completed my 2003 Masters project in Samaná, which focused on increasing access to renewable energy resources for educational and health-related endeavors in rural communities, by developing solar energy systems to fulfill the energy needs of the community.
18 I spent extensive time developing and cultivating trust with many of the AME church elders whose memories and experiences are vital to my initial questions. I participated in their religious services and celebratory activities to understand the function of religion as a base for organizing. Many of the interviews conducted with elders were done in walks through the town of Samaná remembering the various dislocations of space over time.
facilitated many of my interactions and decreased the suspicion towards my constant questions. Yet, these prior relations also complicated many aspects of my research, particularly when approaching government representatives in Samaná. One of my uncles had run for mayor in the past and had made many friends and enemies in the process, which elicited suspicion as to my interests in accessing the municipal archive.

I placed much emphasis on interviewing and documenting oral histories of elders in the community, as they have been witness to the various transformations of the town and the periods of transition in the country. Twenty-five local informants were selected, comprised of a range of ages and sexes. These twenty-five life histories were used to explore the heterogeneity of Atlantic processes of entanglement and movement to the space of Samaná. Attention was given to the multiple and complex ways that Samaneses construct their identities both regionally and spatially. This data helped to construct an image of shared and divergent experiences within the community. Additional interviews were conducted with various government representatives of the Ministries of Tourism, Culture, and Non-Conventional Energy and the Ministry of Environment that delved into questions pertaining to tourism and infrastructure development plans for Samaná.

Throughout my time in the field, I monitored local newspapers and local media outlets for news referencing Samaná and the current political climate. These media outlets were also used to market the region to national and international audiences and project an image of a docile and accepting population eagerly awaiting tourism development (Sheller 2003, Godreau 2002).

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19 Most residents believed my work as an anthropologist focused on the local taino caves, and routinely commented on how I should wear a hat like Indiana Jones.

20 Interviewees were asked to detail the knowledge of their personal history, family structure, job status, economic conditions, language retention, religious practices, work habits, educational background, and historical knowledge. I also asked them to describe the multiple changes they have been witness to in Samaná. They were asked to emphasize the effects they have perceived and to offer a prognosis for what is to come.
The absence of conflict in these media reports is complicit with the plans by the state to turn Samaná into the “Monte Carlo” of the Caribbean (Listin Diario 2012).

I began my preliminary archival work in 2007 at the Schomburg Center for Research on the African Diaspora in Harlem, where I worked with the Jose Vigo collection of unpublished interviews of the African American descendants in Samaná. Additional archival resources were found in multiple locations across the DR, including the Joaquín Balaguer Research Center, the Juan Bosch International library, and at the Foundation for Global Development and Democracy Library (FUNGLODE). After this preliminary work, I embarked on a more thorough search for documents pertaining to the social, economic, and political relations of the community of Samaná. I worked in archives across the US Eastern seaboard (Philadelphia, New York, Washington, South Carolina), attempting to establish a narrative of migration and economic conditions.21

I have collected many of the primary documents pertaining to the African American migration to Samaná and the US commercial interests in the region in the late 19th century.22 In the Dominican National Archives, I found documentation about the Spanish colonial and Dominican states’ intentions and plans for the development of the area of Samaná.23 These documents recognize the role of structures of power in homogenizing and intervening in the local space.

21 Archives that I have worked in include the NY Historical Society, the Dominican Studies Archive at City College, the Mother Bethel Church Archive in Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Historical Society, the US National Archives, and the South Carolina Historical Society.
22 With the support of the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship and other CUNY Graduate Center fellowships, I have visited and lived in the region of Samaná on multiple occasions. I have published two short pieces on Samaná. The first emphasizes construction of family narratives and participation in local politics; the second is concerned with the spatial transformation of the community with an emphasis on the great fire of 1946. It is my hope that these initial articles will set the stage for future scholarship on Samaná and will allow others to become interested in what I consider a rich site of encounter.
23 Under the guidance of Martha Ellen Davis who has conducted research in Samaná for the past 20 years.
I also used the maps and plans of Samaná held in various archives to analyze the spatial plans, changes, and manipulations in Samaná over time. Plans, whether they came to fruition or not, have been attempts to reconfigure and claim Samaná without consulting the local inhabitants, a process that has deeply affected the formation and organization of this community. The visions projected by these maps were not simply of progress and control; instead, they point to expectations of region and the people who inhabit the land. These maps and plans had ripple effects across the region and set in motion a flurry of land surveys and travel narratives that were used to make claims in the peninsula. Copies of all the documents I collected as part of this research are at the Dominican Studies Institute in New York for further use by community members and researchers. It is my intention to deposit copies of these documents in Samaná and Santo Domingo so that others may access this information.

**Chapter Outlines:**

In Chapter One, I develop a historical narrative of the community through archival and secondary sources that touch on issues of class, race, and gender. My first chapter documents the movements of people and products in and out of Samaná, while emphasizing the institutions that were created and sustained locally. I divide this early history into three sections and identify various spatial, economic, and political interventions that have significantly impacted the community’s organization. This history chronicles major events as outcomes of social practice and allows for the movement from event to structure (Comaroff 1985).

To understand the effects and processes of the local transformations in Samaná, it is necessary to document the multiple historical and contemporary changes to the region and identify the transnational, national, and regional forces at play. The multiple attempts to annex

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24 These documents were collected at the New York Public Library Map Room, the Library of Congress map room and augmented by those at the Dominican National Archive and private collections.
Samaná by various foreign powers are part of the rich historical tapestry that has shaped the littoral space of Samaná. The community has been forced to maneuver the various imperial, national, and global actors that have taken a military and economic interest in the region (German 1995, Winch 1986).  

I analyze early 19th-century travel narratives and consular records from the British, Spanish, and United States governments active in Samaná (Schomburg 1853, Hazard 1873). These records contain information about the schemes and designs of these empires within Samaná and provide evidence of the heterogeneity of cultures interacting within the coastal areas of the peninsula.

In Chapter Two, I analyze the Great Fire of Samaná that in 1946 destroyed the town. In particular, I analyze how blame for the fire was attributed and its effects on local society. I examine the early formation of the modern Dominican nation under the dictatorial regime of Rafael Trujillo and the societal transformations that were part of this development. I outline and analyze the elite foundational ideologies that the Dominican state used to formulate the Dominican nation and its citizens. The incursion of authoritarian state power into Samaná brought the first concentration of rules, pronounced surveillance, and inflicted violence on behalf of the Dominican state. The Samaná population interpreted these Dominican state actions and their effects in multiple ways.

After the assassination of Trujillo in 1960, there was a brief opening for societal and political transformations within the DR. Leftist opposition forces momentarily gained power, but were overwhelmed by entrenched interests and conservative forces that banded together to regain power. Chapter Three examines the rapidly implemented economic transitions from subsistence

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25 I emphasize the United States attempts for annexation in the 1870s, because of momentary success in claiming the space.
26 The records contain information on the economic activity, daily life, networks of travel, economic and political trends, and early hints of globalization. The records also contain the origins of the merchant ships, cargo, and passengers that entered into the littoral space of Samaná.
agriculture to industrialization and the emphasis on the tourism service sector that the Dominican state promoted after the murder of Trujillo. These state-driven economic changes were intended to promote the process of modernization of the DR and regions like Samaná. The newly elected Partido Democratico Social Cristiano (PRSC) declared Samaná a “tourist city” in 1971 and inaugurated a series of infrastructural renewal projects through the use of eminent domain laws. This renewal required the destruction of the old town of Samaná and precipitated a different relation between the Dominican state and the rural electorate. The three-year process of destruction and renovation dismantled Samaná’s civil society and further disrupted spaces of local organizing.

In Chapter Four, I analyze the current tourist boom in Samaná promoted by the Dominican state and European multinationals. Tourism, alongside an increase in real estate speculation spurred by flowing capital from drug money, remains the central economic input to the Dominican nation (Listin Diario 2012). Although presented as positive by the state and media, this new round of capital circulation is increasingly displacing the members of the community of Samaná through the manipulation of land titles and the privatization of coastal lands. I explore tourism development in the DR and the particularities of the local experience in Samaná and its emphasis on whale watching tourism. Tourism has not resulted in the promise of access to capital for local residents. I then trace the process of local dispossession by looking at who in the community is possessed or dispossessed through their participation in or exclusion from tourism activity. Local tourist initiatives, if organized differently, might positively impact

27 While in the field, I collaborated with two non-profit organizations, Samaneses Ausentes and CEBSE, and two community-based organizations, Samaná mi Tesoro and Brigada de Voluntarios Culturales. Samaneses Ausentes is dedicated to the well-being and development of the community and has established platforms of resistance against state induced changes. CEBSE works with the economic and environmental development in the community with an emphasis on humpback whale research.
the community. Residents have continually attempted to present a different view of the region. This is done as part of the resistance against the homogenization of the community enacted by these global tourism forces.

In Chapter Five, I provide a brief history of the development of Dominican political parties and oppositional forces. These parties and their members are the central actors pushing the political disenfranchisement of sectors of Dominican society. I analyze the role of local politicians, their decision-making patterns, and their relations to the electorate. In this chapter, I dissect the political caravans in the space of Samaná. These caravans occur throughout the country and can be analyzed to understand the performance of the state and the relation of the parties and elected authorities to local voters. Political disenfranchisement and the marginalization of civil society groups have hindered local organizing, paralyzed community action, and led to the displacement of rural Samanéses from their land. To close, I identify the various organizations that are currently participating in the development of Samaná and collaborating with the community in order to develop new spaces of local empowerment.

In the face of these global and state-led processes of dispossession, there is a new generation of Samanéses willing to organize collectively and to defend their home. There is a visible resurgence of voices of local dissent and a willingness to organize against the incursions of capital and tendencies of dispossession. In Chapter Six, I examine the historical sites and modes of organizing in Samaná and address the current methods of dissent within the community. The methods of organizing within the community of Samaná are rooted in deeply historical processes, not just as products of this history, but instead as active reworkings of the meanings and memories that have been influenced by power and geography. That these new forms of organizing have been developed to respond to the treacherous conditions before them
highlights the resiliency of Samaneses. By constantly maneuvering the changing tides of power, the people of Samaná present a new possibility for engaging with the Dominican state to ultimately transform its direction.
Chapter 1

“El Pueblo de Samaná” and Projects of Rule

“They say Liborio is dead, but Liborio has not died. Liborio is dancing in the fields of Samaná” – Luis Terror Diaz

When I was a child, my mother would send us every summer from our home in Puerto Rico to see our grandparents in Samaná, Dominican Republic. For my sister and me, it was a drastic change of pace: a small coastal town with limited electric services and no television. It was a chance for us to reconnect with family members that would mark the beginning of an endeavor to piece together my family’s history and explore my own identity. As a descendant of the African American immigrants to Samaná, I was motivated by my own historical ignorance of their migration and a desire to understand the various moments of uncertainty that they faced.

My interest in Samaná begins with a struggle to produce a response to the constant questionings around race and name that I encountered growing up in Puerto Rico. My surname “Hamilton” did not fit into the Puerto Rican or the Dominican national imaginary, both of which were dominated by surnames of Iberian origin. As I searched for an answer to acknowledge my mother and her family’s history in Samaná, the responses I received from them seemed inadequate. These intimate family histories were never passed on to my generation; the details were lost in the minds of my aunts, uncles, and mother, who defined themselves as Dominican and nothing else. These histories of migration are no longer shared within the educational system in Samaná, and therefore are relinquished to oral histories remembered by few within the various descendant families. It is through these oral histories and personal interactions that I learned the most about Samaná.

28 “Dicen que Liborio ha muerto Liborio no ha muerto na, Liborio esta bailando en los campos de Samaná” are the lyrics to a popular merengue song in honor of peasant religious and political leader Olivorio Mateo “Liborio,” who fought against the Dominican government and later against the US occupying forces over the seizure of his community’s agricultural lands and their interventions in the DR.
Dominican state-led impositions into the local space have attempted to erase these early histories from Samaná as part of a nation-making endeavor. The erasure of local history and the severance of economic and cultural networks have been used as tactics of control to challenge local autonomy and practices of self-determination. Too many youth in Samaná grow up without knowing their history and the different ports their ancestors traveled through to arrive there.

Figure 2: Plans produced by Ferrand to create Port Napoleon in the region that is today Samaná. Source: The National Library of Congress.

The official narrative of Samaná written by Dominican historians excludes most local voices. The history books used in schools give the impression that rather than being actors in the development of the space of Samaná, my family and others like them have been marginal to its history. Stories shared by the elders contradict much of the printed historical narrative of the region and are filled with magic and music, twist and turns, and journeys to neighboring islands. In unearthing these narratives, I encountered the quiet dignity of the residents of the peninsula.

In this chapter, I share a brief history of the region as “we” see it. The story I constructed would not exist were it not for the myriad of voices emanating from Samaná, seeking

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29 I use “we” because this is a shared history that can only be built by bringing together different narratives within the local space.
justice and equality through a deep exploration and affirmation of their past. In the following pages, I develop an alternative historical narrative of the community of Samaná, Dominican Republic: one that documents the movement of people, their acts of placemaking, and the interests and transitions of power in the peninsula. This historical narrative—constructed through archival and secondary sources alongside the use of oral histories—counts the vision of isolation supported by many Dominican historians and reproduced by foreign scholars.\(^{30}\)

Oral histories within the community of Samaná have continuously clashed with the country’s official narrative of isolation, which has been used to contain and conceal the local and transnational histories of the space and its population. In erasing these stories, it has also silenced local processes of contestation, which has had an effect on the region’s treatment and representation within the national sphere. This erasure is part of the process of dispossession that results in making the Afro-Diasporic population and its history invisible, and therefore expendable, to the state and the more recent invasion of foreign capital. This erasure has much to do with the conflicted racial dynamics and the racial project of the modern Dominican state, as well as the elite structures of power that continue to dominate the national sphere.

The narrative I construct in the following pages is an attempt to develop an alternative history that includes processes of local contestation, manipulation, and negotiation.\(^{31}\) I examined various national and international archives with pertinent documents dealing with Samaná. These multiple archive locations account for the various political interests in the space of Samaná. Yet,

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\(^{30}\) Anthropologist Michel Rolph Trouillot argues that very little attention has been given to the analysis of power relations embedded within the construction of history and historical narratives. One way to approach and research Caribbean histories is to undertake an exploration of multiple archives that serve as a “repository of knowledge” that “culls, retains, accumulates and classifies” (Gonzalez Echevarria 1990). The archive has the ability to maintain and create a new reality in giving power to objects that are placed in it without context. Exploring these multiple archives has allowed me to revisit items and stories that at the moment of inception may have been irrelevant or disconnected. At the point of retrieval, they take on a new life and meaning separate from their original intentions.

\(^{31}\) As part of this archival search I visited the Library of Congress, the Schomburgh Library in Harlem, Philadelphia Society Archives, AME Church archive in Philadelphia, the South Carolina Historical Society, the Dominican National Archives, and the New York Historical Society.
most of the documents I found fail to capture the perspectives of the local inhabitants and the institutions they created in the early absence of a Dominican state. One of my tasks is therefore to bring together the archive, oral histories, and local historical knowledge in order to construct a narrative that looks at the relations between those interested in the region and those occupying the space. My intention is not only to add layers to a history, but also to delve deeper, follow the conflicts, and construct a new story that includes local voices.

My research suggests a different story than the one we often receive from the government and historians: a story of the articulation between global and local forces that pursues the connections to and between other Caribbean regions and larger networks of capital. This reconfiguration of early Samaná history is both a political and an intellectual project and is also part of an intimate quest to trace my own family’s routes within the Caribbean. It is an attempt to answer the question, “Where are we from?” For many Caribbean peoples, this question diverges in multiple directions and leads to contradictions, silences, encounters, and movements across time and space.

The early history of Samaná is central to understanding the different phases of political, cultural, and economic dispossession as a process emanating from the shifting projects of rule in the region.\footnote{I define these projects of rule as incursions by European Empires and US geopolitical interests that have at times meddled in the affairs of Samaná and have sought to control the local space without regard for the populations living there.} I focus on the community’s political and social traditions, its responses to shifting forms of governance, and the infiltration of the Dominican state into their daily lives. Through these moments of intervention, I analyze the experiences of the residents of Samaná as they structure their relationship to these projects of rule.

To analyze contemporary changes in the Caribbean, one needs an understanding of the specificities of the region’s history (Mintz 1995, Trouillot 1995). The peninsula of Samaná has
been at the center of attention of various empires and of Dominican state/nation formation. The local experience continues to reveal the tensions and challenges in state making processes. This reconfigured historical narrative is necessary to understand the changes in the ways of life of the Afro-Diasporic community of Samaná. Processes of historical memory and the construction of the place of Samaná help to reveal how the community was spatially dismantled over time. In exploring these life histories, we encounter answers to the community’s ability to sustain traditions through years of nation-building processes that help to constitute them as Dominican citizens.

A full historiography of the community of Samaná has yet to be produced. Rather than constructing a teleological narrative, I identify three key historical periods where spatial and political interventions had significant effects on the community’s formation and its process of organization. The first period, from 1791-1844, comprises the community’s formative period and the semi-autonomous development of the space of Samaná. The second period, from 1844-1899, is one of political instability on the island and throughout the Caribbean region that emphasizes a series of attempts at annexation and control of the region of Samaná by foreign powers. This moment of regional uncertainty allowed for the consolidation of various social, cultural, and economic institutions in the hands of local inhabitants. The third period, from 1899-1960, which I call that of incorporation, takes place during the early development of the Dominican nation-state. This modern Dominican state evolved after US military interventions in the Caribbean region in the early 20th century and was solidified during the subsequent rise of the dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo. The Dominican state played a central role in reshaping the Samaná community through particular spatial and economic interventions.
The Samaná community’s response to incursions into the local space has not been one of outright revolt, but, rather, one of constant struggle entailing a demand for rights to education, freedom, religious belief, autonomy, and the ability to maneuver within a shifting political sphere. In response to these interventions, a regional Black identity was developed that was inclusive of differences of language, religion, and culture. The community has actively constructed its space throughout constantly shifting political projects while making choices and employing strategies to sustain its voice against the waves of dispossession crashing on its shores. These traditions of resistance have been part of the community’s repertoire of speaking to power.

**Early History of Samaná**

“Some people thought that Samaná didn’t belong to the Dominican Republic. They used to think that it was an island apart….Well they found out better…” (Dora Vanderhorst, Interview by Jose Vigo, 1982).

The island of Samaná is where Christopher Columbus, in his second voyage to the new world, first encountered hostility from the indigenous population on January 13, 1493 (Vega 2004:9). After attempts to trade with the indigenous Ciguayos, a skirmish ensued and a rain of arrows from Ciguayo bows greeted the Spaniards. The peninsula entered the Spanish chronicles as the *Bahía de las Flechas* (Bay of Arrows), documenting the first wave of resistance to Spanish control in the Caribbean (Vega 2004:9).

During the early period of Spanish colonial settlement in Santo Domingo, many African laborers escaped captivity and made their way to Samaná. Some of these maroons joined in resistance with the indigenous inhabitants, led by the female chief Anacaona, while others formed their own communities in the hillsides of Samaná.  

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33 The difficult terrain of the region made it difficult to capture and destroy these maroon communities in the hilltop areas of el Limon in the peninsula.
24th of April 1545 record the King of Spain complaining about the large number of maroons present in the region and the need to punish them (Rodríguez 1972:12). Similar reports on the maroons appeared in 1643 when a detachment led by Captain Rodrigo Pimentel was sent to the peninsula to deal with them (Demorizi 1972:12). These maroon communities continue to be mentioned in travelers’ narratives as late as the 1840s and comprise the oldest remaining settlement in the peninsula (Vega 2004:11).

Throughout its early history, Samaná was an island separated from mainland Santo Domingo by the Gran Estero, a body of flood plains, used today to grow rice. Cartographic depictions and geographical surveys commissioned by the French government in 1730 and others by Charlevoix and by Jean Baptiste d’Anville in 1731 present the “island” of Samaná as disconnected from the island of Santo Domingo. This geographical disconnect created a sense of isolation and abandonment, capturing the attention of various empires vying for a strategic location in the Caribbean. Early travelers’ accounts describe small boats that sailed between Samaná and the mainland. One of these accounts published in the late 19th century by Samuel Hazard reported that “a glance of a map of Samaná Bay will give the reader an idea of the form and extent of this superb sheet of water, the coveted prize of many governments” (Hazard 1873, Sagas and Inoa 2003:101). As a point of strategic importance adjacent to the Mona trench, and one of the preferred routes between Europe and the Americas, the bay was unequaled.

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34 “Xamana” was the original name given to the region by the indigenous Ciguayos.
35 A map does not exist individually nor is it neutral; it is taken for granted, referenced continually, and therefore endowed with a truth making quality, one that is rarely doubted, but instead reworked and reimagined. The Charlevoix map was part of the Historia d L’îsla Espagnole published in 1730.
36 The Mona Trench is the deepest oceanic point in the Caribbean.
Little news about Samaná appears in the colonial historical record until 1673. That year, Bertrand D’Oregon, the French governor of Tortuga, was attempting to return there and stumbled upon a population of French men living on the southern coast of the island. This small French settlement remained until 1687, when the Spanish governor of Santo Domingo sent 120 men to reclaim the area for the Spanish crown, capturing 14 people and killing two (Rodriguez Demorizi 1972:21). The buccaneers that remained were forced to evacuate the region three years later at the request of the French authorities, leaving only the maroons in control of the island territory until the foundation of the town of Santa Barbara de Samaná (Vega 2004:13, Rodriguez Demorizi 1972:16).

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37 In 1605, the northern towns of Spanish Santo Domingo were forcefully removed by the Spanish authorities to the southern part of the island with the intention of exerting more control over the population. The “devastaciones” left the northern portion of the country and the coastal areas of Samaná at the mercy of French Buccaneers and Filibusters. These men survived off whatever they could plunder or grow themselves and relied on the wild pigs, brought by the Spanish, as a source of sustenance and trade with other communities in the Caribbean (Vega 2004:12). These pigs were to be a constant food source in the area and would serve the local population in their ability to remain outside the control of colonial authorities.

38 D’Oregon was enamored with Samaná and decided to establish a town in that location. He brought a ship filled with French women who were of ill repute being sent to Tortuga to increase its population (Vega 2004:14).

39 During their attacks, the Spanish attempted to decimate any crops and kill any pigs and cattle that could be used by these “foreigners” for surviving in the region.

During this early period of community formation, Samaná was an open frontier, an island physically disconnected from the larger island of Santo Domingo. These initial years were characterized by the absence of structures of governance, regional political conflicts, and economic uncertainty. This fluctuation allowed for the space of Samaná to early on be claimed and used by different immigrant populations. This instability provided opportunities for the inhabitants and immigrants in Samaná to establish their own political, sociocultural and economic structures. These institutions were modeled on their past contexts and spaces of participation.

The official construction of the town of Santa Barbara of Samaná began on the 21st of August, 1756 (Feliz Feliz 2008:52). Early reports of French settlement in Samaná had forced the Spanish crown to take notice of the region, and the Crown sent orders to establish a loyal population in the region. To prevent the French and British from inhabiting the area, Canary Islanders were brought to populate the town to serve as markers, like flags of convenience, to claim political power over the peninsula. Spanish census records of 1783 estimated the size of the town was of 49 homes with a total of 215 persons, 55 of whom were children (Vega 2004:15). Crown documents indicate the Spanish governor was excited about the location and available resources in the region and requested to move the capital of Spanish Santo Domingo to that location (Feliz Feliz 2008:52).

The explosion of the Haitian Revolution in 1791 had an immense impact on the Samaná region and its population and would initiate a new phase of control. The subsequent victory of

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40 With the Treaty of Basilia in 1795, all former Spanish colonies in Santo Domingo and Samaná once again became property of the French.
the Black Revolution changed the landscape of imperial control on both sides of the island: Haiti became a beacon of freedom in the slaveholding Americas.

At the outset of the Haitian Revolution in 1793, some of the French planter families escaped the violence by fleeing to Samaná. Most of these families arrived with their slaves, taking over much of the unused land and using the free labor of their slaves to enhance their economic powers. By 1801, the revolutionary forces led by Toussaint L’Ouverture had taken over the colony of St. Domingue, resulting in the abolition of slavery and the plantation system on the island. As a result, all unused lands became the property of the Haitian state (Sagas and Inoa 2007). This destruction of the system of slavery had reverberations across the Atlantic world, causing concerns in all corners of the Americas in which slavery endured (James 1963, Dubois 2004).

In response to the Haitian Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte sent a military force to wrest control of the colony away from the Black generals. The Napoleonic forces, led by General Leclercq and composed of 80 ships and 58,000 men, were sent to quell the Haitian uprising and capture anyone dissenting from their control (James 1963). On the 28th of January 1802, the French fleet arrived in the Bay of Samaná (Hazard 1873:140). Three divisions were immediately sent to different parts of the island to unleash a violent suppression of the Black Revolution. As part of the effort to assure their victory, the French forces established a garrison in Samaná and fortified the town, whereby “the principal points of the coast were provided with defenses” (Schomburck 1853:257).

From the hillsides of Samaná, Toussaint saw the French forces making their way to fight the Haitians as they disembarked and set up their camp in the Bay of Samaná. Early in the conflict General LeClerq, the leader of the French expeditionary forces, succumbed to yellow
fever, leaving General Ferrand in charge. In laying ground for a long siege against the Haitian forces, Ferrand had plans prepared for the establishment of a new capital of the French Empire in the Caribbean. He chose the location of the town of Samaná as the capital and renamed it Port Napoleon (US Library of Congress Maps, Vega 2004:20).

Ferrand had all the land in the island of Samaná divided with complete disregard to the existing population that claimed property in the region (US Library of Congress Maps). These land plots were assigned to the French planters who continued to stream into the peninsula and to the French commanders as a gift for their services and allegiance. The French planters gave names to many of the sites of the peninsula, such as Curete, Anadel, Clara, and Tesson (Vega 2004:21, Schomburck 1853:268). On this land, they grew small amounts of sugar cane, coffee, and cacao, and began planting indigo and culling of wood (Vega 2004:15). Some names of these French families, such as Joubert, Landes, Arrendel, Demorizi, Devers, Leroux, Tessón, Dujarric, Petitón, Lalanne, and Chasserieau, still exist in Samaná.

In 1804, the French were defeated by the Haitian forces in the west, and caught between Spanish forces and British interests, to the east. As part of the conditions for the surrender and the return of the region to the Spanish crown, the British received assurances that the French planters who held land in Samaná would be protected and their rights respected.41 The Spaniards disregarded this assurance, and upon regaining control, settled their own population as they chased away many of the French slave-owners (Rodriguez Demorizi 1945). With the success of the Haitian revolutionaries, Ferrand’s plan for the creation of Port Napoleon never came to

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41 On the 10th of November 1808, an English squadron arrived in the Bay and captured five vessels that were to be used as defense by the French. The British went on to ransack and destroy the forts built to protect the town and handed over the town to the Spanish forces making their way from the western province of Trinidad Sanchez.
fruition, but it did not disappear along with the French forces from the island.\textsuperscript{42} After the departure of the French, many of their slaves remained in Samaná, but now as free people, and became owners of the vacant plantations and smaller properties. Dora Vanderhorst, an elder in the Samaná community, explained how some families had come to own land in the outskirts of town:

What happened to them in Clara, The owner of that place went away. But he had an overseer. What we call an encargado or a mayordomo, an’ he was Haitian. Papa Gil they used to call ‘im, Gil Dishmey…He went away an left this man in charge. He never turned up anymore…Year go, year come, year go…he gave into the government that he’s remain in charge of this property… So that the reason those Clara people come to get that property (Vigo 1983:31).

Figure 4: Map of the Peninsula of Samaná

Haitian President Jean Pierre Boyer united the eastern and western portions of the island of Hispaniola in 1822.\textsuperscript{43} Although portrayed by official Dominican historical narratives as a violent invasion, the action was performed upon the request of, and in collaboration with, Dominican revolutionaries who wished to avoid a return to slavery and Santo Domingo being reclaimed as a Spanish colony (Sagas and Inoa 2007, Martinez 2008). This notion goes against popular belief and official narratives and posits a relationship of collaboration rather than

\textsuperscript{42} These plans appeared in the US National Archives, perhaps brought back by those escaping the Haitian Revolution and their subsequent arrival at many of the Eastern US ports, from which the future members of the Samaná community would later depart. They would reappear 170 years later, many of the details carried out against the will of the community under the government of Joaquin Balaguer.

\textsuperscript{43} During the first two years of Haitian rule, the town and region of Samaná had a fluctuating number of inhabitants.
conflict. Under Haitian revolutionary rule, slavery was abolished in Santo Domingo, and unclaimed lands became the property of the Haitian state. In response to the union of the eastern and western portions of the island, another French fleet was sent to attack unified, independent Haiti. In March 1822, French ships once again anchored “within the Bay of Samaná, with 11 vessels and 1200 troops, under the command of Colonel Barre,” but would once again be repelled (Schomburck 1853:269).

In the context of the shifting rule and international attacks, in 1824 President Boyer extended an invitation to free African Americans willing to settle in the Haitian Republic. This invitation brought a large number of African Americans estimated at 7,000 to the unified island of Haiti. For these Black populations from the slave-holding US, Haiti represented freedom and Black affirmation. Boyer’s intentions were part of a larger racial project to strengthen the Black Republic, to gain a Black population that would be in solidarity with his efforts, and to establish commercial ties with other Western nations (Hoetink 1962, Winch 1989). Haiti also hoped to gain official US recognition as a nation by offering a solution taking in unwanted black citizens from the US, a group that was perceived to be a problematic population.

The notion of transporting African Americans to Haiti had been proposed in the early 1800s, with interest being expressed by both the US and Haitian governments (Winch 1989:3). It was under the leadership of Haitian president Jean Pierre Boyer that actual attempts were made to fulfill these ideas. Boyer enlisted Jonathas Granville as his representative in the US to gain support for the migration of African Americans to Haiti and take charge of making the travel arrangements for those accepting the invitation (Dewey 1824). Boyer supplied Granville with

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44 One can assume that some of the emigrants were runaway slaves seeking freedom, but it is believed most were free.
45 The US did not recognize Haiti as a sovereign nation until 1862.
46 A portrait of Granville on his first and only visit to the US can be found in the Baltimore Museum of Fine Arts.
50,000 pounds of coffee that was to be sold to finance the migration (Dewey 1824, Hoetink 1962:6).

For Granville, the first stop in the US was Philadelphia, where he met with the Reverend Richard Allen, the founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Granville later traveled along the eastern seaboard meeting with other African American political and AME religious leaders (Winch 1989:8). As part of the efforts to disseminate Boyer's proposal, announcements were printed in many of the local newspapers in large Northeastern cities. Among those was an article published on July 1, 1824 in the *Niles Weekly Register* in Baltimore, promising “a free country to Africans and their descendants” (Winch 1989:9).

President Boyer declared, “You will convince yourself that I have prepared for the children of Africa, coming out of the United States, all that can assure them an honorable existence in becoming citizens of the Haytian republic” (Dewey 1824:8).⁴⁷ In his correspondence, Boyer also promised that they would not “be meddled with in their domestic habits, nor in their religious belief, provided they do not make proselytes, or trouble those who profess another faith than their own” (Dewey 1824:10). This was a foundational promise of autonomy, self determination, and freedom, and those willing to make the journey would receive full political and civil rights, freedom of worship, free passage, paid sustenance for four months, and an allocation of 36 acres per every 12 farmers (Dewey 1824, Vigo 1987, Winch 1989, Hoetink 1962). These rights were of course denied to them within the US.

Historians have compared the migration of African Americans to Samaná to the movement of Black communities to Liberia. Although they occurred during a similar historical period, they differed in multiple ways in both “conception and execution” (Singler 2007:311).

⁴⁷ A series of correspondence between Boyer and Loring Dewey, a member of the American Colonization Society, relays the concerns that both sides had with this endeavor. The correspondence delineated the conditions through which these people of African descent would be brought to Haiti.
One man, the citizen Granville, organized the Haitian endeavor while the American Colonization Society (ACS) organized the Liberia endeavor with chapters across the US. The ACS geared its efforts towards enslaved African Americans and had most success in the slave states, while the migration to Haiti was mostly composed of free Black folk from the northern free states. This difference in the status of the participants also led to differences in levels of literacy of the participants in each endeavor. The AME Church in Philadelphia, which had openly protested the idea of the move to Liberia and a return to Africa, supported the migration to Haiti (Winch 1982:185).

The African Americans who accepted Boyer’s invitation departed between 1824 and 1825 from various ports in New York, Boston, Charleston, Norfolk, Philadelphia, and Baltimore to seek their freedom and fortune in the first Black Republic of the Americas (Stephens 1974, Hoetink 1962, Winch 1982).48 The first ship of emigrants arrived on the 29th of November 1824 in Port au Prince amid great celebration (Stephens 1974). Boyer was specifically interested in receiving agricultural laborers and artisans to respond to the economic needs of the country. His “plan was to send 3,600 emigrants to traditionally Haitian areas and 2,400 to traditionally Spanish areas” with the aim of populating specific areas of the island with Black families that would be receptive to and supportive of the newly created Haitian nation (Hoetink 1962).

For Dominican historian José Gabriel García, who wrote during the Trujillo regime, “the motive behind Boyer’s immigration scheme was not so much to provide the country with able laborers and artisans, but rather to change the social physiognomy of the Spanish part of the island and to awaken racial preoccupations in the immigrants minds which would tend to create their identification with the Haitians” (Hoetink 1962:6). For current Dominican historians, the

48 Many of the African Americans returned home after a few months succumbing to the pressures of their new environment (Stephens 1974),
linguistic and cultural differences of these African Americans became a motive of national concern. These immigrants did not fit the image of the “Dominican” and therefore were to be treated in a different manner. These comments reflect a deep suspicion by Dominican authorities towards the population of the region.

Upon arrival, some African American families chose to stay in the Haitian capital, going against the wishes of the Haitian state. Others were scattered to the eastern portion of Spanish Haiti, to the communities of Puerto Plata, Samaná, Santo Domingo, and La Romana. The majority of the areas were selected in the countryside of Santo Domingo in an attempt to place populations that would be supportive of the Haitian republic.

The peninsula of Samaná, which had served as a point of entry for the French forces, was a location that needed to be controlled and surveilled because of its strategic location, abundance of land, and sparse population. In responding to this past threat, Boyer may have presumed that the relationship between the African American emigrants and the US would prevent further attempts by the French to meddle in Haitian affairs. In article eight of his instructions to Granville, Boyer was explicit about those emigrants who were to be taken to Samaná.

You will take the most efficacious measures to convey to the peninsula of Samaná, forty artizans of African blood, such as carpenters, wood-sawyers, blacksmiths, caulkers, rope-makers, sail-makers…who would be capable of working in a timber yard, at small vessels for cruising the coast of the country, which vessels will be bought from them by government. If these workmen have wives or children, Government will give them land, suited to the cultivation of coffee, cane and every other species of food, grain and vegetables…(Dewey 1824:25).

African American Emigrants to Samaná

The largest of the African American immigrant groups that accepted the offer was given land and settled in the northeastern peninsula of Samaná (Hoetink 1962, Davis 1979, Stephens 1974, Smith 1989). The majority of those who arrived in Samaná were members of the Mother
Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) founded in Philadelphia by Reverend Richard Allen in 1794 (Hoetink 1962, Stephens 1974, Davis 1979, Aracena 2000, Newman 2009). The AME was one of the few churches at the time that allowed Blacks to preach to their own communities. It rejected “the negative theological interpretations which rendered persons of African descent second class citizens” and supported and collaborated with the Underground Railroad (Newman 2009:15). Its members thus migrated to Haiti with their own religious, educational, and linguistic practices, which immediately established their difference from the existing population of Samaná. The populations that existed in the peninsula prior to this migration were outnumbered by this new movement, which became the bedrock of Samaná society.

The AME Church began in Philadelphia, a product of Black communities struggling for their own spiritual and religious space. W.E.B. Du Bois wrote that at the time, the AME was “the greatest negro organization in the world,” extending its influence across the United States, the Caribbean, and Africa. African Methodism “represented a haven from a hostile white world,” a place to organize, a place to create, a space that “opened up new avenues for engaging with the dominant society, both politically and culturally” (Campbell 1998:xi). Rather than serve as a space of isolation whereby Blacks could escape from the surveillance of white society, the AME became a space of negotiation, transformation, and the development of a strong work ethic and self-discipline.

The history of the AME was bound to the history of slavery, and many of its members experienced a new world of freedom without equality, where the threat of reenslavement was a daily reality. The church was born at a time of fluctuating freedoms for Black people, when the ideas of enlightenment and revolution still only applied to white men. “From the moment of its
inception the AME Church was consumed by African issues — by debates on emigration, on missions, on the meaning of enslavement itself” (Campbell 1998:ix). Methodist virtues “provided a formula by which blacks could lift themselves up from their impoverished, degraded state”(Campbell 1998:11). In the context of Philadelphia many of the emigrants to Samaná had taken part in the formation of the AME Mother Bethel church, and were members of the city’s Freemason associations and mutual aid societies like the Free African Society, founded by Absalom Jones in 1787 (Campbell 1998:9).

By 1780, Pennsylvania had passed the first gradual abolition act in the US, which brought an influx of Black people to the city of Philadelphia (Campbell 1998:8). Under this new abolition, rather than receiving immediate freedom, Blacks were expected to continue offering their labor as indentured servants as a way to instill work habits and to compensate the masters for their loss of labor. Philadelphia “was a city of refuge, not the place of birth, of most of its free blacks” (Nash 1988:136). Thousands more freedmen and women poured into Philadelphia in the decade after the Haitian Revolution, and the city became their home, as well as a site to be contested. Rather than finding equality, work and jobs in the city, they encountered hostility, indifference, increased poverty, and reluctance by their white neighbors to allow them to participate equally in US society (Campbell 1998:8). “The more fortunate found jobs at the port, working as mariners, dockworkers, caulkers, and the like, positions that offered a degree of autonomy” (Campbell 1998:19). These maritime sites of labor provided opportunities for encounters with new people and ideas and receive news from the many boats that came into the harbor.

As the number of free Blacks increased across the US, miscegenation laws were tightened and an ominous pattern of segregation began to reemerge, marked by separate schools,
penitentiaries, and even cemeteries. These reactions in turn produced an increase in the
formation of autonomous Black institutions that would continue to be central in the lives of these
African American families for years to come. These institutions would be transferred to the new
context of Samaná. Race was a foundational aspect of daily life both in Philadelphia and also
after the migration. It is therefore crucial to understand these families’ move to the Caribbean as
a reaction against the US system of slavery and repression and to understand their pursuit of
equality in a white supremacist world.

AME-ordained minister Narcissus Miller arrived in Samaná accompanied by twenty
families with 32 different surnames (Hoetink 1962, Stephens 1974). Most of them could read and
write in English. These emigrants escaped a racially-divided US slave society and attempted to
assert their own ideals in forming their new community in Samaná. Beginning in 1825, with an
attack on the AME Bethel Church in Philadelphia and a string of other violent attacks on Black
institutions in the northeast US, violence against Blacks once again became the norm.

African American Surnames in Samaná

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<th>Anderson</th>
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Table 1: African American Surnames in Samaná

One of the families that made the journey to Samaná was the Vanderhorst family. Their
story extends beyond the northern free states, from where the majority of the emigrants departed,
and provides a glimpse into the roads taken to achieve permanent freedom. The Vanderhorst
family hailed from the Kiawaa plantation on Kiawaa Island in South Carolina, owned by
Arnoldus Vanderhorst. Many of the slaves on Kiawaa Island were carpenters, caulkers, and sailmakers who built the ships that aided in the war of separation of the colonies against the British. After the death of his wife, Vanderhorst began a relationship with one of his slaves, named Hagar Richardson. Out of this union two children were born, Eliza and Peter. Upon his death, Arnoldus stipulated in his will that his legitimate children would receive their inheritance only if they gave Hagar and her family freedom and provided economic sustenance for their well being. Their freedom was granted in his will, dated October 13, 1813.50

Hagar and her children spent eight years in Charleston as free Blacks, paying the yearly colored freedom tax (South Carolina Historical Society). Once free, Hagar maintained correspondence with the Vanderhorst estate. This communication was meant to ensure the proper expenditure of funds for the needs and education of the children, and it sheds light on the condition and struggles of a Black single parent household in the south.51 Perhaps disgusted with the conditions and limitations of southern racism or the attack on the AME church in Charleston, the family moved north to New York. There they bought a pickle store on Church Street with what little funds they had amassed. In New York City, the family joined the African Methodist Episcopal Church, where Peter quickly rose in the ranks of the church.52 Peter Vanderhorst was later ordained Bishop of the AME and sent to complete his missionary duties serving the AME Church members in Haiti. Peter and his family arrived in Port au Prince in 1842, eighteen years after the initial migration. After a period of uncertainty, the family chose to move to the town of Samaná to lead the services for the large congregation of African Americans living there.

49 Arnoldus Vanderhorst was governor of South Carolina and collaborator with General George Washington during the War of Independence.
50 See the Vanderhost Family Papers (1689-1942) South Carolina Historical Society.
51 Vanderhost Family Papers (1689-1942) South Carolina Historical Society.
52 Vanderhost Family Papers (1689-1942) South Carolina Historical Society.
The African American emigrants in Samaná established an AME-affiliated church, schools with instruction in English, and cultural and mutual aid organizations to serve the community. These structures were their attempt to organize and assert control of their new home space while providing adequate services for the growth of the community. The AME church became the backbone of the community, offering weekly outdoor services until they could erect a church. The church became a space of collective practice to shape thinking and maintain identity different from the rest of the population that differed in language and customs: “Of the five to six hundred colonists in 1870 there were two hundred members of the Methodist church […] the average attendance at public worship being three to four hundred” (Hoetink 1962:10). These services, though initially led by men, later permitted women in the community to share the preacher’s pulpit (Ward Howe 1884:336).

As part of their religious and personal beliefs concerning racial uplift, the African American emigrants placed great emphasis on education. By 1856, in addition to the various home schools, the emigrants had established two church-run schools that taught in English, one in the town and the other in the countryside (Vigo 1987). Until 1874, all educational institutions in Samaná were either private or religious. The municipality established the first boys and girls schools in the 1880s (Devers 1993:57). Dora Vanderhorst, one of the descendants, described the local educational conditions in this way:

Well, here we use to have several little English schools… There was a minister from Jamaica called Elijah Mear. He had a college in the mission house an’ they taught English, Spanish and French. So when I come to have knowledge, they had different little small English schools here and there about. There was lady from Turks Islands named Ruth James. She know a lot of English and she always had a little school….Am’ here too the AME church, they taught English because Jacob James wife was from Turks Islands.

53 In her study of Samaná, sociologist Valerie Smith emphasized that “the church has traditionally provided the sources for role models and mate selection” (Smith 1989).

This second period of Samaná history was characterized by constant attempts to subvert the autonomy of the region. Various schemes and plans for annexation of the region surfaced with different empires vying for control of the peninsula and its proximity to trade routes. As a result of the intrigues around annexation, there exists a wealth of documents and land surveys in international archives that describe the geography and resources in Samaná and provide small glimpses into the lives of the population. These efforts towards annexation had little success, but produced much worry amongst the local population. The constant threats provided an impetus for the community of Samaná to consolidate its institutions, expand its resources, and develop a regional identity that was deeply tied to its political, economic, and cultural autonomy.

In 1844, the DR gained independence from Haiti. Opposition to Haitian rule had begun after Boyer instituted new taxes for the Dominican population and attempted to limit trade with other countries by regulating all the Dominican ports (Betances 1996:17). After the separation, political control of Santo Domingo fell into the hands of two caudillos, each of whom represented regional interests. General Buenaventura Baez clamored for independence, while General Pedro Santana clamored for continued association to Spain, each with their own army and will to battle for power. The fledgling Dominican country changed governments many times throughout these developing years, switching power from one side to the other. An elder in Samaná described the period in this way: “You know, they had a time here in the Republic they used to fight plenty. They call it ‘concho primo’ you heard that name? Every six months was a

54 Interview with Dora Vanderhorst, Vigo 1989.
fight, every year was a fight. They knocked the President down, they take t’woods go to the bush and come shoot on the town” (Dora Vanderhorst Interview by Jose Vigo, 1982).

Reacting to this political uncertainty and with the intent of stabilizing their power, both caudillos attempted to annex the country and at times only the peninsula of Samaná to various empires. The sale of Samaná by the caudillos was understood as a way to gain favor from stronger nations, ward off threats by Haitian forces, decrease the amount of foreign debt, and increase their personal coffers. If left to the artifices of the Dominican elite, it was safer to return to being a European colony than to be led by Black men. Britain, France, Spain, and the US all vied for the peninsula as a strategic military installation and central port for their future interests in the Caribbean.

The British were keen on controlling the space of Samaná for commercial and military purposes. Robert Schomburck, consul for the British government, visited the bay of Samaná in 1853 to investigate his government’s interests in the region. He described his “surprise at being accosted in three different languages by the people whom I met, namely, English, Spanish and French. The latter distinguish themselves by the neatness of their habitations, the American by the cleanliness of their provision-grounds and their industry” (Schomburck 1853:281). Given the bay’s importance and “forming as it does, one of the principal keys to the isthmus of Central America, and to the adjacent Gulf of Mexico” the British preferred that France, Spain, or the US not acquire the area (Schomburck 1853:283).

In his report, Schomburck provided a description of the area of the Gran Estero river, which divided Samaná from mainland Santo Domingo, and wrote of the flat-bottomed boat commerce that flowed from the Bay to the northern ports of the Atlantic.55 “This channel is at

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55 Schomburck, through his diplomatic efforts as consul for the British government, protested attempts to sell the Samaná peninsula.
present filled up with sand, but could be easily re-opened and afford a passage to boats from the Bay of Samaná to the sea” (Schomburck 1853:270). A few years later, the island of Samaná would become connected to mainland Santo Domingo through shifting tides and the movement of sands. The British attempt at annexation would fail, but the Spanish and the United States would reference these reports in their later attempts to control the region.56

The African American community cautiously supported some of the initial intentions of annexations in the belief that political stability might provide economic stability. The African American inhabitants aligned themselves politically with those that least interfered with their affairs. Using the church as a space of discussion and organization, they protested against those who did not serve their interests by means of diplomatic efforts, letter writing, or armed revolt. There was a deep preoccupation over the possible loss of their properties and an obstacle in the accumulation of capital. Their opinions changed when the promises made by these projects of annexation vanished before them.

In 1861, after continued caudillo warfare, a successful attempt was made by the Dominican ruler General Santana to annex all of Santo Domingo to the Spanish. General Pedro Santana initiated contact with the Spanish and French liaisons to offer them the annexation of the country (Betances 1996:17). Many of the Spanish soldiers sent to manage the island had recently arrived from Cuba where slavery was still strong, and therefore they maintained the belief that Blacks should be subservient. This caused much conflict in the treatment of Dominican nationals and Samanéses. The reannexation scheme—marked the “high point of the pro-Hispanic elites”

56 Schomburck completed a series of surveys of the region that identified mineral resources and strategic ports of call for the protection of the bay if it were to be annexed by the British. The report in describing the various ports and waterways of the peninsula made note of where ships could enter and the defense of specific locations in the Bay. The report also described the geology and the agricultural production of the region, giving special attention to the high productivity of the soil of the bay and to the mahogany grown in the mountainside: “It is an article of spontaneous growth and constitutes the greatest export. There are still a number of trees to be seen in the mountains and forests, promising employment and profit for years to come” (Schomburk 279, 1853).
and their ideology— renewed worries by the Black population of the possible re-institution of slavery in the eastern part of the island (Sagas 2000).

The newly-empowered Spanish authorities created a series of civil regulations and instituted new taxation policies on both foreign and national enterprises, among them a highly unpopular horseback riding tax. The Spanish also forced all institutions to adhere to Catholic religious doctrine, which became an issue of contention in Samaná for the AME church members (Betances 1996:18). Additionally, lands that had been in private hands, if not in use, would be transferred to the hands of the government (Varela y Recaman 1864:26). This land would be distributed to the new settlers the Spanish intended to bring to the country.

In 1861, a Spanish expedition was sent to the bay of Samaná to conduct a census and evaluate whether the bay could be of use to the Spanish militarily or economically (Varela y Recaman 1864:15). The Spanish authorities counted 1,721 inhabitants in the region, of whom 300 families were African American emigrants (Varela y Recaman 1864:26, Vega 2004:27). The remaining population was composed of maroons, Canary Islanders, Haitians, a few Spaniards, and Frenchmen.

Initially, the Spanish intervention was designed to control the port, recover duties, and aid in the taxation of the population. It later shifted to a military endeavor when Dominican forces and groups in Samaná rebelled against the Spanish. To justify their rule, the Spanish authorities had a small group of Samanéses pronounce in favor of annexation of the peninsula on the 20th of March 1861 (Rodriguez 1945). The Samaná residents who signed the pact of annexation were men with Spanish surnames. None of the head of households of the African American families signed the document. One can only guess the reasons for their lack of participation in the annexation, but it may be attributed to their concerns with Spain and the continuation of slavery
in their other Caribbean colonies. For Samaná, the issue of its racial makeup, linguistic background, and religious affiliations provided an easy reason for the interventions into the space by the Spanish government.

Two years after the Spanish forces arrived, the War of Restoration began between the Spanish forces and the Dominican rebels. The War of Restoration “was a struggle that cut across class and racial lines,” in which the lower classes were active participants in organizing the resistance (Sagas and Inoa 2003:92). Led by the Generals Jose Cabral, Benito Moncion, and Gregorio Luperon, and with the support from the Haitian government, the rebels attempted to expel the Spanish forces from the DR.

The Spanish forces used Samaná as a launching point for their attacks, just as the French had done during the Haitian revolution. During the conflict, the AME Church in Samaná was converted into a provisional hospital for the Spanish forces. The occupation of the church and the community’s inability to use it for worship, combined with the religious prejudice of the Spanish Crown towards non-Catholics, caused an uproar in the community of African Americans. In addition to the Church, the Masonic temple was shuttered. “When the Spaniards came […] they had promised us religious liberty, yet they forbade us to hold Methodist meetings in our church and behaved to the people generally in a haughty and overbearing way […] and behaved badly to our women” (US Commission Report 1871:232). The AME members protested vigorously and wrote letters to Spanish General Parmentier concerning the affronts to their church and community. These letters of protest were signed by at least fifty heads of households of the African American community.

57 The Spanish crown brought a group of Chinese prisoners from Santiago de Cuba to Samaná to labor in the newly created plantations.
58 Archivo General del a Nacion, Interior y Policía Legajo 6.
The treatment of Samaneses by the Spanish forces brought about a unification of efforts to expel them. Many of the men of Samaná joined the rebel armies to fight against the Spanish in the Battle of Capotillo in 1863, which culminated in Spanish defeat. The Spanish were aware of the US interests in the region and saw the community as an obstacle to their desires because of linguistic and religious differences (Varela y Recaman 1864:8).

Samaná became a battleground for many of the conflicts to expel the Spanish, and it was one of the last points of control of the Spanish crown on the island. The Batallion of Canton composed of Samaneses and led by Jose Silvano Acosta, a Black Dominican, battled against the Spanish forces. The battalion planted a cross on the hill of Tayota and declared that this was as far as the Spanish would go (Devers 1991:120).

During their retreat, the Spaniards burned the AME Church and other local structures as retribution for their resistance. The Reverend James, an AME pastor, commented, "we once had a schoolhouse and a mission house and did much in the way of scattering books and teaching the people; but all was destroyed and burned up during the wars" (Hoetink 1962:15). The burning of the church angered many in the community, and leaders later demanded payment for these affronts.

After the war and Spain’s expulsion in 1870, the caudillo General Buenaventura Baez rose to power. The Baez regime’s inability to develop the country’s economic resources, and the high cost involved with the multiple conflicts it was engaged in, required the country seek protection. Still fearing the potential annexation to Spain, leaders from various political sectors in Santo Domingo instead sought protection from the US (Sagas and Inoa 2003:95). Taking note

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59 The Spanish were aware of the US interests in the region and saw the community as an obstacle to their desires because of linguistic and religious differences (Varela y Recaman 1864:8).

60 Unwilling to annex any part of the territory of Santo Domingo to foreign interests, revolutionary leaders Gregorio Luperon and Jose Cabral once again rose up against Baez.
of his tenuous hold on power, Baez approached US President Ulysses Grant to revive the idea of annexation first proposed by his rival General Pedro Santana.\footnote{This overture provided an opportunity for the US government that had not yet come to fruition: to insert them into the political landscape of the Caribbean. (Sagas and Inoa 2003)}

The pretense for US annexation was concern for a possible annexation to Spain and a return of the island to European rule.\footnote{The revolutionary forces headed by General Cabral and Luperon were against any intervention. US representatives stated that Cabral “received supplies through Haiti and that Haitian soldiers and arms have been at his disposal, “... “As for Luperon, the testimony both in the Cibao and on the coast is that he is simply a bandit stained with crime ”. With these very phrases the US administration justified their intervention into these processes and adjudicated the presence of these alternate forces as coming from outside and desiring to destabilize the nation. By branding the mulatto general Luperon a thief, they discredited the man who was to become the image of the movement towards autonomy (Pinkett 1941, 33).} President Grant claimed that with the reestablishment of Spanish rule, Dominicans would be excluded from state affairs, “prejudice would return to the island, religious. Intolerance would be furthered, and that slavery would be reinstated” (US Commission Report 1873). Dreams of US annexation were initially defeated in the US Senate on June 30, 1870, opposed by Senator Charles Sumner, who saw annexation as a menace to the independent country of Haiti.\footnote{“To Mr. Sumner, the annexation was a measure to extinguish the colored nation, and to do so by dishonorable means and for selfish motives” (Douglass 1882: 359).} Sumner’s defense of Haiti was not a popular stance at the time because it showed a deep concern for the Black Republic. Despite the initial failure, US agents continued pursuing annexation and sent a commission of inquiry to further efforts towards gaining a foothold in the Caribbean through the acquisition of the Samaná Peninsula.

**US Commission of Annexation**

The steamer Tennessee arrived in the port of Samaná Bay on the 24th of January 1871 (US Commission Report 1873:1). Aboard were political representatives of the government of Ulysses S. Grant, along with a delegation of journalists, scientists, representatives of mercantile firms, real estate speculators, and military officials that arrived to conduct a survey of the
peninsula of Samaná. 64 The Commission of Inquiry to Santo Domingo and Samaná Bay was “to investigate the physical, botanical, mineralogical, geological, esthetical and meteorological condition of the land,” and intended to evaluate and to recommend whether the annexation of the peninsula was in the interests of the US government (US Commission Report 1871; Minaya 2012:9). Some of the reasons given in the report for the potential annexation were “the benefits of a naval station, the assertion of balance of power within the continent, the acquisition of valuable lands, and the substitution of order for anarchy” (US Commission Report 1871:6).65

The day after the commission’s arrival in Samaná, African American abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass, who had been designated secretary of the delegation, was asked to address the members of the African American-descendant community in the town plaza. Douglass spoke favorably about annexation, exclaiming “how can the Dominicans refuse the embrace of the great American republic when they see one of their own race and color a dignified official and in equality with the distinguished white men of this commission” (Minaya 2012:33). Nearly 200 Samanenses came from the nearby areas to hear him speak about the conditions of their race in the US and on the conditions of annexation being proposed (Leslie 1871:438, Minaya 2012:35). Douglass favored annexation and may have been chosen for this post to help convince those involved of the validity of the endeavor, quieting worries of the return to a system of slavery.66

At the end of his speech, Douglass asked for a show of hands to discern who would be in favor of the proposal of annexation (Leslie 1871:439, US Commission Report 1871).

64 The ship returned to the US by way of Jamaica and landed in Charleston on March 26, 1871. The total duration of the representative’s trip was 70 days. The three representatives were Benjamin Wade of Ohio, Andrew White of New York, and Samuel Howe of Massachusetts. None of them spoke Spanish.

65 Samuel Hazzard, a member of the commission left a beautiful description of the Samaná landscape and the possibilities for its future use. Hazzard described the population of Samaná as being composed of no more than 800 souls of whom the majority were descendants of the African Americans. This is a significant difference in the population numbers attributed by the Spanish census, and these diverging numbers may be related to the interest of annexation and a purposeful miscounting of the population.

66 Douglass was later named ambassador of the United States to Haiti.
Douglass was an ordained minister in the AME Church, and in solidarity with his Black brothers and sisters, started a collection among his travel companions to help in the rebuilding of the local Methodist church. Among Douglas’s duties was interviewing the African American descendants in Samaná as to their thoughts on the region’s potential annexation to the United States. Douglass had been a proponent of Dominican annexation to the US and believed that in “Haiti and Santo Domingo blacks and whites from the United States could seek their fortune on an equal footing” (Mayes 2014:15). The Douglass interviews provide insight into the community’s concern with its current economic conditions and the continuation of its political freedoms.

The Commission’s report also provides an indication of the different class and ethnic groupings present within the town of Samaná. These differences were reflected in the institutions the population participated in, the educational and religious pursuits of the different groupings, and the ownership of land, with the most prosperous having multiple plots. The responses of the interviews reiterated their connections to Philadelphia and the AME church, as well as their allegiance to the US as their country of origin. Those interviewed verbalized their concern about the possible reestablishment of slavery and their status as people of African descent (Eller 2014:90). It is difficult to ascertain how much of a role Douglass had in the final version of the report, but throughout it there was a portrayal of the relationship between the DR and Haiti as one of conflict.

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67 Douglass returned to Samaná in 1890 and once again addressed the congregation.
68 The Commissioners appealed to the African American descended community because “The incorporation into public sentiment of a feeling strongly favorable to the annexation to the US in preference to any other power” was attributed “to the presence in various parts of the country of small colonies of colored people formerly from the US” (US Commissioners Report 1873, 11).
69 The condensed version of the report agrees with the published thoughts of Schomburck on the importance of the Bay in the West Indies (Commissioner’s Report 3, 1861). The report predicted that with political stability the region could grow into one of the economic centers of the Caribbean. Samaná Bay “shall become a great commercial harbor, and the principal naval station of the United States in the West Indies” (Commissioner’s Report 1871, 61)
Many of the articles that appeared in US newspapers at the time appealed for the cause of annexation by presenting the Dominican nation as a “white nation on the verge of annihilation” (Mayes 2014:19). Although underplayed in the official documents, the racial component of annexation was a constant question throughout the various attempts to gain consent towards the annexation project. To ensure annexation, the Dominican government orchestrated many of the public meetings with the commission. Of the population interviewed and included in the report, the majority were descendants of African Americans (US Commission Report 1871:75). The annexation of Samaná was being sold to the community as a way to protect it from the interests of the Haitians, and in doing so, presented a vision of Blackness as uncivilized and dangerous. Affiliation with the US was seen as a redemptive endeavor that could produce a continued economic and social cohesion. In interview after interview, the members of the community expressed worry about the constant political wrangling and changes in government and changes in national currency, all of which had caused great consternation within the community.70

Many of the interviewees complained of abuses by invading Spanish forces and the loss of decision-making at the local level. This uncertainty and instability was an obstacle to the accumulation of capital and land for the local population.71 Local merchants also showed concern with US economic interests because they desired to maintain their commercial relationship with merchants in Hamburg and other European cities.72 Joseph Hamilton, who was

70 At the time of the visit, there existed no money in the town, and all transactions were based on bartering (Commission Interviews, 217)
71 Another prominent line of questioning was in regards to the land grants given to foreigners in the peninsula that had to be respected if they were to acquire Samaná. They also attempted to ascertain the amount of Haitian influence during the various caudillos and local revolts that had wrought the country. Additional questions by the commission in regards to health issues and the spread of diseases showed their concern for the climate of the tropics and their ability, or lack thereof, to adjust to these new diseases.
72 At the end of the report on page 271, there appears the only note emphasizing the disapproval of the population of the interior of the island to the annexation project.
a merchant, a member of the African American emigrant community, and my great grandfather, was interviewed in the report, expressing his concerns in the following manner:

For twelve or fourteen years the peoples ideas have been drawn to the United States; they are now talking about it...when a man labors and labors and labors and finds it all in vain; when revolutions and troubles are constantly in the country, destroying all that he gets, the time will come when he must be disgusted, and he will renounce his own nationality for the sake of security, that his labor may produce something. There is no security now. Take my own case; I married in 1850; I was then a very poor man; in 1857 I was worth about 60 or 70 doubloons; then the revolution broke out with the same President Baez and we had to run and leave everything, and we lost all; still I was young and strong, and I went right to work again; in 1858 the war ended; in 1861 I was worth $3500; then came annexation to Spain, and in 1865 I was again worth nothing; all was lost in the revolution driving out the Spanish...The Spanish taxed me and threatened to sell my property...When the archbishop came he stopped our religion and at Puerto Plata, and everywhere. The Methodist could not worship publicly; but they did privately. Here our people spoke up so much about it that the governor said we could hold private worship in the country, but shut up our public space of worship. Mr. James, the preacher asked him if he would be so good as to give him that in writing...(US Commissioners Report 1871:222).

In an attempt to sway US public opinion in favor of annexation, the journalists who accompanied the commission published numerous articles about the Samaná annexation in US papers. The articles described the natural beauty and resources of Samaná and delivered evaluations of the favorable feelings towards annexation of the general Dominican population and the African American community. The New York Times and other US newspapers republished these pro-annexation accounts without hesitation (NY Times Archive 2014).

A feeble attempt was made to gain consent for annexation from the Dominican people, which consisted of a plebiscite held on the island on the 19th of February 1870. As presented to the Dominican populace the question was to choose annexation to the US with its inherent benefits or to choose an alliance with Haitian neighbors. The plebiscite was held with seven US battleships off the coast of the DR, and through this presence assuring the acquiescence to their desires. Of the 120,000 inhabitants of Santo Domingo, only 16,000 participated in the
referendum. Those opposed to annexation were deemed enemies of the state, persecuted, exiled, or imprisoned and resulted in only 11 votes against the proposal (Sagas and Inoa 2007).

The attempt at annexation to the US brought members of the political elite in the country, the Diaspora, and intellectuals from across the Spanish Caribbean together under a common anti-annexation cause. Letters of protest were sent to the US commissioners, one of whom stated, “believe US illustrious sirs, amongst the Dominican people there are no ideas about annexation, there is no more than a traitor, a liar that accepts and promotes it. An ambitious mans who is willing to sell and another ambitious man who is ready to buy” (Nunez Polanco 1997:263).

Another letter by the Haitian Foreign Minister directed to President Grant objected on behalf of the Haitian government (US Library of Congress). Haitian generals were active participants in attempting to thwart the annexation proposal and provided economic and military support to General Gregorio Luperon and other Dominican leaders to ensure that annexation would fail.73

Unwilling to lease Samaná to the US, General Luperon declared an independent republic from the north coast city of Puerto Plata in opposition to that of Baez and the Dominican state. The community of African Americans in Puerto Plata and Samaná supported Luperon.74 Luperon was a symbol of antilleanism and represented a Dominican nationalism that was not negrophobic or anti-Haitian. Antillean ideology may not have addressed racism specifically, but it was an ideological force that “demanded critical attention be paid to how racial ideas lubricated relations between states and racial social relations in general” (Mayes 2014:35). Antillean political figures like Puerto Rican abolitionist Ramon Emeterio Betances, Cuban hero Antonio Maceo, and

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73 US National Archives.
74 The final statements included in the report emphasize the savagery and the inability of Cabral to lead the country in the eyes of the populace. These interviews and the questions regarding Cabral seem to indicate a deep worry with the resistance of Cabral and an attempt to decipher whether he could be reigned in and convinced to favor annexation, but also to establish an image of conflict and control by the Haitians of Cabral so as to ensure his illegitimacy. In the end they dispensed with interviews and direct questioning and instead recorded citizens and military men sharing their critiques of Cabral and his military and economic support by the Haitian government.
Puerto Rican leader Eugenio Maria de Hostos, rose to Luperon’s defense. Luperon had strong words for President Baez and any others attempting to annex any part of the DR: “The repeated Monroe Doctrine, has its vices and deliriums, we believe that America must belong to herself, far from all European influence, to live like the old world, from its own wine, local and independent; but we do not believe that America should be Yankee” (Nunez Polanco 1991:232, US Commission Report 1871:7) The US Commissioners refused to meet with the opposition in order to understand the source of the conflict towards annexation.

Samaná came to serve as a space for imagining an independent Caribbean. For many exiled leaders of Spanish Caribbean independence movements and Antillean figures of the anti-colonial and anti-racist movements in the Spanish Caribbean, Samaná became a focal meeting point and space of convergence. The Antillean political project supported the insurgent struggles in Cuba and Puerto Rico and supported a project of Caribbean unity that went beyond nationality and race. A stream of Antillean leaders gathered and lived at different moments in Samaná. Don Francisco Ramirez, leader of the failed armed insurrection of Grito de Lares in Puerto Rico, along with his brother and their families, spent ten years in exile in Samaná. During the Cuban War of Independence, the “Bronze Titan” General Antonio Maceo visited in 1880 and General Maximo Gomez met with local leaders in 1886. Beginning in 1887, Eugenio Maria de Hostos, Puerto Rican patriot and father of education in the DR, went on multiple occasions in Samaná.

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75 Luperon wrote a letter to Queen Victoria seeking support for his endeavors and visited the US consulate in Santo Domingo to protest the way he was being vilified and pursued by the US government.

76 As a result of his resistance, the commission described General Luperon as “a bandit stained in crime,” and “until now he has not distinguished himself in any way, with his principle actions being that of robbery and acts of piracy on the coasts.” (US Commission Report 1871)

77 After failed attempts by the US government to gain Luperon’s support through means of monetary coercion and an offer to appoint him as governor of the island, the US government subsequently demonized him, and an arrest warrant was issued for his capture and deportation to Baltimore to be tried for piracy.

78 Hostos wrote several articles about Samaná and contributed to the development of local educational initiatives. Hostos was later named an honorary member of the Society of Samaná Unity in 1888 (Rodriguez Demorizi 1972:36).
The various movements of political actors into this space cannot be seen as a coincidence. These visits and points of encounter reflect the concern among independence figures with potential annexation. These movements reflect the central geographic location of Samaná within the Caribbean, the lack of a constant presence of authority, and a local society that was open to new perspectives and currents of thought that coincided with Antillean desires of freedom. Leaders in Haiti, Cuba, St. Thomas, Nevis, and Puerto Rico supported the anti-annexation movement and were themselves soon threatened by US interests.79 In 1876 Ramon Emeterio Betances, exiled Puerto Rican independence activist, Antillean leader and later ambassador to France on behalf of the DR, wrote from Samaná to his wife:

Dear, this place is the most beautiful in the world and if I could I would stay. This is beautiful, large and admirable…Here my patriotism has been reborn and I would give all my life to make of this the emporium for all the riches of the republic and prepare it a banquet of prosperity for all of the towns. Here I feel as a pure Dominican…I feel ennobled by Samaná and with all the enthusiasm of youth, I would clamor against Europe and North America at the same time. Long live the republic, long live independence.80

The analysis of these attempts at annexation make visible the important political and intellectual ties that crosscut the Caribbean beyond linguistic and colonial boundaries. These stories reveal the political and intellectual networks that existed throughout the Caribbean and in Samaná. The movement of people and ideas into the coastal space gave testimony to notions of Antillean identity that went beyond national conceptions and approached a transnational perspective that supported other movements of independence within the Caribbean. Though

79 After US victory in the Spanish American War in 1898, the US claimed Cuba and PR and would shortly take control of other nations in the newly independent Caribbean.
80 The original reads: “Querida, este es el lugar mas lindo del mundo, y de Buena gana me quedaria aqui. Esto es bello, grande y admirable…Aquí ha vuelto a renacer todo mi patriotismo: y daría toda mi vida por hacer de esto el emporio de riquezas de la Republica y prepararle un banquete de prosperidad a todos los pueblos. Aquí me siento Dominicano puro…Me siento enoblecido por Samaná: y con todo el entusiasmo de la juventud, clamaria a voces contra la europa y el Norte America a la vez. Viva la Republica! Viva la independencia!” Quoted in Demorizi 1972:38.
these Antillean movements had little success, they set the stage for historical interactions across island nations and were formative for Antillean anti-colonial thought.

In the end, the annexation plans failed. A mixture protests in Samaná and national dissent, public uproar, violent clashes, debates in the US Senate, and transnational political networks doomed the annexation project.81 Immediately after the failure to achieve annexation to the US, the Samaná Bay Company, a joint stock association incorporated in New York that had connections to many US senators, like Senator Howe, made an effort to induce private capital to annex Samaná. The company appointed a group of commissioners who sailed on the 5th of January 1873 on the steamer Tybee to Santo Domingo to meet with General Baez to secure such an agreement. They arrived nine days later, meeting with the Dominican secretary of state Gautier, who had been authorized to begin negotiations.82

The Samaná Bay Company obtained the rights to the peninsula of Samaná in exchange for $150,000 a year and a $350,000 goodwill gift to the Dominican Congress (Cordero Michel 2009:55). The company was given political, social, and economic control of the peninsula and received a deduction of 15% of their import duties with neighboring ports on the island.83 The Company assured that “all the rights of person and property” would be guaranteed (Samaná Bay

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81 At an extraordinary session dedicated to the annexation question, Dominican Representative Juan Bautista stated, “To lease the bay of Samaná would be equivalent to declaring war on the Haytian people and the European nations who held possessions in the Americas” (Nunez Polanco 1997:52).
82 They arrived in Santo Domingo with enough gold coin to pay for the “first year’s rent” and “procured for the company all the widest and largest powers and privileges […] with immunity from most of the restrictions and limitations which are always imposed where the law is most indulgent to joint stock operations (Samaná Bay Company Report 1873:5).
83 The political conflicts that prevailed on the island forced the Baez government to negotiate from a position of need because their coffers had been emptied with the cost of battling the forces of Generals Luperon and Cabral on different fronts. In the articles of convention for the annexation of Samaná, the land was to be leased for 50 years and gave exclusive jurisdiction to the Samaná Bay Company as an agent of the US, “to impose and collect there its own duties, port charges, for its own use, without any control or interference whatever by the Dominican or any other government. Most of the stipulations in the agreement were about the rights to future concessions in regards to establishing a bank in the peninsula, a steamer line to impulse migration, a railroad line to increase the commerce to the region (US Commission Report 1873, 6).
Without local consultation, the US flag was lifted above the Samaná customs house, signaling a change in power. It would fly over the town of Samaná for exactly a year, after which the agreement was rescinded (Cordero Michel 2009:56).

The Aftermath of the Attempts at Annexation

After the schemes of annexation came to an end, Samaná went through a period of relative stability and economic prosperity. From 1875 to 1907, the geographical distance of the community of Samaná allowed it to escape the sway of continued caudillo interests. During this period, the port town of Samaná became a trading post, principally in tobacco sugar, cacao, and coffee, with additional trade in mahogany, hides, and wax. Its strategic location for foreign and national trade brought an influx of products and services from the exterior and the establishment of consulates for the French, Italian, British, Dutch, and United States governments. Ship logs indicate that the ports of embarkation to Samaná were predominantly in the US, but ships also came from Italy, Norway, Spain, France, and Britain (Samaná Bay Company Papers 1873).

At the height of Samaná’s prosperity, there existed a library, theatre, baseball teams, printing press, various local newspapers, and lighting for many of the public areas. Beginning in 1877, Gregorio Riva brought a press he named El Pueblo which printed the local paper El Eco de Samaná, and shared stories of international and national importance, connecting the Samaná population to events around the world (Devers 1993:110). Samaná had several import and export

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84 A small amendment was made in the incorporation documents that allowed for the solicitation of protection and intervention by the US government if the company deemed it necessary to protect its interests.
85 Cornel Joseph Fabens, a representative of the Company was put in charge of Samaná and named governor of the region. The ill-fated company had as representatives in Samaná Mr. Samuel Howe and his wife Julia Ward Howe, wealthy heiress and writer. Mrs. Ward-Howe witnessed the taking down of the flag by the Dominican authorities amid her husband’s protests, describing the incident in her memoirs. In describing local feelings, she wrote, “The blacks here say that they would have offered forcible resistance if we had authorized their doing so” (Howe Richards 337).
86 The Frenchman JL. Marciaq was one of the largest merchants during this time in Samaná. In the report he states “there is very little money in circulation except when a man of war in the harbor, and in the market season. The whole business on the island is conducted on a system of barter” (Commissioners Report 1871, 235).
87 For a ten-year period there existed a direct steamer line that connected New York, Samaná, Santo Domingo, and New Orleans.
houses, a soap and lotion factory, and the Sevez-Huot chocolate factory that exported its products across the world. Wooden ships were also made locally to ship the goods produced in Samaná to other ports. The boats brought back other items of basic necessity as well as more modern products such as jamón serrano and barbed wire (Samaná Bay Company Papers 1873).

By the end of the 1870s, the “deficient infrastructure, political instability, and scarcity of workers led to the predominance of cattle enterprises, which required a minimum of personnel” across the country (Hoetink 1962:5). Responding to the abundance of cattle on the island, a system of terrenos comuneros was established whereby land was owned and used collectively. The state owned 2/3 of the land in the DR and made much of its revenue through the leasing and rental of lands to individuals and companies. These terrenos comuneros continued until the sugar boom at the end of the 1800s under which the price of land rose so high that it was impossible to maintain them as communal lands. In Samaná, land ownership had been given by the Haitian state and those titled were respected. Local economic prosperity resulted in a high incidence of land ownership within the community: “The land is not divided off by fences or any distinct landmarks, but the boundaries of the different plantations appeared to be well known” (US Commission Report 1871:70). Samanese labored on these private lands for their own benefit rather than renting their labor for wages. Many of the families would retreat to these lands to escape the violence, which thus served as an important escape valve during various moments of conflict. As a visitor to the community observed, “They have no more necessity than to live, and for that they have enough plantains and fruit” (Ward Howe 1874). The abundance of fish, oysters, and other maritime resources provided sustenance for the local population.

In 1876 the Dominican government of Rodriguez Urdaneta commissioned a census of property and land ownership in Samaná (Feliz Feliz 2008:50). The lack of a wage labor force
was a source of concern for the different projects of rule interested in exploiting the resources of the region. The intent was to bring more laborers to the region in order to develop it further. Spanish colonial government documents reported high levels of land ownership by the community members and multiple residents owning several landholdings in different areas of the town and outskirts. The surnames of landowners reveal links to the early French and Haitian immigration, the African American migration, and a smaller number of Spanish families.\textsuperscript{88}

At the time of the Spanish census, the town consisted of six streets, with \textit{Calle Marina} being the principal street whose homes patios led to the ocean (Feliz Feliz 2008:59). A total of 308 lots were surveyed, of which 93 were homes with multiple rooms, 121 were one bedroom shacks, and 94 were empty lots. Of the 93 large multiple room homes, 41 were on private land, 18 on municipal land, and 34 on state land. Two points were stressed in the report: of the 121 shacks, 6 were on private land, 15 on government land, and 45 on municipal land; of the 213 total structures surveyed, 54 of them were owned by women. These numbers indicate the ability of the different segments of the Samaná community to accumulate capital to purchase land and build their homes. The report also indicated that the African American immigrants mostly owned lands that were on the outskirts of the town. This accumulation of land was important for their ability to subsist throughout the constant conflicts for power on the island.

In 1844, the Municipality of Samaná established the first music academy in the town and named Alberto Brea as the first director (Devers 1993:14).\textsuperscript{89} The music academy produced a large number of local musicians and bands and put music and culture at the center of Samaná

\textsuperscript{88} The municipal government of Samaná many times was at odds with the military and national leadership structures. In 1876 the municipality, led by Evaristo Demorizi, carried out a revolt against then governor Fidel Rodriguez for he did not represent the interests of the town (Devers 1993:94).

\textsuperscript{89} The steemer Tybee, owned by the Spofford and Tilestone Company, came to dock in Samaná every 30 days beginning in 1868 (Dever1993:109). The music academy continued to be a part of daily Samaná life until the late 1970s when it completely lost economic support from the national and municial government.
life. The most famous of these bands was the trio *Brisas de la Bahia*, composed of Luis Cernuda on the violin, Joaquin Barba on the flute, and Andres Diaz on the guitar. The music academy provided a soundtrack for local life and used music to reflect daily occurrences and critiques.

Samaná was left to its own devices until General Ulises “Lilys” Heureaux, a Black man of Haitian descent, rose to power in 1886. Under Heureaux, the initial steps in the formation of a modern Dominican state were taken. According to Heureaux “dictatorship represents the zenith of trends that began in the period of the first republic: despotism, praetorianism, personalism, political corruption, and clientelism” (Sagas and Inoa 2003: 109). Heureaux commissioned many public work projects: telegraph lines, port facilities, railroads, and bridges. He attempted to build a state bureaucracy, establish a local currency, and “began to express the interest of an emergent bourgeoisie” (Betances 1996:4). These efforts would lay the groundwork for the subsequent economic and political transformations prompted by the US military occupation of 1915 and marked the beginning of an authoritarian mode of governance of the Dominican state (Betances 1996:18).

As part of the modernizing efforts, the Hereuax dictatorship invested in the construction of a railroad that was begun by British engineers in 1888. The railroad was to connect the agricultural-producing region of El Cibao to Samaná, and it created an expectation of increased national economic opportunities. The railroad never reached Samaná, as the loans ran out before it was completed. Instead it ended in Sanchez, a small town 30 miles east of Samaná, founded by many of the African American families seeking to capitalize on the increased movement of products through the region.

A new port was built in Sanchez to load the products transported by the railroad to the coast and to receive the various incoming ships and their goods (Vega 2004:29). Once the rails to

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90 He maintained power until he was assassinated on July 26, 1899 (Sagas and Inoa 2003, 117).
Sanchez had been completed, 9% of the country’s exports and 11% of its imports flowed through the port. By 1892, 18% of all exports were departing from Sanchez (Betances 1996:33). The construction of the railroad and the increase in agricultural work brought an influx of migrants from other regions of the country who were attracted to the growing local economy of Sanchez and other Caribbean islands (Mayes 2014). English-speaking laborers from the Turks and Caicos and St. Thomas traveled there to work on the sugar ingenios “Progreso de Grullon y Fondeur and Gemersinda” owned by Jose Manuel Glass (Devers 1991:67). These Black English-speaking laborers had an easier transition into the space of Samaná because of their similar linguistic and racial backgrounds (Mays 2014).

In addition to the Afro-Caribbean migrants, a small number of Lebanese merchants, and other Dominican and internationals entered the Samaná space during this period. In 1893, two Lebanese merchants, brothers, arrived in Samaná and married local women (Devers 1991:24). The brothers Antonio and Abraham Ailwen later changed their last name to Jose and became exporters and importers of products across the Caribbean (Devers 1991). The Paiewonsky, a Jewish Lithuanina family, also arrived during this period, establishing their enterprises in the town of Samaná and slowly becoming one of the wealthiest families in the peninsula. The San Giovanni Commercial house in Samaná was founded in 1904 by other immigrant families.

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91 The railroad operated until 1966. The train tracks have withstood the test of time and still linger in the brush (Vega 2004:24).
92 From 1875 to 1882, thirty sugar cane haciendas were established throughout Santo Domingo, only three of these were to be found in the North, two of which were in Samaná (Hoetink 1962:7).
93 Archibald Derick James, son of a sailor from St. Martin and his mother a member of the AME church, became the first person from Samaná to be ordained as a catholic priest in Rome on the 9th of June 1927. To complete his duties as a priest he returned to the United States and practiced at the Santa Ana church in Bristol, Pasadena (Devers 1990:34).
94 The Paiewonskys later moved their enterprise to the north Atlantic coast of the DR establishing the area of Portillo so as to have a better route to export their products.
originating from Italy. The San Giovanni’s were agents in Samaná for the International Banking Corporation and Banco Territorial y Agrícola de Puerto Rico (Devers 1993:43).95

Heureaux had visited Samaná many times and frequented the Bambula festivals and African syncretic celebrations in honor of the Virgin of Altagracia.96 During Heureaux’s rule, there were multiple attempts to intervene in the space of Samaná. Local assemblies and committees were violently repressed and many of their members thrown in jail during the 1888 elections when many of the members of the community supported Heureauxs opponent Gregorio Luperon (Betances 1996:65). At the time, the political representatives of Samaná were Isaac Vanderhorst and the governor was General Moses Anderson, both third generation African American emigrants. The regime attempted to close local schools and open state-run ones. After protesting erupted, they were granted permission to keep the school open. Heureaux once again attempted to annex Samaná to the US in 1894. He attempted to broker a deal with Frederick Douglass, who was then ambassador to Haiti, to annex the peninsula of Samaná to the US (Cordero Michel 2009:58).97

Heureaux built support for his regime through close dealings with national and international merchants who provided him with loans in exchange for concessions. One of these merchants was Evaristo Demorizi, a recent arrival in Samaná. In exchange for Demorizi’s economic assistance, he was given a concession for a coconut factory in Samaná (Betances 1996:66). These immense state loans and the lack of repayment became the justification for the first US intervention on the island in 1915. After the assassination of Heureaux on the 26th of

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95 For some in the community the links to the US were maintained until the early 1900s. Jacob James who was trained in the US and then returned there as a representative of the AME church was named President of the AME churches in Santo Domingo by the convention. (Devers 1991:116).
96 Interview with community historian Ciriaco Stubbs in 2011.
97 Their recently acquired possessions in Cuba and Puerto Rico doomed the deal.
July 1899, the US became more involved in the Dominican economy to protect the interests of the sugar barons in the DR and Haiti (Betances 1996:27).

Despite these attempts at intervention, one of the most productive economic periods for Samaná was during the years of 1889 to 1901. At the time, Samaná’s economy was controlled by local families who dominated the transportation of goods in the region to adjacent islands. This economic boom brought a resurgence in local institutions and the formation of various social clubs, music academies, and other arenas, vastly improving local life and developing civil society. As a result of these optimal economic conditions, several local industries like Jabonerias Unidas del Cibao, the largest soap factory in the country, opened in 1890. The Paiewonsky coconut factory and the Sevez-Huot chocolate confection production facility brought a number of jobs and economic resources to the community (Devers 1991:121). The products exported from Samaná traveled the world and were well known for their quality.98 The municipal government had enough resources to build the public park in honor of Ulises Heureaux in 1891 and a Municipal Cemetery in 1895; telegraph communications were extended to the region in 1898 (Devers 1991:153).99

After the murder of Heureaux there was a period of political instability. A national unity coalition led by Ramon Caceres ran the country, under which there were renewed attempts to consolidate the Dominican state. By then, “the emerging national bourgeoisie based on sugar

98 Carlos Baez a merchant of Samaná displayed his products at the International Exposition in Brussels in 1910 and received a bronze medal for the items he brought from his hacienda “La Aguada” (Devers 1991:50)
99 In 1998, community historian Gregorio Elias Penzo Devers published the first volume of his “Compendio histórico de Samaná, 1493-1930” which attempted to vindicate Samaná’s history. He ended his narrative in 1930; the book fails to incorporate Trujillo’s modernizing project and its effects on Samaná. His plans were to create a second volume that incorporated the later years, but he passed away before this work was ever completed. We are left with what was published and the conspicuous date of 1930, the rise of the dictatorship. Devers also published a book of biographies of Samanéses that highlighted their accomplishment on the local, national, and international scenes. The biographies reflect a stronger relationship between the municipal government and the population. These biographies describe the multiple educational and social institutions in Samaná that served multiple interests and purposes and provided ample opportunities for the youth to expand their educational and professional pursuits.
plantations had been elbowed out, and the US government controlled finances” (Betances 1996:27). The agrarian laws established at the behest of the US government were the first to establish land as private property and shift from the use of communal lands. The Caceres government legalized foreign ownership of land without limitations, which hugely benefitted US sugar capital, which through illicit means managed to gain title to the best producing lands in the DR (Betances 1996:27).

The 1907 Dominican American Convention gave power to the US government to directly collect the customs revenues of the DR to pay back loans owed (Betances 1996:55). As a result of the convention, the US Army established new customs houses at the border with Haiti and in ports around the country such as Samaná. At the time, customs revenue accounted for the majority of the Dominican state budget. These border posts were immediately protested on both sides of the border and served as the origin basis for much of the future violence along the border.

To protect its economic interests, the US invaded Haiti in 1914 and took control of its custom houses. The following year it occupied the DR. US occupation forces remained in the DR until 1924 and in Haiti until 1925. US efforts involved the training of military personnel who would become the new protectors of imperial interests that paved the way for the establishment of dictatorial regimes on both sides of the island.

**Period III: 1907-1960, Political and Social Dispossession: The Rise of the Nation State**

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100 “The Dominican American Convention limited the foreign merchants to a subordinate status in the import-export trade, and local Creole merchants were alienated from the higher echelons of commercial activities” (Betances 1996:75).
101 After the Spanish-American-Cuban conflict of 1898, the United States gained control of the islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico.
102 Under US occupation, the first use of Haitian migrant labor to satisfy the growing sugar trusts increasing demand for labor occurred.
The forceful incorporation of the peninsula into the Dominican nation state increased substantially during the period of 1907-1960. The incorporation of Samaná was achieved through the dismantling of local institutions and the seizure and control of the economic opportunities available to the community. This incorporation entailed the suppression of regional identities and autonomy, which could only be attained through a series of social, cultural, political, and economic interventions that attempted to “break the back” of the community. Through violence, surveillance, and bureaucratic practices, the developing Dominican state consolidated its hold on the peninsula and its resources.

Figure 5: US Marines in Samaná 1916.
Photo courtesy of the Dominican National Archives.

The US intervention of 1915 provided the impetus for state development in the DR under the guise of modernization. In addition to controlling the Dominican economy, the occupying force embarked on a series of infrastructural, sanitation, and road building projects (Betances 1996:74). Throughout the period of occupation, there was a “barrage of new legislation seeking to regulate daily life,” such as the outlawing of traditional medicinal practices and African religious and musical forms. Cockfights were restricted to Sundays; forced labor for all men was used for public works projects one day a week; new sanitation laws were enforced; the registration of private property became mandatory; and attempts to collect new taxes were
imposed on the Dominican population (Derby 2009:504, Hoetink 1965:11). These Land Registration Laws served to legalize many false titles, leaving the majority of productive lands in the hands of the sugar corporations (Betances 1996:30). One of the few exceptions to this occurred in Samaná, where many of the land titles were respected.

As the formation and consolidation of the Dominican state progressed, there was a pronounced transformation in the spatial configuration of the country (Turits 2002, Derby 2009). For Samaná to be a part of the Dominican national imaginary, there needed to be a serious transition in the structures of local power and changes in the linguistic, educational, and religious institutions. After incorporation, decisions were no longer be made locally, momentarily silencing the community’s voice. This period marked the beginning of a construction of indebtedness to the Dominican state that has stifled local action and organizing.

The Dominican state did not become “involved in the process of primitive accumulation until the US military occupation of 1916-1924” (Betances 1995:3). The US military intervention in 1915 succeeded in destroying the power of the regional caudillos and brought about the forceful disarming of most its fighters and the Dominican peasantry (Betances 1995:6). The initial years of US military rule created a series of tensions and violent uprisings as many Dominicans opposed the occupation and were unwilling to participate in the US schemes (Betances 1996:84). Under the new laws established by the occupying force, we can trace the beginning of the dispossession of the Dominican peasantry. Without land, peasants were absorbed as laborers on the corporately-owned sugar plantations. This spurred a guerilla resistance movement in the eastern part of the country led by Liborio and Mama Tingo that was brutally silenced by military force (Sagas and Inoa 2007).
Alongside the public works program implemented by the occupying force, the regime developed a constabulary force that was formed to bring unity to the Dominican nation by defeating the regional power structures. Volunteers for the constabulary consisted mostly of poor and illiterate men and boys from the countryside. In addition to the new laws being enacted by the occupying forces a series of restrictions were also placed on the national media, censoring critiques of the occupation (Sagas and Inoa 2007).

The US occupation attempted to modernize the DR, but “it failed to transform its authoritarian political character” and gave support to the continued use of this authority (Sagas and Inoa 2003:119). This early development of the state security apparatus served as a precursor to the formation of a unified Dominican nation under the rule of the Dictator Rafael Trujillo (Betances 1995:4). The new national constabulary trained by the US forces helped to decrease the regional power centers and to bring the peasant classes into the military. In doing so, the constabulary facilitated the penetration of the state into the different regional power structures (Betances 1996:32). The constabulary later became the Dominican National Police and would be used as a coercive force for years to come.

Conclusion

Many historians and writers during the Trujillo era wrote briefly about Samaná and the historical and linguistic backgrounds of its inhabitants. These scholars repeatedly lamented these linguistic differences, which indicated the abhorred non-Hispanic influence in the region. In the introduction to his novel Macabon Estampas de Samana,103 renowned Dominican novelist Luis Bourget paints an exotic image of Samaná, quoting Dr. Manuel de Jesus Troncoso de la Concha

103What prevails in the novel is the alienation of linguistic differences and the mocking of the heavy accents used by the characters in the book purported to be those of African American descent. The constant images constructed throughout the novel are of inadequacy, foreignness, and difference that somehow must be subdued (Bourget1961:9).
speaking at a historical conference: “If in Samaná Spanish has become the normal language
used, it has been because of the service of obligatory instruction and because of the continuous
efforts of the established schools in that region of the country, especially since the year 1930”
(Bourget 1961:9).

In early 2009, I visited the Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia intent on finding further
documentation of the African American migration to Samaná. To my surprise, upon speaking
with the archivist and the pastor, they were unaware of the groups of emigrants that had been
organized under Reverend Allen. Philadelphia, as a point of origin, is an important detail told by
the descendants in Samaná, even borrowing the Bethel name to give to the African Methodist
Episcopal Church in Samaná.105

Living in the absence of the Dominican state presence was the initial experience for the
inhabitants of Samaná. They developed mechanisms whereby they could manage the space,
maintain order, and establish their own political, sociocultural and economic structures. Constant
political manipulations and efforts to annex the region were used to dismantle a regional
consciousness and identity that had unified a heterogeneous population whose binding elements
relied on the place of Samaná. This identity was pan-Caribbean, a site of convergence where
language, religion, and race were less bounded and more open to personal decisions and daily
interactions.

104In the introduction to the book Samaná, Pasado y Porvenir, there is an ominous introduction by the author and
collaborator of the Trujillo regime: “La fausta noticia de que el Sr. Presidente de la Republica, Generalísimo Rafael
L. Trujillo Molina, se proponía extender su mano constructiva a Santa Barbara de Samaná, para realizar ansias y
proyectos de mas de un siglo, nos indujo, a preparar una obra en que, junto a las breves resenas historicas de
Samaná, se presentasen, como incentivo para su explotacion, las imponderables riquezas naturales de la feraz
peninsula y de la esplendida Bahia” (Rodriguez Demorizi, 1945:5) In the second edition, the author corrects his
earlier introduction. “Los citados proyectos no se realizaron entonces (1945), pero ahora (1972) […] ya avanzan las
esperadas obras publicas que constituyen el punto de partida del progreso de Samaná, el presente que nunca tuvo,
que espero durante tantos anos oscilando entre el pasado y el provenir” (Rodriguez 1972:7).
105 The economic link to the Philadelphia church had been severed by the late 1800s and support for the original
AME church in Samaná came from the Anglican Church of England.
Power exerted throughout multiple projects of rule have attempted to rewrite the historical narrative of Samaná to leave out the resident’s experience. These politically- and economically-motivated projects of rule resulted in the movement of peoples in and out of the space of Samaná, having direct impacts on how the community organized and identified. This story of Caribbean exchanges and entanglements suggests the power of collectivities in deciding their own identities, rather than accepting impositions from afar. The African descendants of Samaná defy simplifying narratives of nation and race and continually challenge the dominant racial, linguistic, and religious tropes of the Dominican nation.

The different ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the population and their experiences with structures of governance led to the formation of decentralized local structures that could be equated with autonomy. With the consolidation of the Dominican state, there were state and corporate efforts to dismantle local autonomy. Throughout these multiple projects of rule, the inhabitants of the space of Samaná have been able to navigate through a mixture of political manipulations, and armed and written protest. Over time, local inhabitants have both resisted and acquiesced to the multiple strategic and global interests that have historically swept through the region.
Chapter 2:

What Rises from the Ashes: Race, Ideology, and the Dominican State.

In the early evening of the 13th of October 1946, fire engulfed the town of Samaná. The flames spread from warehouse to warehouse, consuming the mahogany and cedar planks culled from the local hillsides. The fire slowly spread beyond the commercial sector adjacent to the water and began to consume the small homes that lined the dirt streets. Neighbors scrambled to find empty containers so as to fill them with any available water and attempt to douse the flames. Father Epifanio Ploude was at the front of the line of buckets trying to douse the fire and thanks to his efforts the parochial documents and some religious icons were saved (Devers 1999:89). Many of the townspeople watched helplessly as the fire devoured their homes. The more they struggled to extinguish the fire, the more the wind blew, fueling it further.

During the Great Fire, approximately 76 homes burned and an additional 18 had to be destroyed in order to contain the flames (Godbout 1987:80). “A caravan of individuals without homes and many without economic resource” transporting what little they found in the rubble was reported upon by the national media (Godbout 1987:81). There were no deaths, but the loss of personal property and homes, commercial and manufacturing locales, schools, churches, and government buildings had an enormous impact. Among the few structures that remained was the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Saint Peters Church, locally known as “La Churcha.” Most importantly, the fire also destroyed most of the documents related to land tenure, debt, and

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106 Months prior an 8.1 magnitude earthquake whose epicenter lay 65 km north of Samaná generated tsunamis across the northern region that left 20,000 people homeless. The earthquake on August 4, 1946, was the strongest ever recorded in the Caribbean (USGS). Some Samanenses suggest it was an omen of what was to come.

107 The Reverend JR Picot donated the materials for the church on behalf of the Wesleyan Church of England and also offered the community support in the form of a pastor to lead their services. The materials arrived by sea from England in 1901 and were donated to the descendants of African Americans who had lived in the region since 1824 (Godbout 1987:84)
mercantile exchanges, as well as most records pertaining to the history of the community and its unique transnational ethnic population.

Accounts differ as to how the fire began, but all witnesses agreed that it started in the Paiewonsky soap factory located adjacent to the water on the main street of the town (Godbout 1987:83, Wilmore 2013). Many local people have recounted a macabre story of jealousy, local control, and domination, and have attributed the fire to the artifices of the dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo and his efforts to incorporate the region into the Dominican national project. Samaná until then had been a prosperous port city that had developed a strong regional identity as a result of its economic and cultural autonomy. As part of the Dominican nation state project, the Trujillo regime sought to stamp out this regional identity and destroy its economic power so as to construct a homogenous identity under a centralized Dominican state.

In 2004, I interviewed Papito Coplin (Copeland), a community historian and funeral cask maker, who also claimed that Trujillo had burned down the town, as he was envious of the prosperity Samaná inhabitants enjoyed at the time.108 Another Samaná resident who witnessed the fire stated, “he watched as a policeman hit a man who tried to put out the fire. The man didn’t get up. The police prevented people from putting the fire out. At one time the governor asked men to help put it out, but he himself refused to participate […] he said that Trujillo set the fire because he was envious of the prosperous site of affairs in Samaná” (Vigo 1987:44).109

Trujillo had made many visits by ship to Samaná, familiarizing him with the diverse racial, cultural and linguistic makeup of the community. Many older Samaneses emphasize these differences in imagining Trujillo as having had a hand in the burning of the town. The attribution of envy as the motive for the fire could also be linked to the precipitous decline in the economic

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sphere of the port of Samaná. With the newly-constructed railroad ending in Sanchez and much of the region’s trade shifting, Samaná’s economy was in decline because of Dominican state intervention and regulation.

The elders speak of the fire in Samaná as the final steps in the state-spatializing project of the Trujillo regime. The fire was understood as the culmination of the attempts to control the town and to subvert local autonomy.110 The aftermath of the event-solidified Trujillo’s political and economic power in Samaná, that was sustained until his demise. The burning of the town and the destruction of most educational institutions would open the way for an institutionalized educational system that erased local history and contributions, was dominated by Catholic values, and denied and devalued the presence of people of African descent within the country. What rose from the ashes of this devastation was a fractured community that no longer had control over its economic, political, and educational institutions. The fire of 1946 created uncertainty; the Samaná community’s rebirth would be under the watchful eyes of the “father” of the nation and his vision of the Dominican nation state. After the town’s reconstruction, Samaná was at the mercy of the ideologies and decisions transmitted through the powerful military and political circles in the capital city of Santo Domingo.

In this chapter, I examine the development of the Dominican state and the racial, class, and gender ideologies mobilized in its formation. Many of these ideologies were developed by some of the country’s more prominent and elite political players and have deeply influenced

110 “Samaná used to have many people who used to raise hogs. They used to fatten the hogs with the coconuts, they sell the oil and they use the rest for the fattening. The first children, they planted cocoa, like the chocolate and coffee and they made a living and they know how and where to sell the chocolate and the cocoa in the United States (US) and they used to send the children to study in the US. It was good money they were paid for, but they began to find somewhere where they sell it cheaper somewhere else and then they stop buying from Dominican Republic and found other places where they got their product. When the price fell they begin to cut out all those jobs. My grandfather was one of the first to lose his job. Every 15 days he picked, he would cut out 28 or 40 pounds of cacao. A box of cacao of 27 pounds was only worth 70 cents, something like that, but it couldn’t pay the time, so most of them stopped” (Martha Wilmore, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, 2013).
Dominican state development practices and their effort to constitute a new Dominican subject. I therefore focus on the methods and modes of consolidation of state power and the socio-cultural transformations led by the Trujillo regime. These state-driven ideologies were spread through social and educational programs, which in many sites forced a violent encounter of state power with rural populations. These nation-making ideologies established homogenizing linguistic, religious, and racial terms for the Dominican national subject. In the second half of the chapter, I explore the implementation and effects of these state ideologies from the vantage point of Samaná. I look at how these ideological subject-making endeavors permeated Dominican social and political life, affected state economic policy, and impacted the locality and people of Samaná.

**The Dominican Nation State: Taming the National Subject**

Nation-building has been a conflictive process within Caribbean island societies. In imagining their newly independent nations, elite factions in island societies replicated the structures of colonial power so as to maintain their privileges. Driven by the elite political and merchant classes, the masses, with limited participation, have not shared in the bulk of the benefits of this national project.

A central element in the ideological formation of the nation-state has been the construction of a unifying national narrative and bounded conception of the Dominican citizen. This national unity is developed to establish a common ground through which to bring together divergent ideals and people. The formation of the nation-state has entailed a move towards homogeneity rather than the promotion and acceptance of heterogeneity. The naturalization of these boundaries works to exclude those who do not fit within them.
In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson attributes the social construction and rise of the nation and nationalism in the Americas to a new spatial organization of the world transformed by the confluence of capitalism and colonialism. This new form of nationalism was to be built on personal sacrifice, and the decline of religion was seen as the source of legitimate authority in the political process. Rather than an ideology, Anderson sees nationalism as a tool for shaping subjects and the rise of nationalism as a way of linking horizontally “fraternity, power and time,” bringing large groups of people to relate to each other in a common language.

In spite of social inequalities, Anderson claims that the nation is “imagined” as horizontal and shared. He fails to acknowledge that power shapes specific populations differently and that one’s position within a particular society dictates the degree of one’s sacrifice. Anderson ignores the possibility that this deep horizontal comradery could also be achieved through coercive projects and circumstances, or, through what Claudio Lomnitz argues, an interconnection between fraternity and dependency (Lomnitz 339). Anderson’s suggestion that nation-building processes were easily transplanted to different spaces glosses over the historical and social particularities that have helped each nation to become what it is. Absent in his analysis are the hierarchies of class, gender and race that were central in the construction and the imagination of national identities (Lomnitz 339). In avoiding these hierarchies, Anderson’s notion of sacrifice and connection to the national project are misleading and fail to account for vertical aspects of these societies where hierarchies of difference are created and maintained.

**The Racial and Gendered State**

The modern state has been configured through the categories of race, gender, and class. Theorist Wendy Brown argues that “the racialized, gendered, and class elements of state power are mutually constitutive as well as contradictory, the specific ways in which the state is racialized
are distinctive just as the gendered process of state power are analytically isolatable” from those of class and race (Brown 2009:194). These various modes of social, political, and economic domination intersect in the daily constitution and regulation of subjects, yet they require separate genealogical study (Brown 2009:189).

For Brown, the state “is not a thing, system or subject, but a significantly unbounded terrain of power and techniques, an ensemble of discourses, rules and practices, cohabitating in limited, tension ridden, often contradictory relation with one another” (Brown 2009:191). In Brown’s conception, all of the dimensions of state power “figure in the gendering of the state” (Brown 2009:192). The masculinity of the state refers “to those features of the state that signify, enact, sustain, and represent masculine power as a form of dominance” (Brown 2009:188). State powers are never neutral. This naturalization of masculine dominance is meant to exclude women and to construct them as subjects who need to be protected and governed.

For the purpose of this chapter, I will focus on the racialized elements of the Dominican state because they continue to be mobilized in the present. For scholars like Daniel Goldberg, the modern state “is nothing less than a racial state” (Goldberg, 2002:2). In his work, Goldberg traces the development of the racial state back to the rise of modernity and the expansion of the Spanish Crown into the new world. The observational differences that were documented and codified between the invading population, indigenous groups, and Africans were used to establish racial differences and different forms of treatment. These early exclusions were codified into law, naturalized as racial difference, and made real through different practices of governance and exploitation.

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111 In her work, Brown develops a feminist theory of the state through a critique of the current theorization of the state.
For Goldberg, there is no singular way of understanding the racial state, but there are generalized conditions that lead to its function and formation. The racial state can therefore be understood as “a set of projects and practices, social conditions and institutions, states of being and affairs, rules and principles, statements and imperatives” (Goldberg 2002:5). The racial state becomes a place of convergence to formulate a strategy of rule and to develop educational, political, and civil programs that shape national institutions. Power and exclusion are the mechanisms through which the racial state progresses; it makes acts of racism natural, as part and parcel of the process of development. The racial state brings to the fore the “tension between racial conditions and their denial, racist states and their resistance,” and in the end challenges the homogeneity ascribed to by the modern state (Goldberg 2002:6).

Racial states are “as much a state or condition of being as […] a state of governance” (Goldberg 98:2002). Through its condition of being and its forms of governmentality, the racial state aims to formulate a new subject that enters into a relationship of subservience to the state. This relationship is thrust upon the subject, unable to escape the classifications that exclude and limit their possibilities. The racial state “strives for a racial subjection which, though usually perceived as externally imposed upon subjects, actually is self fashioned and promoted” (Goldberg 2002:106). A new subject is articulated through the actions and limits set by the state and this subject continues to reproduce and perform within these racial boundaries. Expectations are made into common sense, repeated, manipulated, and then naturalized. Over time, subjects interiorize such feelings and help to self-discipline and discipline those around them to conform to these racial classifications. These joined processes articulate a way of being for the subject that relies both on denial and acceptance.

**Dominican Racial Formations**
In Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean, race and racialization can be seen as unstable categories whose meaning is constantly being transformed through political struggle (Omi and Winant 1992:123). Race continues to play a fundamental role in structuring and representing the social world. Race and nation in the context of the Dominican Republic (DR) should be understood as interdependent, as terms that are continually contested, reworked, and transformed to allow subjects to enter or be excluded from the national imaginary (Applebaum and Rosenblatt 2007).

Racial formations are defined as “the formation of a socio-historic process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed” (Omi and Winant 124). These racial formations are historically situated and linked to hegemony as a way to organize society and rule. Dominican racial formations have over time led to the domination of a hispanicized elite. To maintain their hegemony, these elites have elaborated a “popular system of ideas and practices […] that are spread through education, media and religion,” thus becoming common sense (Omi and Winant 130). These racial formations have permeated the development of the modern Dominican nation state, and been heavily influenced by United States (US) incursions into the country and have shifted significantly over the 20th century.

US incursions into the Caribbean in the early 1900s led to its control of both the Dominican and Haitian customs houses. After the US intervention of 1914, there was a significant shift in how race, class, and gender were understood, experienced, and accepted within the DR. This economic and military takeover in the DR resulted in the entrenchment and institutionalization of racist hierarchies within the formation of the modern Dominican state. Prior to the occupation and the dictatorship of Trujillo, many Dominican leaders were of African
descent and of heterogeneous cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Power and status were more accessible and not restricted as it is today to those from elite Dominican families of whiter skin (Moya Pons 1992, Jimenez Polanco 1999, Torres-Saillant 1998).

The DR has a long history of constructing its national identity in relation to neighboring Haiti (Derby 2009:491). A myriad of documents produced during the period of US occupation reflect a deep concern with Haiti and its perceived destabilizing influence on the DR. Haitian historian and politician Jean Price Mars and Dominican intellectual and political figure Juan Bosch both wrote about the worsening conflict between Haiti and the DR. Both attribute this to US policies and military interventions in both countries. During these interventions, the political and economic conflicts between Haiti and the DR were racialized, which found broad acceptance among many of the powerful landed elites who had a Hispanicized vision of the Dominican nation.

The conflict with and opposition to Haiti are based on an official revisionist history that has erased the many moments of collaboration between the two countries and the historical ties and deep interactions among people (Martinez 2003:90). Haitian neighbors, rather than being seen as allies in the fight against colonialism, were marked as invaders, enemies of the newly-independent Dominican state. This oppositional narrative, later supported by Trujillo and his ideologues, has had very real effects on the identity of Dominicans and the treatment of some of its citizens. These ideological conflicts between neighbors were made real through acts of violence routinely enforced by the Dominican state.

The Dominican state has controlled and defined categories of Dominican nationhood, forcefully transforming its citizens through control and manipulation. In particular regions of the

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112 Leaders like Ulises Heareaux and Gregorio Luperon grew up in Puerto Plata and struggled for the independence of the island. Luperon believed in a state project that was inclusive of all.
country, these state-defined racial categories have been mobilized by the state to marginalize a more localized, regional, and inclusive identity. The Dominican state as a racist, patriarchal, and authoritarian state “emerged in the 1940s as a result of the exclusionary governing practices that disenfranchised rural Dominicans, reactions to black labor, and US military intervention” (Mayes 2014:6).

Scholars like Ernesto Sagas and Franklin Franco have argued that Dominican elites imposed their racist attitudes onto the general public, manipulating this racist sentiment when needed. Other scholars like Ginetta Candelario, Kimberly Simmons, and Robin Derby have documented the complicated ways that Dominicans identify and deny Blackness. Historian Lauren Derby explores the difference between Haiti and the DR as “an identity first marked by language, then by a collection of derivative collective assertions of difference originating in colonial rivalries,” whereby race became a cultural construct that differentiates the two nations (Derby 2009). Ginetta Candelario argues that Dominican identity was not only formulated in opposition to Haiti, but was also in conversation with US imperial interests that demanded US intervention at multiple moments in the nations history. For political scientist Ernesto Sagas, Dominican racial ideologies were created as a form of shaping national emotions to otherize Haitian Blacks and equate Blackness with Haitian populations while assigning it negative traits (Sagas 2000).113

More recent scholarship on the Dominican Republic produced by Richard Turtis and Robin Derby finds that the rural Dominican masses did not share in the anti-Haitian emotions of the Dominican elite. Richard Turits has argued that one of the unique ways that anti-Black

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113 In the Dominican Republic, certain types of black subjects, usually lighter skinned and with greater levels of education, cultural capital, or actual capital, are allowed limited access to elite spaces. They are allowed to move within those boundaries as long as they follow the prescriptions set forth by the racial state. These exceptions are constantly reminded of the privilege of being accepted within the racial state.
prejudice has operated is through a coexistence with the integration and mobility for certain
people of African descent (Turits 2007:58) Historian April Mayes in her recent work argues that
the anti-Black ideologies mobilized under the Trujillo regime and visions and feelings of
Hispanidad had a history prior to the regime. This resentment serves as a guide to engage in the
past of places like Samaná to understand this national project of hispanidad as one that has been
operating prior to the formation of the strong Dominican state.

The Rise of the Dictator

A nation is a clearly delineated territory united by a series of cohesive elements: inhabitants, production, tradition, culture, historic vicissitudes, customs […] if one of them is lacking, the Nation dwindles in primacy and is reduced to a fragile, inert entity […] There did not exist here (DR) a nation enjoying its just attributes. Instead there was a group of humanity–a group tormented by unrest, insecurity, compromise, injustice and servitude (Trujillo 1960:13).

The 1916 US intervention into Dominican affairs provided the necessary political
conditions for the rise of the dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo.114 Under the Trujillo dictatorship,
the Dominican population experienced the first concerted efforts to unite the country under a
vision of “Dominicanidad” and to break with regional identities and caudillo politics. As part of
its modernizing project, the regime needed to transform the rural population and its image as
c unplacent, malnourished, and uneducated into one where its labor was a principal input
towards the nation. The regime embarked on a series of educational, infrastructure, sanitary,
economic, and land redistribution programs to fulfill the mission of constructing the country into
a modern nation. Trujillo claimed to bring unity to a nation that had been in disarray.

The regime believed its plans for the DR could only come to fruition by forcefully
controlling dissent and giving attention to the needs of the rural populations who until then had
been ignored. During the regime’s initial years, the silent support of the rural population, the

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114 Rising through the ranks of the US-established military force, Trujillo “served under the infamous Captain Merckle, notorious for his persecution and oppression of Dominican nationals” (Wiarda 1968:28).
Church, and many other sectors of Dominican society gave the dictatorship ample latitude to embark on its nation-making endeavors (Saez 2008, Turits 2007). Trujillo’s extraordinary political control and longevity finds explanation partly in the support Trujillo cultivated among the peasantry (Turits 2003:2).

Beginning in 1930, the regime embarked on a series of economic transformations and invested in industrial infrastructure to be able to compete with other Caribbean nations. The desarollismo (development) program begun by the regime was a “state based, nationalist oriented development of populist political projects” which served specific interests and class sections of the country (Pantoja-Garcia 1990:7). The desarollismo program amassed capital in the hands of the Trujillo family and its allies within the ruling class and armed forces. In amassing control of state industries and land, Trujillo “failed to allow the development of a strong bourgeoisie and state institutions that could survive his political regime” (Betances 1996:6). Through the control of all decision-making and natural resources, a new Dominican elite with allegiance to Trujillo benefitted from its association and gained power.

The Partido Dominicano became the only authorized party in the DR after 1931 (Rodriguez de Leon 1996:49). Through the consolidation of power, the Trujillo regime managed to overtake regional power structures to create one main caudillo under the Trujillo family (Rodriguez de Leon 1996:72). This caudillo form of governance relies on the charisma and power of an individual and has since taken the main state form in the DR. The national development plans and economic models for growth developed by the regime cemented a relationship between the dominant social and economic elites and the state that continues to exert influence on state decision-making (Betances 1996:7).
The destruction caused by the hurricane of San Zenon in 1930 legitimized the regime’s moves to modernize the nation, beginning with the rebuilding of the capital of Santo Domingo. The regime was able to rebuild multiple sites in its own vision, and these infrastructural projects created a relationship of indebtedness and subservience from its vulnerable populations. The ideologues of the dictatorship forged a national Dominican identity from above and institutions were created to support these endeavors. The Dominican nation-state project implemented by the regime had a central role in reproducing and institutionalizing Dominican homogeneity. This homogeneity was achieved through the erasure, marginalization and repression of those elements that stand outside and in opposition to the national historical narrative. As I will demonstrate, unity came at the expense of those who had a more fluid vision of the nation. The implementation of these national ideologies was done through coercive means, showcasing the power and ruthlessness of the Dominican nation-state.

**Anti-Haitianism, Blackness, and the Dominican State**

In his book *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*, Ernesto Sagas produces a detailed analysis of the design, development, and use of anti-Haitianism by the Dominican political establishment. Sagas traces the ideological, sociocultural, and historical implications and forms of socialization that deny and subjugate Blackness in the DR. As described by Sagas, “anti-Haitianism ideology combines a legacy of racist Spanish colonial mentality, nineteenth-century racial theories, and twentieth century cultural neoracism into a web of anti Haitian attitudes, racial stereotypes and historical distortion” (Sagas 2000:21). While Dominicans “hailed their society as “color blind” and “prejudice free,” they also fostered a climate of intolerance […] and avoided the violence of open racial conflict, but manipulated racism for political gain and the subordination of the lower class” (Sagas 2000:24). The Trujillo regime viewed as the architect of
anti-Blackness in the DR, an ideology that was held by small groups of intellectuals that was transformed into a thought that has permeated Dominican society (Mayes 2014:2)

One of the shortcomings of Sagas’s work is his analysis of the modern era without attempting to piece together a historical argument that looks at the political transitions within the country. There are many critiques of the Dominican society as one that denies African contributions to its history. Yet these denials have been constituted through authoritarian and elite-driven political projects and are not reflective of individual identities and daily forms of identification. Many of these critiques fail to analyze the complexity of ethnic and racial composition within the DR and do not reflect regions of the country such as Samaná or San Pedro de Macoris, whose ethnic and cultural identity has never been static.

Anti-Haitianism did not solely emerge out of the Trujillo regime, but was a continuation of a discourse of division routinely mobilized between the elites in Haiti and DR: “Anti-Haitianism was a convenient strategy exploited by state administrators and local government officials to divide the laboring classes; anti-black racism and anti-Haitian xenophobia complemented the state’s increasing control over migrant labor for sugar production” (Mayes 2014:8). In her study of San Pedro de Macoris, Mayes looks at a region of the DR where many English-speaking Black laborers from the British Caribbean emigrated. Known as “cocolos,” these communities, much like Samaná, challenged Dominican conceptions of identity and representation.

In the DR, “race became integral to the emergence, development and transformation of the modern nation state” that was achieved through the creation of markers of difference based on racial definitions and characteristics (Goldberg 2002:4). A narrative was constructed focusing on Dominicans as mixed race, and within this mixture whiteness was privileged. Anti-
Haitianismo existed through creating difference and therefore was “central to inventing Dominican whiteness” (Mayes 2014:10). The indigenous category of “indio” was attached to many Dominicans of African decent, whereby Blackness became an element of foreignness attributed to the Haitians who lived next door.

The deployment of a Dominican racial state ideology has underlain the formulation of the nation’s development plans. A concerted “occlusion of blacks from the representational historical record” has posited white leaders as real Dominicans, while placing Black leaders closer to their Haitian neighbors. Blacks are therefore rendered invisible within the historiography of the nation. However, a few Dominican scholarly works reclaim these erased histories and highlight the contributions of people of African descent to the formation of the Dominican nation (Franco 1969, Andujar 1997, Aracena 1999).

For the ideologues of the Trujilo regime, “Dominicanidad” was to be built upon the tenets and moral values of Catholicism that were linked to Europe and white supremacy. Alongside the regime and elite families, the national branch of the Catholic Church also promoted anti-Haitianism. The Catholic Church and the state established a strong relationship in the effort to instill “white Hispanic values” in the population (Saez 2008:88). Several published letters between Dominican state representatives and the Catholic leadership reveal the various levels of contact and convergence between the state and church. The church and the state developed a symbiotic relationship in which they mutually supported and benefitted from the modernization of the Dominican nation. Through this relationship, the Catholic Church was able to acquire huge amounts of land and received economic support from the Dominican state.

Towards the end of the Trujillo regime, this relationship began to experience tension when the

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115 Trujillo went as far as signing a concordat in 1954 giving the church additional lands and decision-making power; in return he received a Papal Blessing for his family and an official annulment of his second marriage (Wiarda 1963, 143, Saez, 91).
violence and repression escalated, affecting representatives of the church.\textsuperscript{116} The relationship between church and state has been renewed and strengthened under later Dominican governments.

Trujillo and his ideologues manipulated Dominican nationalism to serve their interests in creating a clear distinction between Dominicans and Haitians. After Trujillo’s death, intellectuals such as Joaquin Balaguer continued to mobilize these ideologies to aid in the modernization of the Dominican nation. Driven by economic motivations to control the flow of cheap labor, anti-Haitian ideology became naturalized and made to be the distinguishing factor between two populations. These racial ideologies enhanced and solidified an already-existent social stratification and enforced hegemonic racist ideals to aid in the consolidation of a “whiter” Dominican upper class. These distinctions become relevant when transferred to the material realm and were imposed and manifested through laws, educational, religious, and economic programs that affected individual and collective life. Today, these ideologies continue to figure prominently in the construction of the Dominican nation and the functions of the state.

A significant way that the state crafted and enforced the newly-constructed Dominican national identity was through the requirement of \textit{cedulas} (identity cards) in 1932. The \textit{cedulas} were initially used in the 1920s to police the border for movement between the US customs depot and were later extended to the whole populace (Derby 2009:502). The \textit{cedula} served multiple purposes and became another way to identify, restrict, and police the movements of Dominicans. The peasantry was forced to take part in performances that gave legitimacy to the authoritarian regime.

\textsuperscript{116} A letter by Cardinal Armando Lamarche to Dr. Pedro Henriquez Urena, Superintendent of Teaching, requested the incorporation of religion into the national schools (Saez 2008:123).
The cedulas became a major generator of capital for the state and helped to further the ideology of mestizaje by officially identifying Black Dominicans as “Indian” (Turits 2003:87). Indio thus became a racial category that was used to classify and strip Black identity from the dark-skinned populations of the island vis a vis the Black (Haitians) who lived next door: “Ethnically, Indians represented a category typified by non-whiteness as well as non-blackness, which would easily accommodate the racial in-betweeness of the Dominican mulatto” (Torres-Saillant 1998:131). This redefinition of ethnic categories affected the Dominican Black and mulatto masses “who had but two choices: to ‘lighten’ themselves by assuming the Indio identity, or be ostracized and excluded from the national mainstream” (Sagas 2000).

Border Conflict and the Extension of Violence

The Dominican-Haitian frontier became an official border as a result of the 1907 Dominican-American Convention that resulted in the turning over of customs collections to the US to satisfy a series of debts (Derby 2009:490). The demarcation of the border benefitted US business interests on the island by controlling the intra-island commerce and using their control of both nations to regulate commerce across the Caribbean. But this border was porous, as it lacked roads, control, and surveillance that allowed for the development of a unique economic system that revolved around cattle and coffee cultivation. The Dominican state, prompted by US interests, had to create “a specific situation to justify change in popular psychology” and fix the differences between neighbors (Derby 2009:492).

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117 “Cocolos” was the name given to the English-speaking emigrants from the English-speaking Caribbean islands. Many of the “Cocolos” married African American descendants and attended the same churches and schools. In 2007, I applied for my first cedula in Samaná. After receiving it I noted an (I) under identification, indicating “Indio.” I was never asked about my classification, nor was it asked in the application.

118 Trujillo’s own racial and class backgrounds most likely influenced his decision in this endeavor. Many claim that Trujillo’s grandmother was herself Haitian, and it is well documented that he came from a working class family. Like many other dictators, he was not allowed into the social clubs and was sneered at by the elites of the nation, whom he excluded from economic affairs.
helped transform local notions of race and further exacerbated differences between the two populations (Turits 2003:18).

Although the constitution of the border occurred prior to it, the ideologues of the regime devised a plan to cleanse and police the border between the Haiti and DR by controlling the movement of labor and goods across it. Anti-Haitian rhetoric, and the violence associated with it, reached its height on the border between the two countries in 1937, which culminated in what is known as the “Perejil massacre.” The number of dead is difficult to confirm, though estimates ranges from 17,000 to 33,000 Black men and women (Turits 2003, Derby 2009, Sagas and Inoa 2007). Most were of Haitian descent, but many were Black Dominicans who had traversed the border for their economic livelihood and social connections on both sides of the denoted line. The Dominican state blamed the event on local tensions between neighbors, downplaying the army’s participation and the number of dead (Derby 2009:490). Thousands of bodies were reported in common graves or thrown in the ocean in areas like Puerto Plata, Montecristi and Nagua, an hour drive west of Samaná (Rodriguez de Leon 1996:95). It seems doubtful that the massacre would have occurred had intellectuals like Balaguer not provided the powerful anti-Haitian ideologies of the time, which served to legitimate the struggle (Turits 2003:171).

Prior to the massacre, Dominican-Haitian relations appeared friendly, and a series of meetings between the two heads of state indicated a willingness for cooperation. The tides may have shifted as a result of the expulsion of Haitian labor from Cuba and Jamaica after the

119 Dominican soldiers held up a sprig of parsley to someone and ask “What is this?”; how the person pronounced the Spanish word for parsley (perejil) would determine his/her fate. The Dominicans realized that a Haitian would have difficulty pronouncing perejil, so if the person could pronounce perejil with a trill, the person was considered to be Dominican and allowed to live, but if the person pronounced perejil without the trill, the person was considered to be Haitian and executed.
120 In his autobiography Joaquin Balaguer, an historian and ideologue under the Trujillo regime and later president of the country, explains the motivations for such a brutal act. The genocide of 1937 was “neither the work of a crazy man […]. It was simply an act by a man, who not only obeys the brutality of his instincts but also to a conception of his destiny as a patriot and leader” (Balaguer 1989:72).
collapse of sugar prices. The returning laborers had no option but to venture into the DR in search of work. The influx of large amounts of Haitian labor became a source of worry for the Dominican state. Land accumulation, the control of trade on the border, and the circulation of Haitian currency were additional reasons analysts offer for the atrocity, but the ideological dimensions to the massacre cannot be forgotten (Betances 1996:98). After the massacre, the border was maintained through military enforcement, but in practice, families and individuals have continually found ways to cross the border and reunite with those on the other side. In the aftermath of the massacre, the regime increased its propaganda against Haitians and developed a “campaign of virulent anti Haitian discourse” (Turits 2003:146). “Violence was a catalyst, not simply a consequence of racism and identity formation” (Turits 2003:172). Several months after the massacre, the military deported thousands of ethnic Haitians, and anti-Haitianism ideology began to be enforced in regions of the DR that were perceived to have larger Haitian or Black populations. On the eastern part of the island in San Pedro and La Romana, where there were a large number of Black laborers from the island, and in places like Samaná, this “cleansing” did not take place. Similarly ingenios in Barahona owned by American corporations protected their labor force (Rodriguez de Leon 1996:94).

**The Power of the Regime**

Many authors have commented on the power of the Trujillo regime, describing it as absolute and tyrannical (Wiarda 1968, Rucker 1999). In *Foundations of Despotism*, Richard Turits departs from this vision of totalitarian to emphasize the hegemonic processes that allowed Trujillo to stay in power. The Dominican state was able to “infiltrate everyday peasant life not

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121 After international outcry over the massacre, Trujillo promised pay an indemnity to the family of the victims. In the end only paid $270,000 to restore his international support

122 Historian Lil Despradel (1994) argues that it was Dominican historians associated with the regime who maintained versions of anti-Haitianismo while exalting Hispanic heritage to inform nationalist feelings.
only with vagrancy ordinances, compulsory community labor, political rallies, and local meetings, but also with sanitary inspections, vice regulations, paternity laws, health clinics, day and night schools and literacy campaigns” (Turits 2003:218). Trujillo gained consent from the Dominican population through agrarian reform policies transforming peasants’ needs, culture, and identities to promote their acceptance of and identification with the state (Turits 2003:8).

Some scholars still insist on imagining Trujillo as the sole director of the regime, “as opposed to the network of social relations through which the regime penetrated civil society and wove the population into a role of complicity with the dictatorship” (Derby 2009:225). The dictatorship “did not survive only on the base of organized terror, but also because of a certain capacity of social and ideological domination over the most numerous centers of population in the country, the campesinos” (Lozano 1985:28). The fulfillment of the regime’s vision required the domination of both the state and civil society. Dominican society became the material base of control whereby coercion was legally exerted by the state, enforcing behaviors on non-consenting groups through direct action and violence. In addition to revealing how the regime secured peasant support, the history of Trujillo’s policies also illuminates how the state expanded its political and economic control over the nation. These policies increasingly integrated city and countryside following three centuries of relatively deep separation (Turits 2003:9)

Initially, Trujillo embarked on an incredible amount of small-scale infrastructural projects around the nation and tried to promote small-scale businesses that would substitute certain imported products (Rodriguez de Leon 1996:65). The regime expanded the bureaucratic arm of the state and consolidated its power by establishing different ministries and bureaucratic offices (The Ministry of Public Health, Taxation, Telecommunications, Industry, and Commerce) in addition to a central national reserve bank. These new ministries and the rise in
state institutions led to a substantial increase in the number of government employees, many of whom, in exchange for jobs, pledged and maintained loyalty to the regime (Betances 1996:100). The larger national industries were reserved for the Trujillo family and their fortunes.

Analyzing the process of state formation “impels us to reconsider the mechanics of rule and workings of power through such apparently mundane state activities such as the collection of taxes, the distribution of subsidized food to the poor or the issuance of passports” (Gupta and Sharma 2009:9). Additionally, the Dominican state established a rudimentary income tax that extracted substantial amounts of capital from the rural peasantry (Turits 2003:113): “Peasants recalled the policies of development and state intervention under the Trujillo regime as eviscerating certain traditional freedoms, but also offering desirable benefits” (Turits 2003:13). These initiatives indebted the peasants to Trujillo and bound them to his policies. The mechanics of Dominican rule significantly impacted rural areas like Samaná, who had for years developed their own institutions and community leadership structure.

Military forces and secret police were dispersed throughout the country to enforce these new rules and violently repress any dissent. The constant presence of agents of the regime and the fear of being denounced damaged the national psyche, altered political discussions, changed the way people acted in public, and silenced dissent. These state agents subjected the rural population to Trujillo’s whims and other “forms of terror that were often chosen to highlight their theatrical effect” (Derby 2009:2). Many of these agents could be identified by their Volkswagen Beetles and sunglasses planted above their moustaches, much like Trujillo himself.

Over time, these forms of everyday terror helped to develop a Dominican population that has learned to view state power through the prism of fear. The consequences were real for those who dared provoke the ire of the regime, and these responses were learned through authoritative
modalities of power. Over time, this fear has turned into a collective paranoia that continues to silence voices of dissent. One can still observe the hushed tones, the pauses and silences between words, the sideways glances to see who might be within earshot. This legacy of fear still reverberates in the psyche of many Samanenses and Dominicans and has given way to a vision and expectation of the state as an ever-powerful orchestrator of daily life.

Samaná and the Dictatorship

In preparation for his swearing in, Trujillo in 1930 proposed the annexation of Samaná to the US delegation, which it did not accept (Cordero Michel 2009:57). Once in power, one of the first acts of the Trujillo regime was to close Samaná off from its maritime connections. The regime restricted the movement of private and merchant vessels limiting local entrepreneurship, severing business networks, and disenfranchising local Black elites who had business ties across the Caribbean. The regulation and control of trade with other Caribbean and international communities put a stop to the intercultural exchange, linguistic renovation, and religious and political dialogues emanating from this Antillean relation. At the time, Samaná had a strong regional identity formed over years of migration and struggle, which I expand upon in Chapter One. The consolidation of power in the urban realm of Santo Domingo challenged the regional autonomy that had persisted in the island sphere. For rural populations like Samaná, prosperity and peace could only be reached by acquiescing to the desires of the regime. This acquiescence required leaving behind their regional identities, which were perceived as a challenge to the control of the regime.

Much of the power and legitimacy of the Trujillo regime came from the integration and disciplining of the rural peasantry. As part of its intervention, the regime promoted a shift from communal lands to private property, which worsened the economic conditions of peasants who

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123 For the African American emigrants, the sea had been a route to captivity and to freedom.
relied on the land for their subsistence. Only a few peasants were given titled property, construction materials, and other basic items to ensure their compliance with the new laws (Derby 2009:505). The land privatization scheme brought the rural areas such as Samaná under state control and threatened a community that already held title over their lands.124

The Dominican nation-making project in Samaná was achieved through an authoritarian relation that relied on the imposition of economic, political, and social controls and a stifling of local efforts. The effects of the consolidation of power and resources by the Trujillo regime and his allies were extreme. Capital accumulation became tied to land accumulation to be used for agricultural and sugar production. According to the 1950 Dominican census, 75.6% of landowners in the DR held less than 12 acres in their name, while 1.9% of landowners owned 53.3% of the land. Additionally 21.7% held land holdings of 12-120 acres, accounting for 33% of the total agricultural land (Betances 1996:108). The consolidation of power and wealth is reflected in these statistics. In Samaná, most families were members of the second group of small-scale land holdings and small subsistence plots from which they fed their families. In Samaná, access to land had facilitated local autonomy and provided a source of sustenance during difficult times.

The overt violence perpetrated on the border did not take place in coastal communities. The maritime border was treated and approached in a different fashion, but similar results were achieved through fear and acts of coercion.125 With the focus on “the apparatus of formal repression scholars have neglected everyday forms of coercion that were often not necessarily

124 Prior to the dictatorship, Samaná and Sanchez had been transformed from small coastal towns to bustling economic centers as a result of the extension of the railroad.
125 Steinberg calls for scholars to see the sea as a social space as an arena of social conflict (Steinberg 6). As a space both unbounded and bounded the sea had provided a form of transport, sustenance and resources, a conduit for their economic and geographic explorations; a medium of exchange for communication with English-speaking communities in the Caribbean to coastal communities
perceived as domination but rather as legitimate authority” (Derby 2009:21). “To Dominicans, state culture was an important matter since failure to comply with the myriad rites of political participation could be met with economic pressure or even death” (Derby 2009: 6). As part of its intervention into the Samaná space, the regime required the dismantling of all social, educational, and economic structures as a requisite for inclusion within the Dominican nation.

Figure 6: Municipal Matadero before the fire. Source: Jesurem Adams Collection.

Education

To support the construction of state hegemony, the Trujillo regime revamped and nationalized the educational system. The state became “the educator and the creator of a new type of society” to be used as “an instrument of rationalization and became the repressive portion of the civilizing nature of the state” (Turits 2003:247). The establishment of state-controlled institutions brought an increase in the suppression of local educational and social institutions. None other than Joaquin Balaguer spearheaded the educational plans set forward by the Trujillo dictatorship.126 This national education system required the dismantling of the “Hostos” pedagogy, which emphasized a secular education and directly linked the church and the Catholic faith (Rodriguez de Leon 1996:181). Under the regime, public schools grew from 526 schools in

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126Balaguer would also be the main figure in the concordat between the Catholic Church and the Trujillo regime in June 1954, thus solidifying his power over the Dominican populace (Rodriguez de Leon 1996:188).
1930 to 2,570 in 1953 (Turits: 2003, 226). By establishing schools in all parts of the country and providing a government-sponsored curriculum, the regime ensured that its ideologies were promoted, inculcated, and absorbed by the vast majority of Dominicans. Attendance at these schools was mandatory.

Prior to the state-controlled education, most schooling in Samaná was done privately and in three languages: English, Spanish, and Creole. An important function of the AME Church in Samaná had been to create and support the English schools that provided education to the African American-descendant community. Beginning in the 1940s, the state-mandated educational textbooks began to emphasize the Spanish and Indian backgrounds of the population, excluding the Afro-Diasporic peoples and demonizing its Haitian neighbors. These new schools were seen as the “vehicles for Trujillista indoctrination” (Wiarda 1968:129). The newly-developed state curriculum presented Trujillo as the benefactor of the nation, rewriting stories of collaboration with Haiti into tales of conflict. State educational control severely limited critical thought and transformed local histories to reflect state interests. Samaná historian Eliseo Rodriguez Demorizi’s work *Samaná Pasado y Porvenir* reflects these state interests. Demorizi was a friend of the Trujillo regime, and his work emphasized the Hispanic roots of the region and erased the contributions and history of the African Americans and other Afro-Caribbean populations in Samaná.

**Language**

State-promoted language competence was another active aspect in the process of assimilation to the Dominican nation state. The Trujillo regime designated Spanish as the

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127 The textbooks used in the schools carried the name of Trujillo as the author, making him an educator as well as a statesman.
128 Once the church services began to be conducted in Spanish, English was relegated to the home environment where many of the youths could understand the language, but did not speak it.
129 An official during the dictatorship of Trujillo.
national language of the DR and outlawed speaking French Creole in public settings punishable by jail: “A distinct language is a far more powerful basis for autonomy than a complex residential pattern. It is also the bearer of a distinctive history, a cultural sensibility, a literature, a mythology, a musical past” (Scott 2004:257). The definition and imposition of an official language is a powerful move for creating barriers and distinctions, but is also a way to devalue local knowledge and processes. After the Dominican state’s language decree, the AME Church schools in Samaná had to resort to using Spanish as the means of instruction (Vigo 1987). Some families continued to have private instruction of English and French, but for most, English then became relegated to the home, and language education became largely the responsibility of the women of the community. Dora Vanderhorst, an elder of the community, explained it this way:

My mother didn’t allow them to speak Spanish in the home. She didn’t want them to… “Don’t you marry with them natives” “Don’t you speak that here! Stop with that, don’t speak that here” They were living in a country, well, they didn’t understand, they didn’t understand. They didn’t know anything in Spanish. So she didn’t want to hear them speak that at all. And less they didn’t want their children to mix up with them natives, less with them Haitians […] they say that was going to bring down the religion (Dora Vanderhorst interview by Jose Vigo 1982).

Racial Identities and Cultural Eviscerations

State-enforced ideologies were significant in transforming local education and the space of Samaná and in molding regional racial identities. Many of my interviews with various African American descendants in Samaná reveal a serious disconnect between generations and how they identify. The elder generation staunchly held on to their history, language, and religion. Anti-Haitianism ideology provided a base for the cultural shifts that occurred for the youth in Samaná from the 1940s onward. Many people of younger generations developed a Dominican identity in which they no longer acknowledge their connections to the US or other Caribbean islands. This indoctrination is pervasive throughout all levels of education.
The practice of marrying lighter-skinned residents became valued in Samaná and were seen as a way of “improving the race.” An elder informant of mixed-race descent explained with unflattering words why she married her Black husband: “El era un negrito feo, pero tenía buen trabajo” (He was an ugly Black man, but he had a good job). The utility and practical side of their union and the love expressed through their years of interaction far outweighed the ideological prisons that the regime constructed. The couple had seven children, all of whom were educated in Spanish-speaking schools. They all became professionals outside of Samaná, and all of them married partners who were significantly whiter. Although it is hard to gauge their perception of these marriages, one must question what the inclinations were in their preference for the combination of foreign and white. In conversations with one of the daughters, she repeated a warning given to her by her mother: “Si te dejas del gringo te mandamos a un convento” (If you break up with the gringo, we’ll send you to a convent). Clearly there were forces at work, whether in the home or in their surroundings, that made these unions attractive.

Bambula

The regime’s shadow was present in everyday activities and extended into local religious and musical traditions. As part of the attempts to control social life and steer the population towards its conception of being Dominican, the state imposed the cultural whitening of different regions of the country by outlawing cultural connection to Africa. In Samaná and other regions, the regime prohibited all syncretic religious practices and Afro-Caribbean music. Traditions like

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130 Though this phenomena is always perceived as the choice to lighten, it also requires that one partner be willing to marry darker and therefore shouldn’t always be perceived through a negative lens.

131 Interview conducted in 2012.
Bambula and their practitioners became the early victims of these policies and were routinely harassed by the regime.132

Bambula is a courtesan dance accompanied by West African drums that was practiced in Samaná beginning in the early 1900s.133 Bambula appeared in the region brought by people escaping the violence of the French war against the Haitian Revolution. As a result of its link to Haiti, it was classified as witchcraft with a supernatural connection, and thus Bambula was outlawed and deemed unworthy of civilized Dominicans. Prior to the prohibition, all levels of Samaná society practiced Bambula with the largest Bambula dances being held in the community coinciding with the popular spiritual celebrations in honor of the saint Rafael.134 Other African syncretic practices like Palo—a cultural, musical, and spiritual tradition that in Samaná was celebrated in honor of the Virgin of Altagracia—were also outlawed.135 Ironically many older Samaneses will attest that Trujillo consulted healers and practitioners with “power,” who lived in the hillsides of Samaná. Yota was one of these men who was regularly consulted

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132 The Bambula is both a dance and music style; its history helps us trace movements and migrations within the Caribbean. Recent scholarship on Bambula has documented its practice in multiple locations including the Dutch Caribbean islands, the western portion of Puerto Rico, in New Orleans at Congo Square, and in Samaná (Tejada 1984).
133 The steamer line Tybee, connected New York, Puerto Plata, Samaná, Santo Domingo, and New Orleans on a monthly route carrying messages, people, products, and connections with other lands. The connection to New Orleans has much to do with the maritime routes that connected ideas and people from the US and across the Caribbean.
134 Dona Vertilia, who organized the dance events, had an affinity towards the Saint and thus celebrated on his day. Dona Vertilia was a well-respected Samaná resident who owned the locale adjacent to the water where Bambula was danced and played on the weekends. After Bambula was prohibited, Dona Vertilia continued dancing and singing indoors to the beat in her head. Today her grandson Silvio continues to practice Bambula and gives courses to youth in the community as an attempt to rescue the musical form. There are currently efforts to start a local folkloric dance and music school for the youth of Samaná to be named in honor of Dona Vertilia. During subsequent “democratic” governments, Dona Vertilia was asked to showcase the Bambula for the elite residents of Santo Domingo.
135 After the death of Trujillo, rediscovering the Bambula in the 1960s was part of the work of Fradique Lizardo and his band of barefoot folklorist who took to the countryside in an attempt to rescue many of the cultural and art forms prohibited during the regime. Some of these prohibitions were extended under later governments. In their attempts to salvage many of these folkloric traditions, they swept through the countryside in flash visits, documenting what they saw and publishing those results rapidly. In this rush to salvage, they visited Samaná during one of the Fiestas de San Rafael, who because of Dona Vertilia’s practices had been linked in her enramada with Bambula. Lizardo published that the Bambula was done in relation to the Saint Raphael and in his honor, thus creating a magical religious link to an art form that had never been thought of in that way, and forever confusing it with other magical religious activities.
and performed work only for Trujillo. Yota’s grandson practices on the same hilltop his
grandfather did and told stories of Trujillo visiting, accompanied by an armed contingent:
“Trujillo would spend hours on the hilltop privately consulting with my grandfather.”
Through the rehashing of these stories, he claimed his own powerful lineage, one able to protect and give
power to the dictator himself.

![Figure 7: Samaná prior to the fire of 1946. Jesurum Adams Private Collection](image)

**The Aftermath of the Fire**

Many in Samaná understood the 1946 fire as the culmination in a series of acts that were
aimed at coercing the community of Samaná to succumb to the nation-building pressures of the
Dominican state. One will never know whether the attribution of the acts of suppression to the
Trujillo state culminated in starting the fire of Samaná. What is certain are the spatial
transformation brought on by the fire and the subsequent reconstruction of the town and Samaná
society. The fire, alongside the modernizing effects of the authoritarian Dominican state during
the period of 1930 to 1960, was chaotic. The fire resulted in an exodus of local capital from the
region and a precipitous decline in local institutions.

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136 This information is based on an informal interview with Yota’s grandson who still practices his healing arts in the
hillside of Las Pascualas. When Yota became ill, the President’s helicopter was sent to airlift him from Samaná so
that doctors could tend to him.
137 I learned this through the collection of oral histories I collected in the community of Samaná from 2007-2014.
Amidst delays and protests, reconstruction of the town began five months after the fire on March 9, 1947 (Godbout 1987:83). The project of reconstruction took three years, during which time any request to satisfy a community need supported the formation of a paternal relationship of subservience to the regime. During reconstruction, the principal sections adjacent to the littoral zones were reserved for government buildings and for families who supported the Trujillo regime. Old parcel titles were disallowed and new homes were built for families on different lots. Neighbors and neighborhoods that had been formed over years were separated and families were transplanted to different areas. Some of the affected families migrated to adjacent rural areas, escaping to their agricultural lands or those of neighbors and friends. The rural areas of Honduras, Villa Clara, and Barrio Algarrobos are still home to many of those families.

Reconstruction took place under the surveillance of state representatives and resulted in the takeover of the structures of local political and social representation. The fire achieved what other projects of rule could not: to momentarily dismantle local structures and subordinate them to national forces. The rebuilding of the town was directed by engineers assigned by Trujillo and reflected his vision for the town. A new Catholic Church, built and paid for with state funds, was given a prominent and centralized position in the town immediately adjacent to the AME Church. A new music academy was constructed by Trujillo in 1943 at the request of the community and was inaugurated after the fire (Devers 1991:59). New offices for the governor, a customs house, police station, military barracks, and firehouse provided new infrastructure for use by state forces. Many of these structures led to an increase in the presence of and surveillance by the state.

Documents I found in the Samaná archive indicate that in 1949, the town council requested additional infrastructural projects to Dominican state representatives. The council
requested the establishment of a municipal theatre, a local hotel, a public park, and a sports and recreation area.\textsuperscript{138} These were all services that existed in Samaná prior to the fire and had been promised in the reconstruction plan. Municipal representatives also demanded the finalization of previous projects begun by the regime. These requests were routinely ignored or denied.

After the fire, the Dominican state took control of the economic development of the region. The few remaining industries and businesses that survived the flames were absorbed by the state. The local warehouse owned by the Paewonskis remained closed, and other businesses that had provided jobs and commercial trading opportunities moved to other regions of the country. The “Huot and Sevez” chocolate factory in Samaná, owned by Francisco Sevez Huot and which had some of the most advanced technology in the Caribbean, also closed in 1950 (Devers 1991:99). The ample amount of unused land for agricultural production was taken over by the state to increase the production of goods for the national market. Agricultural arenas that still provided a profit to its producers were taken over by the state, which intended to expand the market for these products through export to the United States.\textsuperscript{139} This appropriation of land affected many Samanáes who had held legal title, but received no compensation.

The decrease in available businesses, local credit, and limited private investment caused many to lose the titles of their assets because of debt. Government incentives and infrastructural and agricultural support would have provided Samaná a chance to regain its economic prowess. Yet, in the process of reconstruction, state projects and their managers failed to incorporate local knowledge and perspectives into their views. The vision of development that was to be implemented in Samaná would come from the Dominican state.

\textsuperscript{138} Documents found in the Municipal Archive dated January 7, 1949 enumerate the various projects the locals requested for the continued growth of the town.

\textsuperscript{139} With the new sphere of US influence, there was a steep decline in interaction with the international and trans-Caribbean networks and business contacts they had relied on in the past.
The regime had an impact on how a new generation of Samaneses saw, understood, and expressed themselves within Dominican society, and also interfered with the way that people understood their past. Samaneses learned to perform for the regime, to masquerade their practices and carry on in private. To reward obedience, the practice of gift-giving and cronyism was further institutionalized and continues to be a central aspect of Dominican politics that affects the relationship between the political classes and the masses.

CONCLUSION

What rose from the ashes of the Great Fire of 1946 was a community with limited economic and political power, whose social, religious, and educational institutions were under siege by the newly formed Dominican state. The Samaná regional identity allowed for fluidity of identities and inclusion and now had to be subsumed within the Dominican. The community of Samaná was a visible challenge to the national narratives and categories and therefore needed to be silenced and transformed to maintain the appearance of national unity. In Samaná, integration required cultural eviscerations that were far more pronounced than in other communities. This upsurge in mistreatment responded to the differences in the local linguistic, racial, educational, and religious ideals. Residents of Samaná were required to accept being Dominican with all of its limitations on themselves, their families, and their histories.

The fire is remembered as a singular event that forced the members of the Samaná community to momentarily silence their voices after years of struggle. The combined effects of the 1946 fire and the closure of the maritime border marked the beginning of Samaná’s dependence on the Dominican state. The region entered a period of stagnation, during which many relied on a return to subsistence agriculture, fishing, and small business enterprise, as a
way to sustain themselves in difficult times. Of course, memories are selective visions, but these are some of the memories that permeate the community of Samaná.

Trujillo is still remembered positively by some peasant communities who, after his demise, were all but forgotten by the Dominican state. For some of the population Trujillo had been responsible for bringing morality, peace, and stability to the country. The regime “effectively propagated an ideology linking an authoritarian political system to security of property, control over the fruits of ones labor, and respect for those peasants who worked the land” (Turits: 2003, 212). It was these connections that helped peasant communities to identify with the dictatorship, but for those who suffered under the regime, their opposition of it never waned.

Many Samaneses were staunch anti-trujillista and suffered for their rebellion by being exiled and sometimes murdered by the regime. Many others were also threatened, some by their inaction and others because of their silent resistance. The regime sent many of its enemies to jail in “La Fortaleza” in the hilltop above the town of Samaná. Elders recount stories of torture victims as their screams filled the valley below. The fear of the Trujillo state and its representatives affected the voice of protest of the Dominican nation and the community of Samaná.

Though an image of a racial democracy is exalted in the DR, a system of colorism and gradients of Blackness dominate island society. The dominance of the Dominican state has been reserved for whiteness and is used as a mechanism for naturalizing white supremacy and Hispanic values. The power of state decision-making is kept in the hands of few whose political

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140 Samanes Eliseo Demorizi faced violence for turning down a political position given to him during the regime (Devers 1991:77). An image of Trujillo was delivered to the school by General Cesar Caamano where Demorizi was the director, and he told the messenger that there was no space on the walls to put any more portraits. The spaces were occupied by the likes of Hostos, Bolivar, Duarte, and Sanchez. His refusal to hang the portrait could mean death, but he was steadfast in his decision and escaped punishment (Devers 1991:77).
interests in most cases benefit the elite of the nation while ignoring the needs of the middle and lower classes. Many Dominicans “have not escaped the mental scars inflicted by generations of official vilification of Haitians” and Blackness (Sagas 2000). Anti-Haitianism persists as an effective political instrument for conservatives and “continues to be the manifestation of the long-term evolution of racial prejudices and the selective interpretation of historical facts” (Torres-Saillant 139). It is necessary to understand the conditions and ideologies that lead to the formation of the authoritarian Dominican state if one wishes to intervene in and transform its current trajectory.

These racialized ideologies continue to affect and alter structures of governance and the relationship between the state and the population. These ideologies have permeated the decision-making for national planning and the development efforts of the Dominican state and have lead to the uneven geographical development and treatment of specific regions of the country like Samaná that have refused to conform. This treatment has resulted in increased inequality along racial and class lines and the increased consolidation of power in small pockets of Dominican society.

Since the modernizing project of Trujillo began in the 1930s, the rural population of the DR has experienced incredible changes to their day-to-day lives, some of which they have yet to adjust to. Trujillo held power for thirty years before disgruntled associates murdered him on the 30th of May 1961. In his place rose Joaquin Balaguer, one of his main ideologues and historians, and who was soon exiled, but returned to power after the 1965 US intervention in the DR.

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141 Nearly 90 percent of the Dominican Republic is made up of Black and mulatto populations, “[y]et, no other country in the hemisphere exhibits greater indeterminacy regarding the populations sense of racial identity” (Torres-Saillant 126).

142 During fieldwork in Samaná, many of the youth remained unaware of the story of migration to the peninsula and unable to provide an explanation of their last names, such as Smith and Johnson. A new generation of Samaná youth speaks only Spanish, does not attend church services, and is politically apathetic.
two men lead the country for almost fifty years. Upon news of Trujillo’s death, a song was adapted from a rural merengue by Antonio Morel with the following lyrics: 143 “Mataron al chivo, en la carretera […] el pueblo celebra con mucho entusiasmo, el 30 de mayo, día de la libertad” (They killed the goat on the road […] the people celebrate with much enthusiasm, the 30th of May, the day of our freedom.) The murder of Trujillo was followed by a period of political instability, which allowed for a re-conception of the country’s future pathways. Yet the dreams for a participatory democracy were quickly dismantled when the conservative forces once again attained power.

143 Throughout the regime, Trujillo co-opted the rural musical style of merengue as propaganda to bolster his image before the people.
Chapter 3

Dominican State Power: The Destruction and Reconstruction of Samaná

Samaná was a paradise. Here what we grew we harvested, we ate it here. Samaná was prosperous, produced organic agriculture, because here we didn’t use any pesticide. We just waited for the times of rain, the right times when we would plant, we waited for nature to tell us when. Here the people used to be united, and people knew each other. We would organize parties, and pageants, lots of beautiful things. It is no longer like that. I liked Samaná then, when I saw the disaster they (state) had caused, they finished with everything. Now you see houses, but they demolished everything. Before the destruction, folks would gather every Sunday after 7 PM in the park in front of the Catholic Church. The musicians would start playing and the couples would come out and dance. It became a tradition. They would play merengue, romantic music, the fox trot, any type of music, it was so much fun. But all that was put to an end. The streets were small then, but one could breathe a fresh breath. All the homes had gardens and trees and the heat wasn’t felt as much. Now everything is in cement (Ciriaco Stubbs, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, April 2012).

Born in Samaná to a family of musicians that emigrated from the islands of Turks and Caicos, Ciriaco Stubbs was one of the last directors of the Samaná Municipal Music Academy. His band, Círiaco y los Muchachos, represented Samaná in national music competitions. Music is part of his family’s legacy, but also reflects the longstanding support of music bands and teaching academies in Samaná prior to the town’s destruction. After years of battling with different municipal administrations to keep the music academy open, it closed its doors when economic support was withdrawn. Disheartened by the state of affairs in Samaná and the rapid changes taking place to Samaná society, Ciriaco moved to La Vega, where he lives today.144 On one of his visits we spoke, and he described the Samaná he cherished:

When you would arrive in town in the afternoon hours, all you could smell was the fried fish and coconut, everyone was making the same thing, they would make their bread, their eggs and viandas with their fish. When you would arrive in the port from the capital you would find the people on the “muelle” with these big bats made out of wood made out of the ceiba tree. From these bats they would hang the fish they were selling or taking back home. We sure knew how to live. We would live and eat really well, but here we have become Americanized, and the people have become lazy. Here we had a great life,

144 On one of his visits to Samaná, he shared with me three unedited pamphlets of local Samaná history that paints a beautiful picture of daily life as it was.
but everything has been destroyed” (Ciriaco Stubbs, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, April 2012).

The destruction that Ciriaco referred to was the culmination of the Dominican state’s modernization project, which brought about the complete displacement of the community from 1971 to 1973. The changes precipitated by the structural transformation and renovation of the town resulted in a decimated civil society and a population that held very little power over the local structures of governance. The dislocation of neighborhood power structures and social networks dismantled and disrupted everyday life. As a result, many of the towns more established families began leaving Samaná.

The nostalgia expressed by many of the elders denotes a time when Samaná prospered. Like many of the elders in Samaná, Ciriaco understood the destruction and renovation of the town as an unnecessary act. Having been designated as one of three major national tourist centers, Samaná required a series of infrastructural additions and improvements to make the region accessible and amenable to visitors. As a result, the town of Samaná was forcefully destroyed in 1971 to make way for infrastructural improvements imposed by the Dominican state that intended to modernize the local space. This infrastructural makeover responded to the nation’s economic and social project to transition from an agricultural economy to a service industry model with tourism at its center. This moment signaled the beginning of many economic, political, social, and cultural transformations taking place in rural towns and the nation.

This chapter delves into the socioeconomic and infrastructural transformations imposed on Samaná that were implemented by the authoritarian Dominican state. I focus on the social effects of the initial 12 years of rule of the Partido Reformista Social Cristiano (PRSC) and the economic policies that substantially shifted local habits. These state interventions that began in
1970 should be analyzed differently than subsequent periods of PRSC state rule. I delve into the cultural effects of this renovation process and the displacement and disenfranchisement of much of the Samaná population. Although similar efforts to modernize coastal spaces occurred across the country, none of them were implemented as thoroughly as in Samaná. I investigate the process of modernization through which this renovation was achieved, and the factors that required eminent domain laws and the use of forceful state tactics to make this transition a reality. I argue that these interventions into Samaná were implemented forcefully as a result of the racial and linguistic differences of the region and the autonomous and middle class ethic of Samaná society.

Sociologist Emelio Betances’s work has been instrumental in documenting the links in Dominican state formation between the regime of dictator Rafael Trujillo and the initial 12 years of rule of the Partido Reformista Social Cristiano (PRSC) led by Joaquin Balaguer. In his work, Betances focuses on the class fractures and struggles in the formation of the Dominican state that resulted from the country’s modernization process. Absent from his analysis is the role of race in these imaginings and in elite economic processes of accumulation. In the formation of these class fractures, racialized ideologies have been central to Dominican state formation and to its planning and development projects. In my analysis, I examine the racial identities of Samanéses, which I argue served as a motivation for the forceful implementation of these state strategies.

Tourism Infrastructure

The increased investment in infrastructure for tourism required an engagement with many rural coastal populations located on the pristine beach locations around the island. This shift in

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145 Joaquin Balaguer was the founder and main leader of the PRSC party. He was a crafty politician, who, after living in exile, gained political and military control of the Dominican nation for five terms as president over a 30-year span. During his last two terms he succumbed to national and international pressure and began to cede power to other parties and elements within his own party.
investment towards tourism signaled a new relation of the state to local elites and international
capital. The transformations that were implemented marked an increase in state intervention into
local affairs and a rapid decrease in the function of civil society institutions that had been
developed over years of struggle. As a community Samaná went through substantive changes
and was forced to relinquish many of its cultural practices and spaces of organizing. As a result
of Samaná’s distance from the urban centers of state power, tourism development would be an
immediate way for it to become integrated into the national, economic, and political structure
(PUCMM y CeEPAL 2001). The populations occupying these tourist spaces were not part of the
plans for the development of the region, but could not be made to disappear. Rather than
partners, rural communities were recipients of the modern turn and were to be relegated to the
outer boundaries of these tourist centers.

As part of the tourism renovation project, the first paved road connecting Samaná to the
rest of the DR was completed in the 1970s. In addition, an international airport and a cruise ship
port facility were built to prepare for the expected increase in the arrival of tourists to the region.
In the restructuring, many community spaces were lost and local institutions such as the Club
Peninsular social club, two Masonic Lodges, and the Samaná Music Academy were completely
dismantled. These actions were indicative of a larger tendency towards authoritarian rule within
the DR.

From Dictatorship to Authoritarian Democracy

After the murder of Trujillo in 1961, a period of political turmoil ensued in the DR. The
political crises provided an opening for opposition political groups, labor unions, and student
organizations to emerge as a force of dissidence against the continuation of the authoritarian
Dominican state. Initially, Joaquin Balaguer, who had been a historian, ideologue, and Vice
President during the Trujillo regime, assumed power, but he was forced to leave the country when opposition forces called for open elections.

During the first democratic Dominican elections held in 1964, a political coalition elected leftist candidate Juan Bosch of the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) to the presidency. The PRD presented a platform that extended state benefits to all populations and gained support from rural masses through its emphasis on agrarian reform and land redistribution programs (Jimenez Polanco 1999:104). Bosch attempted to nationalize many of the corporations and business interests that had been controlled by Trujillo and his counterparts. These attempts at nationalization led to increased opposition from elite segments of the country and multinational business interests. After only ten months in power, a military-led, elite-supported, and CIA-funded coup sent Bosch into exile, prompting an American occupation and the return of Balaguer to power (Inoa and Sagas 2007, Rodriguez de Leon 1996).146

With the first Dominican democratic government deposed, armed conflicts erupted between the old reactionary forces of the dictatorship and the smattering of opposition groups who took to the streets.147 As a result of the turmoil, the US marines invaded the DR in 1965 under the pretext of promoting order and “protecting” US economic interests in the sugar industry. The invasion began a period of civil resistance and street warfare against the occupation that resulted in the formation of a provisional government headed by Miguel Garcia Godoy (Inoa and Sagas 2007).148 The provisional government attempted to implement economic

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146 Juan Bosch returned to the country during the election of 1970. There were widespread claims that Bosch was a communist and supported the Cuban government. This elicited a tide of state-sponsored violence and forced his withdrawal from the electoral process.

147 General Jose Caamano, a Bosch loyalist, led the country provisionally. Caamano and the loyalist forces represented a portion of Dominican society ready to embark on a different route for the country. Caamano returned to the DR clandestinely in 1973 in order to attempt to direct a peasant revolt against the Balaguer state, but was ambushed by Dominican forces.

148 Operation Power Pack, ordered by President Johnson, was intended to protect American interests and lives in the region that were threatened by the violence between the different political movements.
changes at the behest of the US invading forces and orders from Washington. These economic changes began with the nationalization of all enterprises owned by the Trujillo family and a reallocation of state resources for a push towards industrialization (Inoa and Sagas 2007). These confiscated “assets had an estimated value of $800 million and included factories, commercial houses, service companies, urban real estate, and extensive rural landholdings” (Betances 1996:114). Multinational corporations and the elite segments of the country would benefit from the sale of these enterprises.

Following the invasion of 1965, the influence and control of the US reached its height. At that point “the Dominican government was controlled by some 400 consultants and functionaries from the US who worked at all levels of public administration. The armed forces were practically controlled by the 75 US military personnel who were sent to assess and provide support” (Moya Pons 1992:542). As a way to move past the country’s historical relationship with agriculture, the provisional government established laws to increase state support for industrialization. Among these was Law #299 meant to “promote the most rapid and effective development of the industrial economy with the purpose of gaining permanent forms of employment and welfare for the population” (Dore y Cabral 1978:25). Law 299 promoted Dominican industrialization and established three categories to differentiate amongst the investment schemes and levels of benefits that were to be given. These initial attempts at industrialization were not as successful as the Dominican state had projected.

The three categories of incentives differed based on the amount of exonerations that were to be given by the government. For Category A, industries, there was 100% exoneration of duties for the import of primary materials for production, for machinery used in production, for lubricants and combustibles used in production, excluding gasoline. Facilities would be rent-free if the company was based outside the country. (Note For those industries with offices in the country, they only received 75% off rents for the first 5 years and 50% as long as they have the concession). These industries were also exonerated from the tariffs on patents. Category B industries received 95% exoneration of duties for the import of primary materials for production, of lubricants and combustibles used in production, excluding gasoline. Category C received 90% exonerations in the same categories as Category B. These incentives also differed geographically with benefits being extended when taking place in non-traditional areas. For
Category A incentives were given to companies that manufactured products for export. Factories had to be located in the Free Trade Zones built by the Dominican government.

Category B incentives were those deemed a priority for the nation's development because they provided a great number of jobs. These industries were aimed at reducing the amount of imported products.

Category C incentives were given to companies that produced for the national market rather than export.

Table 2: Dominican Industrial Incentives

The laws in support of industrialization required the expansion of various transportation and sanitary infrastructural projects and a multitude of incentives to attract multinational companies and their operations. These investment incentives were limited to international corporations that aimed to produce materials on the island. Meanwhile, incentives for local industries were severely limited, promoting a consolidation of capital in the coffers of foreign companies and other Dominicans who facilitated these transactions.

The Modern Turn: Balaguer and the PRSC

After the demise of the Bosch democratic experiment, the conservative factions would once again control and benefit from the Dominican political realm. In 1970, Dominicans elected the Partido Reformista (later known as Partido Reformista Social Cristiano PRSC) founded by Joaquin Balaguer, under duress, as there were no other candidates. The PRSC government inherited a country with a lagging economy, political uncertainty, and recovering from a civil war that involved a US occupation. The PRSC state maintained many of the economic policies begun by the provisional government of Garcia Godoy. In order to gain support from the Dominican economic elites, the PRSC adopted “a new scheme of social, economic and political

150 These incentives excluded the sugar industry, petroleum and natural gas extraction enterprises, fisheries extraction, tourism, and other hotel-based investments and artisanal industries.
domination” that adapted to the interests of the landed elite (Lozano 1985:49). This scheme was not intended to transform Dominican society. Rather, it was intended to support entrenched interests and keep the rural inhabitants subservient and disenfranchised.

The Dominican state under Balaguer was able to “unite the diverse sectors of the dominant class in a coherent project of social domination […] but also managed to gain the political and social support of the most backward sectors of the urban bourgeoisie and peasants” (Lozano 1985:54). In contrast to the Trujillo dictatorship, the PRSC state did not openly use state power to enrich state representatives. Instead, the PRSC wielded state power to aid in the extension of the ideological vision of the state and unify diverse sectors of elite economic interests who saw in Balaguer a more palatable continuation of the dictatorship.

At the end of the Trujillo dictatorship, the Dominican middle class was a very small segment of the country, and the majority of Dominicans (70%) still lived in rural areas of the DR. The rising tendency towards urbanization and the rising strength of Santo Domingo as the most important industrial space would be cemented under the Balaguer regime (Rodriguez de Leon 1996:224). To consolidate and ensure its continued power, the PR state began forcefully disarming opposition groups able to oppose the government. Additionally, the labor movement was repressed, “jailing and murdering many of its organizers and destroying and dividing the more important and influential unions” that belonged to the transportation and agricultural workers (Lozano 1985:69).

After two years of increasing repression, a shift occurred from 1972 to 1978, when terror became “an obstacle in the process of capitalist modernization” and conspired against the unity

\[151\] The country would suffer through a period of terror, where all those who opposed the government were persecuted: “For the city of Santo Domingo it took many months to return to normalcy since the combat of the Civil War was replaced by a campaign of terror towards the Communist and the Constitutionalist, executed primarily by paramilitary forces” (Moya Pons 537).
of “the ruling bloc” (Lozano 1985:68). After years of support, the international community no longer stayed silent over the use of state violence. The PRSC state was forced to find other ways to gain consent and continued to exert control by establishing a positive relationship with the rural peasantry through embarking on rural sanitation projects and improving the educational facilities in rural regions.

The PRSC state project can be understood as a class-structured form of dominance led by the bourgeois class. This class-structured hegemony was attained in the DR through controlling the political and social realms whereby the state and civil society were ideologically linked. For Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci, “the state is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules” (Hoare and Smith 1971:244). This hegemony was enforced by the state through economic, social, and educational means.

**Phase 1: State-Led Economic Development from Agriculture to Industry**

The prescription for modernization in the DR required a series of economic and social transformations that were to be led by an authoritarian state. In this context, modernization can be understood as “a set of projects with cultural and institutional specificities” (Tsing 2005:320). Power is an integral aspect of this modernization that is “implemented through educational practices, military coercion, administrative politics, and community reorganization” (Tsing 2005:329). Power relations permeate all levels of society, but when mobilized by the state can be understood as a process of domination that requires contestation at many levels. As part of gaining consent from the public, the Dominican state enacted a series of agrarian reforms and

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153 Every relationship of “hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship […] because it implies both coercion and consent” under the direction of the state (Quintin and Hoarde 1971:350).
public works projects to transition the country to the modern. Balaguer would travel to different rural locations in his helicopter to inaugurate these many projects, making visible his endeavors.\(^{154}\) The infrastructural projects the state directed attempted to cement Balaguer’s legacy in the eyes of the nation.\(^{155}\)

Throughout the 60s and 70s, US foreign aid remained essential to the Dominican state’s survival and economic plans. From 1966 to 1973, the DR received increasing amounts of economic aid from the US through the Agency for International Development (USAID). From 1967 to 1969 alone, US economic assistance reached $133 million yearly, most of it in the form of donations and long-term loans (Betances 1996, Moya Pons 1992:544). These funds came with a series of conditions and prescriptions for the country’s development and began to decline from 1969 to 1973 (Moya Pons, 1992:542). The other major source of revenue for the Dominican state was the income from the sale of sugar, which was mostly under the control of foreign corporations.

In the early 70s, the IMF and World Bank pushed loan reduction programs and structural adjustment policies as part of the restructuring of the Dominican economy.\(^{156}\) The conditions imposed by the moneylenders required the rapid industrialization of the country, the promotion

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\(^{154}\) Many rural peasants professed support for Balaguer throughout his rule, but shifted their support when the economy began to decline and government repression against rural manifestations increased.

\(^{155}\) In addition to the infrastructural projects, there were a series of monuments such as the “Faro a Colon” dedicated to Christopher Columbus on the 500-year anniversary of the “discovery” of the Americas. Though built by Balaguer, it was Rafael Leonidas Trujillo who laid the foundation for this monument in 1948. The state spent millions finishing this cross-shaped monument that was expected to attract tourists from around the world. It united various factions in critiquing the frivolous expenses of the state in dire times. When unemployment and inflation rates were at its highest moments, the cost of the monument incited national protests.

\(^{156}\) During the 60s, the preferred model of international donors was the Import Substitution Industrialization model (ISI). ISI gained prominence during the 1950s, “giving birth to dependency theory and Latin American regional integration schemes” (Pantoja-Garcia 1990:2) and was initially tested in the US colony of Puerto Rico. Unlike Puerto Rico, many of the unemployed agricultural laborers were not able to migrate to the US or receive welfare assistance. When ISI did not result in the expected returns, it was replaced by the Export Promotion Development model (EP) that was favored by the World Bank in the late 1970s. The EP strategy was characterized by an expansion of the manufacturing sector and a continued decline in agriculture investment. The EP model assumed that “all countries benefit from international exchange and specialization”, therefore inequalities were not a function of unequal exchange, but of market conditions (Pantoja-Garcia 1990:2). Check opening and ending quotation here.
of foreign investment, and the deregulation of natural resources to private capital. The Dominican elite and the state coalesced in the political project to promote specific development policies and reduce social investment at the expense of the rural and urban masses, further consolidating class power (Harvey 2002:18, Liberato 2013:63). The success of these state strategies was achieved through sociopolitical stability and state consensus on the basic economic direction of the country (Pantoja-Garcia 1990:8). The adoption of particular strategies of development benefitted the social groups and elite classes associated with the Dominican state.

The PRSC state led a transition from agriculture to a focus on the service industry, thus attempting to skip the stage of industrialization (Gregory 2007:23). This rapid economic transition would have detrimental effects on the majority of rural populations that until then had relied on subsistence and small-scale agriculture. Throughout this period of transition, much of Dominican agricultural labor was replaced by Haitian migrant labor, who were paid at much lower costs. The influx of Haitian labor exacerbated the existent racial and cultural tensions between the neighboring islands and tightly squeezed the pockets of rural populations who had little choice but to accept the options dictated by the state.

Eager to take advantage of the abundance of natural resources and lower labor costs, US corporations invested much of the initial capital in the Dominican manufacturing sector. The increase in manufacturing sector investment and jobs led to an “acceleration in the process of urbanization and proletarianization” accompanied by the displacement and marginalization of sectors of the Dominican working class (Pantoja-Garcia 1990:73). During the period of 1960-1979, 20% of the island remained unemployed with wages falling significantly, forcing the
Balaguer government to place a freeze on wages and the price of basic food items (Liberato 2013:62). The economic transition resulted in persistent high rates of unemployment.

**Agrarian Reform and Rural Populations**

Beginning in the 1960s, the decreased investment in agriculture and the decreasing prices of agricultural products on the international market precipitated a stall in agricultural production in the country. This caused national food shortages, which had to be supplemented with food imports. Dominican Central Bank figures show $127.7 million worth of food imports from 1966 to 1970 (Dore y Cabral 1978:20). These amounts were substantial when compared to the previous decades when agricultural production had supplied national needs and a surplus for export. By 1971, only 25% of the lands used for agricultural production were for the national market; the remaining lands were used to produce sugar cane, coffee, and rice for export (Dore y Cabral 1978:23). Of the 43.3 million hectares of land available for agricultural production, 216 families owned 10.05 million hectares. The majority of the remaining 30 million hectares of land available for national production were owned by the Dominican state, while the 2 million poor landowners across the country held title to what remained (Dore y Cabral 1978:22).

To aid in the transition from subsistence to industrial agriculture, the PRSC state formulated the 1972 program of Agrarian Reform. The reform was necessary to transform national land use and attempt to redistribute lands to increase national production. It aimed to reclaim unused private and state lands and redistribute those lands to rural agricultural producers. Those arguing against the reform believed it intended to create a redistribution of income in the rural countryside so as to decrease the pressure and protest from rural areas against the regime.

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157 In his third term, Balaguer co-opted the Left by offering positions in the government. He also offered jobs within the Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo to many in the left. The state had already infiltrated the university with its own cadre and neutralized those that opposed him first through fear and coercive tactics and lastly through consent (Moya Pons: Date?). [This sentence above is a bit awkward; consider rewording].
The reform was opposed by the oligarchy, which had traditionally been partners with the state. The Dominican state was forced to procure other methods of land reform or risk losing the oligarchy’s support.

The continued concentration of land in the hands of elite families and US companies caught the attention of peasant leaders, who in response began to occupy state and private lands. In retaliation, the land barons expelled many of the campesinos (farmers) from the land expropriated by the state. The violent assault by the land tenants and businessmen against protesting peasants was cloaked in calls for the respect of private property and the violation of democratic principles of land tenure (Rodriguez 1996). The fearful silence from the terrorized population stifled the agrarian reform law’s passage.

As a result of the elite landholder’s rejection, the agrarian reform managed to distribute very little land into the hands of rural laborers. Having failed in its attempts at reform, the Dominican state passed Law 282 that transferred state-owned lands to be used for agricultural production (Dore y Cabral 1978:24). These lands were not to be distributed with the intent of handing ownership to Dominican peasants, but to have them produce food for the nation while paying low subsistence wages. Agricultural support programs were established to train local farmers on high yield growing methods coordinated by the Secretaria de Estado de Cultura (Dore y Cabral 1978:85). The state promoted the accumulation of capital through the provision of a cheap labor force largely achieved by repressing the unions. There were efforts by the rural proletariat to organize and publicly protest for an increase in wages, but the state responded by placing a freeze on salaries and organizing a program of repression against the labor unions to
disrupt their organizing (Dore y Cabral 1978:20). This systematic repression was exerted across the country.

The Economy of Samaná: We Lived Off the Coconut

In the 1970s Samaná was a tranquil town, of little production, agriculture, and fishing. Although we have always lived off fishing, it has been a subsistence catch, not an industrial catch where one can say that from one boat live 20 people. No, from this boat you and I live and are going to eat; we still don’t have fishing as an industry. But at that moment it was basically agriculture and fundamentally the coconut from which people subsisted (Augusto Gonzalez, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, 2013).

During the first phase of Dominican agricultural industrialization in the 1970s, Samaná and the nearby municipalities of Miches and Nagua were identified by the Dominican state as the main regions for the production of coconut.Wanting to capitalize on coconut’s abundance in the region, the state generated proposals for the industrialization of coconut production. Directing these efforts was Jose Lalane, a Samaná resident who occupied the position of Vice President of the Dominican State Corporation under the interim government of Garcia Godoy.159

The industrialization of coconut was expected to satisfy the national supply of coconut cooking oil and increase the refinement of all coconut and palm byproducts.160 The project consisted of developing a coconut processing plant in the peninsula of Samaná that would be under the majority control of local producers and a minority control of the Dominican state. It was developed with the assistance of Dutch technicians and included marketing schemes, improved technologies for production, and benchmarks to evaluate the financial returns of the project (Lalane 2012). In a conversation in his beachfront home, Lalane explained to me the

158 These programs provided economic support in the way of small grants to the peasants in the DR. The majority of these funds came by way of Agency for International Development (AID) and would only be extended to those peasants that already owned land. Those without land were left to their own desires.
159 The Lalane family were descendants of a French general who participated in the military incursion against Haiti.
160 By-products included the production of wood from the trunk of the coconut, brooms made from the leaves, and an increasing amount of products to be used from the remaining portions of the tree.
objectives of the Popular Industry of the Coconut and the conditions that led to its development and later demise.\footnote{In addition to coconut, Samaná had once been an important area for the logging of mahogany, cedar, and other woods for export. The export of the wood had steadily declined because of overcutting and the planting of alternate vegetation, but Samaneses still relied on these woods to build their own homes and for sale locally. In 1968, the Dominican state established laws to curtail the destruction of the hillsides and outlawed logging in all regions of the country for a period of ten years.}

The project relied on trust. This was the first attempt at agricultural industrialization in Samaná and the first project developed by Dominican agricultural technicians. The financial vision given to the project was to establish the double interest of the shareholders, as owners. It was an attempt to stabilize the cost of the primary materials, establish adequate costs, and provide a livable wage from the sale of such products without the exploitation of the laborers. Local producers would have more than half the shares. The Manicera and the Lavador company were the other two large factories that produced oil for the national market, whether it be coconut-based or peanut-based. Before the industry, what was done was the sale of the nut of the coconut, but that (the price) wasn’t decided by the owners, but by the consumers. The producers were in hands of the consumers and generated little profits (Jose Lalane, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, October 2012).

For Lalane as the administrator of the project, what was remarkable was its failure to account for private competition and the lack of local participation. Many attributed the failure to the lack of buy-in on behalf of the local producers, but many rural participants were rightfully suspect of the involvement and intentions of the state. In the end, after various years of slow production, the factory closed its doors. Samaneses chose to maintain their small-scale production, opting for less intrusion and regulation by the state. For others who initially participated, the decision to sell their shares was not an easy one, but the lack of trust and transparency in the process may have helped to make the decision. The demise of the project impeded the empowerment of local labor and the accumulation of capital for local producers.

Local landed elites and national business interests also presented an obstacle to the enterprise. The competing Manicera and Lavador companies constantly maneuvered to make the endeavor unattainable. “The Manicera went around buying the shares of the local producers” that
were all small scale because Samaná never had any large-scale producers (Lalane 2012). This resulted in the monopolization of the coconut industry by large-scale private coconut growers from outside the region. Those small producers started selling their shares to the Manicera, and in the end the Manicera kept control of the market. When the coconut project closed, local producers returned to selling their coconuts directly to the Manicera and Lavador companies. The end of the coconut industrialization in Samaná would also signal the beginning of the divestment in agriculture within the region.162

Augusto Gonzalez, a trained agronomist with substantial land holdings in Samaná and now a local tour company, was one of the last to plant coconut in a farm of 500 hectares. At the time there was very little incentive to plant; the first thing the agricultural technicians told him was not to plant coconut. The technicians questioned him as to why he was planting coconut, with so many other things to invest in. But Augusto was of a different opinion, and he understood that the failure of coconut industrialization in the region was due to the clash between state expectations and local practices and culture.163

Samaneses don’t have a culture of agricultural work (for large scale production). Not here; the agriculturalist worker from here leaves at 6 AM with a sack on his back on his way to his subsistence plot. He burns the hills, plants name, and yuca and other things together and then plants two or three coconut trees that at the end of the year they could harvest. After the year, the land is left idle and they return to use it the following year. Everything has been planted in that way. While the factory was around prices stayed at a constant, and the fluctuation in price was minimal. (Augusto Gonzalez, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, 2013)

Augusto understood that each region should have its own product and that the coconut, through its different uses, remains the product of Samaná. The production of coconut in Samaná

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162 In the 80s the arrival in Samaná of Haitian merchants in big colorful trucks caused a momentary increase in the price of the coconut in Samaná. The Haitians arrived and paid in cash, meaning that local producers no longer had to deal with intermediaries. The trucks would arrive in the mornings and headed back across the frontier to Haiti full of cargo where they fetched a higher price. This trade only lasted a few years before a hurricane damaged trees, thus beginning the precipitous decline of the industry.

163 The Gonzalez family had moved to Samaná in 1971 during the renovation of the town when Augusto was a child.
was a labor-intensive activity, which required the participation of many local families and therefore was not something you could easily mechanize. The end product served to make a profit for the families and the byproducts could be used in the home:

That’s why they say that the people lived from the coconut, because of the labor required to get the coconuts. First you had to knock them down and that was a whole group of people, then came the ones who produced the copra and that was a whole new group of people. Knocking them down a person can get around 2,000 coconuts a day for a single person. You could knock them down, but cleaning them and removing the husk was the difficult part […] they would work in teams and it created a constant demand for labor in the peninsula and when the coconut had a good price, and that I did see, the economy of Santa Barbara and the entire province could be felt. One way of seeing it is how the butcher explained to me. When the prices were good, he would kill two cows a day; when the prices were bad, he would kill two cows a week. That alone gave you an indication of how things were (Augusto Gonzalez, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, 2013).

**Paradox of Tourism**

The first phase of agricultural industrialization did not go as expected, and international donors like the IMF and World Bank pressured the Dominican state to steer their efforts towards tourism to help sustain their ailing economy. Dominican state investment in tourism began in the early 1970s, but the industry was already in development in other Caribbean economies like Jamaica and Puerto Rico. Presidential decree 2536 established the first Dominican state policies and incentives in regards to the tourism industry, followed by the Organic Tourism Law 541, passed in 1969. Both laws emphasized international and national tourism development and were aimed at coordinating state efforts with foreign capital investment.

The Dominican state embarked on a project of infrastructural development to increase and attract foreign capital willing to invest in the Caribbean island. These investments included the development of roads and public transport, the construction of regional and international airports, and the development of ports to meet the demands of the emerging cruise ship industry (PUCMM y CEPAL 2001). Santo Domingo and Santiago were targeted for urban renewal
projects, as were, to a lesser extent, La Vega, Moca, San Francisco de Macoris, San Jun de la Maguana, San Cristobal, Haina, La Romana, Hato Mayor, Puerto Plata, Mao, and Nagua (Moya Pons 1992:545).

Under the direction of the Central Bank, the department of INFRATUR was established in 1971 as the central coordinating entity for the development of tourism in the DR. The Central Bank established incentives for foreign investors and steered international funds from the World Bank and the International Development Bank into tourism infrastructure projects (INFRATUR 2001). In setting in motion these modernization plans, the state set its sight on Samaná and other regions with tourist promise. Three regions were initially selected in which to develop tourism infrastructure projects: Puerto Plata, Boca Chica, and Samaná. To increase investments in these regions, state incentives were given to the hotel industry, and all private investments received exemptions of 100% value on rent and import costs. Private tourist investments in the DR were made tax deductible for a period of 10 years with the possibilities of extending the deductions to 15 years (PUCMM y CEPAL 2001). These conditions did not immediately capture the interest of foreign corporations. Investors may have been fearful of the currency devaluation, the country’s high inflation rates, and the repressive tactics of the Dominican state.

With the global collapse of sugar prices at the beginning of the 80s, the economy of the DR took a hard hit. Industrialization had not yet taken off; agriculture had been forgotten; and tourism was only beginning to take root. It was not until the mid 80s that the revenues accrued through the tourist industry surpassed the investment made by the Dominican state. State tourism

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164 The state established the National Agency for Tourism (ANT) and gave powers to the Central Bank to help promote and support tourist-related endeavors in the country.
165 Recently the Dominican state has attempted to develop a tourist market for the southwest portion of the country, areas like Barahona, that have yet to reach their full tourism potential.
incentives remained intact until 1992, after which the private sector easily overtook the state in tourism investment through ample opportunities for borrowing on the world market. In the 90s, tourism began to emerge as a central aspect of the Dominican economy (Betances 1996:128). Beginning in 1991, the direction of tourism development fell under a newly-formed ministry of tourism (PUCMM y CEPAL 2001). Recent figures by the Dominican Central Bank indicate that 60 to 70% of investment in tourism on the island is now foreign capital, with those numbers only increasing over time (SECTUR1999).

The development of tourism infrastructure required the acquisition and use of coastal lands, which prompted the displacement of populations that inhabited regions deemed important for tourism endeavors. This displacement was legally sanctioned by the newly-established imminent domain Law #153, which allowed for the expropriation of land for reasons of public utility (PUCMM Y CEPAL 2001, Gregory 2007:24). In Samaná, Law #153 was used to expropriate land where state-financed hotels were to be constructed, for the airport and the maritime port in the area of Arroyo Barril, and to build a new road to the region. Much of the land appropriated belonged to the African American descendants, who held legal title at the time (Wilmore 2012, Hamilton 2012). Many of these cases, which demand compensation for the use and appropriation of those lands, are still pending in the courts.

What Remains: Upheaval and Migration

Samaná was a very colorful town; it had its traditions, its customs, how do I describe it […] where the park is, what is there now is garbage. In the old park in la Glorieta, folks would gather and play music. All the kids would gather in the park and the adults, too, and they would sit there and listen to the marine band, while the elders would sit and watch over us. There were schools of music here, real good ones. There were a lot of latrines at the time, no bathrooms indoors. The houses were works of art. The people would come into town on their animals to shop for their basic necessities. Or they would come in on their small boats filled with “viveres,” plantains, and other items to sell. What a town it was (Ciriaco Stubbs, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, April 2012).
The destruction of Samaná took place from 1971 to 1973 under the guise of modernization. Infrastructural renovation for tourism required the complete destruction of the town. The orders for the town’s renovation came directly from the desk of President Balaguer. Although similar infrastructural tourism projects were put in motion in different parts of the country, in no other instance was it done as in Samaná. In the archives of the municipality of Samaná, I found minimal instructions sent from Santo Domingo, and available documents included only small comments by the local politicians reacting to the orders handed down by Balaguer. The National Archives in Santo Domingo and the Balaguer Library contained no additional information about the renovation of the town of Samaná. As a result, I rely on interviews and the oral history of elders who experienced this destructive event and the subsequent social transformations.

The forced removal of families was done within the confines of the township of Samaná; those living in the rural areas adjacent to the town were spared. There was no process of local consultation, and the swiftness of the endeavor and the violence of the regime stifled any type of collective organizing. The renovation of the town would continue in stages for the next two years until it was completed. Without distinction, the residents of the town were forcefully removed from their homes and placed in temporary housing in makeshift wooden encampments. The transfer of all families to the barracks instantaneously equalized the town, destroying the social distances that existed between the different segments of Samaná society.

Leticia Wilmore, a Samaná community historian, described how life was during the forced renovation of the town that severely altered daily life. Prior to the destruction, most homes had small gardens filled with flowers and medicinal plants, a parlor to receive guests, and large kitchens where they baked their coconut bread and fried fish. Many families had cut their own mahogany from the hillsides and built their homes by hand. Renovation meant the
destruction of all the wooden homes. The municipal school, local hospital, two private wooden homes, and the AME church were the only buildings left intact.\textsuperscript{166}

Leticia’s family had arrived during the initial African American migration to the region in 1824, as discussed in detail in Chapter Two. Like many elder Samanése, she was conflicted by the turn of events brought on by the renovation. She went on to say of the government officials who ordered the destruction of the town:

They did what they felt like. You’d rather sell the house than for them to take it away. If you could sell your home, you sell your house and go somewhere. Plenty of folks had nowhere to go. They destroyed the homes; the people didn’t want this to happen. A neighbor said they stole many of her things—her antiquities and her mom’s belongings in the confusion. The state took everything from her house (Leticia Wilmore, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, December, 2012).

For Leticia, the threat to Samaná originated directly from the state and had been imposed by political power. Others elders like Tata also had a critical view of the changes transpiring locally and like many in the community; she complained about the changes that Samaná society had undergone. Talking to me during an interview, she smiled as she reminisced about the Samaná of her youth: about the old neighborhood where she used to gather with her friends and had her first kiss:

The smoke, the lack of water and electricity, it was a disaster; it generated much bad feelings amongst the people. When they destroyed the people’s homes many of them left Samaná: all those that could emigrate did so. If you had kids en route to the university, all those who could not continue living without local work, they left and got jobs elsewhere, never returning. Many gained land titles in the capital in exchange for their Samaná lands and left. All that could, left. Families that stayed were able to get their homes from Balaguer, but it was a moment of living very uncomfortably for three years. You really had to love Samaná to have stayed here or not had any other option (Tata, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, December 2012).

Samaná residents were not able to save their homes, but they did manage to save the Churcha (AME Church) through local protest. “They knew, they said no we can’t take down this

\textsuperscript{166} One home was owned by the Wilmore family and the other by Dr. Coplin.
church, and so they left it” (Leticia Wilmore 2012). The church became the only space for Samaná residents to converge during the reconstruction without interference from local authorities. For Tata and many others in Samaná, surviving the destruction was a struggle they had to endure. For many others, the choice to leave was not a simple one. The destruction of the town tore apart neighborhoods that had formed over time around religious and ethnic affiliations. These neighborhoods and relations were based on strong historical bonds of years of trust and interaction between families. To leave everything behind and start anew was a struggle that many could not fathom.

Families removed from their homes would receive a one-room barraco (barrack) to be shared by its members. Witnesses commented on how there seemed to be no order to the mayhem of allocating the small provisional home spaces in the barracks. Their backyards and courtyards gone, a small outhouse in the back was to be shared by multiple families. Prostitutes, alcoholics, church members, people from all political factions shared the same space and were forced to interact and live with each other.

For many of the families, the conditions of the space were insufficient and protests erupted from different segments of the community. To appease the protests, the PRSC state offered disgruntled families the option of being compensated for their homes. As the rates of compensation were much lower than the value of their homes and land, most families were forced to wait to receive a new home built by the state. Some families escaped to their rural properties until reconstruction was completed. Others, rather than await reconstruction, took the low compensation offered by the state and moved to Santo Domingo, where displaced Samanese began their own neighborhood. Members of these families continued to travel back to Samaná to visit those who did not depart.
Silvio’s family, like many others, suffered from the destruction. For years his family had been at the center of folkloric life in Samaná, sponsoring many of the local Bambula dances and economically supporting the annual celebration in honor of Saint Raphael. Those celebrations had been outlawed under the Trujillo dictatorship for their supposed connections to Haiti. Silvio, in a moment of deep emotion, shared his perspective on the changes to the town space:

That’s why they say that progress in towns also brings misery. With the remodeling of the town, they kicked us out of our living quarters. They wouldn’t talk to anyone; they just brought those tractors destroying the houses and felling most of our coconut trees. No one dared to protest anything. They gave us a few pesos for our houses, a misery of compensation. No one knew what to do; they threatened to tear down our homes, and all we could do was accept. So we left our house and found a different piece of land that at that time we thought was owned by the Bezis, but it was a lot without title, and we have been here ever since. A group of neighbors, as was the custom at that time, helped me build the home where we now live (Silvio, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, January 2014).

In the town’s rebirth, cement structures were built instead of wooden homes. The pricey mahogany and cedar wooden slabs that had been culled from the hills of Samaná were carted off and served as the building blocks for other rural towns. During the process of reconstruction, all private and religious schooling was halted and only the public school remained in operation. During the two-year transition, locals sought ways to make a living with many households having to rely on both parents joining the labor force. Tata recounted this period of her youth, when she struggled to find work. It had been the restructuring of the town that forced her to venture beyond the confines of Samaná. She sought alternate job opportunities and found one as a nanny for an elite family from Santo Domingo related to the Trujillo family and traveled around the world caring for their children (Tata 2012). Tata briefly described her attempts to find work and subsist in Samaná prior to her forced move:

I used to buy fish to resell. I fried it and sold it. My hands got really tough because I had never dealt with so much fish before. My mother had to heat up “el flance” to soothe my

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167 The justification was that they would be more resistant to the strong winds during hurricane season.
hands, because they became infected. One day I was walking through my grandfather’s land, and I saw a palisade and a big orange tree. It was full of fruit, most of it going to waste, and I thought to myself, I can make money from this. I began to make orange marmalade in containers. Not to make the story too long, my candies and jams became famous and everyone who came to town would always order some. They became so famous they [the candies] traveled the world (Interview with Tata by Ryan Mann-Hamilton 2012).

Like many Samaneses, Tata had to engage in multiple entrepreneurial endeavors during the renovation process to maintain her economic standing. Samaneses who had worked in different managerial and technical positions within the town had to revert to working on adjacent lands to be able to sustain their families: “I wasn’t happy with the destruction, but I remember when they made the malecon [boardwalk], I actually liked it. They built these little benches one could sit on; the malecon was just a little area, not the way that you see it today, mangroves surrounded it” (Tata 2012).

Along with many of the community’s elders, Tata was concerned with the process under which the renovation was carried out and the effects of the destruction. But a younger generation of Samaneses born during and after the destruction had different perspectives, as their memories of old Samaná were limited. They viewed the renovation as a moment of growth for the town and perceived the development of tourism infrastructure as a much-needed infusion into the local environment. Other witnesses shared their shifts in thought on the destruction of the town:

That was in 1971 […] when we arrived in Samaná […] it coincided with the reconstruction of Samaná and the destruction of the old town. We lasted two years living where one could. They moved you today, they tore it down tomorrow, and then they came back and said, that it is somewhere else. That was a disaster. In those moments I can’t tell you that I was thinking about what was happening, but later, one realizes. That period caused a radical change in the social structure of Samaná. When the reconstruction of the town began, Samaná was a ghost town. There were no cars, no people, and no buildings: everything was empty and barren (Augusto Gonzalez, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, November 2012).
Large amounts of state and municipal resources were disbursed for these infrastructural projects. A new elementary and high school complemented the construction of a hospital, airport, public park, water sanitation infrastructure, and a cruise ship port in Arroyo Barril.\(^{168}\) A new road connecting Santo Domingo to Samaná was also constructed in hopes of increasing the flow of tourists to the region. Two large state-owned hotels were built, one on the island of Cayo Levantado and the other on the hillside above the town overlooking Puerto Escondido beach.\(^{169}\) After construction of the Puerto Escondido hotel, the community lost access to the beach that had been used for years for their activities and weekend outings.\(^{170}\)

In addition to the infrastructural enhancements, beautification projects were also created to attract the tourist gaze. The new town would have an oceanfront walkway and a cement bridge that connected the outer cays. The design for both the walkway and the bridge were initially concocted in plans commissioned by French General Ferrand in 1808 during the attack against the Haitian Revolution.\(^{171}\) As an object of the archive, the plans designed by Ferrand provided a point of reference: a truth that was appropriated and reimagined by various historical subjects.\(^{172}\)

In his book on the early history of Samaná, Bernardo Vega comments on the existence of the

\(^{168}\) After the airport was finished, it did not pass its first inspection. The runway was too short to receive international flights and was thus only available for small planes. Many of these projects lie abandoned today, replaced by a new port and a new airport. The building of the port of Arroyo Barril began in July 1973 and continued at a slow pace until February 1976 as a free port (Vázquez, 2012). During the 80s, it was used by the Dole fruit company to ship its food products to the American markets, and in the late 90s was also used as a port for the cruise ships until that was shifted to the bay and town of Samaná. [check full citation above].

\(^{169}\) During the 80s and early 90s when the national electric shortages were rampant, the hotel remained lit on the hilltop while the town lay dark and silent beneath it.

\(^{170}\) To ensure the privacy of their guests, the hotel disregarded the constitution of the country and privatized the beach areas and placed restrictions on who may enter the adjacent grounds.

\(^{171}\) Ferrand intended to establish the new capital of the French empire in Samaná, renaming it Port Napoleon.

\(^{172}\) Ferrand’s plans made their way into the archive as an event that never succeeded, and Balaguer, who studied in the Sorbonne, as a historian may have viewed these plans as his inspiration. An object does not only belong to its point of inception, but travels through time and creates its own history throughout its journey. Why is it that a plan that did not come to fruition became “real” as a document to be archived? Does its reality and power come from being an object, or from its incorporation into the archive? If we look at the archive as a process rather than as a thing, can we understand how these plans were incorporated and resurfaced at different times for different efforts? The archive as a “technology of rule” is deeply caught up in processes of power and domination. What, how, and why items are archived and classified, and how they are then found and interpreted by others, are all processes mediated by people’s desires and positionalities.
plans for the construction of the walkway. He relayed that one of the engineers for Balaguer’s redesign was asked about the expenditure of money on something so useless, and he responded “that in the plans by Ferrand of Port Napoleon, there was a bridge” (Vega 2004:31).

Some segments of Samaná society profited from the redevelopment and their allegiance to the ruling PRSC party: “When they destroyed the town there were those who took advantage and would claim the money that was for the town and kept it for themselves. It was a time of a lot of pressure, and there were definitely some families that benefitted more than others” (Ciriaco Stubbs 2013). Through their political connections, many gained prime living locations after the renovation and jobs in the new municipal buildings and offices. In the allocation of the newly constructed homes, the PRSC would control what families were given property near the waterfront, with the homes nearest to the water and of most value given to party supporters.

Through the dismantling of the community’s social, cultural, and political structures and stripping away local decision-making power, the Dominican state achieved the control that previous governments had not. Samaná’s destruction established a pattern of subservience between the state and the locality. In one of the few articles published in national papers, the editors wrote about the role of Balaguer in the region:

He destroyed a town, its symbols, and its memories, to build a grotesque elephant of cement. Deformed for the purpose of tourism and indifferent to a public opinion that was terrorized. The intellectuals are accomplices and the elite have always turned their backs to our identity. Dozens and dozens of Samaneses have decided to migrate, and some of those who stayed died of sorrow, pain and nostalgia (The Editors, “Trozos de la historia de Samaná,” Diario Libre, November 10, 2012, p. 2).

Photos from private collections and published postcards of the town help to create a visualization of how it was prior to the destruction. These images allow us to view the marked physical changes to which the town was submitted. With the destruction of the town and the exodus of businesses and families, there was a significant decrease in the income of most
Samaná families. This act of local intervention had further psychological effects on the community and intensified their view of the state as coercive.

However, the population of rural Samaná found “new ways to engage such scheme[s]” and create a productive option for themselves (Garcia-Colon 2009:96). Taking advantage of the announcement by the state to provide subsidized homes to the population affected by the destruction, many rural families of the peninsula used their social relations to claim these new vacant spaces. They took advantage of the increase in the price of rural landholdings and sold, abandoning their conucos and migrating to the town and “redefined their lives and means of livelihood under their new social and economic conditions” (Garcia-Colon 2009:96). They sold their land, seeking a better future for their families, but ironically, it was the lands they were leaving behind that had provided for their survival. These lands held more value than the new spaces they came to occupy, and would be ripe for the picking by interested real estate parties.

The sudden rise in rural inhabitants in the town’s population required an increase in services provided by the schools and hospitals, but the state was slow in fulfilling these needs. This new migration solidified the dependence of individuals and families on the available social service programs of the Dominican state. Tata mentioned, “That’s what has affected our local society, whereby we don’t have a strong civil society. Now we have a lot of people from different places here that don’t care for Samaná, but only about making money” (Tata 2012). The increase in population also brought a resurgence in religious participation in the newly-built Catholic Church, as well as the adjacent AME church. Rather than organize against these incursions, these sites asked their congregations for faith and patience.

The attempts to transform the community of Samaná and to shape and control it were part of the state intervention into the local. Authoritarian modernizing schemes such as the one

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173 The move to the town facilitated the state’s attempts to surveil and condition the daily lives of local inhabitants.
carried out by Balaguer and the PRSC in Samaná serve the interests of the state in constructing a facade of service and caring. These modernizing projects represent the desires of those in power to further promote the power of the state (Scott 2006). Appropriation, control, and manipulation are methods the state uses on specific populations. The Dominican nation-state intervention was interested in having a legible society. This legibility is achieved through mass simplifications, mapping, census data collection, and other documents (Gupta and Ferguson 2006, Scott 2006). The Dominican state does not “merely describe, observe, and map; they strive to shape people and landscapes” (Scott 2006:262). Many of the designs and plans of the Dominican state are about visibility, surveillance, and control, and these plans refuse to incorporate local knowledge and practices. Therefore they must be understood as a threat to human well-being: “These schemes deliberately removed people from the relations in which their lives were embedded to build on a clean slate” (Li 2005:389). Borrowing from Scott, the “forcefully initiated social engineering” project in Samaná was not able to displace localized identities that have been produced over years of struggle and agentive processes that created the place of Samaná. The families who withstood the town’s destruction experienced intense changes in the three-year period from 1971-73. These state-led changes linger in the minds of Samaná’s inhabitants, many who lament and share the memory of loss at the changes that came to their community. The demise of many community-based institutions had a crippling effect on the organization of local civil society, from which it has yet to recover fully. The memory of that experience is part of their story, their trauma, and their hesitancy to trust. This was not to be the last of the great infrastructural transformations in Samaná. In 2008, President Leonel Fernandez would embark on a series of new tourism infrastructural projects that would again change the landscape of Samaná.
Despite the violent destruction after the renovation, there was a strong political following for Balaguer. My grandmother, like many others, slept with Balaguer’s image underneath her bed, believing that he, as the representative of state power, would protect her alongside her saints. These renovation plans are perceived as failures by much of the local population, but for the state they were seen as a success because they achieved their desired control. One cannot call the renovation process a failure because it was never meant to be a success or satisfy local needs, but, rather, was intended to fill the pockets of the few managers involved. As an authoritarian state with an ability to act, the Dominican state enacted an administrative ordering of local society with an orientation towards Hispanization and European ideologies and perceptions of race, which temporarily incapacitated civil society, wounded from years of repression.

**Conclusion:**

Samaná was one of the cleanest towns; it was a town that in the times before Trujillo the most experienced nurses were from Samaná, the best professors were from Samaná […] The students were also excellent. I attribute this [the changes] to the degradation, everything has degraded, everything […] there’s no respect, there’s nothing left. The leaders are to blame for this lowliness. Here the people weren’t as ambitious, here the people had respect, and we didn’t have the ambition of owning things, for power. They say that’s civilization! That our lack of ambitions don’t let us progress. They can’t see farther than their noses (Tata Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton 2012).

In his work, sociologist Emelio Betances concluded that “the authoritarian character of the Dominican state is deeply rooted in the historical and structural weaknesses of Dominican society” (Betances 1996:133). For Betances, this weakness was a result of a fragmented grouping constantly constrained through foreign interventions. The Dominican state continues to use an authoritarian model in the management of its population. This state governance style has

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174 Dominican scholar Franklin Franco affirmed that the decision to redevelop the space was made easier as a result of the racial, religious, and linguistic backgrounds of the local population, which differed from the rest of the nation.
significantly affected the way that Dominicans continue to view the state and its representatives through a prism of distrust and fear.

The Trujillo dictatorship and the subsequent Balaguer regime correspond to the strongest moment of state consolidation and incorporation of Samaná into the Dominican nation-state. Both figures and their respective governments mobilized state power to enforce their ideologies and economic ideals. The largest perceived difference between the two regimes lay in their tactics. Trujillo as dictator attempted to achieve coalescence through dominating all aspects of Dominican society; Balaguer promoted projects similar to that of the dictatorship through more hegemonic practices of coercion and consent. I would argue that the intensity and tactics of the Balaguer state were equally ambitious and vicious, but the economic changes and infrastructural projects under Balaguer had greater effects on the population. These transformations were increasingly reflected in regional cultural changes and the dominance of the political landscape.

The process of incorporation of Samaná begun by the Trujillo regime was finalized under the auspices of democracy presented by the Balaguer-led PRSC state project. This process promises to repeat itself, as tourism has become a central economic input to the Dominican state. This past still conditions the thought and decision-making process of the Dominican state, which continues to relegate the needs of Samaneses to the margins, while developing the local space for the needs of seasonal visitors.

The intervention in and privatization of coastal spaces for tourism has had dire effects on littoral communities such as Samaná. Over the past 187 years, Samaneses have constructed their own sense of community through their proximity to the ocean space.¹⁷⁵ The penetration of tourism, which I will discuss in the following chapter, has been more successful than previous

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¹⁷⁵ A constitutional amendment passed in January 2010 legalized the privatization of all lands bordering waterways such as waterfalls, rivers, and oceans.
imperial attempts because of its control of the local space through an political and economic stranglehold.

Coconut still lines the hillsides of Samaná, but without the investment in and regeneration of local coconut production, the number of production sites has decreased significantly. Many rural residents continue to rely on the small-scale sales of coconut to provide a source of income for their families by selling them on the side of the road. The dwindling government support and private investment towards agricultural projects in the region has significantly decreased the number of participants in this endeavor. As a result, the production, transportation, and sale of the agricultural items in Samaná have shifted to businessmen from the Cibao region, displacing local producers and vendors.

By the 1980s, a country that had been self-sufficient under Trujillo now had to import most of its food. After 1981, the majority of Dominicans lived in urban areas, thus decreasing the interests of and investment in rural communities (Turits 2003:263). During the PRSC governments, the disparity in Dominican incomes skyrocketed, with a widening gap between the rich and the poor. The PRSC state reshaped the relations between the state and civil society and maintained control of many of these civil society institutions to assure their allegiance to the state. With the accumulation of power within the executive branch of government, other locusts of power decreased: the church and other civil society institutions, important during the dictatorship, took a back seat to the formation of political parties. Civil society institutions in much of the DR were replaced by the multiple political party apparatuses as the sole force of opposition to the Dominican state.176

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176 The rise of the middle class is a more recent phenomenon, and even in this arena, we have seen retreats in the number of families.
Through coercive economic transformations and spatial development projects, the DR is being transformed for the consumption tendencies of a small elite. In the DR, tourism has become the central arena for the accumulation of capital for elite and political segments of the country. Tourism has brought the majority of the population into a different relationship with the state and its tactics of surveillance. Urban regions have become the focal points of the state’s efforts towards modernization. The reluctance to operate outside of and beyond the state and imagine power outside of that mechanism has hindered some of the attempts at local reform and created a prime environment for continued authoritarian rule and the implementation of new schemes to develop the region.
Chapter 4

A Whale of a Tale: The Promise of Tourism Development.

Samaná was one of the earliest sites selected for tourism development in the Dominican Republic (DR), which brought substantial changes to the region. This chapter examines the tourism industry as a central economic force that is being developed and emphasized in coastal areas of the DR. I endeavor to understand how the current tourism model has unfolded in the context of Samaná and to untangle the conflicts of interest that exist in the management and promotion of tourism sites. I analyze the potential for and the limits of this tourism economy, as well as the possible threats posed to the community through the increased penetration of capital and real estate interests.

Central to this chapter is the question of what alternatives exist or are being presented to the way tourist-centered economies are organized and implemented. Similar to Steven Gregory’s work in the DR, I explore the ways in which “working people and communities respond to and in some cases contest” these national economic developments in the space of Samaná (Gregory 2007:4). As an alternative to the all-inclusive model of tourism, a whale-watching industry has been developed in Samaná as an attempt to set it apart from other tourist destinations in the Caribbean. The increase in visitors to the Samaná region has yet to significantly impact most of the community and does little to satisfy local demands or improve the treatment of local labor.

To evaluate the premise that tourism is economically beneficial for marginalized communities, I engage with participants in the industry, some of whom are exploited and others who profit from this service. My work extends the urgency of, and highlights the conflicts with, this problematic. I ultimately argue for a more inclusive model of tourism, but this proposed model can only take shape following a change in Dominican state decision-making, the political
structure, and the economic expectations of the Dominican state. More inclusive models of tourism development should be implemented in the DR to construct an economic relation that improves the livelihood of communities adjacent to these sites.

**Tourism and Ecosystem Management of Samaná**

An Environmental Protection Plan for Samaná was drafted in early 2012 between USAID, The David and Lucille Packard Foundation, The Nature Conservancy, and Dominican NGOs Quisqueya Verde and CEBSE. The plan was presented to the Dominican Minister of the Environment and was meant to establish a vision for the future management of the protected whale sanctuary ecosystems and a zoning plan for the bay that would help to regulate its use (USAID 2011:6). Among the major guiding principles and expected outcomes from the plan was the possibility of establishing and designing a participatory and integrated process of management of the marine ecosystems in Samaná. Included within the plan was a proposal to disseminate and provide technical support to local fishermen and other users of these resources (USAID 2011:9). Yet plans and actions are two different beasts. Of the technical team involved in crafting the plan, only one person was from Samaná; the rest were experts from the Caribbean and an international team of researchers.

The regional environmental plan would be part of a larger national plan to develop the nation’s tourism infrastructure in a sustainable way. In the plan for community inclusion, there was an emphasis on public dissemination as an important aspect of the participatory nature of the project. Questionnaires were produced as a way to receive local input, but rather than take a random sample of the community the questionnaires were given to organizations and individuals.

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177 The plan resulted from Presidential Decree #571-09 passed in 2009, in which the marine region in the interior part of the Bay of Samaná was included in national conservation and protection efforts.

178 The project was supported with funds from USAID, and the research and analysis was to be carried out by CEBSE and the Nature Conservancy officers in the Dominican Republic.
who had been previously identified as stakeholders. The mechanisms of selection for inclusion
gave little importance to the connections within the community and to the technical expertise of
the subjects. Much like the ideological programs that underpinned the development of the
Dominican state, the questionnaire follows in line with the state protocol of exclusion and
erasure. In addition, very few efforts were made to publicize the meetings to the general public,
further limiting local input. I argue that these facades of consultation are meant to keep the
Samaná community in the dark, uninformed, and therefore excluded from any management or
decision-making.

In attendance at the meeting was a local youth group that had been organizing for a few
months and was prepared to make a statement regarding the management of the sanctuary and
against the continued hunting of the humpback whales in Caribbean and international waters.
The youth appeared with matching blue T-shirts painted with the slogan “No a la caza de
nuestras ballenas” (No to the hunting of our whales).179 Staking a claim on the whales as their
own, the youth declared that these whales were central to the economic livelihood of the Samaná
community and were worth much more alive than dead.

![Figure 8: Samaná youth at a peaceful protest in the municipality. Photo by Ryan Mann-Hamilton.](image)

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179 Economic support for the youth came from the boat owners’ association, who paid for the shirts.
In their prepared statement, the youth asked the Minister of the Environment to support a
delegation from the DR at the upcoming International Whaling Commission (IWC) meeting.\textsuperscript{180} As described by one of the elders in attendance, it was rare to see youth attending these municipal meetings and even stranger to have them make an organized public declaration. These supposed decision-making spaces had become arenas where the community was informed of what was to occur and was not welcome to offer different perspectives or counter the claims being made upon them. The unified plea publicly pressured the minister to accede to the youth group’s demands, and in the summer of 2013, a delegation that included two Samanenses attended the IWC to vote for the continued conservation of the humpback whales.\textsuperscript{181}

Global Tourism

Driven by global interests and funding sources, the pressure to transition to a service-sector economy focused on tourism has had significant effects on the organization of Caribbean societies. The global tourism sector accounts for one-third of all global trade in services (WTO 2014). Travel and tourism account for 4.4 trillion dollars in expenditure, with tourist arrivals worldwide projected to reach 1.6 billion by 2020 (WTO 2008; Cabezas 2008:22). The World Bank, UN Development Fund, and the IMF view the tourism industry as capable of generating employment and alleviating poverty, and therefore tourism has been at the center of the development of many Caribbean economies after decolonization (Cabezas 2008:21).

The rapid socioeconomic transition from an agrarian economy to a service-sector economy has created a crisis for many small island states. Many have been unable to find economic alternatives to the declining income and number of participants in agricultural

\textsuperscript{180}The DR had not participated in the IWC in the last 30 years and therefore could not vote or have any effect on the well-being and conservation of humpbacks whales.

\textsuperscript{181} These youth were attempting to connect to the IWC and other conservation groups to create a larger network of whale-watching advocacy. These networks help to attract more tourists to the region and increase tourist expenditures locally to benefit those participating in tourism.
production, which has caused a series of conflicts within island societies, creating huge class ruptures. Rather than seek strategies that diversify and expand their investments, most of these island states have invested in tourism as the only alternative to their economic woes. Although the promise and benefits of tourism continue to be exalted, the economic indicators for these Caribbean islands are not reflective of such promised benefits. What then does this tourist economic model offer to island populations, and who benefits from the extension and promotion of these tourist-related services?

The transnational tour operator industry based in Western Europe and the United States (US) accrue the greatest benefits from tourism growth. From their vantage point, tour operators can project the tourist image of a country, control the tourist package being offered, and promote particular destinations. Through both the vertical and horizontal integration of tourism agencies and actors, the tour operators control the flow of tourists to a specific location. These operators, consolidating their offers and thus their power, prefer the all-inclusive experience in which they control the offerings and the profit, and thus limit the number of national participants who may benefit from the endeavor.

All-inclusive options provide a safe and controlled environment for visitors and allow for tourists to pay their expenses up front. They also severely limit the participation of local tourism operators and allow for the bulk of the profits to stay in hands of the transnational operators (Cabezas 25:2008). These all-inclusive spaces are highly segregated and provide security to tourists by excluding locals from these tourist spaces. In the DR, over 95% of hotel offerings operate under the all-inclusive model, which has substantially decreased the earnings per tourist (Cabezas, 2008:29). In the last decade, individual tourist expenditure within the DR has decreased from $318 to $154 (UNDP 2005:73, Cabezas 2008:25).
The majority of these all-inclusive locations are in the littoral zones of the DR and are therefore threatened by the changing tides and the disappearance of the coast line due to anthropogenic and climate change variables. The excessive reliance on tourism in the DR and other Caribbean countries can leave the country open to shifts in the market, a weakened demand for the destination, and open to damage from the natural elements and calamities (Cabezas 2008:27). The increasing effects of climate change are bound to bring substantial changes to Caribbean tourist destinations. Unfortunately, it is rare for these aspects of the local environment to be discussed as part of the management of these areas.

The State of Tourism

The DR entered the tourism industry later than other Caribbean islands such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and Barbados. Despite its late start, the DR has become the most popular travel destination in the Caribbean and the fourth largest market for tourism in all of Latin America (WTO 2012). The increase in visitors to the country has been significant to the economy, increasing expenditures per visit from $1.75 million in 1993 to $5.1 million in 2013 (Dominican Central Bank 2014). In 2013, visitor numbers increased nationally by 3.6%, with hotel occupancy around the island reaching 87.3% (Dominican Central Bank 2014). The largest numbers of these visitors are arriving from the US, Canada, Germany, and France with a large increase in visitors emanating from the emerging markets of Russia, Argentina, and Brazil. Other Caribbean countries are vying for tourist attention and developing new options to entice tour operators to push their national offers.

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182 The DR became the Caribbean region’s leader in capturing foreign investment in 2011. Their total for 2011 was $2,371 million, which is equivalent to 53.3% of the investment in the whole Caribbean region. This data was provided by CEPAL. In this report they also placed the economic growth of the country at 5.9% for the 2011 year, marking one of the most significant increases within Caribbean economies. This increase and its effects continue to benefit the upperclass segments of the country. Much of this investment, the report signaled, came from Brazil and other Latin American countries.

183 Statistics provided by the Ministry of Tourism indicate 1.6 million visitors emanating from the US.
Tourism is currently being promoted and funded by the Dominican state as if it were the only solution to the economic difficulties of the national population. An increase in the number of visitors to the country has brought sustained economic growth for the nation, accruing $4.5 billion in income from tourism-related endeavors. A closer examination of this income reveals that though the number of visitors has substantially increased; there have been dwindling economic returns from these visits. There has also been a decrease in the number of those employed in tourism, with tourist job numbers in decline since 2006 (Ministry of Tourism 2014).\textsuperscript{164} This economic growth is reflected in certain segments of the population rather than being extended to the majority. Current government estimates indicate that 195,000 Dominicans currently work in the formal tourist industry (Ministry of Tourism 2014). There are currently no statistics for the informal networks that operate and benefit from the tourism sector, but their participation is being limited by state surveillance.

The Dominican state in its different iterations has colluded with the oligarchy and business interests to transition the country from and agricultural economy to the service industry sector, of which tourism is its largest enterprise. Tourism in the DR is managed by elite segments of society that align themselves with foreign capital and political actors to benefit from their partnership. Created through greater laxity in labor laws and the formation of legal-judicial alliances with business interests, these forces thrive on inequality and the suppression of voices of dissent. Dominican state development practices and the increased investment in tourism have complemented the work of real estate interests in achieving the dispossession of land, the privatization of public spaces, and the criminalization of voices of dissent led by the strong Dominican state.

\textsuperscript{164} The most visited region tourist is Punta Cana, where the majority of the all-inclusive hotels and tourist resources can be found.
State economic investments in infrastructure to improve the conditions for capital investment have been essential. These investments require the ability to secure tax breaks and a mixture of state and private funding to develop these projects to the detriment of other necessary national investments. Over the last decade, sustained economic growth has occurred in the DR, but 31.6% of the island territory’s population still lives below the poverty line (UNDP). The investments made by the Dominican state are not geared to satisfying the population’s needs, and the economic gains from the increase of visitors to the country benefit the politicians and other wealthy Dominicans. Rather than aid in the development and growth of local populations, tourism, as presently organized, perpetuates disparities and “desskills and devalues Dominican workers, marginalizing them from tourist development and sexualizing their labor” (Cabezas 2008:21). Some of the effects of this state investment have been to “discourage the development of an educated middle class, since returns on educational investment do not offset the rising cost of imported foodstuff and plummeting wages” (Padilla 2007:52). As a result, the “most important energy that is being wasted in the DR is human energy” (Yunen 1985:125).

Tourism Labor: Formal and Informal

The PLD government of Danilo Medina elected in 2014 continues to view tourism as central aspect of the nation’s economic plan; it has designated and invested in nine tourist regions in the country. The Dominican state projects these investments will bring in an additional 10 million tourists. In the 70s and 80s the principal tourist destination was Puerto Plata with its new airport and cruise ship dock, but it has since decreased in quality and usage. Currently, the region with the most developed infrastructure and highest number of annual visitors is Punta Cana (Ministry of Tourism 2014). Being designated a tourist region impacts the national

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185 The tourism state appears content in promoting these tourist-related endeavors that provide a large number of jobs, even when those jobs are mostly low-paying positions.
planning vision and therefore the funds available for these regions and their development
(Vazquez 2013).

Table 3: Tourist Regions of the Dominican Republic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polo</th>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Santo Domingo and Costa Caribe</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Puerto Plata</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Punta Cana and Macao</td>
<td>1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Barahona and Pedernales</td>
<td>1991</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Region Noroeste Ampliada – Montecristi y Dajabon</td>
<td>1991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Samaná – 1971 as a zone of biodiversity</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Jarabacoa and Constanza</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Peravia y Azua, 1975</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nagua and Cabrera</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A recent UNDP report indicated that the tourism labor force in the DR is primarily made up of young women under the age of 39. The majority of these young women have less than eight years of schooling and receive wages that are significantly below the national average (UNDP 2005:78). They are rarely promoted to positions of management or supervision, positions which are kept for foreign men. Dominican men are generally excluded from tourism positions, but as a result of gendered work roles, may be hired as bartenders, luggage handlers, or security guards. Since the early 80s, the Dominican informal sector has employed more men than any other sector of the economy. The country represents one of the rare cases in which men are approximately as likely as women to be employed in the informal sector (Padilla 2007:47). As a result of their exclusion from tourist endeavors, many women and men are seeking other options through cultivating sexual and affective relationships with tourists in hopes of gaining some type of benefit (Padilla 2007, Gregory 2007).

Samaná Tourism: Management, Sustainability and Exclusion

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186 The population of Samaná is estimated at 91,875 people, 45,137 of whom are women.
187 In his work, Padilla observes men's increasing involvement in the pleasure industry.
Samaná is being marketed across the globe as the poster child of Dominican tourism sites. In the fall of 2013, USAID and the Dominican Ministry of Tourism produced a promotional video of the region of Samaná. Beautiful aerial shots showcased the pristine natural environment, the whales, beaches, and waterfalls of the region. This video, like many other promotional materials on Samaná, attempts to promote an image of isolation devoid of local peoples. Only once in the seven-minute video, and as a brief silhouette, did a local face appear. It was the image of a gardener walking across the lawn of a private time-share residence. The video gives the impression to the naïve eye that the region is available and open for exploitation.

The narrative of the isolation of Samaná has been repeatedly mobilized by the Dominican state over time, initially to annex the region and now to sell the available lands to investors. The exclusion and the displacement of Samaneses from the region has been a tactic used since colonial times to create a vision of the region as an unoccupied paradise. This vision of isolation is reinforced in the images of pristine virgin beaches being sold by the tour operators.

Visitors enamored by the beauty of Samaná are buying large tracts of land and rapidly displacing members of the community, who are forced to migrate to the interior of the peninsula or other regions of the country. These visitors have an increasing role in the process of dispossession and displacement of those who historically have made the peninsula their home. These visitors also serve as role models for many local youth who want access to travel, yet lack the resources and education to make informed decisions about their future. These youths attempt to insert themselves into the tourism matrix in hopes of attaining resources and finding ways to leave the local arena.

As part of the complicity of the state with tourism development, the national political and legal system is routinely manipulated to support tourism operations. “The institutional
arrangements embedded within the state have […] an influential role to play in setting the stage for capital accumulation” (Harvey 2005:28). Through the advantages achieved by legislation and state enforcement, tourism interests are routinely protected. Therefore it is no longer necessary to alter public perception through violence as past regimes have; now, only the threat of violence suffices.\footnote{One of these acts of complicity was the constitutional reform passed in January 2010, which allowed for the privatization of coastal zones and other water environs by private corporations and entities.}

**Particularity of Samaná Tourism**

Since the early 1970s, the Dominican state has forcefully intervened in the spatial layout of coastal communities like Samaná so as to improve the local aesthetic to attract tourist eyes. Samaná is still viewed by the Dominican state as an area to be managed and developed for visitors with little concern for the development of the local population. Ecotourism and sustainable development initiatives have been promoted in the region as a way to distinguish it from other locations.\footnote{Sustainable development as a concept and practice developed out of the 1987 Brundtland Report, “which aimed to promote economic activity and growth while preserving the environment” (Howard, Hume, and Oslender 2007).} These claims of conservation and sustainability are not aimed at improving local livelihood, but instead are utilized as a selling point for visiting tourist and new business endeavors. Efforts to conserve Samaná’s natural resources are unilateral decisions imposed through state regulation and management. Many of these state-developed management plans have created a series of conflicts with the inhabitants of the region and their everyday use patterns. These conservation decisions without local consultation impact the local economy, contain entrepreneurial efforts, and have been effective in displacing communities to protect and prevent specific lands from use.

The current population of Samaná was estimated at 92,102 in the 2002 census. The census recorded 107.88 people per square kilometer. In 1960, at the end of the Trujillo era, it was
43.53; in 1970 it was 54.03; and in 1981 it was 66.45 (Planteamiento Politico 2004:28). The increase in the population of the peninsula in the last 40 years has been substantial. Most of this increase in population has occurred in the urban centers of the peninsula in towns like Samaná, Las Galeras, and Las Terrenas.

Analyzing local tourist initiatives allows us to inform policy making at a national level (Jamal and Robinson 2005:2). In Samaná, participation in tourism endeavors is not an open affair, but is instead limited to certain segments of local society who are continually exploited. The ebb and flow of tourism activity in Samaná is predicated on the movement of tourist bodies into the space. Tourism has been imagined and sold to Samanese as a local capital-generating activity, but the majority of these funds are generated for foreign-owned companies. The bulk of tourism participants make minimum amounts of money, and a miniscule quantity of capital stays within the community to be divided between a small numbers of families who own service-sector businesses. Very few Samanese possess the capital necessary to make the initial investment to participate in tourism-related endeavors. Others trying to work outside of the limited jobs offered have attempted to make money through the establishment of small businesses catering to tourists. These small businesses require large initial investments and are regulated and heavily taxed by the Dominican state. Without access, many Samanese are creating work and small profits through informal business arrangements and creative endeavors. As more Samanese attempt to benefit from their informal sector businesses, the Dominican state has ordered a limit to these businesses and has attempted to tax, regulate, and control the amount of participants.

In the town of Samaná, the largest hotel is the Bahia Principe Cayacoa, owned by a Spanish multinational company presided by Miguel Pinero. In 2008, Bahia Principe Corporation entered into an agreement with then-president Leonel Fernandez to lease the land.

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190 The company also owns the Cayacoa Cayo Levantado in Samaná and various other hotels around the country.
and facilities that the government had constructed in the 70s for a 50-year period.\textsuperscript{191} The agreement received state tax deductions and was accompanied by a promise from the Dominican government to construct a new road to the peninsula and improve sanitary, water, and electric services to the region.

The Cayacoa Hotel employs many Samaná residents, but their labor and compensation practices are suspicious, exploitative, and highly gendered and racialized (Gregory 2007:25). Temporary positions with lower pay and no benefits are provided for workers. New employees are shuffled, fired, and rehired, so as not to pay them a salary that is required after a three-month testing period.\textsuperscript{192} As an all-inclusive type of hotel, guests are recommended to stay within the confines of the hotel, and non-guests are barred from entering the premises. The relationship of the hotel to the community is fractured at best. Guests are continually instructed that Samaná is dangerous and they should keep their expenditures within the confines of the hotel area. Since all items at the hotel are priced substantially higher, the more time the guests spend in the hotel the larger the profit. The hotel has also closed off vehicle access to Puerto Escondido, one of the few nearby beaches used by community members. An armed guard protects the entrance, deterring would-be violators with his shotgun.\textsuperscript{193}

What, then, are the jobs available to the Samaná population? A survey of tourism workers in Samaná conducted by a local NGO estimated that up to 76\% of the workers were between the ages of 20 and 39 with the majority being single (CEBSE 2009:37). Almost half of the workers interviewed were not native of Samaná and had arrived there to find jobs in the tourist industry. This data is important in showing the constant movement of people searching for a better

\textsuperscript{191} The Dominican government built the existing hotel facilities after the state-sponsored destruction of 1971.
\textsuperscript{192} One informant spent six months working for them and was released before six months so that they would not have to hire her permanently and provide a salary and benefits.
\textsuperscript{193} The hotel has repeatedly been accused of dumping wastewater into the adjacent beach, which is used by their guests and the townspeople (Cebse).
livelihood. These outside movements stifle local entrepreneurship and limit local participation as these migrants take the few local jobs that are available.

The most coveted local positions are within the Ministry of Tourism and other government offices because they come with a government pension plan. The whaleboat crew jobs, taxi driving, and motoconcho (motorcycle taxi) work are all limited to men, and the tour guides are dominated by foreigners who live in Samaná. It is under the employment of the various hotels that Samaneses can find work as maids, cooks, cleaners, and other low-level jobs. The few management positions available are reserved for those who have studied tourism in Santo Domingo or from the pool of European expats making the county their home. The vast majority of workers benefitting from tourism are self-employed (Gregory 2007:32).

Here Come the Whales

Most visitors to Samaná are not traditional tourists looking to stay around the pool for three days. The region attracts adventure and nature tourism enthusiasts who are enticed by the promise of a pristine destination that is different from the all-inclusive locations abundant across the Caribbean. As a result of the long distance from the major urban transport hubs, the majority of the excursions to Samaná depart from other parts of the country. Many of these excursions return to their point of departure at the end of the day, thus limiting local expenditures and interaction.
The local emphasis on whale watching and sustainable tourism is an attempt to reconfigure the local tourism industry to amplify the effects of this economic mode and to grant access to larger segments of the local population. Whale-watching tourism versus traditional tourism has the potential to provide economic remuneration and incentives to a larger segment of the Samaná community. As an effort that is mostly organized and controlled by local business owners, whale watching is an attempt by Samanenses to insert themselves into the profit matrix of tourism.

The Humpbacks have been part of the landscape of Samaná for a long time, many returning every year for over 30-year periods. During the months of January to March the whales are the biggest attraction in the Bay of Samaná. From their vantage point in the water, they are witnesses to the increased usage of the waterways and to the transformations taking place on land. Attempting to create a niche to distinguish itself from other destinations within the DR and the Caribbean, Samaná has embraced the visits of the humpback whales. Through their protection and the management of the whale sanctuary, there has been an increase in visitors and in money for some local families who are involved in the endeavor. This economic relationship has been used to breathe new life into Samaná.

Developing the whale-watching industry is now at the center of the discussions of local management of tourism. When the whales arrive, so do the visitors, and combined with the arrival of the cruise ships, the local economy is significantly boosted. These months bring the largest amount of income to the region and attract thousands of tourists from all over the world. As stated earlier in the chapter, in analyzing the whale-watching endeavor, I found multiple conflicts between local participants, national political actors, and transnational corporations.

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194 The humpback whales journey every year from the cold waters of the North Atlantic to the Caribbean. They return to the waters of their birth in search of respite, many of them to the Bay of Samaná.
vying for control of the local space. The whale-watching industry exemplifies the conflicts between local, national, and international tourism interests within the space of Samaná. Therefore an analysis of the participation and conflicts in the whale-watch industry provide details as to who benefits and who is excluded from these tourism endeavors.195

The Whale-Watching Industry

Whale watching in Samaná began in the early 80s as a result of the work and interests of Kim Beddall, a Canadian expat living in Samaná. Realizing there was an unfilled niche, she and a local partner began organizing whale excursions for a limited number of tourists. With a rapidly increasing demand, other boat owners followed suit, slowly building a local fleet of boats dedicated to whale watching. In 1985, 165 tourists visited Samaná to see the whales, and in 1992 those numbers were still as low as 4,150 (CEBSE 2001:19). Tourist visits have substantially increased over time, and during the 2013 season more than 40,000 visitors arrived to catch a glimpse of these majestic mammals (Ministry of the Environment 2014). Many Samaneses have subsequently come to rely on the visits of the whales as their economic activity for the year.

Whale watching has the potential to provide economic incentive for larger segments of the Samaná community. Two companies initially provided the services for whale watching in Samaná, and now there are over 42 boats in the water observing the whales and more waiting to get permits. Because of the high cost of seeing the whales, the majority of the local population has never had the opportunity to witness them up close.196 As presently managed, the whale-watching endeavor is limited to certain segments of Samaná society.197

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195 A deeper analysis is required of the monetary impacts of this economic endeavor, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.
196 Some local operators have provided opportunities to visit for locals to experience the whales; access is not granted to all or equally.
197 At national development meetings, a consulting entity titled the Hotel Cluster of Samaná represents the region. Of the cluster, only three individuals are members of Samaná; the remaining 15 people are representatives from
Whale-watching activities and enterprises require a level of initial capital investment that very few Samaneses are able to achieve. Capital is needed to purchase the permits, the boats, pay for the crew and insurance, and to cover maintenance costs and trip expenses such as gasoline. As a result, only a small segment of Samaneses have been able to participate in and benefit from this industry. The limit on the amount of permits allocated and the types of vessels selected also limits the local fishermen from benefitting. Many participants in the whale-watching industry are intimately linked to local power dynamics through webs of kinship or political relations. As a result, elite families from Samaná and local politicians own the majority of the whale-watching boats.

The numbers of jobs available during the whale-watching season are limited by the amount of boats that participate every year. On most boats you will find two sailors, a captain, a tour guide, who are sometimes accompanied by an inspector from the Ministry of the Environment, paparazzi, and tourists. The workers who are aboard the boat represent a microcosm of Samaná: to understand the dynamics on the boat is to have a glimpse at the relations within local society.

During fieldwork in Samaná, I volunteered with CEBSE, a local NGO, to help with humpback whale research they were conducting in the bay. As part of my duties, I was asked to do educational and historical workshops for visitors to the whale museum and to volunteer youth.198 I was also required to go out on the whale-watching boats daily to help conduct different international and national organizations, hotels, and cruise ships. Local and international non-profits Nature Conservancy and CEBSE have expressed deep concern with the development of the space of Samaná.

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198 As a volunteer I traveled daily aboard the whaleboats and interacted with the different actors involved in the whale watching industry. I sat atop the boat peering through my sunglasses into the horizon, hoping to see movement or a brief spout from a whale. While we searched, I would chat with the crew and captain and interact with the visitors. On the boats I took pictures of the fluke and tail of the whale for identification purposes, recorded their behavior, and took the GPS coordinates once they surfaced. Initially, I was to jot down any violations by the boat captains and photograph illegal boats in the area of observation. Initially, the volunteers were asked to take...
behavior research. On the boat I closely interacted with the crew, tour guides, the representatives of the Ministry of the Environment, and the tourists themselves. The majority of the paid participants in the whale-watching endeavors are men, and the daily performance of machismo is central to the day’s work. This interaction facilitated my conversations with many of them and allowed me to glimpse the different job roles each had on the boat. The relations on the whale-watching boat reflect the different class, racial, and power structures within a tourist space that is highly patriarchal and racialized. The interactions between the crew, passengers, and other actors on the boats reveal the tensions, desires, and stereotypes that are mobilized by this tourist endeavor.

The Boat Crew

The crew is the first to arrive on the docks and the last to leave. In the early morning hours they clean the boats, put out the life vests, set up the refreshments, and cut the coconuts that will be offered to the excursion guests. These young sailors are the most easily replaceable and the ones with the lowest levels of education and pay; as a result, they are the ones most exploited on the boats. They spend the mornings joking amongst themselves and providing jovial critiques of their surroundings and the inner workings of their occupation.

The sailors are expected and required to do much more than their duties, without being provided training or additional compensation. They work on a seasonal basis and must find other endeavors to sustain themselves beyond the three whale-watching months. During the off months, most of the crew work in the fields, as motoconchos (motorcycle taxi drivers), or as

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pictures of these boats, delivering copies to the ministry representatives. This placed the burden of enforcement on the volunteers, who were then accused by the small vessel owners of threatening their livelihood. Small boat owners then saw the photo lens of the volunteers as a way of surveilling their actions.

199 When the sea is rough they must prepare the bags that will hold the tourists’ vomit if they are affected by the rocking of the boat.
fishermen. A few of them continue to work on the tourist boats in the offseason, taking passengers to Los Haitises National park across the bay or to Cayo Levantado.

On the days of the whale trips, groups of tourists converge on the dock before departure. The sailors are the first point of contact for the visitors and yet have minimal language skills beyond Spanish to interact with the tourists. These sailors are treated by the tourists, owners, and guides not as men, but as boys; there is no attempt to empower them in their work. They are required to smile and tend to the tourists, never thanked and rarely smiled upon by the other protagonists in this whale of a tale.

I became friends with many of the sailors helping to clean the boats after the guests departed. Throughout the day, their critiques were hidden beneath the required smile. After work, there were long sessions of hilarious mimicking of tourist behavior by the sailors. During these conversation sessions, they complained about their interactions and shared personalized critiques of the local situation. Many of them spoke of the disrespect by the different visitors on the vessel and were fully aware of the small amount of money paid to them in comparison to how much the tourists were being charged.

With limited job opportunities in Samaná, working on the boats is a position of privilege for these young men. They receive 350 pesos for a day’s work, the equivalent of $8.50, which is less than what a day laborer might earn, but doing less strenuous work. On the days when there are no whale trips, they are still expected to be on the docks, clean the boats, and do other work. On those days they receive less compensation than the normal rate. Twenty-one-year-old Jose had been recently hired and was one of the youngest sailors on the boat. “I plan to do this for a few years.”

Throughout the day, the crew boasted of their female conquests, while eyeing the unsuspecting female tourists. If able to strike up a relationship with a tourist, the crew can receive physical, emotional, and economic rewards that
female tourists on the boat. He saw no future in his job, and instead used the opportunity to find himself a foreign partner. Jose’s desires reflect his own position within Samaná and his dreams of departing to a place with more opportunities. This is a common theme with the youth in Samaná, who see few options for themselves locally.

At the end of each voyage, the crew bring out the tip jar. Their tips rely upon a good relationship with the guide, the conditions of the sea, and, they say, the nationalities of their passengers. On a good day, they might gather $20 in tips to be divided amongst the crew and captain with a percentage given to the guide. The tip bucket is always placed in the middle of the exit row. As the tourists exit the boat, those who don’t leave anything in the bucket are struck by the bucket in the face. If no tip was left, the crew is at least amused by the discomfort and attempts by tourists at avoiding the bucket on their way out.

Captains

The Captains are held responsible for any mishaps throughout the whale watch journey. The experience of the tourists, the wellbeing of the whales, the adherence of the laws, and safety of the whale endeavor is in the hands of the captain. Few of them have an official certification or formal training, but make it up with years of experience on the water. The captains are only compensated 500 pesos a day ($12), plus tips for all of their duties. They have very little interaction with the tourists and occupy an intermediate space of power between the ministry authorities, the boat owners, and the desires of the tour guide. There are constant attempts to manipulate the captains to follow others orders and expectations. In seeking better tips, the tour guides demand the captain move closer to the whales or give their group additional observation for a few culminate in moving in with their foreign partner. For some these possible rewards are the impetus for working on the boats, while others are more concerned about gaining a wage for their families.

201 When people get sea sick, they tend not to leave in a good mood. [I had expected a footnote here about the nationalities of the tourist; might be interesting to add here if you have that information? I saw you have a footnote later, but I had expected it immediately following the statement about nationalities/tipping.]
time, thus violating sanctuary regulations. It is common for the tour guide to approach the
captain in an unfriendly manner, and an argument will ensue. The captain then takes out much of
his own frustration out on the crew.

**Tour Guides**

Dominican law requires that a tour guide accompany all tourist excursions. Joining the
ranks of the tour guides is an opportunity for Dominican nationals and others to be employed in
tourism jobs that provide a decent wage.\(^{202}\) The criteria established by the Ministry of Tourism
dictates that guides receive training and certification. National guides must be able to speak two
languages other than Spanish, while local guides, like those who operate in Samaná, require one
additional language. These state-based initiatives help to exclude many nationals from these
tourism jobs that could enhance their economic status. Most Dominicans are excluded from
participating as a result of the language requirements. Therefore many of the tour guides
operating on the whaleboats are of foreign descent. The non-local nature of these guides
translates to a different modality of service and a lack of local information provided to the
tourist. Most tours that emanate from other regions of the country bring their own guides, which
further reduces the opportunity for local participation.

The guides establish relations with all levels of local tourist endeavors and secure their
economic position through connections, favors, and the control of the movement of tourist
groups. Guides work hard to establish relations with local artisans and restaurant and shop
owners, and also to guide tourists to these connections in exchange for a percentage of the total
purchase. Although these networks benefit the guides and business owners, they continue to limit
the number of participants who may benefit from these tourism endeavors.

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\(^{202}\) Few guides have learned Russian, and so these tour groups come with their own tour guides and paparazzi and
rarely interact with others. [which others do you mean here? Locals? Crew members? Local crew members?]
The Visitors

Since the early 80s, French, Italian, Spanish, and German visitors have been arriving in Samaná, and the crew has ample experiences to share about these travelers. To the boat crew, tourists are “Gringos” regardless of their country of origin. A common characteristic among most of these visitors is the whiteness of their skin. The crew make superficial distinctions based on nationality for the purpose of distinguishing the quality of their service, the expected rewards, and hence their behavior towards them. These stereotyped distinctions are based on close interaction with these groups over time. Even though he had only been working there for a few months, Jose summarized his observations of the tourist: “The French are good tippers, the Germans they rarely smile or tip, and the Italians never tip and always have something to complain about. The Americans and the Canadians, they provide decent tips if the service is good, but those Russians they sure are stingy.”

The recent increase in tourists from China, Brazil, and Russia has begun to alter local perceptions. For Jose, the Russians were easy to spot: “robust men and thin women in heels.” I witnessed this parade of Russian pomposity described by Jose: the stereotypical Russian woman wore the latest fashion accessories on the boats, and the men wore big gold chains around their necks. Many arrived with the latest camera equipment, rarely smiling at the crew and never leaving a tip. It was a recurrent joke among the crew that the Russians just needed to see a whale spout and that was sufficient for them to go back to the shore, never fully enjoying the whale-watching experience.  

The Buscones

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203 Various boat companies stopped offering alcohol on the boats because of incidents with Russians under the influence.
Many Samaneses imagine tourism as a productive space where they can accumulate capital, but they encounter a different reality. There has been a sharp increase in those that depend on hustling for tourist dollars to sustain their families. Many younger males gravitate towards buscon work. These buscones (hustlers) target tourists in Samaná who are walking around and convince them to hire their services. Buscones work on commission or for tips; they skirt the law when needed and will work anywhere: whatever you need, they will find. They have become a thorn in the side of the local tourism police force and for the tour guides who tend to compete for the attention and money of the tourist. The “Politur” (Tourism Police) have developed a routine of catching buscones the day before the cruise ships arrive, preemptively placing them in cells to avoid the supposed harassment of tourists.²⁰⁴ To be a buscon can be a dangerous life because it means always having to look over your shoulder.

The buscones exist on the margins, and many serve as liaisons for the movement of illegal products and services. Much like the guides, these buscones rely on the network of shops and restaurants to which they direct business and receive a percentage of the sale. The buscones are vilified for their job, and yet all in the community use their services. Many of these youth must exude a hyper masculine persona so as to survive in these public spaces.²⁰⁵ Because of the aggressive actions of some buscones, many visitors leave Samaná with a bad impression of the community and little understanding of local economic woes and the different levels of abuse that exist.

Inspectors

²⁰⁴ “Politur” was created with the specific intent on policing areas of tourism. Politur officers report to the ministry of tourism rather than to the armed forces and receive additional training in handling tourism situations. They are expected to be respectful to visitors while policing the locals against any aggression towards the tourist.
²⁰⁵ It is common to see the Politur chasing after homeless children who hang out at the docks asking for money. The children usually escape by jumping in the water where they know the Politur will not follow.
During the whale season, the Ministry of the Environment employs inspectors to enforce the environmental regulations in the whale sanctuary. The inspectors are chosen among the pool of young adults in Samaná, many of whom are linked through established kinship and political networks. It is a seasonal job, and very few return after their initial year of service. The inspectors are stationed in each of the different ports and whale boat departure points with the bulk of their job consisting of keeping count of the amount of tourists on each boat and charging each of them the 100-peso entrance fee to the whale sanctuary.

The inspectors are expected to make sure the boats follow regulations. In attempting to sanction violating vessels, many inspectors have faced violent encounters with local boat owners. As a result, the inspectors rarely file any complaints or get too involved because they understand the local power dynamics in which they operate. These youth, poorly trained and underpaid, are the recipients of the abuse by the captains, guides, and users of the sanctuary. They receive the brunt of the complaints regarding the conflicts in the management of the sanctuary. The inspectors are not enabled by the state or their supervisors to do their functions and routinely complain regarding their low wages, lack of direction, delayed payments, and the futility of their positions that results in very little interest and effort in their work. Without having any means or authority to enforce the laws, they prefer to sit quietly and not interfere with the other workers, many of whom are their neighbors.

**Boat Owners**

The Association of Boat Owners was established in the early 80s to represent and lobby for the tourist boat owners’ interests before the pertinent authorities. Although all boat owners in Samaná are expected to participate in the association, the numbers who actually participate fluctuate from 10-15, of whom only three owners do so regularly. The most vocal and assertive
are the owners of Moto Marina and Whale Watch Samaná, who are two of the more successful whale-watching businesses in Samaná.

To curtail critiques from whale conservationists, the association hired an environmental consultant in the early 80s to develop a set of regulations for the whale-watching endeavor. At the time, there did not exist a government entity charged with caring for the environment. These regulations were aimed at protecting the whales by creating a less hostile environment and provide a better viewing experience for visitors. The regulations limited the amount of vessels in the viewing area at any given time; reduced the viewing time of boats; regulated the proximity of vessels to the whales; and prohibited the use of planes and helicopters for viewing. Conveniently, the regulations also limited the liability of the boat owner and place the burden of responsibility on others like the captains with less access to power.

**Regulating the Whale Experience: The Conflict Continues**

Much of the local conflict in the whale-watching endeavor is between conservation efforts, tourism interests, and local needs, with these interests many times operating against each other. The Ministry of the Environment, established in 1999, is in charge of managing the whale sanctuary and regulating those that participate in the endeavor. The ministry is responsible for implementing the sanctuary regulations and for the distribution of the licenses for the whale watching boats. It is in constant conflict with the Ministry of Tourism, who sees it as their purview to handle all tourist endeavors. This conflict is about control and about who gets to benefit from the user fee charges to experience these natural resources.

The Ministry of the Environment’s mission is to regulate the protected areas of the DR. In Samaná, the ministry is in charge of the whale sanctuary and chose to adopt the regulations that were developed by the boat owners’ association. The main representative of the Ministry of
the Environment and the coordinator of the whale sanctuary and the Banco de La Plata was Peter Sanchez. As part of their regulation of the sanctuary, the ministry charges all visitors $100 Dominican pesos for access. The entrance fee that is collected is sent back to ministry offices in Santo Domingo and divvied up. Once the funds are tallied, a percentage of funds returns to Samaná to provide support towards local efforts. In an interview with Peter Sanchez, he indicated that the percentage of funds returning to the community had increased to 30%.

The ministry has attempted to regulate the increasing number of boats that participate in whale watching. The limits placed on the amount of boats that participate have solidified the monopoly of boats that have in the past attained those permits. The dispensing of permits has become an act of controlling who gets to benefit and participate legally in the whale watching endeavors. One local tour company alone owns 6 permits, and two other boat companies have four permits apiece, with the remaining 28 permits distributed among different owners.

During the 2012 season, 32 boats received permits by the ministry, and by the 2014 season, the maximum 42 vessels received permits. New permits are rarely given, and those currently holding them are not eager to give them up. These permits are allocated to the boats through different mechanisms. Once approved for permits, the vessels are inspected by the Navy and are ready to begin making money after payment of the initial sum to the ministry. The price of these permits differs based upon the length of the boats and their passenger capacity. The maximum price for the season permit is $15,000 pesos, the equivalent of $375 dollars. This is paid directly to the Ministry of the Environment for their management and payroll allowances.²⁰⁶

For many local fishermen who contemplate participating in whale watching, the difficulty and the costs associated with attaining a legal permit are prohibitive. In addition to the permitted boats, other vessels participate in the whale watching by means of illicit trips. These boats are the

²⁰⁶ This amount is easily recovered with one large whale-watch trip.
first point of conflict between the ministry managers and local users. They willingly violate the whale sanctuary rules and enter without a permit. These vessels are usually smaller fishing boats owned by local families that depart from smaller ports in the bay. What options do these fishermen have other than to violate the law?

These violations can be seen as a local critique of these management processes from the most exploited of the participants: the fishermen. It is substantially more difficult for a small boat owner with trips of five people to recuperate the initial cost associated with the whale-watching permit. These illegal vessels charge less for the same experience and are the source of many headaches to the ministry representatives. The whale sanctuary regulations dictate that after the first infraction illegal vessels are not allowed to go into the water for a day. The second infraction receives a monetary penalty and a restriction on leaving port for multiple days. As the reaction to their actions is minimal, the monetary benefits of participation far outweigh the punishment.

Encounters with illicit boats in the whale-watching area are a constant nuisance for the ministry, as well as for boat owners and captains with permits. A Dominican navy ship is charged with giving sanctions to illegal vessels, but lacking gasoline or interest, rarely leaves the port to enforce the laws. As one of the captains stated under his breath, “the only ones they mess with are the captains with license.” Rather than placing the responsibility on the boat owners or guides, the new regulations instead shift the blame to the captains for any infractions out on the water. For any violations, the captains have to pay a fine of 5,000 pesos, which equals half of their salary for the month. In addition to the monetary penalty, captains are restricted from captaining a boat for a period of time, thus further losing income. The fines for the violations are
to be paid to the boat owners’ association to be used at their disposal. This conflict of interest has not caused much alarm.

The sanctuary laws are flexible for the elite and politically-connected.Foreigners and elite families who own larger vessels enter the area without permission and are rarely penalized, while smaller vessels belonging to fishermen are routinely harassed. These discrepancies in enforcement anger many locals, who constantly receive the brunt of the enforcement. The boat captains of the permitted vessels use these violations to justify their own violations, causing a breakdown in enforcement and regulation. The boats corral the whales and chase after them to provide a better viewing experience for paying tourists, thus endangering the lives of the whales and their offspring. As one captain said, “the only ones who suffer are those who follow the regulations, because there is no repercussions for those that don’t.” The competing objectives between capital accumulation and conservation are not easily balanced.

Even if documentation exists of a violation, the culprits are rarely sanctioned. At times when the authorities approach these illegal vessels, the participants yell threats in forms of questions: “Why are you taking food from my family?” “What if I did that to you?” These statements are indicative of the conflicts in the management of the sanctuary. These conflicts

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207 I was out in the water during one of these conflicts and witnessed by representatives of the ministry. A large private sailboat owned by the CEO of the national gas company entered the area without a permit. The company donated money and items to the Ministry of the Environment for their various campaigns. After multiple attempts to contact the boat by radio and requests for them to exit the area, the ministry representative gave up, and they were allowed to stay. A sanction was not given to them, arguing that sometimes politics supersedes enforcement. The inspectors on the boats are afraid to communicate with the violators by radio because of the possible loss of their own positions.

208 The dock master in Samaná, responsible for allocating the day permits for private vessels, publicly stated that private vessels could visit the whale sanctuary in their boats without the permit. Other private motorboats hail from the neighboring Puerto Bahia luxury project, owned by elite families within the DR who spend weekends in Samaná.

209 Although not a regular occurrence, incidents where whales have been hit have occurred because of these thoughtless actions.

210 As much as the tourist peers at the whales, the whales also observe. They approach the boats; glide beneath them; and jump beside them. They surely feel the increase in boats and tourists and are bothered by their constant entry into their mating zone.
will continue if more active communication and enforcement is not established between the users and managers of the sanctuary. The increased number of vessels and the harassment of whales by boats also appear to change the movements and numbers of whales visiting the bay of Samaná. Many Samaneses are concerned with the effects of the increase in whale-watching boats. As a local elder commented:

Even the whales can see the deterioration. Before we could sit on the boardwalk and you could see the whales close by. I would take my kids to the bridge to see them. But with that persecution they have now, they don’t want to come close. Even the whales are being chased away by money. There will come a time when the whales stop coming here looking for peace, because there will be none. (Tata, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton 2013).

The Ministry of the Environment has attempted to extend the area of the whale sanctuary to capture the movement patterns of the whales and to encapsulate the areas where they mate and give birth. This extension of the sanctuary falls in line with conservation effort, but not with local needs and user realities. If the extension is achieved, a large swath of the ocean environment will be legally closed to fishermen during the three-month whale season. Recent regulations supported by the ministry attempts to bar local fishermen from entering the whaling grounds to fish for subsistence purposes, arguing that these actions endanger the whales. It is hard to imagine that these fishermen significantly disturb the peace of the whales, who are likely more disturbed by the high-powered whale-watching boats and the proximity of the cruise ships that pass through their habitat en route to the port of Samaná.

A new whale-watching operation is beginning on the southern coast of the bay in the town of Miches that could present competition to the boats in Samaná. Responding to this, the recent updates to the regulations have restricted the permits to boats with local ownership. This is an attempt to intervene in the tourism process and to claim a bigger piece of the pie for local
investors and owners. But the spoils are still not large enough to impact those who need it the most.

![Carnival celebrations in Samaná. Photo by Ryan Mann-Hamilton.](image)

**Branding Samaná**

The disorder in the enforcement of the whale sanctuary regulations is indicative of the lack of follow through on the part of the ministry and other state institutions. This disorder shines a light on the fraught relationship between government entities and the local community. Although the ministry has failed to properly manage the whale-watching enterprise, there have been attempts to connect the endeavor to the community. The humpback whales have become an economic project for the town and have slowly been incorporated into the local identity of Samaná. In early January 2012, the mayor of Samaná, Miguel Bezi, and his advisors, announced that the town needed to have a stronger and more unique image to attract tourism. Alongside the Ministry of the Environment, the municipal government developed a brand for Samaná that would be linked to the arrival of the whales.

To inaugurate the whale season every year, the Humpback Whale Festival has been organized with the support of the local tour operators, business owners, the whale museum,
CEBSE, and other local conservation organizations. The festival is an attempt to establish a relationship between the whales’ arrival and the larger community through a series of public events and educational projects with local youth. The relationship to the sea and its creatures is not only manifested through material means: the sea also is expressed and represented by the community through various religious rituals, musical variations, visually-inspired paintings, and culinary inflections. The sea is seen as an entity to be respected, revered, and one to which blessings must be given. The sea is understood as an unpredictable force of destruction. The branding effort had the support of the Bahia Principe hotels that provided a space for the festival in the Pueblito Principe location. For the first edition of the festival, a small number of people turned out, which could be attributed to the lackluster publicity for the event that consisted of a small banner at the entrance to the town.  

On the final night of the festival, mayor Miguel Bezi shared a few words with the small gathering. He did not attempt to disguise his intentions, nor did his words lend support to a vision of conservation. He exclaimed, “These whales are a resource to be exploited,” as gasps came from the audience. For Bezi, the whales mean visits from foreigners: another way to amass funds for municipal expenditures and the continued development of the region’s tourism infrastructure. Perhaps not yet convinced by these efforts, most Samaneses came as onlookers, still unsure of how to engage.

Follow the Money

211 A short film was shown about the conservation of the reefs and its ecological importance, followed by a live band composed of mostly musicians from the Diaspora who embraced the African rhythms of Haiti and the DR in their presentation.
212 In addition to the festival, the town’s carnival was revived and included costumes linking its theme to oceanic creatures like the dolphin, turtle, shark, and whale.
213 The push for the development of these lands and the region is a political imperative for Bezi and is of personal benefit. As the cost of land and interest in the region rises, so, too, do his private land holdings. The real estate projects his family is involved in are set to increase in price when the state infrastructural projects for the region are completed.
A cursory evaluation of the profits in the whale-watching endeavor reveals large sums of money being made in a three-month period. Although the costs of purchasing the boat and depreciation are not factored in, the whale-watching business is lucrative. The whaleboats carry anywhere from 15 to 60 passengers who are charged a minimum of $40 per person to go see the whales. Depending on the point of departure of the trip, the excursion may cost up to $100. A single person paying for their whale experience pays the money owed to all of the boat crew. If we assume a trip of 30 people per boat, the company makes $1,200 per trip, of which approximately $200 will be used to pay for the day’s gasoline, refreshments, and crew costs. If you multiply these profits by an increased number of boats, they are substantial, enough so that many of the boats are not used for the rest of the year. The income that is generated from whale watching stays in the hands of the boat owners and rarely trickles down to others, which means that we find the limits to the benefits of this tourism endeavor.214

Cruise Ships and Local Money Flows

Beyond the whale-watching endeavor, another important aspect of local tourism is the cruise ships. Cruise ship arrivals in Samaná began in the late 70s, but the number of ships arriving was not significant until the late 80s. By 2013, over 80 cruise ships docked in the bay, although these numbers fluctuate year by year (Ministry of Tourism 2014). The cruise ships arrive in the bay early morning and leave late afternoon. As there is no port in Samaná with the capacity to dock a large cruise ship, the tourists are ferried onto smaller vessels and brought to the dock located in the eastern part of the malecon (boardwalk).

214 During the remainder of the year, some of the whale-watching vessels rely on charter trips to Los Haitises and tourist ferry service to Cayo Levantado. Augusto Gonzalez, an entrepreneur and tourism boat owner from Samaná, spoke before the International Whaling Commission (IWC). Augusto, as a key player in Samaná civil society, was there to represent the town and its interests, but certainly spoke for certain segments of the local society who benefitted from the income generated by this conservation tourism. Through the online sphere, many Samaneses commented with pride about having Samaná represented on the world stage; others questioned whose interests were being served.
It is a local joke that when the cruise ships arrive in the bay, so, too, does the rain. Critics and supporters of the cruise ship industry agree the economic impact of cruise ship arrivals is severely limited by the inadequate port facilities in Samaná. Additionally, pressure from cruise ship companies has kept “arrival taxes so low that they do not cover the direct costs incurred by governments” (Wilkinson 2005:75). Upon disembarking from the ship, the passengers are greeted by representatives of the cruise ship company and various tour guides. The majority of cruise ship tourists who disembark in Samaná have their itineraries arranged beforehand. Tour operators have exclusive rights on the tours for the cruise ship passengers, and there is little flexibility to engage with the local community.215 During the cruise ship visits, Cayo Levantado and other local attractions are closed to the local public and made available exclusively to the cruise ship passengers.

For the few cruise ship tourists who choose to explore on their own, the first point of encounter will be with the barrage of local tour guides who offer their services for the day.216 The tour guides are in charge of choosing the mode of transportation and the restaurants and the shops they will visit, whereby the guide receives a percentage of the transaction at each stop.217 Those who choose to go without a guide can hire a taxi driver who either teams up with a guide or offers private car service for couples and families, charging a set price of $100 for the day.218 Beyond the services provided by the guides and taxis, only a few other food businesses in town and local artisans benefit from these visits. Most of those who accrue benefits must be connected

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215 Making money in Samaná is based on too many ifs. For example, if the rain held out, it would be a good day for sales. If enough tourists got off the cruise ship, money would be made.
216 The Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Tourism offer the guides trainings two to three times a year, but these trainings are not required and instead are made voluntary. These accreditations are many times not given based on the knowledge that can be imparted to the tourist, but, rather, on the connections of the individual.
217 In informal conversations with many of the guides, many were unfamiliar with much of the local history and were unable to provide a historical background for tourists.
218 The taxi drivers make the largest economic investment by purchasing a vehicle and absorbing the cost of the gasoline.
to larger structures and therefore are paid less than if they were to offer their services as individuals.

On cruise ship days, a local artisan market pops up in the *malecon*. Each tent houses a local artisan or a representative of an artist collective. The municipality charges a fee of 10,000 pesos for a permit for these tents, or the equivalent of $350 for the cruise ship season. The initial cost of the permit can be recuperated in just a month of good sales. To reap the benefit from any of these tourist opportunities in Samaná, one must be connected through economic, political, and social networks. At times these business relationships require small payment or gift to maintain their networks.

An increasing number of tourists may be arriving at these destinations, but data suggests that the expenditures of the individuals on the cruise ship have substantially decreased over time (Wilkinson 2005:58). Attempts by local authorities to attract more cruise ships and improve the conditions for the cruise ship experience in Samaná go against the data on cruise ship economics. It is important to be critical of the latest data provided by the Dominican government on tourism profits. The unreliable nature of this tourism data reflects the gross income of these endeavors for the national economy. The data does not provide a break down of how these economic returns affect populations and regions that surround tourism centers and the incomes of families participating in the tourism endeavor. The lack of adequate data regarding tourism expenditures allows for the data to be manipulated so as to justify state expenditures. This incomplete data leads to faulty planning and infrastructural decisions that require large economic inputs with very few results (Wilkinson 2005:59).219

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219 One should measure the environmental impact of these cruise ships in relation to the number of jobs provided by the cruise ship industry.
Tourism enclaves have become a pattern within the cruise ship industry. These companies purchase or lease a smaller island, which is exclusive for cruise ship participants, and in this way they also monopolize the expenditures during the stops. The all-inclusive packaging of the cruise ships leaves few hours when the tourist is left to wander the different port stops. The visitors are monitored to ensure there is little contact with people outside of the tourist economic chain. These cruise ship visitors make little local expenditure because they are limited by what can be taken back to the boat. Caribbean islands continue to try to attract cruise ships out of hope, but the economic data shows the expenditures, and thus local profits, continue to decrease (Wilkinson 2005:74). 220

Much like the whales, the arrival of the cruise ships sets off a series of conflicts between the authorities and the local population. The cruise ship companies exert pressure to improve the conditions of Samaná, not for the community but for the tourists. Some of the concerns expressed by the cruise ship representatives are in relation to the amount of garbage on the streets, perceived levels of crime, the passengers’ safety, and the lack of a proper port facility to disembark the passengers. These factors referenced by the cruise ship companies have limited the growth of the Samaná tourism industry. 221

The Real E{state}

As a process deeply linked with globalization, tourism has brought an increased interest in real estate development. The extension of basic services to rural areas has made available additional lands for investors that have spurned a new market for housing developments:

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220 Beyond the cruise ships and the whale season, the most active time in Samaná is during Holy Week. There are stark differences between the income generated by cruise ships and whale watching. Many of those interested in the whales stay locally and spend money on other endeavors, but this is also shifting with the improvement of the road. Tour groups to see the whales can now come in to Samaná and then leave in the afternoon, thus spending no time in the town. Outside of the peak months of November to March, most visitors to Samaná are Dominican nationals, many who bring their own supplies in their vehicles and once again expend little money locally.

221 The mayor of Samaná has been working on the issue of garbage, but he relies on hiring local labor to clean up green areas every morning rather than teaching people not to damage their surroundings.
“Tourism as a mode of development impinges directly upon issues of power relations through the ways in which external capital is accommodated in national contexts, the legitimacies of planning procedures, lands rights, ownership, access, and the legacies of social exclusion and inclusion” (Jamal and Robinson 2005:5). With the increase in private capital, real estate has become one of the main endeavors with a widening margin of profit and is altering the relationships among communities, families, and their land. This has resulted in a significant increase in false titles, illegal claims to land, and corrupt judicial processes that led to the displacement of local inhabitants. This real estate interest in Samaná threatens the subsistence of local families and substantially decreases the land available for agricultural production.

The development of real estate tourism cannot be separated from the development of a strong hotel industry, without which there cannot be a dynamic tourist sector. The increased money allocated towards tourism has precipitated a string of projects that are geared towards growth in hotel room capacities and an increase in luxury real estate. In places such as Puerto Plata and Samaná, there is a growing tendency to buy properties within larger managed complexes. These units, when not occupied, are rented out to tourists visiting the area and therefore generate a profit for the owners. This model allows the operators to recuperate their inversion at a faster pace with the sale of these units.

One of the most effective ways for local politicians to accumulate capital is through the approval and control of infrastructural and real estate projects. Large tracts of land are being attained through the displacement of locals and mediated and facilitated by the politicians in the midst. These political interests devour the lands for sale to construct yacht clubs and limited access luxury facilities. These increased investments have precipitated a rise in the price of land and resulted in an increase of real estate fraud and community displacement for private
residences. These new residences provide vacation homes for many national politicians, elite families, foreign investors, and visiting dignitaries. Local willingness to sell land in order to receive immediate compensation has resulted in a generation of landless families in Samaná. Without these lands, they face the greatest obstacle to survival yet.

The manipulation of local titles and the displacement of local populations is routinely orchestrated and directed by state representatives through their connections to the judicial system. The collusion between state and real estate interests has secured pristine locations for these new projects. Lax state processes have facilitated the ease of their displacement through the abundance and acceptance of false titles. The falsification of land titles has become an extremely lucrative process involving different segments of society and deeply implicating the courts in the mismanagement and reselling of lands to multiple parties. Samaná courts are filled with these fraudulent cases as a result of the willingness of many lawyers to participate in, and sometimes direct, these fraudulent land schemes.

Many of these local land tenure conflicts have been blamed on the lack of municipal records and land title registry. Many families in the Samaná peninsula are without a title to the lands that they have lived on for more than 100 years. These records were alleged to have been burnt in the fire of 1946, yet I found a series of land title books dating back to 1897 housed in a non-descript room in the Samaná municipal archives. The books contained the judicial titles of

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222 Most Samanese, unless they participated in the construction or work in the home, will never see the inside of these luxury private spaces.
223 These spaces also occupy some of the best land and thus access to swim holes and beaches that are then made inaccessible to the general public.
224 Luxury tourism projects like Balcones del Atlantico in Las Terrenas required a presidential decree allowing the project to be constructed on the beach, which is a violation of Dominican national laws. These projects organized by elite and politically-connected families escape the permit system.
225 When I was allowed in the room, I was told that I could look at a stack of documents and ledgers lying on the floor next to Clorox bottles. The municipal employee pointed at the large volume of books on the other side of the room and indicated that I was not permitted to look at those, and then left the room. Alone and armed with a scanner, I began to wonder. Curiosity got the best of me. [this is amazing].
land for Samaná, Miches, and Sabana de la Mar. I suspect they are being sequestered because if these books are made available, they could provide unwanted resolution to a series of historical conflicts around land in Samaná.

In 2010, there was an attempt by the Ministry of National Goods to expedite new legal land titles for the peninsula. The project would have required a state-funded survey of the peninsula to establish more exact measurements of these public and private landholdings. The endeavor would have replaced all old titles and deterred false land claims, but the greatest opposition came from local politicians, real estate developers, and the mayor of Samaná. They publicly decried this endeavor as a waste of resources, even though the funding would not originate from the municipal budget.

Few attempts are made to hide local political collusion with these real estate interests. The offices of Bezi real estate belonging to the mayor’s family attest to the vast amounts of local land interests. The Bezi family’s substantial land holdings have increased in the last 8 years with some of these purchases in legal dispute in Dominican courts. Through his role as mayor, Miguel Bezi has been able to attract business partnerships to the region while increasing and accumulating his own resources and the value of his investment. In February 2012, a Samaná resident sued Mayor Bezi and the municipality for the theft of land and the falsification of titles. The land at the center of the conflict had been donated by the mayor for the purpose of building a low-income housing project for the most impoverished in the community. In a news conference at the municipal office, the mayor declared that those lands had been in his family for many years. The regional court disagreed and ruled in favor of the Samaná resident as the legal owner. Court documents indicated that the mayor had produced a false title.\footnote{Leonel Fernandez, president at the time, arrived in Samaná to inaugurate the low-income housing project named \textit{Projecto La Esperanza} (Project Hope). He was there to cut the ribbons on the project and leave the keys to the...} Since the low-income
housing construction had been completed, the citizen entered into an agreement with the municipality to receive compensation for the land.

The Other Side of Tourism

For many in Samaná, the promise of tourism has not come to fruition. With the increased number of visitors to the region, other changes to local society have taken effect. Worsening economic conditions and growing inequality have given rise to a sense of desperation, forcing those most in need to venture beyond the national borders in search of alternatives. Many choose to leave their homes for urban areas in the DR to seek individual desires for accumulation and to understand the limits of the local environ. But many young Samaneses are seeking a future through the dangerous journey by sea from the DR to Puerto Rico in hopes of making a jump to the US mainland. For many of these journeys, there is a chance of tragedy.

On the 5th of February 2012 at the peak of the whale season, a boat carrying over 60 individuals capsized in the Bay of Samaná right off the coast of Sabana de la Mar on the southern end of the bay. The news spread like wildfire. In the middle of the night, crowds gathered on the town dock waiting for the return of the navy frigate and other smaller boats that...

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The Dominican police have extended their dragnet to rural areas and populations. Because of their low cost and low gasoline consumption, motorcycles are the common mode of transport in rural areas such as Samaná. These motorists regularly drive without documentation and commit traffic infractions. In attempting to both recoup money for their efforts as well as enforce rules, the AMET Transportation Ministry has established new guidelines for motorized vehicles. Requiring proper registration, compulsory insurance, and protective gear, the new enforcements have come down more harshly on those with less income. The policing of these motorized vehicles has significantly increased the revenues for the Transportation Ministry, but also has left many working families without the only form of transport they could muster.
had been sent out to search for any survivors. Forty-eight souls lost their lives in the journey. For the next few days, bodies were spotted by tourist boats headed to Los Haitises National Park. The captains maneuvered around the bodies, calling in rescue workers to reclaim them from the sea. For three days and nights, bodies were piled up on the dock. Blankets covered some; others remained uncovered in hopes of being identified. The cries of family members could be heard in the distance, and the usual bachata music that emanated from the cafes had been turned off. In the market, the sales of fish substantially decreased for the week. Many Samaneses believed that the longer the bodies were in the water, they more susceptible they would be to being eaten by the fish, which they would then consume.

Aristoteles, like many Samaná youth, had attempted the journey to Puerto Rico twice. Aristoteles had worked in Samaná’s tourism sector for many years, but he believed his skills would be better compensated in Puerto Rico. He knew Samaneses who had prospered and had witnessed many return years later with documents in their hands and dollar bills in their pockets. He joked, “I went away by boat, and the government flew me back. As I looked down from the airplane, I realized how crazy I had been to try that journey twice.” He felt no ill will to those who had captured him; instead he commented on how respectful they had been to him in comparison to others who had made the journey. He perceived that his mixed racial background had allowed him to pass within Puerto Rican society, but his friend Anibal, who accompanied him, was immediately identified as a Dominican because of his phenotype.

Conclusion

In April 2012, a meeting of the five district mayors of Samaná and representatives from the Ministry of the Environment took place in the Chinese restaurant that overlooks the bay.228

228 The meeting for the Pacto Ambiental with Samaná had been scheduled for 6 months and was postponed because of a last-minute fundraising event for Danilo Medina. The meeting with the elite political class, many of whom own
The meeting was convened to discuss issues related to the conservation and management of the local environment. The Ministry of the Environment was attempting to establish an Environmental Action Plan to mitigate the effects of larger development projects scheduled for the region. Though the event was open to the public, there was no notification and therefore no local representation beyond political actors and representatives from local environmental NGO CEBSE, Nature Conservancy, and USAID.

After introductions were made, the ministry representative spoke briefly about their environmental management attempts. He gave examples of the multiple ways that the system of enforcement of laws protecting the environment had broken down. He called for the support of the local mayors to ensure that these laws were applied across the board and hinted that the breakdowns were a result of local-level conflicts.

The response of the mayors was expectedly defensive, and one by one they protested. The mayors decried their attempts to enforce the guidelines and proceeded to narrate how they had attempted to do so. They all declared that the authorities had ignored attempts at local enforcement because the violators had connections to someone in power. The Mayor of Las Galeras described a situation in which a general from the armed forces cut down the trees in an area he wished to develop after authorities had told him not to. The mayors presented a series of other instances where the ministry had taken contradictory positions to local authorities when consulted. The mayor of Las Galeras concluded his statement by stating “those with capital are able to do as they please.” Through the multiple examples they shared, the mayors declared that they were not accepting the blame for the failure of enforcement by Dominican state structures.

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land in Las Terrenas, required the attendance of the PLD party members and the Minister of the Environment, who is in charge of approving many of these tourist projects (Guzman 2012).
Aware that he had lost control of the meeting, the ministry speaker asked them to stop and diverted attention to another matter.

The Dominican state has entered into public-private partnerships that accrue large amounts of money for those involved. ²²⁹ The latest of these public-private partnerships has been with Canadian multinational Barick Gold and their gold-mining endeavor in Puerto Viejo.²³⁰ The increased attempts towards participation in the tourist industry by different segments of the Samaná community are creating additional competition for an already saturated market.

An odd mixture of desperation, faith, patience, and hope emanates from Samaná. The town of Samaná is currently going through a process of gentrification and environmental degradation and shows signs of increasing cultural and social change. The region of Samaná continues to be battered by foreign and national influxes of capital intent on exploiting local resources and labor. These interests can only be slowed and reorganized, not gotten rid of. Though people are participating in the tourist endeavors of the town, this participation is limited, enforced, and corrupted by processes of power. These powers demand a cut into the profits of the lowest-level workers while accumulating large quantities of capital in the hands of foreign business owners and nationally-based elites. Too many participants in lower-level positions within the tourism industry receive little benefit for their work.

Tourism infrastructural investment relies on two things in the DR: the relatively low price of land and the low cost of labor. A whole bureaucratic arm of the government has been created

²²⁹ Tourism has been linked to the commodification of culture, trafficking of local women and children, internal migration and displacement, and the disruption of traditional behaviors (Cabezas, 2008).
²³⁰ As part of its efforts to improve its public relations and public image, Barick distributed a slough of local development funds to different municipalities around the country. They bought advertisements in all of the major print and media outlets, pushing their environmental record and job creation schemes. In the context of Samaná, the money allocated by Barick has been used for small infrastructural projects that the local municipality had been pushing for some time. The same sign announcing that the funding comes from Barick gold—the sign that makes its way through all of the different projects they claim to support—is a reminder of the company’s engagement with these local endeavors.
to deal with the increased interests of land-instituting systems that require large amounts of money and time to receive the proper documentation. Public spaces are limited to elite segments and visitors and become exclusive spaces where one can choose not to encounter the local population.

The increased economic investment in tourism has been accompanied by rising levels of inflation, and the cost of basic food items, alongside a substantial increase in taxation. The rise in national prices has far outgrown personal and family incomes, and many are unable to meet the growing economic demands. Dominican state resources are not being used to improve the island’s human resources. Although participation in the wages of tourism are beneficial and desired by many, most of the wages gained from these endeavors are not conducive to the accumulation of capital. They are only enough for subsistence and survival.

Tourism endeavors in Samaná, if organized differently, could have positive effects on the community. Many visitors are intrigued by the history of the community, and this attention has energized some community efforts to reclaim their histories. Another result of increased tourism has been a resurgence of English language in Samaná, but its importance for the community “has shifted from performing a highly symbolic and affective function to strategic commercial functions” (Smith 1989). The process of cultural erosion established in previous chapters that began under the dictatorship and extended into the modern nation-building phase is coming to an end as local youth relearn some aspects of local culture in response to tourist projects and interests.

Samaneses are workers, not owners; they are labor not production, peripheral not central, and as time passes their roles are less stable and their reaction to dispossessions more volatile. The exclusionary tactics of the state are continually used to establish hierarchies within the
population and help to reconfigure spaces of opposition. Surveillance groups are also created to “protect” tourists while violently oppressing locals. Samaneses now watch as the beaches they grew up with are set aside for hotel guests.²³¹ Locals are bombarded by foreign images of capital, while observing the mostly Caucasian tourists seasonally invades their coasts, spending lavishly and effortlessly.

Others have given up on waiting for the state to assist them because they always end up paying more than they receive. Excluded from decision-making within the larger structures of the country, local voices have begun to organize. In Samaná, economic and land-based dispossession is being contested through overt and covert organizing and a return to mobilizing the community’s past. This newfound attitude is pushing against the limits of the Dominican state with new forms of organizing at both the local and national level.

In early 2013, the announcement of the most recent union between private capital and state development unveiled plans for a new cruise ship terminal to be built in the town of Samaná. The contract was signed in the final months of the previous government and announced a few months into the new PLD presidency. As a way to entice the local population to support the project, there was much talk of the terminal providing local jobs. In addition, this new business incursion promised a slough of services to visiting tourists: shops, museums, and a cultural center that was to be accessible to the community.

For the terminal to be built, the bay of Samaná would have to be dredged, as it was too shallow for cruise ships to enter. It was the hope of the planners that by the ship being able to dock in the town, a larger of number of passengers might disembark to spend their money. The President identified a location designated for the terminal that would be adjacent to the malecon

²³¹ When purchasing a cell phone in the summer of 2009, I was asked for a foreign passport and was told that if I had one, the price of the phone and the service would be 100 pesos, the equivalent of $3 cheaper than it would be for residents. There was no explanation given when questioned as to why; only that it was company policy.
(boardwalk), a space that prior community plans had intended to be a green area and park for the local children. The project would disrupt local wildlife and water flow patterns; decrease the available green space; and leave the community center that both groups were working on under the control of private hands not associated with the community. In a rare sign of internal party conflict, Mayor Miguel Bezi voiced his disapproval, not of the project itself, but of the way it was being done without any local collaboration. After a few tense meetings with local businessmen, the project was given a green light, and the mayor, now included in the planning, was appeased. This continued dispossession and displacement requires the development of quotidian practices of survival by the population. In the next chapter, I will discuss the erosion of democratic institutions, the suppression of dissent, and the disenfranchisement of local voters as a result of the vested interests in tourism.
Chapter 5

The Real E(state): Political Tigueraje and Electoral Dispossession in the DR

Llegaron en chancletas y se fueron en jeepetas
(They arrived in sandals and they left in SUVs)

As the roosters announced the beginning of the new day, families prepared their children for school in the rural community of Cueva del Agua. There was a commotion outside with the arrival of various pick up trucks and SUVs filled with armed men who began yelling for the families to get out of their homes. “Take whatever is important with you!” they screamed. The men entered the community in full force, firing at the feet of the youngsters and men who dared to protest, as if inviting them to respond to their violence. The machetes and guns they waved around prompted screams, reminding many of a not-so-distant past when the Dominican state forces abducted people at will and terrorized the population.

The sheriff had delivered the eviction papers that same morning of the 12th of March, 2012. There had been no warning, no time to prepare, no prior visit to inform them of their removal. The required 15-days legal notice in cases of eviction was ignored. The armed contingent was under the leadership of a captain of the police force of Santo Domingo, and witnesses recalled a number of policemen in addition to the armed plainclothes men. Members of the Rodriguez family who were linked to the governing PLD party had paid for the armed men. The family was intent on regaining this land at any cost because they intended to sell it to a conglomerate of investors who had announced the development of a new golf course and luxury private residences in Samaná.

The armed men stopped traffic a kilometer outside the site, making sure that no one would go through. They denied entry to the press, the mayor of the municipality of Las Galeras, local authorities, and concerned citizens and family members. The armed men also denied access
to a few members of the Rodriguez family who, in a show of good faith, had signed an accord with the residents of Cueva del Agua acknowledging their legal claim to some of the land. In the signed agreement, the community would be allowed to stay and the surrounding occupied lands would be returned to the Rodriguez family.

Dominican law declares that the occupiers can claim land occupied for more than 25 years without objection. This land had lain idle for countless year and had been occupied for over 30. During this time, the community of Cueva del Agua had managed to secure funds to build a Catholic parish church and convinced the Dominican state to build a small school and a clinic to serve the community. Local courts had sided with the community of Cueva del Agua, but regardless of the court injunction, the more powerful Rodriguez family members used their political and economic clout to orchestrate the displacement.

By mid-afternoon, 140 adults and 43 children had been left on the street. Over fifty homes and the local school and clinic were razed to the ground by bulldozers. The few items community members could carry and rescue in time were piled into trucks, driven to the main road and dumped there, along with the families. During the process of removal, the armed contingent looted many of the homes, taking the few valuables that remained. Witnesses declared that the armed men broke into a local community store and took all they could find. To further terrorize the community, the men destroyed the conucos (small farm plots), which families had long used for subsistence. By attacking their food source and livelihood, they attempted to make sure that they would not return. Armed sentries were posted at the entrance of the road to forcefully impede the return of the residents to the land. In the violent, disorganized onslaught, additional areas of land were forcefully taken, violating the rights of other families
who lived in the vicinity of the community. They too would experience the violence of dispossession and displacement.

After a week of public pleas, court appearances, and fruitless meetings with the authorities, thirty of the ousted families occupied the governor’s office in Samaná. The families intended to wait there to pressure local state representatives to intervene. The decision to occupy the governor’s office during a year of national election was a strong and decisive move aimed at pressuring political actors to act on their behalf. For the next eight months, the families occupied the governor’s office: living, cooking, washing, and waiting for their fates to be decided by the national courts.

The displaced families received some support from the community: families donated clothes and other items to assist them during the occupation. Even the local hotel decided to provide them with the leftovers from their buffet lunches. The families documented their reactions to the conflict and disseminated these images through social media sites. These publicizing efforts reached beyond the limits of the community in hopes of finding support for their struggle. In making their plight visible to the court of public opinion and through their civil disobedience campaign, they demanded their rights be respected. Their actions caught the attention of Human Rights advocates from Santo Domingo, who rallied around the families and denounced the aggression. The families of Cueva del Agua have continued to organize using videos on You Tube to disseminate knowledge of their situation and discuss their current dealings with the state and the perpetrators of the removal.232 This would turn out to be an extended legal battle that four years later has yet to be resolved.

In this chapter, I delve into the fractured relationship of the Dominican state apparatus and its representatives to the Dominican population and specifically the rural community of Samaná. This fractured relationship with the electorate is the result of the historical development and continuation of an authoritarian Dominican model of governance, which relies on the political marginalization of civil society institutions and individuals. Political disenfranchisement as a technique of dispossession has hindered the development of local structures of political power, the development of local leaders, and the formation of spaces of dissent. This disenfranchisement produces a population on the margins that is witness to the actions of the state and facilitates the further displacement of the community from its land.

Since the early 70s, the Dominican state has implemented and supported extractive tourism projects that have led to the dispossession of rural littoral communities. The country’s economic and political elites have lead local acts of displacement such as that of Cueva del Agua and are mobilizing insider information pertaining to tourism projects to satisfy their own economic needs. For the residents of Cueva del Agua, the Dominican state and its network of relations are very real and are doing very little to protect them. Encounters between Dominican state representatives and Samaneses are indicative of an uneven power exchanges, strained relations, and obstacles to engagement. In analyzing the national and local political structure, I identify the myriad of ways that Samaneses are left out of local decision-making processes to understand the possibilities for and obstacles to political involvement and collective action. Other Dominican coastal communities are waging similar struggles and battling against the invasion of power and capital.

In this chapter, I also trace the development and trajectories of the main Dominican political parties and focus on the relation between national and local political actors to
understand how state-society-locality relationships have shifted to disenfranchise the local population. In the DR, the assumption that political parties respond to the needs of its constituents is a fallacy. Attention to the political parties and the electoral process sheds light on the complicated, conflictive, and self-interested acts of elected officials that complement the authoritarian demeanor of the Dominican state. The unwillingness of political parties to adhere to and serve local needs has created a strained relationship that results in a lack of accountability in electoral politics. Dominican political parties and the electoral system continue to rely on a system of patronage and clientelism that excludes the majority of the population.

**Political Tigueraje: The Feel of Corruption and the Taste of Champagne**

The Dominican state’s concerns reflect the links between capital, politics, and the national elites to create the optimal conditions for investment in tourist-related endeavors. This desire for accumulation across the political spectrum has increasingly affected Dominican politics and the public it claims to serve. Many Dominican politicians subscribe to the neoliberal ideology that proposes that “human well-being can best be advanced within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2005:11). To maintain freedom of the market and trade, the state must go against market regulation and instead guarantees processes and frameworks that aim to support practices, which entail much “creative destruction” in an attempt to “remake the world around us in a totally different image” (Harvey 2005:10). Within this project, labor and wages must be controlled, unions weakened, and public protests curtailed by any means necessary: “All forms of social

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233 As a political, social, and economic project, Neoliberalism began in the late 1970s and became the central guiding principle for the state in the US, Britain, and subsequently the DR. In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey traces the spread of neoliberalism throughout the world and analyzes the conditions and economic shifts that have led to the exclusion of citizens from the political process and a system of political corruption and mismanagement.

234 To achieve this, remaking the state must be able to guarantee the rights to private property and enforce these processes through legal means (Harvey 2005:38).
solidarity are to be dissolved in favor of individualism, private property, personal responsibility, and family values” (Harvey 2005:32). The state must therefore withdraw from the area of social provisions and promote a process of deregulation and privatization of national industries.235

A model of political tigueraje has been developed within the Dominican state, which reflects individual desires over communal outcomes within party politics. The phenomenon of tigueraje evolves out of the authoritarian political models of leadership in the DR and has come to dominate Dominican public discourse as an attitude that pervades Dominican political circles and extends into Dominican society.236 Political tigueraje affects all aspects of Dominican lives and encompasses civil society institutions, state enterprises, and particularly military and police institutions. When tigueraje becomes linked to and modeled by political actors, we find major implications for the operation of the state. As tigueraje becomes entrenched in Dominican society, it becomes more violent and does so by threatening local agency by means of assaults on communality and the destruction of civil society coalitions.

Tiguere has multiple meanings in the DR: most broadly, it describes an individual who manipulates, deceives, performs, and seeks out solutions by any means necessary. Tiguere is commonly used to refer “to hustlers and criminals or more generally, to people engaged in behaviors that will victimize others and is also applied to men who exploit women emotionally, sexually, or financially” (Gregory 2007:41). The tiguere is a rogue, a trickster who rises out of poverty to a position of wealth, often through illicit means (Derby 2009:174). Tigueraje is not restricted to males, but it is a domain reserved to maintain and exalt male privilege. Tigueraje is a deeply gendered process that exemplifies the characteristics of a strong virile male characteristic of the mixed race underclass in the Dominican Republic.

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235 The neoliberal push for individual freedoms is not necessarily compatible with the push for social justice (Harvey 2005:50).
236 See (Acosta 2012)
Tigueraje is sold to the Dominican masses through the media and mimicked through the examples of politicians and other elite public figures. It has come to reflect an individual strategy of survival through which individual needs are attained. Therefore political tigueraje can be understood as a lifestyle, a pattern of conduct, and a notion that one is above and beyond the law. Tigueraje as a way of being reflects a society that is losing its cohesion through a substantial decrease in social solidarity that will have extreme effects on the most marginalized communities. These attitudes are reflected in Dominican society through an increased aggressiveness towards others and a disregard for their perspectives.

As an overbearing ideology underlying the authoritarian state project, political tigueraje must be untangled from the public’s imagination so as to develop a new set of leaders and models for the youth to mimic. New generations of Dominicans are responding to these processes of political dispossession, which have spurred disillusionment, mistrust, and a decreasing respect for authority. Attempts to formulate a new Dominican political subject have risen from the public sphere and are resulting in more diverse types of organizing activities and the convergence of different groups attempting to affect change. These changes are in direct response to the continued consolidation of political power in the hands of the three major political parties.

The Political Parties: Whose Party?

The 2012 presidential political campaign was in full swing during my fieldwork in Samaná. The three major political parties vying for power in the elections were the Partido Reformista Social Cristiano (PRSC), the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD), and Partido

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237 A web page dedicated to denouncing political actors who fall into the practice of tigueraje has compiled a list of methods through which the political establishment furthers their control: www.deltiguerajepolitico.net
de Liberacion Dominicana (PLD). These three parties have alternated control of the Dominican state since the death of Trujillo, and are in constant struggle to control the spaces of power within the country. A fluctuating number of 15-20 smaller political parties also exist, but generally support the endeavors of the larger political groupings in exchange for positions of influence or political favor.

The Other Parties

The Dominican constitution allows for electoral parties to throw their support behind other candidates and parties rather than presenting their own. These smaller political parties have become spaces where figures disenchanted or ousted from other parties pursue the option to begin their own. These new parties rely on charismatic leaders who are used to barter for political position or favors, which are auctioned to the highest bidder. The ability to move from one party to the other reflects the lack of ideological differences that exist between them. Of the many small parties in the DR, it appears that only Alianza Pais (AP) actually presents an alternative political platform and is a viable candidate who may gain support from Dominicans that are not beholden to the traditional parties.

Partido Reformista Social Cristiano (PRSC)

The Partido Reformista Social Cristiano (PRSC) party was formed after the murder of Trujillo and incorporated many of the political actors that had supported the dictatorship. The PRSC party maintains a far right, Hispanophile ideology with strong ties to the Catholic Church structure and elite factions of Dominican society. The PRSC, led by Joaquin Balaguer, was

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238 Under the dictatorship of Trujillo, there was only one party: the Dominican People’s Party. After his assassination in 1961, interim president Joaquin Balaguer announced the legal participation and formation of political parties in the DR.

239 In recent years both parties have amassed followings in different regions of the country based upon their political platforms. The urban and tourist areas are vehement PLD supporters, while many agricultural and rural areas maintain their allegiance to the PRD.
elected to power after the 1965 coup against Juan Bosch and remained there for the next 12 years through the brutalization of its opponents, the silencing of political and civil dissent, and its allegiance to elite and business interests. During the PRSC’s initial 12 years of rule—during which time repression of all opposition reached new heights—guerrilla warfare against the state took place in urban centers and in the countryside. Throughout the violence, the PRSC stayed in power with the support and collaboration of the US government. Once the violence subsided, the PRSC would lead the modernization of the DR through enforced economic transitions, infrastructure improvements, and the centralization of state power. The PRSC, led by Balaguer, would lead the country for three more terms before ceding power. Balaguer was a dominant force in Dominican politics for over 70 years. The party lost its political prominence with the death of Balaguer in 2002 and has been supportive of the ruling PLD party.

**Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD)**

Born in exile as a party of protest against the dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo, the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) is the oldest of the political parties in the DR. The party, founded on January 21, 1939 in Havana, Cuba, had an organizational ideology of Antillean solidarity, following a leftist democratic and anti-fascist stance. In exile, the PRD organized human rights campaigns and led an armed struggle against the Trujillo dictatorship (Jimenez Polanco 1999). The PRD leaders and supporters represented a large swath of Dominican society: the middle class, workers, disgruntled merchants, public intellectuals, and members of the country’s labor unions. This broad coalition of social sectors both assisted and hindered its electoral pursuits. In 1961, the PRD leadership returned from exile to attempt to secure power after the murder of Trujillo.

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240 The party initially took power in 1961, but was forced into exile by a popular revolt seeking democratic elections.

241 The party continues to affiliate itself with social democratic circles around the globe and actively maintains contacts with the Latin American left.
As the voice of opposition, the PRD won the presidential elections of 1962 under the leadership of leftist intellectual Juan Bosch. Under PRD leadership, a new constitution was written that guaranteed the rights of workers, prohibited latifundios, and developed a national education program. Early on, the entrenched elite power structures and remnants of the regime attacked the government and accused Bosch of being a communist sympathizer. After seven months in power, a military-led, elite-supported, and US-sanctioned coup overthrew the Bosch-led PRD government. The coup ended the first project of democratic rule in the DR after the dictatorship.242

After Bosch’s removal from power and subsequent exile, ideological and tactical differences led to a split in the PRD.243 Out of street battles and clandestine organizing against the Balaguer-led PRSC state, Jose Francisco Pena Gomez, a Black Dominican of Haitian decent, emerged as the new leader of the party. The PRD, led by Pena Gomez, developed two factions: the public face of the party, which participated in civil society processes, and a clandestine, armed faction that conspired and battled against the PRSC state.

Under Pena Gomez’s leadership, the PRD sought unity with opposition political parties in an attempt to build a united front against the PRSC state. Through the strengthening of international networks and consolidation of networks of opposition, the PRD was finally elected to power in 1978 and again in 1982. Rather than strengthen the party, these electoral victories caused the development of factions internally vying for power. These internal fractures led to the party’s defeat in 1986, once again creating an opening for the return of Balaguer and the PRSC, who would hold power for another two terms.

242 The center right forces led by Joaquin Balaguer and the PRSC Party attained power after the coup.
243 Insiders speak to the final rift between the two leaders as a result of the support given to General Camaano by Pena Gomez, who had been instructed by Bosch to withdraw support from the armed insurrection led by army officers.
During the 1994 elections, Pena Gomez ran on the PRD ticket and won the popular vote by incorporating social movements and labor groups in the party platform. The final results of the election were manipulated by the ruling PRSC, who declared themselves the victors. Through international pressure and a national campaign of protest, the fraud perpetrated by the PRSC was made public. An agreement to shorten Balaguer’s fraudulent term to two years became the resolution to the electoral impasse (Sagas and Inoa 2003).

In the 1996 runoff election, with no clear electoral winner, the PRSC party, rather than accept defeat, pledged its votes to the third place Partido de Liberacion Dominicana (PLD). This alliance prevented Pena Gomez of the PRD, who won the popular vote, from being elected. In the midst of a violent and overtly racist campaign against the PRD candidate, the PLD emerged victorious through its alliance with the PRSC. Leonel Fernandez, raised and educated in the US and a newcomer to national politics, was the new president. With this alliance, the PLD party began its move from the left to center right.

During the most recent election in 2012, the PRD party was consumed by internal conflicts. The two main personalities in the party—Hipolito Mejia, the PRD presidential candidate, and Miguel Maldonado, the party president—were avoiding each other and publicly denounced the other’s strategies. Their personal rivalries permeated the electoral process and were reproduced in internal squabbles resulting in a divided voting bloc. Many PRD party members chose to negotiate with the opposition PLD to thwart Mejia’s electoral efforts.

After the electoral loss, the conflicts within the PRD party escalated into violence. In 2012, during a party conclave in the headquarters in Santo Domingo, shots were fired and

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244 In a final desperate maneuver, the PRSC altered the Dominican constitution, so that future presidential elections would have to be won by a majority of 50% an increase from the 45% previously required.
245 The 2000 elections were the last time the PRD party held power in the DR, with Hipolito Mejia elected against the PLD candidacy of Danilo Medina.
punches were thrown between the two rival factions of the party. A contingent of police officers was sent to stop the violence, and ended up occupying the party headquarters until the courts decided the conflict. The resolution was the division of the PRD with a new offspring named the Partido Revolucionario Moderno (PRM). Recent surveys indicate that the PRM has become the major opposition party against the PLD. This division has substantially decreased the electoral power of the opposition forces and fractured the PRD’s traditional base of support, which will in turn increase processes of political dispossession.

**Partido de Liberacion Dominicano (PLD)**

Juan Bosch and other defecting PRD members founded the Partido de Liberacion Dominicana (PLD) in 1973. It began as a far left organization that presented a strong critique of the two-party dominance of the PRD and PRSC. Today, the interests of the party have radically shifted and better reflect the interests of big business, the right, and the entrenched elite structures of the country. The PLD party has held state power for 14 of the last 18 years, the longest continuous rule by one party since the dictatorship of Trujillo. The PLD has maneuvered with one idea in mind—to maintain their hegemony and control the resources of the state—and positioned itself as the sole party in leadership.

The party has consolidated its power through the centralization of state management, cooptation of opposition forces, and the mobilization of its political gift-giving machine utilizing state resources. In strengthening its business and political networks, it has secured allegiances at all levels of Dominican society by providing jobs, political positions, and monetary benefits to

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246 “What you see is that they are going through internal conflict as well. Hipolito Mejia who lost the last two elections and also served as president prior to that, he again wants to be the candidate for presidency. That is absurd in this country no political leader will admit that they are done, you won’t find this in other places[…] this is a caricature of a democracy, it’s impossible that Hipolito Mejia wants to be the candidate again, it is something one cannot comprehend, the people don’t believe in him. But this happens in all the Dominican parties” (Juan Bolivar Dias, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, 2014).
party members. These benefits are also used to lure and co-opt opposing politicians into their ranks. Through the offering of state-based incentives, the party has gained support from social bases traditionally allying with the PRD.

The PLD party won the presidential elections in 2004 and 2008 with Leonel Fernandez as candidate. With a weakened opposition during the 2012 election, the PLD once again won with the combination of Danilo Medina and Fernandez’s wife Margarita Cedeno as Vice President. This last victory came with a sizeable margin composed of multiple parties adjudicating their votes and supporting the PLD efforts. The PLD party leadership eagerly launched the campaign for the 2016 elections promising “that the PLD will be in power for the next 30 years.” It appears the only obstacle to PLD power lies within the party and interior elements of dissent.

Responses from Dominican Society

Within Dominican political circles, charismatic figures dominate the national sphere of power and project themselves as the state. Reflected in my writing is a tendency within the DR to equate the state with the individuals who lead it. It reflects the emphasis on individuals in party politics and electoral campaigns as a remnant of caudillo politics. Personal charisma and networks of interest are key elements of local politics. The ability with which leaders manipulate the political process to gain personal power is increasingly becoming an obstacle to democracy in the DR. A small group of Dominican journalists who continue to question the tactics and attitudes of the state and the major political parties utilize their positions to critique the Dominican state. Their continued willingness to face off against political power across party lines has come at a great risk for many of them who have received death threats.

A constant thorn in the side of the Dominican state and a voice of critique has been Juan Bolivar Diaz, the Director of Journalism for news channel Noticel and a weekly contributor in
Juan Bolivar has received multiple death threats since the 1970s and even had a bomb placed in his car. From his position as a journalist, Diaz has spearheaded human rights campaigns and has critiqued the violence of the state, the aggressiveness of Dominican society, and the dominance of political parties. In speaking to him about the 2012 elections and his expectations for the 2016 election, he offered a scathing critique of the ruling PLD party and the weakening of opposition parties:

The PRD has been divided and that division has been fomented by the governing PLD party and the state. Money was given to segments within it and through the control of the courts and the Dominican state. Leonel who controls all the courts is the one who is behind the division. Leonel has absorbed the PRSC party and divided the PRD as a way to sustain power, founded on the control of the state. They have achieved this by destroying all civil society institutions, buying anyone they could entice, intellectuals, journalist, labor unions, political leaders, people of all walks, anyone who could be bought, either through money, or positions, giving their children scholarships to study in the US, or through gifts. They want to control Dominican society at any cost. And we must say that he has achieved it. (Juan Bolivar Diaz, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, January 2015)

These national processes are amplified in the context of Samaná. There are few arenas within Samaná that hold state and municipal actors publicly accountable. Only two media outlets in Samaná exist that challenge this silence and demand accountability. One of these, the local newspaper Diario Libre, constantly published cases of corruption in the local municipality and wrote editorials railing against local politicians. In an incendiary headline, the editors ended with a warning to the town: “What will happen to the institutions in this town when the Municipality is the first to both steal from the investing company as well as steal from the

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247 See also: “I have been in this journalism business 28 years; I’ve said all that I can say on certain topics. I’ve had so many attempts and attacks that I have become accustomed to live like this. I am a free soul; nothing terrorizes me anymore. In March 1970 they put a bomb in my car and at the end of that year I escaped death by chance, because the officer who was spying on me told me about the plot to kill me.” (Juan Bolivar Diaz, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, 2015)

248 Because of his recent campaign against the denationalization of people of Haitian descent, there has been an uptick in threats against him.

249 In article after article, the Diario Libre accused local politicians of violating national laws and presented documentation and cases of these violations, which never seemed to be acted upon. The circulation of the paper was free, but the difficulty of finding a copy anywhere was one of the many challenges to reading it.
neighboring municipality?” (Diario Libre, 2012). By the winter of 2012, the paper had disappeared.

The morning TV program Verdad sin Rodeos, led by Erika Guzman, is also a designated site of political intervention. The show relies on listeners to publicly denounce problems and hold those in power accountable. During the morning show, Mrs. Guzman speaks to her audience, and throughout the show makes calls to local politicians demanding answers on behalf of the community. At times she brings local politicians into the studio and questions them directly, decrying all types of local corruption and abuse. She takes calls from community members to present publicly any evidence of wrongdoing. As a result of her outspoken critiques against political actors, Mrs. Guzman is constantly receiving threats. The show demands an atmosphere of transparency from the muddled waters of Samaná politics.

**The Politics of Representation in Samaná**

Samaná is one of 32 Dominican departments, and within the department of Samaná there are five municipal jurisdictions: Las Terrenas, Las Galeras, Arroyo Barril, Sanchez, and Samaná. A mayor and a local governing structure preside over each jurisdiction, to which the national government allocates funds. In the Samaná peninsula, it is the mayors of the municipality who wield the most influence and power through control of their municipal budgets. The mayors have the leeway to appoint different positions, to fill their working cabinet, allocate municipal jobs, and hire local labor to fulfill the municipality’s peripheral functions. It is through job allocations that the mayors gain favors and prestige in the local level. The municipality and the national government are the largest employer in the peninsula. Many

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250 The DR is administratively subdivided into 31 departments, with each of these departments represented at the national level by an elected senator and two deputies. It is the executive branch that designates the governor of the province as the state representative to the region, a largely ceremonial role.
municipal positions are allocated based on kinship or political bonds; this has been a source of local conflict and mistrust.

In the small repository in the municipality of Samaná, there are also records of municipal meetings dating back to 1897. These documents reference and summarize local political proceedings that reflect a different relationship between the community and its structures of governance. During times of decreased economic activity in the past, municipal leaders sent out groups of men to help build destroyed homes, clean the streets, or help their neighbors in times of emergency. Over the years, these communal actions have for the most part disappeared, replaced by the paid labor of municipal employees affiliated with the ruling party.251 The documents in the municipal archive also reflect a more localized and inclusive decision-making process. That was a time when positions of local leadership were selected as a result of the dedication, social standing, and professional expertise of the person. This process of selection allowed for residents to trust in their elected officials.

Although structures are set in place to distribute local power, many of them are ignored or avoided. Annadarys Jose has worked in multiple positions within the municipal offices in Samaná. Like many others, she has taken advantage of her political and kin connections to obtain positions of influence within the municipal and ministerial structure. She commented on the tendency to allocate jobs to party faithful:

I have seen that for political purposes either because of party affiliations or personal relations, they have named different people to positions that they are not qualified for. It’s changed a little; before they would take anyone regardless of education at least now they are requiring a high school education. There are limits to these namings, but the mayor can place people in positions in specific sectors like INAPA, the local schools, as professors, and in the different ministries operating locally. He is allowed to name anyone in offices that are presumed to be important to local development. The mayor is restricted from placing workers in the Ministries of the Environment and in the governor’s office (Annadarys Jimenez, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, 2012).

251 Communal plantings are still held in rural regions of Samaná.
The current mayor of Samaná is Miguel Bezi, who as an important PLD party member was previously appointed to the position of governor of Samaná and Minister of Tourism for the region of Samaná. His new position, though lesser in title, allows him to control municipal resources, sign agreements with businesses to develop local projects, and control municipal lands that can be sold at a profit. Mayor Bezi has constantly used the national media to demand additional funds, declaring that the 4.2 million pesos that the Samaná authorities receive from the central government are not sufficient to fulfill the needs for the region.\textsuperscript{252} Other elected officials in Samaná include Senator Prim Pujals who has represented the region for the past 12 years; recently-appointed governor Enrique Lalane; and two elected deputies. Additionally, each neighborhood elects \textit{regidores}, who represent the community and submit community needs to the mayor.

Annadarys works closely with many of the \textit{regidores} through her position in the office of the Ministry of Tourism.\textsuperscript{253} Her job is to monitor the spaces where tourists interact and coordinate local efforts to make sure those spaces are safe. As a result of her work and community connections, she has contact with different levels of Samaná society including government officials, businesspeople, local law enforcement, and street entrepreneurs. As the organizer of the youth softball leagues, she has constant interaction with younger segments of Samaná society. Although she benefits from these relations, Annadarys’s perspectives reflect what many in the community have called the disconnect between political and local needs. Her

\textsuperscript{252} Under Bezi’s watch, the municipality signed an agreement with the Ministry of the Environment so that 30\% of the funds gained through the whale-watching endeavors in Samaná actually stay in the community. Prior to the 2012 season all of those funds captured in Samaná were destined for administrative costs at the national level and only covered the cost of laborers and administrators during the whale season which he explained added an additional 1 million pesos to the municipality (Garcia 2012).

\textsuperscript{253} Her family arrived at the beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century; her grandfather was a Lebanese immigrant who began a small business in Samaná.
experience allows her to extend a critique of the local structures of governance in Samaná and provide commentary as to the inner workings of the municipality:

We are supposed to have local representatives. Each local neighborhood has their own block mayor that represents them before the “regidores.” The block mayor is supposed to inform the regidor of the specific needs and problems for that neighborhood. The regidores are the ones who then prioritize these projects and present them to the mayor of the town for approval and the allocation of resources. The mayor is supposed to work with the regidores and take their suggestions, but the mayor thinks that he doesn’t have to work with them. Then what happens? The mayor is supposed to be the main figure, but the regidores are the ones that are supposed to make the decisions on what is to be prioritized. The mayor has left them out of this process and therefore chooses not to listen to the needs of the communities (Annadarys Jimenez, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, 2013).

Beyond local endeavors, Samaná politicians are relegated to the fringes of national discourse. The local branches of the political parties are given little flexibility and receive orders directly from the central party offices. The selection of local candidates is based upon their involvement in party politics, not their service to the community. Entrance into the leadership of the party structure requires weaving intricate networks and gaining the support of vested interests. Limited by national-level decision-making, many local politicians choose to immediately benefit from the little power available to them.

Local perspectives on political processes are mixed, but most accept that corruption has increased over time. A common saying in Samaná is “antes robaba uno ahora roban muchos” (before it was only one who stole, now there are many). Another statement commonly overheard is “Under Trujillo, people followed the laws out of fear. Today only the poor must respect the law.” In passing conversations on the street, elders have continually lamented the degradation of local society. Statements like these are a small indication of the problems that the population has with its elected officials and the inconsistencies of Dominican state structures of power.
Many Samaneses have developed an aversion for politics as a result of their encounters with representatives of the state.\textsuperscript{254} This aversion has structured a relation to politics, political parties, and consequently the state that is embedded in an unequal exchange. Others in the community, such as Tata, share these attitudes. Tata works taking care of an elderly woman, and she also supplements her income through the sale of newspapers and has developed a rapport with different segments of the town through these sales.\textsuperscript{255} Tata spends her mornings discussing local news with all who stop by and provides a brief summary of the day’s news for those unable to purchase the paper. In one of our morning conversations she provided her own commentary on local and national politics:

Here the changes have been at the level of politics; they are about ambitions. I wish all of the people who have governed here would live here; they have all been bad administrators. You know why? Because they have all come to benefit, to take their dollars, but they haven’t developed the region the way they should have. You know what happens with Samaná, it’s that the two guys of the three guys who run everything; they are not interested in Samaná growing, that would threaten their control. Samaná is going nowhere, because they don’t want it to change. If they wanted it to grow it would have grown; it would have been a different place (Tata, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton, 2012).

**Center Stage: 2012 Elections**

Political propaganda filled the streets, walls, airwaves, radio stations, and papers during the 2012 elections. Political posters covered every inch of the road, with political affiliations painted in party colors on the sides of people’s homes. Many Samaneses on the street commented, “*en tiempos de política nada se mueve*” (in times of politics nothing gets done).

Although the disdain for politicians and political parties is immense, most public interactions and

\textsuperscript{254} The political situation in Samaná requires the domination of both the state and civil society. Civil society then becomes the material base for hegemony. When hegemony is in full force, consent is garnered through civil society processes, and the force exerted by the state is minimal. Gramsci did not find a single way to define civil society, but saw it as being influenced by economic structures and the state. Gramsci understood the “state as the instrument for conforming civil society to the economic structure (Hoare and Smith 1971:281). Communities not willing to succumb to powers are forced to comply through direct action and violence.

\textsuperscript{255} Seeking better pay and different experiences, she left Samaná at an early age to serve an elite Dominican family, only to return unhappy with the treatment she received.
conversations in Samaná eventually turn towards politics. This political reflection is substantially augmented during the time of elections.

In the months prior to the elections, I surveyed the national papers for news critical of the election process. For months, the Dominican media showed more concern for stories of infighting within the PRD rather than question the platform and performance of the current government. During the electoral campaign, there was no agreement to a public debate between candidates, even though many requested it. Party platforms were presented on various websites and publications, but did not expand beyond the party talking points or engage in discussions of their proposals. Each campaign was run independently, while constantly referencing and attacking the other. Dominican media outlets were utilized to publish paid party advertisements, and, it seems, to expand public misinformation.256 The main source for evaluating each campaign’s effectiveness was through the hiring of private consulting agencies to conduct polls in different parts of the country. In a one-month period, the results of five separate polls were published in local newspapers. Each poll claimed different results, alternating leads for the two largest parties, the PLD and PRD.

Electoral Gift-Giving

In the DR, as in many Latin American countries, it has become routine for major political parties to offer gifts during the electoral campaign as a way to secure the continued support from the electoral masses. In the DR, these gift-giving endeavors are not limited to the elections, but are extended to Christmas and other important national holidays and political events. This practice, made popular under the Trujillo dictatorship, continues today as a way to manipulate and gain consent from the masses. Many Dominican voters rely on receiving compensation from

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256 The 2012 election was the first time that the votes of the Dominican Diaspora were included within the official results. Much of both main parties’ campaign strategy focused on attracting the more than 3 million voters in the US. This tactic detracted attention away from rural areas of the country and its decreasing population.
the parties and use their potential affiliations to receive additional gifts. These gift-giving enterprises bind voters to a party and increasingly to the ruling party that has more resources and mechanisms to distribute these gifts.

During the Christmas celebration, the Dominican state distributes boxes filled with basic food items for needy families. In 2014, over 1.5 million boxes were distributed to families and PLD party supporters during the Christmas celebration. These gifts are presented as assistance by the state towards its most needy subjects and can be understood as attempts to secure their allegiance. The gifts normally consist of food items, but also can include construction materials, refrigerators, and other home appliances.\(^\text{257}\) The amount and quality of gifts differ on the locality where they are being distributed, with larger gifts given in urban regions of the country. At many of the distribution sites, skirmishes have broken out as individuals and families attempt to grab more than one box of items. These gift-giving enterprises have reached extreme levels, with some candidates throwing pesos from an airplane to convince locals to vote for them.

Monetary gifts are also conferred to opposing party members, aimed at neutralizing opposition votes. In many rural and urban sites, money is exchanged for the state-issued cedulas (identification cards), which are required for electoral participation. Three days prior to the election, for the price of a week’s labor, many are willing to exchange their cedulas for money, which are returned once the election has passed.\(^\text{258}\) Rather than attempt to dissuade or convince the electorate, the purchase of the ID cards ensures that the person cannot vote at all. These transactions can be witnessed on the street, as party organizers stand around with stacks of IDs in hand. Those willing to recruit friends and family members are given additional amounts of money. Votes mean access to resources and gifts, and are one way the community can

\(^{257}\) The gift boxes formerly contained small bottles of rum and alcoholic punch, but that practice has since been discontinued.

\(^{258}\) Street costs for the purchase of an ID is 3,500 pesos, the equivalent of $92.
momentarily manipulate candidates and political parties to satisfy short-term needs. The money received by the families through this transaction is more than they will see from the promises made, but never delivered upon, by each political party. The sacrifice of long-term desires is an acknowledgement that once power is grasped, these gifts and relations from politicians and political groups rapidly come to an end.\textsuperscript{259} The people of Samaná have come to understand this and have found ways to manipulate these visits.

I met Aristoteles on one of my childhood visits to Samaná, and we have maintained a friendly relation throughout the years. Our families had once been neighbors and boasted of us being cousins since we shared the surname Vanderhorst.\textsuperscript{260} As a young man, Aristoteles had been celebrated for his pitching arm and his basketball skills. When both of those sports failed to procure him an economic future, he followed his older brother and joined the Dominican Air Force with the goal of becoming a pilot. After his military service ended, he worked in the national police force for five years where he said he learned “about power, taking orders, and how to be abusive.” He quit the police and returned to Samaná, joining the local labor force as a security guard on the island of Cayo Levantado. As the oldest sibling of his family living in Samaná, Aristoteles assumed the position of head of household. He has spent the last 10 years doing odd jobs, mostly as a painter or working construction.

Aristoteles regularly attends political rallies in order to receive food, drink, and other gifts. He has never openly expressed allegiance to either of the large parties, although in private

\textsuperscript{259} One of the many issues that galvanized the campaigns was the desire by the general population for an increase in expenditures for educational purposes. Across the country, spray paint adorned many of the outside walls of educational institutions, stating that 4\% of the nation’s money should be spent on education. This call for the 4\% was accepted by most candidates and incorporated into their public speeches. Marches were done throughout the country; walls were emblazoned with slogans; and politician quickly jumped on the bandwagon promising to do so if elected in the next cycle.

\textsuperscript{260} Aristoteles became my guide for many of the community events I attended. Arriving with him at these locations gave me immediate acceptance.
he is clear of his preference. Over time he has developed relationships with many local politicians, and is often approached and sought out by political party members to assure that he and his extended family vote for them. He has also been asked to help in recruiting voters to extend the different party lists. Through his local contacts and in exchange for their vote, he is able to claim and receive food baskets and other items that benefit his family. During the 2012 elections, Aristoteles received three boxes of food items, one for his allegiance to the PRD and two others from members of opposing parties as an attempt to sway his vote. In addition to the boxes, the family was given 1500 pesos ($40) to help with other expenses.

**Political Caravans**

There is only one highway that connects the peninsula of Samaná to the rest of the Dominican Republic. The highway is at the center of daily life for Samaneses and most of the population gravitates towards it as a place of encounter, entertainment, commerce, and livelihood. Most homes are constructed near the highway and are built of cement foundations with the walls and roofs made out of palm panels or zinc. The rural landscape of Samaná is dotted with churches representing a deluge of religions. These structures are built with community funds or money donated by international missionary groups. Most of the houses of worship have slogans painted on the walls: “Christ lives” or “Christ is coming” are the most popular.

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261 During evening leisure time, locals walk along the road visiting their neighbors. Not beside it, but on it, within the confines of the yellow lines, an obstacle for the many large vehicles that traverse the road. Many lives have ended in this dark stretch of road that winds toward Samaná. On the drive to Samaná, the highway crosses the Gran Estero swampland, with vast areas of undeveloped land, hillsides filled with palm trees, and mounds of coconuts on the side of the road, waiting to be collected.

262 Many rural inhabitants spend two or three days a week seeking guidance and support in service and donating what little they have to the church. It is an investment in what they hope will be a future filled with blessings. Some of these churches serve and support the lives of those most in need, but others extract a huge amount of revenue from local communities or provide daily sustenance for the pastor and his family.
The campaign caravans are the rare opportunity for rural areas to interact with the party candidates and show their support. The caravans provide an illusion of inclusion and participation. Many who lack access to television and national newspapers can view the candidates and attempt to voice their needs firsthand in these public events. Throughout the 2012 electoral campaign, constant reports appeared in Dominican newspapers that referenced the arming of the political caravans that were traversing the country with the party candidates. Although these aggressions never materialized, they elicited a feverish response, and national news channels showcased threats of violence between the PLD and PRD parties and even within the PRD party.263

As a performative and provocative space, the caravan is where loyalty to the party is articulated and immediately rewarded. Although it is difficult to quantify monetarily the campaign and propaganda expenditures in rural areas like Samaná, a visual analysis of the various campaign caravans in the town of Samaná shows a marked difference in interactions and expenditures between the two largest political parties. The discrepancies in the organization and participation in the caravans reveals the political affiliation of Samaneses. These differences reflect the feelings and support of the local population as they compete for small kernels of political attention and mark a divergence between rural areas and urban areas of the country.

During the 2012 elections, three caravans rolled through Samaná. The two political caravans by the ruling PLD showcased its economic prowess, while the caravan for the PRD was one with less economic pomposity and involved a greater quantity of Samaneses. An analysis of the caravans’ organization and the community’s participation in them provides a glimpse into the

263 The Dominican constitution members of the military are not allowed to participate in the elections process. Once retired, many of these ex-generals, who although not in power still command and wield much of it, have been constant supporters of the different campaigns and parties. As sometimes candidates and other times as supporters, they certainly influence the political process and inspire followers, yet also continually plot ways to destabilize the other opposition parties through their own political machinations.
relationship between political actors and rural populations and the performance of power and politics.

**PLD Caravan**

The first of two PLD caravans in Samaná stormed into town with a fleet of new Ford and GM SUVs filled to the brim with party members.\(^{264}\) A mass of thirty vehicles took over the streets, honking their horns with their stereo system loudspeakers blaring the political *Bachatas* paid for by the party.\(^{265}\) The SUVs were covered with colorful signage proclaiming the upcoming victory of Danilo Medina.\(^{266}\) Participants in the caravan were composed of the more phenotypically mixed population that predominates in the urban regions of Santiago and Santo Domingo. As the SUVs roared by, local supporters came out of their homes wearing their purple shirts and waving their PLD flags. Rather than follow the caravans, many of the onlookers went back into their homes.

![Figure 11: PLD Party Caravan. Photo by Ryan Mann-Hamilton.](image)

The PLD’s second caravan in Samaná was intended to be a mass showing of Samaná’s support for the candidate. The caravan was larger than the first, with presidential candidate Danilo Medina making an appearance. In the early morning a crew of *motoconchos* (motorcycle

\(^{264}\) The passage of the DR-Cafta agreement took away import duties on American cars and since then have been the favorite of the Dominican government.

\(^{265}\) *Bachata* is a musical style that expresses deep lamentation. These songs listened to by the poorer sections of the country are used mobilize many and entice them to vote for the party.

\(^{266}\) The security forces accompanying the caravan were a spectacle: dressed in suits and wearing dark glasses and earpieces.
taxis) gathered around PLD representatives who paid them for their full day of service. Their job was to shuttle people back and forth to the PLD event and recruit other supporters, for which they would receive an additional payment. Workers paid by the municipality placed additional posters and flags of the PLD party along all the public avenues. Throughout the caravan many municipal employees wore their PLD political colors in blatant disregard of Dominican laws against political campaigning by public employees. The second caravan culminated at a stage placed near the public school that shut down three of the main streets in Samaná. 267 A truck painted with the PLD colors circled the plaza, with party members handing out sandwiches and juice to the groups that marched through the streets. 268 After the political speeches, the crowd dispersed in the direction of the PLD headquarters, where refreshments, food, and alcohol awaited them. 269

**PRD Caravan**

The day before the PRD caravan, the party organized a public agricultural fair to sell basic food items at low prices. Regardless of political affiliation, the space was overflowing with people. The PRD food stations sold basic food products known as the “canasta” (basket) to the community at subsidized prices. Through the reduced-price sale of these items, the PRD offered a critique of the rising cost of goods and PLD government spending. Next to the food stations, political placards denounced the increase in prices of basic food items over the periods of leadership of the PLD party. The PRD party reps reminded the gathering public that their

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267 The plaza in front of the governor’s office where most public events occur could not be used because that space was occupied by the displaced families of Boca del Agua. A rumor spread through town that Governor Forchue had been given money to distribute amongst the supporters of the party, but that in the end he kept the majority of it for himself.

268 Some things can happen quickly if energy and resources are given towards the project. When the PLD caravan was visiting other regions of the country, the space was occupied by domino tables and bottles of rum. After the elections, the headquarters was converted into a pizzeria.

269 I neared the vehicle and grabbed a snack as I sauntered over to the headquarters to watch a bit more. Alcohol and thoughts flowed freely, resulting in political arguments and vitriolic displays against the other party, and I exited into the night in search of a cold beer.
political platform had always been in support of agricultural production, and made promises of a renewed state investment if they won the election.

Figure 12: PRD party supporters joining the caravan. Photo by Ryan Mann-Hamilton.

Hours before the arrival of the caravan, the crowds gathered on street corners preparing their white flags and T-shirts in expectation of PRD candidate Hipolito Mejia. Only a few large SUVs were part of the caravan carrying the candidate, his administrative aides, and security. As the caravan passed, dozens of overloaded motorcycles filled the streets, sometimes carrying four people on a bike. The roar of Samanenses motorcycles drowned out the sounds emanating from the large stereo speakers. To finalize the caravan, PRD sympathizers gathered at their headquarters adjacent to the municipal hospital. There were no gifts or food or drink being given out; everyone brought their own.

During the caravans, the families of Cueva del Agua continued to occupy the governor’s office. All political activities, caravan routes, and conversation avoided talking about the family’s plight. Some families participated in the caravans in hopes of gaining a solution from the candidates to their displacement, but many more watched the caravans roll by as they tended to their families in the occupied space. None of the representatives from the electoral parties made any attempt to interact with them. Three years later, their fates are still in the hands of the courts.
After spending almost a year occupying the governor’s office, the families were bamboozled by the new governor and enticed with building materials and a provisional space to stop the occupation. Some of the families, weary of their living conditions, decided to leave behind their protests and seek other living options. A group of 12 families stayed together, moving to a nearby lot and setting up their encampment to continue their resistance.

**Electoral Results: What They Say**

The results of the 2012 elections were not a surprise. The Junta Electoral Dominicana confirmed that Danilo Medina received 52.3% of the popular vote, while his main opponent Hipolito Mejia received 45.9% of the popular vote. Of that percentage, the party obtained 42.13% of votes for the PRD, while the remaining 4.82% were accrued by five additional parties in alliance with the PRD. Votes added through the political alliances were much greater for the PLD, with the party receiving 37.73% of the popular vote and an additional 13.48% being allocated through the addition of votes of the 13 parties in their alliance. The PRSC managed to garner 5.87% of the popular vote and secure a seat at the political buffet table. Four parties chose not to allocate their votes in support of the major parties, instead offering their own candidates for election. Of those Alianza Pais, with Guillermo Moreno as candidate, gained 1.37% of the popular vote. Journalist Juan Bolivar Diaz commented on the electoral results:

In the last election, you see, they won with 51% of the vote, but the PLD party actually lost 199,000 votes, much more than what the difference was. They won because of the other parties they were allied with. I believe they are trying to get rid of the population so as to regain that lead (Juan Bolivar Diaz, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton 2014).

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In the aftermath of his inauguration in 2012, President Danilo Medina instituted a series of tax increases to pay for food items, as well as a tax on all items imported into the country. Government subsidies currently exist for petroleum and diesel prices, and have slowly been taken away for most other items of basic use by the Dominican population. The inflation in the pricing of items and the additional taxes on imports has precipitated an increase in expenditures by most middle class households. Simultaneously, there has been an increase in luxury businesses catering to the upper segments of Dominican society who have expendable incomes.
What do these results tell us about Samaná? Even though the expenditures of the PLD campaign easily exceeded that of the PRD, Samaná was one of the 14 provinces throughout the country that the PRD won. The majority of the municipalities in Samaná voted for the PRD, similar to other Dominican regions with high levels of agricultural production. In Samaná, a total of 48,092 local votes were cast for the PRD, gaining 45.24% of the vote, while the PLD lagged behind with 27.69% of the vote. The PRD also won in the majority of the north coast except for the province of Espaillat (Junta Central Electoral 2012). The second largest urban area of the country, Santiago, also voted for the PRD, signaling a regional shift that is likely linked to the political platforms and economic emphasis of the PRD.

The provinces that voted for the PRD are also the provinces that have received the highest infrastructural investment related to tourism. The electoral results in Samaná showed that these communities were in search of a more balanced development than the one being directed by the ruling party and likely to be continued by the PLD candidate. The PRD strategy worked in many rural areas, but they were not able to capture the urban votes, which largely sided with the PLD modernization platform and its emphasis on tourism development.

Conclusion

One afternoon at Café de Paris, an expatriate hangout owned by two young Frenchmen, I met the Director of National Planning for the region of Samaná. He had just finished touring various local spaces and meeting with Samaná municipal authorities to inform them of future infrastructural endeavors. Two French men sat chatting with the director, nodding in obvious support of his plans for Samaná. I sat beside them listening to the conversation, and after further eavesdropping, I commented: “Tu lo que quieres es Samaná sin Samaneses” (What you want is Samaná without Samaneses). The comment took them aback, but it enabled a further discussion
about intentionality, access, and functionality of the new design for the town. After a brief exchange with the Director, I asked if and when they might have some type of local consultation. He seemed surprised I would ask. There would be no consultation with the town, and without hesitation he invited me to Santo Domino to see the plans for myself.

The new designs for the community of Samaná require the removal of all the coastal inhabitants, clearing out the littoral zones of the community to create open access for development. These state plans would have dire consequences for the community and bring about the destruction of many homes. Residents of the community would be moved to nearby underdeveloped areas in the hillsides that have yet to receive access to sewage, water, and electricity.

Over time, the Dominican state has developed more subtle forms of ruling its population. The PLD state has found new ways to maintain its hegemony over the population. Although violence is still a tactic mobilized at specific moments, it is no longer the state’s first response. The PLD state readily controls the opposition through manipulation, blackmail, and corruption.

Political disenfranchisement in Samaná has been achieved over time through a combination of social, economic, and political interventions into the local space. Politic tigueraje and political disenfranchisement have created local tensions and left many youth wondering what role they might play in the future development of the region. The decreased investment in the region’s youth has had dire consequences, with many having to migrate to other areas of the

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271 Secrecy still remains the elites’ preferred method for developing plans. This secrecy is related not only to the origins of the funds and how they are expedited, but also to the intentions and beneficiaries behind these plans.

272 At another meeting held in Samaná in early February 2013, the town was informed of various infrastructural and improvement projects that the Dominican state had proposed and approved. This public presentation, much like previous ones, was intended to create a façade of inclusion and buy-in from the community. The promotion for such events consists in sending a truck around in the early morning hours announcing the public event. It is usual for these meetings to begin late, in wait of the state officials and their difficulty in respecting set times. These public gatherings provide a venue to listen to the results of the decision-making powers of the state, not to provide a critique or question procedures.
country in search of education, jobs, and other growth opportunities. Those that stay behind take whatever job they can find. Increasing levels of inequality have only been exacerbated by the policies of the state.

The disarmament of forces of opposition and the splintering of labor unions begun under the PRSC and driven by neoliberal demands were the first step in dispossessing large segments of the population. The fragmentation of local society, alongside the fragmentation of political parties, marks the decomposition of Dominican society as a result of the political tigueraje that has enraptured national politics. This political tigueraje has been extended to all walks of life and civil society institutions, resulting in a highly aggressive Dominican society.

Local obstacles to gaining and sharing power provide a glimpse into the widening demand for new spaces and forms of organizing emanating from the community. This demand has resulted in an increased willingness for the local population to organize and exert pressure and make claims on the state. These demands are attempts to enunciate perspectives that benefit the majority and reflect a desire to be included in the Dominican state decision-making endeavor. Various segments of Samaná continue to resist state incursions and have begun thinking beyond regular forms and structures of organizing. They are now identifying and formulating solutions for their problems outside of the realm of the state. In the next chapter, my analysis will focus on a discussion of the historic sites and modes of organizing in Samaná, as well as the new spaces being developed that have the potential to strengthen Samaná’s civil society.
Chapter 6

Samaná City of God: Learning to Contest the State

Seven heavily-armed police officers chatted loudly with their machine guns in their laps as they sat on the cement barriers. The officers were part of the contingent of military forces sent to quell the protest of Samaná residents against the new road toll. Adding to the four existing tolls on the only highway en route to Samaná, the toll had been erected without any local consultation.\textsuperscript{273} I pulled over to ask if the protesters were blocking the road, interrupting the officers’ jokes and drawing inquisitive looks. They snickered, “No, there’s no problem on the road,” as if nothing unusual had occurred.

In 2008, Colombian contractors began construction on a new road connecting Santo Domingo to the peninsula of Samaná. Funded by the ruling Partido de Liberacion Dominicana (PLD), it was part one of a two-phase plan that would also build a new highway extension to the tourist town of Las Terrenas on the northern coast of the peninsula of Samaná. The road would decrease travel time and the cost of transportation, shortening the trip from Santo Domingo to Samaná from five hours to two. The project required a $151 million dollar investment, the destruction of coastal ecosystems, and the appropriation of private lands from Samaná residents.

This new highway would also facilitate access to the peninsula for international and national tourists. The second phase of the highway project was completed in 2012 and required access to huge swaths of coastal areas that were still undeveloped.\textsuperscript{274} Along with the construction of the new road, an international airport was also constructed and improvements in electrical and

\textsuperscript{273} I had arrived in the DR that morning of August 2012, ready to embark on my year of fieldwork. I received a call from my uncle warning me of the protest and suggesting I not venture in that direction. My curiosity got the best of me, and with my beat-up 1992 Toyota Corolla filled to the brim with books, clothes, and gifts, I made my way to Samaná to witness the protest.

\textsuperscript{274} It is rumored that much of the land adjacent to the area of the road construction was purchased by PLD party members prior to the project with the expectation that the price of the land would increase with access to the road.
sanitation services were developed. These infrastructural enhancements were done in expectation of the growth of tourist visitors, real estate interests, and the hotel industry in Samaná. At the highway’s inauguration on October 26, 2011, then-president Leonel Fernandez declared to dignitaries and the media that this new road would equal the beauty of those he visited in his many travels. He described it as the “Monte Carlo of the Caribbean.” The quotation was picked up and repeated by the national newspapers and state propaganda outlets to point to the large-scale infrastructural accomplishments of the PLD.

The protests by Samaná residents over the toll resulted from their disagreement with actions taken by the centralized decision-making processes of the Dominican state. The conflict was not only about the toll, but also the amount being charged, the mechanisms of local exclusion, and the continued authoritarian mode of governance. Samaná residents started to see the toll as a rallying struggle for the withering relationship between Samaná, the state, and political parties. Tired of decisions being imposed on them by administrators from afar, the struggle over the toll revealed to many Samanese that the Dominican state can be effectively opposed.

In this chapter, I delve into the historical forms and sites of organizing within Samaná to understand the processes, effects, and limits to local organizing efforts. These organizing limits, if surpassed, are necessary to create new possibilities for overcoming the processes of dispossession affecting the region. How can the local population demand accountability from their leaders and a participatory structure of governance? What are the necessary circumstances to sustain local organizing that will produce changes that benefit the majority? What strata of the

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275 Jet Blue announced direct flights from JFK to Samaná beginning in November 2012. American Airlines attempted to have flights from Samaná to San Juan in 2009, but this plan did not go through.
276 For Fernandez, the difference between Monte Carlo and Samaná was one of infrastructure. Yet many Samanese would argue that it is the lack of basic education and community-oriented services that are most necessary.
community are willing to participate during moments of resistance? These are some of the questions I engage with in this chapter.

Through an analysis of present organizing efforts, I evaluate the possibilities for overcoming these local fractures and identify the obstacles to achieve a long-term grassroots organizing efforts. I develop a critical analysis of recent collective actions to identify the strategies utilized to counter political power structures and to analyze the pitfalls that pervade these processes and hinder a larger movement of peoples and ideas. I then analyze the tactics and strategies mobilized by the community over time as a way to resist incursions by the state. To conclude, I review past community actions that resulted in a positive outcome. The methods and strategies that were mobilized by Samanenses to contest these actions can be replicated in further efforts. Protests around which the community has coalesced serve as a conduit to continued organizing in the local space.

The Toll

Consultation of the residents of Samaná regarding any development project is almost unthinkable. On the front pages of Samaná’s local paper *Diario Libre*, the editors referenced the new toll and delivered a scathing editorial of the Dominican state:277

> Who do they think they are, all that’s missing is that they charge us to breathe in Samaná. There are already five other tolls on the road and no one knows if its done because they think the people are rich or because they think that the population makes as much as its public officials (Diario Samaná 2012).

The Dominican Minister of Public Projects, Victor Dias Rua, had unilaterally increased the toll as an attempt to pass off the government investment to the peninsula’s population. The existing tolls on the road to Samaná from Santo Domingo already totaled 400 pesos ($11 worth of tolls) and the new toll would be an additional 400 pesos, doubling the cost of the trip. In the context of

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277 The paper, lacking proper funding, only lasted 1.5 years, printing sporadically and providing a scathing critique of local politicians and their motivations.
Samaná, where the daily pay rate for a day of manual labor is 500 pesos ($14.50), 800 pesos ($22) for the two-hour stretch of road was an exorbitant amount to charge.

Samaneses questioned why the costs of the road were being transferred to residents and what options for resistance were available. The initial disjointed protests led by individual Samaneses received no response from the authorities. A larger community meeting was convened to bring the various groupings of protest together in coalition. A range of community-based organizations, individuals, and local unions converged to voice their opposition to the toll. At the meeting, a common strategy was discussed and a decision was made to send a collective denunciation and request a meeting with the minister of transportation.

These initial proposals for dialogue were rejected by the minister, and in reaction, the coalition held a plenary to elect representatives and discuss alternative courses of action to ensure that the toll would not be charged. The elected commission was composed of three representatives from the transportation unions, two representatives from the local tourism business sector, and one church representative. Undeterred, the coalition decided on a course of action by consensus, and a call was made for a general strike in the peninsula to disrupt the flow of tourists and goods to the region. With the threat of imminent shutdown, the Dominican state would be forced to negotiate.

The battle for the toll would include all strata of Samaná society. Willing participants in the protest were the transportation unions that included the taxis, motoconcho (motorcycle taxis), public transport, and truck drivers, as well as the tour operators’ union, and the tourist workers union. Religious institutions of different denominations joined the call for the strike and many NGOs doing work in Samaná expressed their support. Local businesses offered to provide food and supplies to the protesters. The general strike was successful in convening large numbers of
Samaná residents, but received scant national attention. The coalescing of oppositional forces during a time of election required an immediate response by the state to find resolution to the impasse.

The Samaná commission went to Santo Domingo to meet with the president and set forward their demands, stating that “no Samanes will ever pay the toll, for we should not have to pay to go home.” The possibility of bloodshed that occurs with any confrontation between police and protesters prompted President Fernandez to intervene. Rather than rescind the toll, the government chose a tactic of divide and conquer to avoid a clash with the transportation unions. A presidential decree was signed declaring that the toll would not be charged to residents going to the town of Samaná, but would be charged to those who took the new road to Las Terrenas. The solution appeased the protesters.

The defeat of the toll was perceived as a major victory for Samaná residents and was the result of a new set of organizing conditions that could be used as a future model for organizing. The protest against the toll overcame organizational obstacles by centering on an action that affected all segments of the Samaná peninsula. The struggle for the toll united neighboring municipalities and went beyond differences in political affiliations. The mobilization clearly exceeded the expectations of the Dominican state. The action showcased the power that unity could bring to the region and community as a new and successful model of engagement with the state. This victory has provided impetus for increased organizing on the local level and demands for community input in the formation of development plans for the peninsula.

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278 The community organizing around the toll almost appeared too late. It was only after the project had been completed that the demands were made. In the past, these belated timing of these last-minute efforts derailed the community’s attempts at protest and dissuaded others from joining.
Local movements of resistance have for the most part been limited by a fractured and fragmented Samaná civil society. These conditions limit local organizing efforts and decrease the acts of contestation towards the state and its processes of dispossession. Organizing around the toll marked a change in the way the community has engaged with local conflicts and emboldened pockets of Samaná society that have been silenced. The protests marked a new strategy to engage with the Dominican state and indicated a renewed willingness by the community to intercede in local affairs.

The battle for the toll illustrates some of the many challenges ahead for Samaneses. If the community is caught off guard, the victory may not last. Although the toll is not being charged, the toll’s site and structure remain. The coalition was content with not being charged, but backed off their threat of destroying the structure when they were appeased. The remaining structure allows for future attempts to charge the toll. In March 2014, the Dominican government threatened to increase tolls around the country to make up for the deficits incurred by the state’s infrastructural projects. Once again, the community mobilized to make sure the state was reminded of the renewed power of local organizing.

Limits to Samaná Organizing

After years of state manipulation and interventions in the space of Samaná, local voices have been routinely silenced and a political consciousness has been curtailed. These convergences of power have resulted in decreased educational, social, and cultural opportunities, and continue to have detrimental effects on the local environment. Over time, Samaneses have become less afraid to verbalize the connections between the state, capital, and tourism that have resulted in increased inequality, corruption, and poverty. This limit to participation in decision-making and inclusion in electoral politics has spurned the development of alternate sites of
organizing. New paradigms are being formulated to bring about a reorganization and resurgence of Samaná civil society.

Through conversations with residents and activists in the Samaná community, I compiled a series of observations that may uncover some of the obstacles to long-term planning and organizing. I identify these obstacles in order to delineate a set of guiding conditions necessary for successful community campaigns. These obstacles include: fear; fragmentation; class, generational, and religious differences; low political consciousness; a disconnect from national and international networks of solidarity; and limited local leadership. These obstacles, although particular to the context of Samaná, also exemplify broader difficulties of organizing on the national level and need to be resolved in order to affect long-term change for rural communities.

Political, social, and economic reforms are being imagined and developed locally as responses to state-led projects of exclusion. The calls for unity among a divided and fractured Samaná population are in their initial stage. The inability to go beyond petty politics, personal conflicts, and religious affiliations has stunted the growth of community-based movements and is the largest obstacle to local organizing. Local activist Jose Hamilton describes this fragmentation and its effects as a response and resistance to change: “They don’t want you to move forward, but don’t want you to change anything either, they don’t support your work nor do they present an alternative” (Hamilton 2013).

Many local organizers like Jose have become disheartened by the lack of support and constant attacks against their persona. Jose was born and raised in Samaná, a descendant of the African American families who migrated to the town. He is a Professor of Economics at the Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo (UASD), and has sustained his commitment to the town. Jose is also the Director of Samaneses Ausentes, a local organization that has been
developing opportunities and programs for Samaneneses for the last 25 years. For Jose, there is a reticence to organize with and in support of other groups because of an increasing distrust amongst the various organizations vying for the limited resources of national and international funding.

In Samaná, adults have historically organized themselves as workers within trade unions, through community-based organizations, in neighborhood councils, and in religious and spiritual groupings. The majority of these groups have their own spaces and have few sites of connection to others. Both the labor unions and religious institutions are connected to larger national structures that offer allegiances and support when mobilizations are needed. Other local groupings rely on regional support for their organizing efforts.

As a result of the fragmented nature of Samaná society, most efforts at local resistance appear as reactive. These local attempts do not thwart efforts beforehand. The process of responding and reacting to events has hindered the development of an alternate voice and leadership within Samaná society. In Samaná, it is rare for groups to converge; therefore, organizing around an event allows for different factions of Samaná society to come together who may not be able to organize conjunctively. Many groups find agreement in specific moments and actions that may affect the majority of residents. Sporadic victories have been claimed by event-based organizing, but the community can only achieve small victories, and this strategy makes it difficult to engage in long-term struggle and attain structural changes. A more constant source of local organizing must be developed that anticipates state actions.

The lack of cooperation within groups has diminished their capacity to organize, and in the long run, is detrimental to collective actions. The disunity and fragmentation in Samaná have led to a diminishing political consciousness and the power of mobilization. Disenfranchisement
combined with a national model of political tigueraje has birthed a culture of individuality that centers around personal benefits regardless of the effects on those nearby. Political tigueraje has taken hold in Samaná, but it is constantly resisted from different segments of the community.

Leadership within the community is approached in a very top-down manner. The unwillingness for some personalities to assume a secondary role has created a plethora of leaders with very few followers. This exacerbates the fragmentation of the Samaná public into camps of interest and religious following. In addition, the lack of proper mechanisms of communication and promotion are also detrimental for local organizing. Without an adequate way to inform the population of events or meetings, little opportunity is given to plan for one’s own participation or strategize with others. Only a small portion of the Samaná population has access to computer or Internet services. Most rely on their cell phones for communication and to receive information. Currently, a vehicle is sent around with a loudspeaker to announce the event the morning of. This practice is designed to satisfy the requirements for public announcement without impacting the audience in any way. Very few respond to these last-minute invitations.

Samaná, much like the larger DR, is an extremely gendered space, and very few spaces where decision-making occurs or opportunities exist to exert influence are available for women. In my work, I have tried to highlight women’s voices in order to develop a more expansive analysis and to understand the contradictions within local culture. Although these women are devalued in the political and professional realms, they clearly dominate many of the commercial-and informal-sector jobs and control the finances in the home, and thus the expenditures and the investments that each family in Samaná makes.

In conjunction with these local issues, there is an eerie silence in the national and international realm on developments and issues pertaining to Samaná. The limited national
media coverage and lack of connection to outside forces hinder much-needed support from reaching those in the region. Interested parties must gather what little knowledge can be found from networks of friends in the region or by accessing Facebook as an important site of exchange of information. A few websites run local news of Samaná, but much of the community lacks access to computer equipment and funds. These networks of support would further local efforts and help to share strategies of dissent. Let us turn to the sites where and the practices of organizing in which the community has historically engaged.

**History of Local Organizing**

Community organizing in Samaná should be understood both in its historical and contemporary context as it has developed over time as part of a placemaking endeavor. Samanesees have been central participants in establishing local structures of education, religion, and other civil society institutions to further develop, enrich, and organize local society. These local spaces, and thus the methods and participants involved, have changed over time in reaction to shifting political and economic conditions and the authoritative nature of the Dominican state. As spaces of possible dissent and alternate thought production, they have been co-opted over time by the state.

Throughout its formative years from 1800-1880, the town was organized in ethnic enclaves that reflected linguistic and religious affiliations. At the time, local fractures were clearer cut. For the most part the Methodists were English speakers and the Catholics were Spanish or French speakers, with other smaller ethnic groups claiming their own spaces. As time passed, these enclaves began to mix, and the linguistic and religious divisions were softened (Smith 1989). Caribbean labor migration to the peninsula during the late 1800s increased the town’s predominantly Black racial groupings and further strengthened local educational
initiatives that were for the most part held in three languages: English, Spanish, and Creole. Organizing primarily still occurred around religious affiliations, but additionally through labor groupings and civil society organizations.

There is a remarkable amount of mistrust amongst the local population resulting from the coercive practices of the Dominican state. The consolidation of the modern Dominican state beginning in the 1930s brought extreme interventions in the local space and a shift in local power structures that established new factions and divisions within the town. During the Trujillo dictatorship, distrust amongst neighbors was promoted through constant surveillance and the infiltration of local institutions. The state demanded allegiance to Trujillo, forcefully stifling most local efforts at dissent. Over time, many of those institutions were co-opted by political actors and the Dominican state. Groups that remained in opposition were forced to do so clandestinely, and local religious spaces became tamed by the threats of violence.

With the death of Trujillo and the subsequent political shifts of 1961, the labor unions grew as an organizing force around both the country and also in Samaná to oppose the executive branch’s abuse of power. The Dominican state terrorized and dismantled many of the first labor unions such as the CGT and SITRACODE. The PRSC state managed to fracture the transportation unions, thus creating two structures: one that is independent of the state and the other beholden to and financed by the state. The proliferation of political parties in the 60s shifted organizing and handed the power of popular mobilization over to political party affiliations. This political party model of organizing has dominated for the last 50 years and has further fragmented oppositional forces.

Spaces of Protest in Samaná
The principal sites of protest in Samaná historically have been religious spaces. These spaces have been centers of dissent and organizing and effective sites for mobilizing a large number of constituents when needed. Religious spaces must be taken seriously as an organizing force within Samaná, as many have configured themselves as sites of social justice and solidarity and continue to make space available for collective actions in benefit of the community. The services provided by these religious denominations have remained constant within the space of Samaná and most likely will remain so for years to come. These groups have large congregations and are active in the daily social lives of the community, providing education, health, and social services that supplement and sometimes replace the services of the state.279

In Samaná, the three largest denominations are the Catholic Church, the Evangelical Church, and the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church. The Catholic Church has a strong relationship with the Dominican state and now has the largest number of followers in the region. Many of the shifts in affiliation to the Catholic Church are due to the increased labor migration from other parts of the country to fill many of the available tourism jobs. The Catholic Church receives benefits from its association with and cohesion to the Dominican state apparatus. As a result of this economic relation, the Dominican Catholic Church structure is reticent to demand more substantive changes from the political structure.280

The Evangelical Church consists of a group of 60 congregations with 7,000 followers spread across the peninsula (Listín Diario 2011). It is also the largest growing denomination in the DR. The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) has the largest following in rural areas of the peninsula and amongst many elders in the community. The church has been active in Samaná since the 1824 migration of African Americans to the region. Both of these

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279 Few youth participate in these spaces.
280 During my fieldwork, all three denominations organized vigils, marches, and religious revivals that mobilized large sections of the Samaná community.
denominations are more beholden to local needs because their organizational structure is directed by Samaneses. These church organizations have the power to elect their own pastors; they therefore have more control over what the church will support in a way that reflects the needs of the community. An ever-growing number of Adventist and Pentecostal institutions are rapidly winning converts in the region and are routinely demanding equality from the Dominican state.

There are multiple examples of the power of churches to rapidly mobilize their members. In October 2012, an elderly woman was decapitated, her dogs killed, and her house ransacked during a robbery. Her murder shook the town. The woman was an elder in the community and a well-respected member of the AME Church. Pastor James of the Evangelical Church rapidly organized a march against violence to be convened on October 23, 2012. The march served to denounce the killing and critique the increased violence permeating the community. More broadly, the march protested against the national increase in incidences of abuse and violence against women. On the day of the march, people gathered outside of the Evangelical church. There were members of the church, some local businessmen, friends and family of the victim, and concerned citizens. Around two hundred participants marched around the main avenues of the town, attempting to garner support from onlookers. Sympathizers waved in support, but very few onlookers were motivated to participate in the march. The majority of the marchers were youth, accompanied by their teachers. Many of the marchers, rather than being concerned with the march, seemed more entertained with getting out of classes and playing on their phones.

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281 The high number of incidences of violent abuse against and deaths of women mobilized a national campaign that went beyond political parties and religious institutions and extended to Dominican civil society. It produced a series of new laws toughening the penalties on these violations. Passed in the summer of 2012, Law 24-97 established guidelines for what is constituted as violence against women, defined as any action of public or private conduct that causes damage or physical suffering, sexual or psychological damage to a woman through the use of physical force, psychological violence, verbal abuse, intimidation, or persecution. With the establishment of these new laws, the state has attempted to curb the violence against women through the establishment of sanctions and punishment, without acknowledging the multiple ways that violence is encoded in daily interactions and promoted by the forces of governance and civil society. This violence that pervades every interaction between people of different positionalities, is part of a historical presence of violence that has been formative of the nation and national culture.
After the march, many of the participants commented on the lack of representation from the municipal government: “Ellos son los primeros que tenían que estar aquí” (They are the first ones who should have been here). Beyond the local radio station, no coverage was given to the event.

These religious communities can be used to strengthen local mobilizations, but can also be used to divide efforts and further fragment local dissent. Rather than participate alongside the Evangelical Church, the Catholic Church organized its own march against violence the following week. This lack of cohesion amongst religious organizations has hampered collective actions and mobilizations and is an example of the fractures present within Samaná. The potential for community organization within these religious spaces could be expanded upon and used to make connections and mobilize larger segments of the population.

The possibilities and limits to organizing by the different church denominations has much to do with the positions and perspectives of their religious leaders. Pastor James heads the Evangelical St. Peters Church. He is a young man who is open to collaboration with others, wears glasses, and is soft spoken, except when he is preaching. The Pastor rides a large road motorcycle around town and lives with his two children and wife in an apartment adjacent to the church. As a member of the Municipal Inter-Denominational Council, he regularly meets with the mayor and his representatives and makes recommendations as to the welfare of the population.

When I met with Pastor James, we spoke about the needs of the community and the role that the Evangelical Church could play in Samaná society. He described the various community projects that the church was involved in and expressed desires to be more involved in social programs. He also spoke to the lack of interest on behalf of the municipality stating, “We have
the people, and we just lack the resources.” The pastor had tried multiple times to set up meetings with the mayor to talk about developing additional social programs, “but every time I go to our scheduled meeting, the secretary tells me he has just left town for a meeting in Santo Domingo.” I had similar experiences having set two meetings with the mayor’s secretary only to arrive and be told by her that he was unavailable.

In seeking the necessary resources for his parishioners, Reverend James expressed a deep interest to be incorporated into the local tourism opportunities: “Most people who get off the boats are not told about the wonderful history of the town and therefore very few come to visit the church and hear our history.” He believed church members could offer guided tours of the facilities and provide local historical tours to visitors. He envisioned the visits could have a positive economic impact and also impart a greater appreciation of Samaná history and identity.

**Unions and Local Organizing**

Beyond the religious spaces of organizing, labor unions have a strong influence and track record of organizing dissent for the workers of the peninsula. Although their power has been diminished by state activities and manipulations, they continue to be a force. Within these unions, members find camaraderie and a common voice to present their grievances before the relevant authorities. Although there has been an uptake in the numbers of unions on the national scale, their power has been reduced significantly. Only 20% of laborers in the DR are unionized. Many of these unions have been infiltrated by the state and are beholden to the political parties. Rather than push the limits of political platforms, they have been complicit with state actions and programs.

The strongest and largest of the unions operating in Samaná is the National Confederation of Transport Organizations (CONATRA), which boasts over 50,000 members
around the island and over 1,000 members in Samaná. The transportation union is composed of the tourist taxi drivers, motoconchos (motorcycle taxis), public transport micro-buses, and the vehicles that transport goods to the region.\footnote{The unions are organized along local and regional lines, and they report to the national level organization, pay dues, and receive support.} As a national organization, CONATRA wields the power to bargain for the rights of its workers, to control the prices and increases in the fares of its services, and to decide the time schedule and routes of transport. It is in charge of bringing all products and people in and out of the peninsula and is continually in negotiations to pressure the Dominican government for favorable working conditions for its members. In addition to the transportation union, the two largest unions in Samaná are those for agricultural laborers and hotel tourist workers. These unions have a regular meeting space and schedule that provides information and support for their members.

A more recent phenomenon of small independent unions has also arisen in Samaná. These smaller unions are not linked to larger national structures and are composed on average of ten to twenty participants. The union participants elect a group representative and pay dues to the elected labor leader, with high expectations of the person in that position. The lack of connection to larger structures makes it difficult to demand larger changes, and thus decreases their effectiveness. These unions are unable to wage a thorough campaign because of the limits of size and influence; therefore their approach is to focus their work on achieving small gains for the workers. Successful groups, such as the massage workers’ union, have managed to get higher wages and better work conditions for the services they offer to the hotels, but the fragmentation of the local labor force benefits the elite segments of the country. Let us now turn to the tactics employed by, and the spaces occupied during, these acts of local protest.

**Public Sites of Protest and Tactics of Resistance**
Throughout the community’s history, public protests have been used as a way to counteract the plans of the state and other projects of rule. These public protests are used as a critique of the forceful tactics of dispossession willingly engaged in by the state and private actors. Over time the community has claimed public spaces like the malecon (boardwalk) and the plaza in front of the governor’s office for their acts of protest.\footnote{The malecon is a site of pleasure and relaxation where all town celebrations take place.} When either of these spaces is taken over, it interrupts and disrupts daily life and brings attention to the matter at hand.

Many of the public protests in Samaná are mobilized quickly and give the impression that much local activism is due to spontaneous acts of resistance. This assumed spontaneity has been used to discredit these actions and assume a lack of organizing strategy for those participating in it. The lack of continuity of these protests also creates an assumption that the different reactions to incursions into the local are momentary, rather than a strategy of engagement. What many fail to realize is that these rapid mobilizations reveal a reliance on an informed and willing network of militancy that can be activated at a moment’s notice.

The threat of violence on the part of the protesters always accompanies organizing efforts in Samaná. The local and national authorities do not take many of these protests seriously, and at times the protesters resort to violent tactics and organized attempts of sabotage as methods to gain attention for their struggle. Actions of aggression and retribution are a part of the repertoire of responses by the community to express their disenchantment and frustration with the actions by the state. This violent response often prevents the religious leadership from participating, thus splintering local voices and thereby limiting the actions and effectiveness of the protest movement.
Small-scale manifestations of protest in the rural context of Samaná are constant challenges to the repression of the state and bring together multiple sections of the community. These street actions are sometimes the only alternative to attempt to sway the minds of the authorities. The violence perpetrated by the protesters pales in comparison with that of state actors. For the authorities, the option is either to listen and acquiesce to some of the demands or to quell the protest by force. The use of force is augmented for specific projects and rural regions that are outside of the mainstream media area of coverage. Force and the use of violence are the first response on behalf of the Dominican state as a tool to dissuade any type of protest and protesters from violence. The increasing violence perpetrated by the state towards these collective actions has left many unwilling to join these acts of protest.

A preferred tactic of protest in Samaná and other rural regions is that of blocking the road by using either human barriers or artifacts. The burning of tires, wood, and garbage are all part of the acts of subversion and contestation. These events bring immediate reactions by the state and are part of the repertoire of protests by the community as a last resort to their problems. Such was the case in the community of El Coyote. For the last 30 years, local politicians have promised connections to water and sanitation services to the communities located in the outskirts of the town of Samaná. As a new cycle of elections was arriving, politicians offered projects in return for their votes, and members of the community would vote for whomever assisted them. After years of frustration and unfulfilled promises, the community once again protested the lack of services, only to be repressed violently.

The Protest at El Coyote held on May 9, 2012 was organized to bring attention to the fact that the community still did not have access to running water. The protest consisted of twenty-five women who were banging on pots and pans blocking the road to Las Terrenas from Samaná,
with a few men scattered amongst the crowd. When the police arrived, rather than attempting to
speak to any of the participants, they began to shove them off the road. Some of the men
intervened on behalf of the female protesters, and a shot rang out amidst the struggle and
pushing. The police officers momentarily retreated and regrouped before opening fire and
spraying the protesters with crowd-dispersal gas.

In the aftermath, one man was sent to the hospital with a bullet wound to the stomach.
Calling in to the local television show La Verdad Sin Rodeo, a young man named Romulo asked
“who was in charge of this police contingent; we were having a peaceful protest; they went to get
more police; came back and shot him in the stomach. You are the ones who are altering the
peace.” Local newscaster and investigative reporter Erika Guzman declared on her daily show,
“You are there to stop the violence, now what are folks going to say. The community cannot
cower; we will not cower.” This was one of many similar incidences where force was routinely
mobilized against local dissent.

At times, local protest can get out of hand. In 2002, with electrical blackouts at their
peak, community members waged a large protest in the town. The growing crowd demanded an
increase in energy service, a decrease in cost of services, and an explanation regarding electrical
billing practices. One group of protesters shut down the highway to Samaná with wooden pallets,
garbage bins, and old tires. Protesters set items on fire, creating multiple obstacles for vehicles to
pass, while protesters gathered around the fires with bottles of rum in hand talking politics and
complaining about the authorities. Later that day, a Caribe Tours public transport bus attempted
to cross the barricades at full speed in hopes of knocking over the burning garbage. Instead, it
found itself with a broken front window caused by a brick thrown from the hillside. As other
vehicles in line witnessed the mayhem, many halted and reversed their direction, unwilling to lose a windshield.

The second contingent of protesters marched and chanted in the streets of Samaná for improved electrical service. As the protesters became more agitated, some began to burn tires in the town with a third small contingent making its way to the state-run telephone company building CODETEL.284 A Molotov cocktail was thrown through the front window of the building, and within minutes the offices were burning. When the volunteer firefighters finally arrived on scene, most of the building was in flames. This action caused a disruption in local phone services for the next two weeks and did nothing to advance the demands for which they were protesting.285

Alternate Spaces of Encounter

Three major points of contention have united the community in the last few years, and these moments of solidarity have coalesced around quality-of-life issues: garbage pick up, education funding, and the conflicts over the new toll. In delineating these common struggles, new strategies of organizing have been activated in long-dormant coalitions. A shift is necessary to recognize other structures and sites of protest that allow a new generation to be incorporated into local decision-making. New organizing spaces that go beyond political factions have taken shape in reaction to the Dominican state’s inability to be receptive to local voices.

These new sites are intended to bring together the young and progressive segments of the community and to break with traditional sites of organizing. These young organizations are

284 The protest went on throughout the night, momentarily interrupted when a group of drivers organized their own effort to get through the barricade. Four shots were fired into the air from the SUV leading the caravan of stranded vehicles. Frightened by the shots, the protesters scattered in all directions, only to reorganize quickly and begin shelling the remaining cars with rocks. This put an immediate stop to driver’s attempts to break the roadblock.

285 The attack on CODETEL can be explained only through its links as an apparatus and corporation of the state and as an attempt to influence and bring attention to community needs.
beginning to make claims upon the state and municipal actors to act on their behalf as a result of the diminishing local opportunities. Young community members are not willing to sit back and wait for change to happen, so they are using their networks and access to social media to mobilize outside resources. These new spaces respond to the increasing need for interventions by and in Samaná’s civil society. These sites are not meant to upend or destroy what is currently there, but, rather, to create new options and expand the limits of local opportunities. These creative alternatives have attempted to establish additional spaces of protest that mediate between the population and the state.

Two of these new groupings have achieved results through their willingness to engage with the authorities in new ways. The Grupo de Jovenes Samaneses and the Patronato de Samaná (PENXAD) reflect the possibilities for future local networks of solidarity to pressure the Dominican state and further consolidate Samaná civil society. I selected these groups because these smaller spaces of organizing are much quicker to respond to local needs and are able to mobilize small projects and resources for the community. The two groups have recently combined their efforts to push for the formation of a Samaná Cultural and Historical Center, imagining it as a space of convergence for many different projects.

**Patronato de Samaná**

Various young professionals from Samaná who live in Santo Domingo formed PENXAD (Patronato de Samaná). Its members are motivated by the limited opportunities they had as youth growing up in Samaná. Their concern is with developing solutions for community issues, supporting local culture, and pressuring the municipal government to invest money in the youth of the region. From their vantage point in Santo Domingo, members of PENXAD can mobilize business networks to quickly connect resources and projects. By drawing upon outside resources,
they exert influence on local politics and social life and bring a much-needed perspective to a relatively stagnant local space. Through partnerships with outside institutions, PENXAD has prompted a series of reforms and small-scale cultural projects like the Festival of Song, the Samaná Gastronomic Festival, and the foundation of three community libraries for local children. Rather than focus on the needs of tourists, these initiatives instead focus on building local networks of support.

PENXAD has been active for the past four years and has at times taken on small collaborations with the municipal government. They have become less willing to involve local officials in their plans and constantly voice their concerns with the pace of municipal decision-making. The composition of the members PENXAD is peculiar for the space of Samaná. It is one of the few, if only, groups where the directors of the organization are all women. This is reflective of a new generation of women in Samaná who are claiming spaces of decision-making. The group has been effective within the patriarchal arena of the Dominican state and battling the tendencies of political tigueraje.

I attended a few of their planning meetings and spoke with the representatives about actions with which they had been involved. The group’s biggest victory occurred after their involvement in helping to establish a garbage pick-up system for the community.286 Money was collected from local businesses and additional support was sought from the Korean embassy in order to provide funding to purchase the garbage truck. In the agreement PENXAD reached, the funds to the pay the garbage men were to be provided by the municipality. This was an instance when PENXAD collaborated with the municipal authorities. Mayor Bezi rapidly painted his image on the truck, making it known that the project occurred under his leadership, claiming all

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286 After receiving letters from the cruise ship industry worried about various conditions in the town regarding garbage, harassment of tourists, and the lack of a proper dock, local authorities supported the project because it was affecting the amount of cruise ships and visitors coming to the town.
the credit. One of PENXAD’s members Katia Pujals, a young executive in Santo Domingo, explained how it occurred:

I was involved with PENXAD and other Samanenses in the garbage pick-up protest. Tourism in Samaná was beginning to decline; people were being affected. A group of local businessmen convened us, and they organized some workshops on garbage disposal and provided training for us to go out and talk to the people. We wanted to educate them on how to dispose of their garbage rather than them throwing the refuse on the street or in the rivers. We were able to get donations from various groups and a tractor to move the garbage in the dump. (Katia Pujals Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton 2013)

Grupo de Jovenes

The Grupo de Jovenes de Samaná began in 2011 and was formed as a result of the desire of local youth to be more involved in the town’s affairs. This group represents one of the few constant localized efforts to rally the youth of the community. They use Facebook as a central form of sharing information, organizing, and posting historical tidbits, as well as images that depict the poverty and destruction of the town. The group’s general objective is to change the direction of development of the community and suggest and support projects that are perceived to be beneficial to youth. They have been involved in mobilizing around conservation issues involving the whales, garbage pick-up, and the lack of funding for education institutions. This youth group has also been at the center of the revival of the local carnival celebration held in February.

The youth group has participated in the planning of many cultural events and local historical plays. On the evening of August 17, 2011, they staged a public play on the history of the town and performed their own rereading of the history of the region. The play exposed a narrative that highlighted the local inhabitants’ role in the early development of Samaná. On display that night was the transnational history of the town that highlighted the waves of

287 The demand to move the garbage dump to an area far from the urban center of Samaná is the latest struggle in which the community and PENXAD are involved.
resistance to the various interventions into local affairs. It also highlighted the community’s Black heritage, which originates from multiple locations in the hemisphere. Many of the official history books that are used in local schools have downplayed this heritage. For these youth, their history was not understood as belonging to the past, but instead as a process that continues to unfold, and is at the center of their identity.

The group built the stage, designed the decoration and costumes, and enlisted some of the elders to perform the play. They requested support from the mayor, but he declined. Throughout the evening, the speakers on stage reminded the crowd of the historical importance of the region: “let us rescue the history and culture of Samaná.” They reminded the crowd: “we should be honored to be composed of three different cultures.” These public presentations also included a critique of local politicians, party politics, and their lack of support for public endeavors. These sites of public enjoyment and engagement are one of the few venues where community members can openly and publicly express their lack of support for structures of power.

One of these youth leaders is Wilfredo Benjamin, who is a registered tour guide who runs his own artisanal coconut business. His family arrived from the Turks and Caicos islands in the early 1900s to work on the different agricultural enterprises in Samaná and then shifted to working in maritime trade between the English-speaking Caribbean islands. At a young age, Wilfredo was forced to look for jobs outside of the DR to make enough to pay for his and his partners’ schooling. After three years of working in tourist endeavors on different Caribbean

288 As it was described to me, the reason for declining to support the theatric endeavor may have also been related to cost. The troupe had only requested 17,000 pesos to pay for all the materials, but apparently the person who presented the project to the mayor and his committee requested 42,000, hoping they would be ble to pocket the remaining funds: “maricones, no ayudan a Samaná, no promueven nada” (bastards, don’t help Samaná, they don’t promote anything).
islands, he returned to Samaná ready to embark on his own business venture and bring some benefits to the place he calls home.

Wilfredo is deeply connected to the youth of Samaná and regularly organizes with them. He works both within and outside of the political circles, knowing well the multiple manipulations that exist and the dangers of succumbing to political interests. During the day, he leads tours, and in the afternoon, he works with the youth in making handicrafts out of coconut, passing on the process to a new generation. On his off time, he organizes youth discussions that provide important opportunities to bring younger members into the group. We sat down on various afternoons to map out the possibilities for future projects, such as creating an artisan school in Samaná and developing the Samaná Historical Center. Wilfredo provided an intimate critique from the perspective of a younger entrepreneur who is not connected to the structures of political power, yet is aware of their importance in the local sphere.289

The problem as I understand it is the apathy of Samaneses. There are a lot of us young people with an incredible capacity to develop our town, but unfortunately nobody cares what we have to say. It is the political system that has not allowed the people to see things how they really are. Many young people feel impotent; sometimes they give up and don’t care because everything has to pass through the politicians and all funds go through them. Many believe that because we don’t have the funds that we can’t do anything to help in our town’s development.

When you are alone and don’t feel like anyone is helping you, you are weakened; you can’t do it all by yourself. What’s going on is that the young professionals in Samaná are learning to develop themselves and only thinks about themselves. I blame our educational system; that’s what has us subdued, because we don’t have that vocation for social work, nor to defend the environment, nor to support our sports endeavors, because in the schools none of these things are being emphasized (Wilfredo Benjamin Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton 2013).

And yet these youth have persisted. A group of 20-30 met on a weekly basis to educate themselves and develop a political consciousness to strengthen Samaná’s civil society. In these

289 Wilfredo’s coconut arts school had been approved for funding by the Ministry of Tourism, but he had yet to receive the funds after 18 months.
meetings, they provide support and encouragement for the difficulties many of these youth are facing. As a Black youth, Wilfredo was also aware of the racial limits to enjoying full citizenship in the DR and the societal conceptions of Blackness that affected local Afro-descendant populations:

We Afros still think that the one who is always right is the white man, because that’s how we have been taught. The system here makes it seem like that is the way it should be. We are afraid; instead of building our own business we would rather go to a white man and give him the idea, because we think he is the only one with capacity and resources to develop that idea.

Wilfredo’s commentary is an important one for Samaná and its population of African descent. The Dominican state’s treatment of darker-skinned individuals and the complicity of Dominican media in showcasing images of light-skinned Dominicans continue to harm the identities of these youth. These Black youth peer contemptuously at political actors as they navigate the minefield of race in the DR. When asked about the limitations he saw in regards to Samaná’s future, he responded:

You can see today that one of the towns with the most churches is Samaná. Because of the egocentrism and that’s what causes us to be skating in the same place in terms of development instead of moving forward. I understand that we are moving backwards instead of forward. Before we had a lot of things and today we have very few. We are a town that doesn’t fight for our things, because through the educational system we are not taught our rights; we know some of our rights, but we think that the state is responsible for everything. But you know when you try to protest, the state still doesn’t do anything about it until two or three are killed.

In seeking to increase local opportunities for youth, the group became involved in organizing to increase state investment in education programs in Samaná. During the 2012 electoral campaign, the candidates had agreed that if they won they would allocate 4% of the national GDP to education. The current 3% GDP expenditure was well below the level of most Latin American countries, and thereafter the battle for the 4% expenditure became a topic of national interest. Students and parents in education centers across the country expressed their
support for this increase in funding and many families hit the streets to demand that their representatives support the endeavor.

Civil society organizations in Samaná had previously pressured the Universidad Autonoma de Santo Domingo (UASD) to promote higher education initiatives within the town of Samaná and to provide small sections of classes locally. The UASD is the largest public higher education institution in the DR. It agreed to open up a small annex branch of the college in the town of Samaná to meet some of the demands of the community and its youth. Most courses were geared towards participation in the tourist industry and providing technical training. These classes met the minimal needs of the population while presenting a façade of effort towards educating the masses.

As a result of the distance from the other major urban centers, the only option for Samaná youth who complete their high school studies is to seek out education opportunities or work in other parts of the island. The youth group came together to pressure the UASD directive to provide additional courses and increase the depth of the current courses being offered. After months of meetings, there was still no clear word from the university administration as to whether the extension would stay open, and if it did, of what type of resources it could avail itself to continue operating. Threatened by the lack of funding, even these minimal efforts were being destroyed.

Sectors of the town marched in support of the UASD extension, with students and their parents joining in the chorus to keep the campus open and expand its services. A general meeting was held with the students of the UASD extension in Samaná on January 28, 2013. To begin the meeting, the student delegation read a statement they had prepared for the gathering, which asked for a permanent site for the UASD educational institution in Samaná. They demanded a
promise from the Dominican state to continue providing funds for local educational initiatives. These youth declared, “we can’t travel to other regions; we cannot afford it; our future is in your hands!” Pleading for a local solution, the statement highlighted the difficulties that many young Samaneses had in getting to other centers of higher education around the country.

During the meeting with the students, the rector of the UASD and a cadre of other local politicians stood at the front of the room. When it came turn for the president of the UASD to speak, the room fell hushed. Awaiting his words, many of the youth pulled out their cell phones and other recording devices. Accustomed to being promised many things and receiving very few, these recordings served to keep the administrators honest and kept their public promises to a minimum. The recordings would later show up on You Tube as a way to claim a victory on behalf of the students and provide a further critique of the authorities.

The president of the UASD confirmed his commitment to the university extension and blamed much of the miscommunication about the extension’s fate on local politicians and their inability to support certain projects. The president’s comments brought a rapid response from many of the politicians in the room, who made it clear that their support for this project would not waver. At the end of the meeting, and in a surprise move after having pledged his support, with no time for further discussion, it was announced that the area that housed the university annex would now be used as the location for a new technical school. The UASD would no longer provide courses.

The technical school project that was to replace the UASD courses was known as a “Llave en mano” (key in hand) project under the auspices of the Spanish government. The technical school was a project supported by the Samaná Educational Coalition and organized to

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290 The land that was to be used were the ruins of the first coconut factory operation in Samaná begun under the PRSC state.
unite local citizens to support education.\textsuperscript{292} It was meant to provide educational and infrastructural needs to the community with a promise to provide adequate funds for the construction of said facilities. The intention is to hand those structures to local partners to make sure they are administered locally. The project united educators from the region to envision the needs of the youth and possible technical careers that they could offer. The committee set up a series of consultations, and alongside the support of local businesses, created a preliminary list of possible careers and the type of training facilities needed for each one. The project as proposed would benefit many youth and adults by providing technical training courses in diverse categories. Three years later, the building has been erected, but services have not begun.

Conclusion

Within the space of Samaná, many activists are proposing a re-centering of history. The calls and references to local history have begun a process of reflection within many parts of Samaná society. To vocalize this history, a series of activities in private and public settings have been organized aimed to engage these stories as a redemptive process. What has caused this centering on history, and why was it now being mobilized in 2013? This interest is not a search for a forgotten history, but, rather, a proactive remaking of history and a process of dignifying the efforts of the community’s past.

A project that has captivated the interest of multiple segments of Samaná has been the formation of the Samaná Cultural and Historical Center.\textsuperscript{293} This project is an attempt to bring the

\textsuperscript{292} The Samaná Educational Coalition had managed to secure an agreement with past president Hipolito Mejia during the 2000-2004 period. As part of the agreement, the government placed lands that had been set aside for use as industrial land, for the construction of a community educational facility. The coconut oil factory had been located on that site in the community in the late 1970s. With the demise of this community-based project, the land was available and claimed by community members with a vision of the future needs of the community. The trust the land was placed under demanded that it be used for educational purposes. [check this wording above].

\textsuperscript{293} I participated in many of the initial meetings were various groupings came to together to discuss the potential for this project. There was but one consensus: that any efforts put towards the project had to be outside of the political realm so as not to get interests mixed up.
perspectives and views of the population back into the fray and insert local history into the tourism industry. It is an attempt to promote the history and culture of the local space, not just the natural beauty of the region. The project as envisioned engages youth, elders, and different segments of Samaná society to produce a local narrative without interventions. As described by the conveners of the space, the center would allow the community to insert themselves into the economic matrix of tourism, identifying the community’s history as an integral aspect of interest on the region. The intent was to craft a space to foment many of the cultural- and community-based activities that have gone by the wayside with the modernizing of the town.

Both PENXAD and the youth group were part of convening the space for the Samaná Cultural and Historical Center. All the organizing groups agreed they wanted to make sure that the project was not taken over by the municipal politicians. They wanted to create a project that was sustainable and relied on its own income rather than donations and state monies. The organizing committee is comprised of young men and women artists, activists, writers, and cultural workers. The groups have sought out different community-based actors to comprise the organizing committee.

In seeking to challenge the political dispossession and everyday forms of subordination, the community is formulating new strategies and sites for long-term organizing. The continued promotion of an atmosphere where political tigueraje is valued and promoted demands a new strategy of organizing to positively intervene in local processes. An increased political consciousness, alongside new tactics, strategies, and networks of solidarity are required for future mobilizations. These future mobilizations will require an active and organized Samaná civil society (Torres 2014).
Recent mobilizations in Samaná are attempts to transform the state-local relations and push for locally-based initiatives that take into account the particularities of the region and people. This organizing process reflects an unwillingness to continue to wait for the state to develop participatory solutions. It is a demand from below to be seen as partners and not just as recipients of development decisions. Through these collective actions, Samanenses make public their awareness of and opposition to structures of power, and it is during these convergences that hope flourishes. At the end of his interview Wilfredo had a parting statement:

I am not a politician; I am not affiliated with any party; I don’t even vote; what interests me is the rights of all citizens. I will support anyone that has good ideas. Until I see extreme changes in Dominican political life, I refuse to participate in it. The priority of the government should be education and health, but that has not been the case. Therefore I understand that it’s a failed state. Then me going to vote, what is that going to change. For me everything continues being the same, because the one that’s in power, the next one and the one that follows will always be the same because this is a societal problem. Our society is rotten, and we are not able to see our future. What we are creating is future prostitutes, drug kingpins; that is what we are going to get because that is what we value.(Wilfredo Benjamin, Interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton 2013)

The recent success in local organizing efforts can be seen as a roadmap for further bargaining and organizing and can serve as a model for continued mobilizations in Samaná. Local media entities are providing spaces of dissent and offer community members a sense of satisfaction of having spoken to power for a brief moment. Sites like the local paper *Diario Libre* insert historical tidbits about the town into its initial pages, indicating the many processes of resistance that the community had engaged in historically. In their publication on the 10th of November 2011, *Diario Libre* published a scathing critique of the local structures of governance. The editorial was titled “If you want us to speak well about you, then do things well.” In it, they wrote about the expectation that as a paper they should not be critical of municipal efforts and instead support the authorities. The editors made it clear that this would only happen if the authorities began to operate for the benefit of the community and not their own personal
interests. Perhaps to remind them of the history of struggle and as a call to renewing those voices in the present, they wrote:

As we can see, in the process of the formation of Samaná, the foreign factors of geopolitical interest, of European empires, American interventions, and Haitian plans have been determinant in defining the profile and identity of Samaná, where the African heritage composed of maroons, Haitians, African Americans, cocolos, and blacks from other English-speaking islands, have been central to its ethnic and cultural composition and its spirituality, culture and folklore. (Diario Libre 2012)

Local histories are being mobilized to counter the power of the state and inspire local organizing. These mobilizations have resulted in a resurgence of local notions of community, an act of resistance that attempts to counter a narrative of acquiescence to the processes of dispossession affecting the region. In Samaná, the tides are shifting and control will no longer be relinquished.
Closing Thoughts: We Have Awakened “Hemos despertado”

The 1824 migration of African Americans to Samaná was a project of grand maroonage: a quest for emancipation and spiritual and social liberation. Nothing was guaranteed; everything was put at risk to seek out their dreams. The migrants joined a space composed of others from different geographies converging in the port city of Samaná, seeking those same ideals. With the sweat of their brows and the backbone of their political, religious, and social convictions, those who arrived in Samaná were able to create a community in their own vision. They embarked upon a process of placemaking that required much struggle and sacrifice.

The Samaná community has constantly been challenged by outside forces, yet despite these many interventions the population has resisted these incursions. A strong civil society and the formation of autonomous educational, religious, and political institutions characterized the initial years of the community prior to the development of the Dominican state. These spaces were used to maintain their identities, language, and religious practices and to strengthen community bonds and historical memory.

In the early 1900s, Samaná had abundant resources, jobs, multiple journalism presses, marching bands, and networks of commerce and communication with other locations across the Caribbean. Stifled by the formation of the Dominican state and controlled and manipulated by political actors, very few of those past conditions remain. Thirty years of dictatorship and subsequent authoritarian state projects have produced incredible changes to the space of Samaná, creating a very different landscape than that of the past. As a result of the incorporation of the Samaná region into the Dominican nation-state, the living conditions of most inhabitants have significantly worsened under the authoritarian state. Local institutions were forcefully supplanted. The state has made little effort to provide alternative and adequate institutions to
meet the needs and demands of the local population. The emphasis on the development of Samaná has been geared towards improving the conditions and experiences of visitors to the region, not those who live there.

Throughout this dissertation, I have conveyed the multiple conflicts that have surfaced in Samaná as a result of the incorporation of the regime into the Dominican nation-state. Many of these interventions were necessary, but it is the process through which they were conducted that I have investigated and critiqued. These state-led processes of incorporation have achieved and supported a process of accumulation by dispossession in the space of Samaná. The most visible forces and agents of economic, political, and social dispossession have been elected representatives and the elite business sectors controlled by the white elites and the mixed racial political class within Dominican society.

In A Brief History of Neoliberalism, David Harvey states that capitalism has not generated growth in the past 40 years. What has been perceived as growth has been a result of a continued processes of accumulation by dispossession that have increased from the 1970s onward. Accumulation by dispossession is a contemporary issue of capitalism and not simply something of the past. For Harvey, therefore, primitive accumulation and accumulation by dispossession occur simultaneously and have operated this way historically.

The dispossession of Samaná and other coastal regions relies on the robbery of resources, the destruction of the natural environment, and the commodification of nature and culture. The increased processes of dispossession have displaced many Samanese from their lands and have shifted their relationship to the region and the networks and social relations they have used to survive. For coastal regions of much of the Caribbean, these expropriations and displacements are part of daily life. These acts of dispossession and displacement are constantly repeated and
have become integral to the process of governing in the DR. The Dominican state, as one of the leading forces of dispossession, enhances its revenue through the promotion of tourism-related activities and the establishment of tourist entry fees and high airport taxes. This dispossession is clearly working to the benefit of certain segments of Dominican society. The state has been successful in projecting an image of sustained economic growth, but this growth is not reflected in the day-to-day lives of the general population.

To intervene in these acts and processes of dispossession, it is necessary to understand the details of how they operate in the Dominican Republic, who the main players are, and what the expected results may be. As my evidence and analysis suggests, this dispossession operates in two phases. The first phase is driven by Dominican nationals and politicians associated with the ruling state who are able to consolidate different landholdings, arrange the illegal paperwork, and secure fraudulent permits and labor at decreased prices. The second phase incorporates global players who are inserted into the matrix and whose largest investment is economic and managerial.

These processes of dispossession do not affect all communities or individuals in the same way. The Dominican state continues to accumulate power through the disenfranchisement of its coastal and rural populations. Permeating these national development models are racial ideologies that are generated and enforced in the DR that posit Blackness as a subservient element. These Dominican racial ideologies further the uneven geographical development of regions of the country, especially those with higher concentration of populations of African descent.

Political, economic, and cultural dispossession have been used as tools to dismantle the regional autonomy of Samaná and make the local population subservient to the desires of state
planners. Many Samanese have been able to resist these incursions as a result of their historic access to and ownership of land. Other have resisted with the assistance of strong community links forged over time.

The symbiotic relationship between the state, church, and elite segments of the country is used to control and coerce the population, thus threatening the development of Dominican democracy. Throughout the nation’s history, multiple armed revolts have been used to curtail power, but they have not succeeded in dislocating the elite political players that wield power and control the economic spaces of the nation. With the rising connection between capital and politics, even some of the old elite are now being threatened by a more brazen brand of corrupt politicians willing to do anything to maintain power (i.e. Felix Bautista).

If organized differently, tourism and sustainable development projects have the potential to spread economic growth to all segments of the country. Methods of local inclusion and democratic participation can lead to the growth and sustainability of the community and tourism. As the community seeks alternative economic options and inclusiveness in decision-making, the Dominican government continues on its authoritative path. The practices of the Dominican state in Samaná are a microcosm of the greater obstacles present throughout the country. Many groups in power continue to benefit from the shortcuts available to them through their connections to the

294 Many of these business investments and interests continue to be complicit in exploiting Haitian migrant labor to satisfy their labor demands. They pay Haitian laborers less and offer them less favorable conditions as a result of their liminal citizenship status and economic reality. These adverse conditions have in turn maintained Haitians as the labor class to be exploited, thus continuing to project Black labor as flexible and easily replaceable. The continued privatization of state industries, such as electricity and waste-water treatment, has also decreased the amount of funds expended by the state. These processes of privatization have also brought an increase in the price of services for these companies to cut off service to debtors, as they have no relationship to these communities, only to the profits generated within these spaces. A series of local contestations have at times ended in bloodshed. The income generated from these endeavors is funneled into personal political projects and other arenas the state wishes to manipulate.

295 These white Hispanic elite are best reflected in the Saturday newspaper section of the social pages in the national paper Listin Diario. The exclusive nature of their public engagements and the privileges of class and race are visually plastered in the social pages, which consist of a sea of white faces, as if these portraits were not of Dominican society.
decision-making structure, the manipulation of the national judicial system, and the continued accumulation of capital through illicit means. The PLD state has maneuvered within the political machine to subvert democratic processes and consolidate power, and has achieved it by dispossessing its at-risk population with a concentration of those efforts on coastal sectors of the island. The continuation of authoritarian state power is all but assured as the PRD, the largest of the opposition parties, is now working in conjunction with the ruling party.\textsuperscript{296} By controlling the labor unions, opposition parties, media, structures of civil society, and other spaces of dissent, the Dominican state has begun a consolidation process that will be difficult, yet necessary, to dismantle. With no unified opposition, many hope for the implosion of the PLD party through factionalism.

The phenomenon of \textit{tigueraje} and its embrace by political actors has been corrosive to Dominican society. My findings demonstrate the continued consolidation of power in the Dominican state and the entrenchment of \textit{tigueraje} into the political and social order. The politics of \textit{tigueraje} in the DR are reflective of the failed battles to contain the elite structures of power. This \textit{tigueraje} has had dire effects on the political and social structures of the nation, engendering a leadership that is devoid of ideas and relies on manipulation. Many sectors of Dominican society mimic these attitudes, which threatens the functioning of democratic institutions.

In 2013, during the first six months of the new PLD government led by Danilo Medina, a fiscal emergency was declared, resulting in the government pushing through a series of fiscal reforms aimed at decreasing its inherited budgetary shortfall.\textsuperscript{297} Through its control of the senate, the PLD was able to pass the fiscal reform without any impediment, consultation, or

\textsuperscript{296} This authoritarian mode of governance is manifested differently depending on the region of the country and the ethnic mixture of the local population.

\textsuperscript{297} The intent was to raise government revenues by 2\% of GDP in an attempt to make up the 8\% budget deficit.
collaboration with other parties. This deficit deduction was achieved through increasing the national sales tax on most products from 15% to 18% and establishing a new special sales tax in the range of 6% to 10% to previously-exempt products like staple foods.²⁹⁸ Within the fiscal reform legislation, language was also added that established incentives for lawmakers and public officials by allocating a higher severance package and retirement monies for their public service. A subsequent law submitted to the Dominican congress on April 31, 2014, made it illegal for citizens to make claims upon or sue elected officials, creating a political refuge for corruption and continued abuse.²⁹⁹

As a response to the fiscal emergency plan, thousands hit the streets on November 10, 2012 to voice their dissent with the largest of these manifestations occurring in the urban centers of Santo Domingo and Santiago. The public openly rejected the fiscal reform, and many assumed that the nation’s budget deficit was linked to the over-expenditure of state funds during the PLD presidential campaign. Pockets of dissent sprung up, and protests were organized throughout the country. Protesters used social media outlets like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter to disseminate information and attract others to the cause. The initial response was largely from middle class families who in the past had appeared apathetic to participating in collective actions of protest and organizing that went beyond political parties.

²⁹⁸ International news sources reported that, “The tax reform is set to make the Dominican Republic one of the first countries to apply ‘fat taxes’ as selective consumption taxes will be included for sodas, candy and chocolate. Selective taxes on alcohol and tobacco will also be increased a half-fold, with telecommunications also being affected by this type of taxes set to increase from a staggering 28% selective tax, to 30%, affecting land phones, cell phones, cable TV and the internet.” (KeDificil, “Dominicans hit the streets as tax reform becomes law,” CNN iReport, November 11, 2012, http://ireport.cnn.com/docs/DOC-880013).

²⁹⁹ At a public meeting at the School of Social Work at Columbia University to denounce the decision, Dominican scholars and activists in the Diaspora came together to voice their dissent about this ruling. Dr. Silvio Torres-Saillant, a Dominican scholar, reflected on what was at stake in the historical legacy that was being promoted and the effects of these changes on the psyche of all Dominicans: “No one can remain psychologically unscathed from the immorality of this law; the present problem is fundamentally a struggle to determine who has the ascendancy to be defined as Dominican.” He asked the audience, “Will the state project be permitted to define us?”
What was striking about these protests was the large number of youth who took to the streets. Wearing black, the protesters converged to voice their disapproval in the Parque de Independencia, a meeting place of many national protest movements. Many of the protestor’s signs read two simple messages, “We have awakened,” and “No to the fiscal reform.” A recurring chant within the crowd alluded to the high levels of wealth amassed by PLD collaborators during the last four years. Other protesters used popular Dominican musician Juan Luis Guerra’s song *La guagua va en reversa* (the bus is going in reverse) to signal the backward decisions of the Dominican state. Once again, the protest received little attention from the Dominican media and was scantly covered by the international media. Two weeks later, when the anger subsided, everything returned to normal.

Additionally, the TC-0168-13, a Dominican Constitutional Court ruling passed on September 23, 2013, provided the legal framework for the denationalization of tens of thousands of Dominicans of foreign decent. The ruling used criteria applied retroactively to those born since 1929 in the Dominican Republic who were undocumented at the time of their birth. The vast majority of those affected were Dominicans of Haitian decent, many of whose families have traversed the border without documentation for generations. Throughout their entire lives, those affected have been recognized by the state as Dominican citizens. The court urged the

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300 Manuel Robles, the public spokesperson for the Movement of Fiscal Justice, read a statement warning that the struggle was just beginning. The movement, “will maintain a presence in all of the public spaces around the country until we reach a fiscal policy that is geared towards human development and eliminates tax evasion, that condemns corruption and the pilfering and bad use of public funds.” Quoted in Bethania Apolinar, “Cientos se manifiestan en contra de la reforma,” *Listín Diario*, November 12, 2012, [http://www.listin.com.do/la-republica/2012/11/12/254700/Cientos-protestan-contra-reforma](http://www.listin.com.do/la-republica/2012/11/12/254700/Cientos-protestan-contra-reforma).

301 1929 is the year prior to the rise to power of the Dictator Rafael Trujillo, who is credited by many as the father of the modern Dominican nation.

302 The ruling confirmed a narrow interpretation of the wording of Article 18, Clause 3 of the Dominican constitution, which states: “Dominicans are those persons born in national territory, with the exception of the sons and daughters of foreign members of diplomatic legations and consulates, and of foreigners who are in transit or residing illegally in Dominican territory. A person in transit is considered to be all foreigners defined as such by Dominican law.”
Central Electoral Board, responsible for issuing birth certificates and identity cards, to eliminate those affected from their lists.

The ruling violated articles of the Dominican Republic’s constitution and international law and presented a judicial instrument of segregation within the Dominican Republic. The ruling limits tens of thousands of people from studying or working in the formal sector of the economy and prohibits them from legally marrying, registering their children, opening bank accounts, or leaving the country. The court decision paved the way for immigrant communities in the Dominican Republic like Samaná to be further marginalized by state power. One of the main supporters of this newly-implemented law includes Jose Ricardo Taveras Blanco, who is the Director of Migration for the Dominican government has openly pledged his intention to begin to deport any Haitian found without the correct documentation. Cardinal Nicolas de Jesus, Archbishop of the Catholic Church, publicly declared that the ruling “is absolutely fair” and that “Dominican[s] should be calling the shots” when it comes to establishing these laws, brushing off both national and international criticism of the new law. Leonel Fernandez Reyna praised the law, stating, “This is an affirmation of the sovereignty of the state to determine who Dominican nationals are.” In defense of the ruling and his government actions, President Medina publicly declared:

It is unacceptable that they want to name us as racist, to accuse us of discrimination, and to accuse us of violations of human rights. How can you accuse a nation of being racist when 80% of its people are black and mulatto. 80% of agricultural and construction workers are Haitian and no obstacle has been placed before them. They are breaking the law; the Dominican state has always looked the other way. We demand respect for our democracy and the institutions that compose the sovereign nation. The decision by the Constitutional Court is irrevocable. It is not true that we have taken away their nationality, for you cannot take away, what they never had. 303

303 Five months after the passing of the Constitutional Court decision TC-0168-13, Dominican president Danilo Medina publicly responded to international criticism at the CELAC meeting held in Havana, Cuba. Medina chastised the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for his continued critique of the constitutional amendment and his attempts to sway international opinion against the decision.
Elite segments of Dominican society and multinational business interests have been complicit in mobilizing and exploiting undocumented labor from Haiti to the DR and have further benefit from this Constitutional Court decision. Haitian labor is used in the construction of large-scale tourism infrastructure projects, the harvest of sugar cane and other agricultural endeavors, and has been integral for the economic growth of the DR. The ruling is the latest action taken by the authoritarian Dominican state to consolidate its power by dispossessing and disenfranchising those at the margins of Dominican society. The Constitutional Court’s rendering falls in line with Dominican racialized ideologies and racial preferences that have impacted specific communities in the formation of the nation. The continuation of these ideologies serves to dispossess a large group of the population through separating them through economic, cultural and educational means.

304 This labor migration is promoted in an effort to expend lower wages, while providing fewer rights and benefits to reap an increasing amount of profits.

305 “Here ultra-nationalism has an anti-Haitian sentiment more than an anti-American sentiment except for the minority of the left in the 70s and 80s. Here it’s been ultra anti-Haitian and that sentiment has been used by the right of the country all the time to exclude and to unite Dominicans under fear and under the most conservative positions, in racist and exclusionary positions and exploitation of the poorest. In the end, it is hypocrisy because those that support the migration are those that benefit from that labor migration are the ones who oppose it. Those ultra-nationalists are the ones controlling the direction of immigration and the national council on the border and the Junta Central electoral: all organisms that have everything to do with this labor migration. In the last 12-14 years that they have controlled those offices, they have not been able to decrease the migration; quite the opposite it has increased. They have a critique on one side and then a business on the other, because that is a business, the frontier, people who charge and make a lot of money, military, police, businessmen, they make a fortune trafficking people.

The sector of economic power in the DR are the ones who most hire Haitian labor, in their farms, business in their homes, in their kitchens in their gardens, as watchmen, and they work for the powerful groups who want to have an unconditional work force that they don’t have to give salary or social security, they can fire when needed or even deport them; they work without a schedule at all hours. That won’t be done with a Dominican; that will only be done by Haitian labor and those are the same ones who have an anti-Haitian discourse. They use that discourse to manipulate the Dominican public because here there is much cultural and racial confusion […] Here there are many people who don’t see themselves as Black” (Juan Bolivar Dias interview by Ryan Mann-Hamilton 2014).

306 Denationalization aims to dictate who is and isn’t a Dominican; what their access to national resources and benefits will be; and who has access to claims upon the Dominican state. Dominican historians have rewritten a history of collaboration between Haiti and DR, erasing their common struggles for equality and replacing it with conflict and division within neighboring populations. These new histories go against actual practices of conviviality.
The court ruling incited mobilizations of the political left and right, human rights organizations, ultranationalists, and groups in the Diaspora. Protests and solidarity actions planned in the DR, Haiti, and in the Diaspora are examples of the willingness of individuals and groups to challenge the laws and policies enacted by the Dominican state. This solidarity challenges the facade of democratic participation and strengthens links between communities in struggle that have historically interacted and organized together. These acts of solidarity have created an opening for further analysis and critique of the forms and modes of governance and decision-making within the Dominican state apparatus. These mobilizations have brought to the surface the conflicts that populations on both sides of the island have, not amongst themselves, but with their respective states.

The Dominican state has resorted to controlling the judiciary and the media and has mobilized nationalist sentiments to denationalize a whole segment of the population that would most likely be in opposition to their political desires. Demand for adequate educational institutions, medical facilities, and proper infrastructure have gone without response. The Dominican state has taken a proactive stance towards silencing dissent. Political tigueraje calls for silence as a prevalent strategy to look away from corruption. An important element in stifling dissent and silencing opposition is through the control and complicity of the Dominican media. Dominican media complicity is being challenged by a rise in online news sources like Acento.com, sponsored by private capital. These online news sources keep the Diaspora informed and active, but are restricted by access to Internet for those on the island. These

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307 The ruling has sparked a new generation of youth seeking solidarity between Dominicans and Haitians.
308 A steady stream of international appeals for change has ricocheted through social and print media. This pressure, rather than easing some of the lines of division, has only strengthened the interior movement of Dominican nationalist and politicians, who claim an attack on their sovereignty through these international appeals.
309 Black Dominican subjects have been the most affected by these elite-driven projects. The Dominican state and its ideologues continue to mobilize anti-black racial formations in the construction of the nation.
alternative media sources are less reliant on relations to the state and are therefore more willing to engage in a critique of state patterns of corruption and mismanagement.

The ruling has received substantial international attention and condemnation, but this attention has also helped to disguise a series of other moves by the Dominican state to limit popular participation and dissent. Among these are the passing of an electoral law that allows political parties to receive funding without having to declare the sources, privatize agricultural seed banks, and limit public demonstrations. Additionally and without discussion or dissent, constitutional amendments have been passed, allowing the president to be reelected and allocating even greater powers to his position.

The new laws, the fiscal reforms, and the continued developmental emphasis on tourism disproportionately affect the Dominican working classes.\textsuperscript{310} The sustained economic growth that the DR has enjoyed over the last few years has yet to spread to the general population. Instead this growth has exacerbated social inequalities across the nation and pitted neighbors against neighbors. Released in August 2014, the latest PNUD United Nations report on development measured an increase in poverty levels and the vulnerability of the Dominican population. The report also highlights the decreasing percentage of the population that is able to move into the middle class category. This is a trend that is being broken throughout much of Latin America, but paradoxically is growing quickly in the DR.

The rising levels of inequality have consolidated a disenfranchised class less willing to succumb to the pressures and manipulations of the state. These economically- and politically-

\textsuperscript{310} In addition to the massive protest, many oppositional political figures called for President Fernandez to be submitted to the legal system on charges of corruption. Though unlikely to occur, this was a quick shift in public sentiments towards the ex-president who until then had enjoyed a positive public image. Reacting to these accusations of corruption, Ex-President Fernandez scheduled a public appearance on Dominican media outlets to explain the reasoning’s behind the budget shortfall. Protesters in turn responded with a new public chant, “Leonel, no te queremos escuchar, lo que queremos es que te entregues a la justicia.” (Leonel, we don’t want to listen to you, what we want is for you to turn yourself in to the authorities)
dispossessed Dominican citizens are increasingly seeking new options and creating alternative structures of localized power to help pressure the state and its representatives. These groups are increasingly asserting themselves and demanding that tourism and other economic endeavors be organized differently to achieve the enjoyment of tourists, the empowerment of the population, and the protection of the local environment. New mechanisms of popular mobilization and public protest are impacting the tourism industry. These protests force the state and its elite supporters to respond in more ways than through violence alone.

The Dominican state led by the PLD continues to sell a dream to the masses that tourism investment rather than human capital investment is what is necessary for the country. The continued emphasis on tourism development has resulted in a decreased investment in agriculture and precipitated an increase in food importation and costs of basic items. The exploitation of labor, unequal exchange processes, and the commodification and packaging of the island results in a disservice not only to its inhabitants, but to visitors as well. The sequestering and separation of those with money and those without is a consequence of the plantation system and past accumulation of wealth. The boundaries created by these work regimes and the decreased contact between nationals and visitors ignites and augments the probability of conflict between the groups.

Rural locations like Samaná have been at the mercy of state policies and interests, and its population continues to be excluded from the planning and decision-making in the development of their home regions. The political and economic possibilities for the community of Samaná within this Dominican authoritarian state model are limited. Retooled tactics and collective demands at both the local and national level are signs of new ways to engage with the Dominican state. There is a dire need for larger public mobilizations that demand change to the political
structures in the DR and increased collaboration between local political players and civil society organizations. Many proclaim, “es que el samanes no quiere trabajar” (it is Samanese who don’t want to work). But who is it they don’t want to work for?

The inhabitants of Samaná have both resisted and acquiesced to the multiple strategic and global interests that historically have swept through the region. In the last 30 years, the dispossessions of space, culture, and identity within the community have been incessant, and these changes have affected the integrity of families and civil society organizations. Alternatives have arisen: local economic projects are once again using localized knowledge and incorporating the perspective of the elders. Tourist projects such as “La ruta del Gengibre” and “La ruta magico religiosa” aim to take advantage of local medicinal knowledge of local flora and extend that knowledge to others. The “ruta magico religiosa” taps into both historical movements of people and ideas and indigenous and African processes, bringing to focus much of the knowledge that was silenced during the previous regimes.

What insight does the exploration of Samaná’s history offer to statecraft? Further studies of Samaná can help to elucidate and inform how race, ethnicity, and class interact in Caribbean societies and how these variables have been used to stifle their growth and human development. The incorporation of Samaná could have occurred on a more equal footing and not only through exploitation. If Samaná’s civil society can be dismantled over time, then surely it can be rebuilt and reformed into a more powerful force to counter state interactions. The possibilities exist to develop a participatory political structure that functions on behalf of all segments of national society. In the DR, this would require a cessation of the current mode of political tigueraje, an attack on political values, and a confrontation with corruption.
The community of Samaná has a history of collective appeals to the state and has continually manifested their collective rights to freedom of cult and education. It has traversed the minefields of power and displacement brought on by nation-making endeavors. Throughout this process, Samaneses have maintained at times a quiet and at other times a boisterous dignity. The tide is shifting, and it is only through collective efforts that the current state-driven transformations will have a positive impact on their futures. There is a danger in “seeing all these struggles against dispossession as by definition progressive,” because many times such struggles inadvertently contribute to acts of dispossession (Harvey 2005). This story will continue to unfold, but how we tell it is perhaps as important as the outcome.

Despite the long-term interventions into the local space, there have been spaces of continuity, such as the AME Church and other community events, that allow the community to reflect on their current conditions and express their understanding of their past. One such event is the annual Harvest Celebration, sponsored by the Evangelical and AME Churches in Samaná. The Harvest Celebration is an event of community remembrance and is an opportunity to give thanks for the agricultural harvest and other blessings throughout the year. The celebration has been organized annually since 1825, brought into the region as a practice with many African American migrants. The Harvest Festival is a political space, a space for remembrance, and a return to agricultural pursuits that have for long been a necessity of daily life for many years.311

The harvest celebrations begin in early June at the small rural AME chapels and culminate at the end of October with a large celebration in the Saint Peters Evangelical Church in Samaná. The Harvest Celebration serves as a fundraiser for the Evangelical Church, the and

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311 As more tourists have come to enjoy the festivities, there has been an increase in participation. In perceiving the value of the space given to it by these foreign visitors, many are becoming reengaged in the planning of the festivities. Others see the potential of the event not only as a fundraiser, but also as a way to raise awareness and spread the history of a community that still remains in the shadows of Dominican history.
AME Church, and their subsidiaries. The celebration attracts folks of all walks of life, including many like myself who rarely attend church services. During the celebration, the most devoted parishioners bring their best agricultural items to be showcased and later consumed during the festivities. These products are blessed and hung all around the church to showcase the connection between land, spirituality, and history. Those with animals, such as chickens, cows, or pigs, will offer them up to be slaughtered for the day’s meal. Members of the church bring baked goods and other sweets, while bread is baked in church ovens to be sold and served to the attending masses. Fresh fruit juices and ginger beer are served, and small candy bags are given to the children. Those who cannot provide goods offer their services or give a monetary donation to cover the costs of the day.

The celebration commenced with a procession of elders and church officials entering the church, who were then followed by the choir. The women strolled down the aisles in their Sunday best with their wide-brimmed hats in varied colors. The men sauntered in wearing suits, carrying their hats in hand as they passed the church’s threshold. Religious hymns from the AME songbook were belted out into the large structure in both English and Spanish and could be heard for blocks, attracting those nearby: “Gimme that old time religion, that feels so good to me.” Invigorated by the large turnout, the songs of the church choir, led by Lincoln Phipps on the trumpet, echoed through the hall. The bellows of the churchgoers rang out in unison, as they stood, Bibles in hand, smiles on their faces.

To begin the 2012 celebration, Mrs. Ana King delighted us with her songs, and Mrs. Leticia Wilmore, the church historian, narrated the history of the community. From the pulpit, Pastor James took a moment to critique the local government and political corruption and the
conditions of Dominican society.312 After the service, those in attendance flowed into the yard to encounter each other, to eat and drink, to gossip and play games. The elders taught songs to the youth and explained the variety of community games sung in English that they partook in growing up. “You put your left foot in,” chanted the chorus of laughing voices. It is through these public acts of remembrance, through their dignity, and through their identities that the members of the community of Samaná have retained their dignity and identity throughout the multiple changes to the local space.

At the end of the harvest celebration, I drove Mrs. Green, Mrs. Wilmore, and Mr. Phipps home and thanked them for the beautiful experience. Mrs. Wilmore slowly climbed out of the car, and Mrs. Green quipped “old age” and smiled. They had but one request—that somehow their stories would become reconnected with their African American brothers and sisters in the Philadelphia AME and the various locations across the eastern US from where their ancestors had departed. I am honored to fulfill their wishes.

“Aqui no te dejan morir”

312 Throughout the event, the pastor reflected on Samaná’s history and demanded that the parishioners practice a brand of social justice.
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