Territorial Transformation In El Pangui, Ecuador

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Understanding how mining conflict affects territorial dynamics, social mobilisation and daily life

The lush green mountain range of the Cordillera del Cóndor lies in the very south-east of Ecuador. Its valleys and steep cliffs, which are covered by dense cloud forest air, are a popular location for mines. In the 1990's, they were landmines positioned by the military during the war against Peru. Today, transnational mining companies develop this land in order to extract gold and copper o n both sides of the border. The arrival of large-scale mining projects owned by the Canadian companies Corriente Resources and Kinross–Aurelian less than ten years ago has met with resistance from local populations. Social and armed political conflict have once again become part of everyday life for people living along the Cordillera.

This paper examines how these mining projects affect pre-existing territorial dynamics and how they in turn affect the ways in which the projects are contested. I suggest that there is a link between territorial dynamics, mining conflicts and current forms of social organising. I am not so much interested in how the mining projects induce social conflict as much as how they transform territorial dynamics. In addition, I consider the various views, understandings and meanings of both nature and the nature-society relationships that lie at the heart of territorial dynamics and, in one way or another, have contributed to a layering of conflicts in the Cordillera del Cóndor.

1. Introduction

El Pangui is a hot jungle town located in the foothills of Cordillera del Cóndor between the Corriente and Kinross mining projects. It forms part of the canton bearing the same name in the province of Zamora Chinchipe. Barely 30 years old, El Pangui is characterised by spurts of five story cement buildings with the latest mirror glazed windows, uneven sidewalks and new taxi-trucks that seem to always be parked along the perimeter of the main plaza waiting for customers. The landscape that surrounds the town is dominated by large deforested areas that are used for animal husbandry, square ponds created for fisheries and still, "wild" forests in the distance that continue onward

towards Peru. The view of the Cordillera is ever-present in El Pangui, and the mountain range holds many meanings and memories for the people who live in this canton.

Immigrant farmers from the highlands (known as colonos) and retired small-scale miners have established themselves in El Pangui. They have come to seek a better life, and their dream is to own their own piece of land in what once was Shuar territory. Although this indigenous group has a long history of warding off outsiders, including the Incans, they have resigned themselves to sharing this space and living alongside their mestizo neighbours. To a certain degree, the mining conflict is transforming the still-tense relationships between the Shuar and mestizos, as occurred during the armed conflict with Peru. New alliances are being built as part of the social movement in resistance to the mining projects, and narratives of Shuar-mestizo relationships are being considered in new ways.

While many of the inhabitants that I spoke to during my field work described life in El Pangui as tranquilo, they also said that the arrival of the transnational mining companies has disturbed this sense of peace. They stated that social relationships have been notably tense since the commencement of the mining projects, and observed that divisions and confrontations are common even within families. Furthermore, my informants suggested that those living within the mining concessions experience constant uncertainty. They are not claiming that life was always free of conflict or tension prior to the mining projects. Indeed, this is not the first time that there has been territorial conflict in El Pangui or that the "tranquillity of life has been disturbed." Nevertheless, the launch of the mining activities seems to mark the end of a certain quality of life. Efforts to resist (or support) these extractive projects have lead to the establishment of social organisations, political mobilisations, street protests and armed confrontations. The local government has responded to the contradictory interests of its inhabitants by swaying back and forth between the companies and national government and the citizens in resistance.

Panguenses have described the central government's role as one of abandonment and disappointment. On the one hand, it has abandoned the people to sort out land disputes on their own and fight off invading Peruvians. On the other, it is a disappointment because some claim they were never consulted or informed of the central government's interest in developing large-scale mining in the area. Patriotic discourses that were developed and used during the war have been taken up by the resistance, which is tapping into a memory and feeling of sovereignty over "our" natural resources. Furthermore, members of various groups (indigenous people, small-scale miners,

farmers, cattle raisers, loggers) are constructing new ecological and environmental discourses in order to resist large-scale mining. These discourses sustain the argument of people's right to choose a model of development, and collective identity is fostered to further strengthen group formation and mobilisation. However, the argument that people have the right to choose a model of development and the process of collective identity construction are just as apparent among those who mobilise in favour of large-scale mining, and they have become the subject of social debate.

2. Why Ecuador?

The international large-scale mining industry is on the verge of having a presence in Ecuador for the first time. Though the country has a long history of artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) it has not received a great deal of attention from the global mining industry. As a few companies have begun to invest in projects in Ecuador, the national government has opened the door to investors and begun to promote large-scale mining as a means of diversifying and growing the national economy, albeit through a new Mining Law that distances itself somewhat from the previous neo-liberal model. However, the Ecuadorian economy is suffering from what former Minister of Energy and Mining and former President of the Constituent Assembly Alberto Acosta describes as boom and bust cycles of capitalism based solely on the extraction of natural resources. The economy has gone through stages of dependency on the extraction of banana, cacao and oil. There is now a possibility that said dependency will shift to copper and gold.

The potential growth of the mining economy has unfolded against the backdrop of over 20 years of indigenous uprisings and movements. These processes have been significant enough to spark the attention of the government as well as foreign and national academics, activists, NGO's and industry (Bebbington et al. 1992; Perreault 2002; Andolina 2003; VanCott 2005; Yashar 2005). While Ecuador's new mining conflicts affect diverse (not only indigenous) groups of people and have catalysed mobilisations across ethnic divides with various "identities," ethnic backgrounds, histories and economic and political interests at play, this mobilisation intersects with the history of indigenous organisation. The case study presented in this article describes the process through which a social movement manages alliances and networks and strategically constructs identities and discourses on the stage of a particular set of territorial dynamics.

As has occurred in other Latin American countries, many disputes over land and resources have evolved around the Amazon in Ecuador. However, the current mining struggle is new to the country, and it is growing on an unprecedented scale and with impressive intensity and speed. The passion of the actions taken since around 2006, the sheer numbers of people involved and the diversity of their backgrounds all seem to suggest that a new kind of struggle is unfolding. While many had not heard of large-scale mining projects prior to 2005, towards the end of 2006 the mining conflict in El Pangui and other towns running north along Ecuador's south-eastern border saw armed confrontations, burning of camp sites, kidnapping, physical abuse and progressive militarisation. Civil society responded by organising relatively quickly, mobilising thousands of people from a wide variety of social groups, not all of which were directly affected by mining. The struggle did not mirror the important indigenous mobilisations that developed around oil-related struggles. Ecologists, small-scale miners, indigenous people, farmers, cattle growers, men and women of all ages, the Catholic Church and universities all seemed to be speaking with the same 'voice' in this new mining struggle.

In the beginning, the mobilisation enjoyed political successes. In early 2008, the passage of a Mining Mandate that halted mining activities, reverted concessions back to the State and, according to the industry, scared off investors was achieved in the context of a new Leftist government and new Constituent Assembly. The mining issue became visible and was debated publicly, and the Constituent Assembly even considered declaring Ecuador a country free of large-scale mining. The new Constitution made specific mention of the mining industry and discussed other sectors Ecuadorian economy and society such as environmental laws, labour rights, water rights and import and export taxes in ways that related them to mining. Yet, contrary to expectations and to the dismay of the many people that mobilised around mining issues, the central government later distanced itself from civil society organisations and became the primary promoter of large-scale mining.

Given the intensity and cross-ethnic nature of these mobilisations around mining and in a context in which academic interest has focused on indigenous movements while the State has attempted to discredit anti-mining movements, this research seeks to understand what has been happening in south-east Ecuador since the arrival of mining. My first goal in my fieldwork was to identify what was happening locally in the wake of the entry of mining projects and development of the conflict. I was interested in examining how mining projects might affect pre-existing territorial dynamics in a context in which the new actor (the company) comes to an area that already has a tense and complex history in relation to land, natural resources and conflict.

Secondly, I wanted to understand the relationships between territorial dynamics and social mobilisation around mining. How are pre-existing territorial dynamics shaping the ways in which people mobilise, build or break alliances and construct discourses? For example, in the canton of El Pangui, key strategic social and political relationships have been forged in relation to land (acquisition, colonisation, titling and uses) as a result of territorialisation and settlement processes. This is reflected in such developments as the important role of the Salesian missionaries in the management of indigenous land in the absence of the State, civil society mobilisation (mainly by colonos) through cooperatives and ecological initiatives in an effort to gain land, ecological organisations interested in teaming up with indigenous communities to establish conservation parks, and illicit land trafficking. Since the arrival of the mining projects, social mobilisation has strengthened some of these alliances, tested others and generated new networks and relationships. Furthermore, identity construction and anti-mining discourses play a key role in these new alliances and mobilisation potential.

3. Locating Literature

Studies of struggles over natural resources have drawn attention to the causes of these social conflicts and the socio-environmental impacts of extractive industry (Geddicks 1993; Ballard and Banks 2003, p.19; Bury 2004); the ways people seek environmental justice (Tsing 2000; Perreault 2006; Bebbington 2007b); the relationships among extractive industry, environment, livelihoods and institutional change (Bebbington and Bury 2009); and the bearing of indigeneity and identity politics (Ali 2003; Sawyer 2004; Kirsch 2006). The goal of my research is to consider the mining conflict, social movements and territorial change in Ecuador in much the same set of traditions.

Political ecologists believe that conflicts involving the environment are as much about meaning as they are about land and resources (Peet and Watts 2004). Values and beliefs can shape people's identities and mobilise actions such that cultural meanings are constitutive forces rather than merely a reflection of the material. Donald Moore argues that "struggles over land and environmental resources are simultaneously struggles over cultural meaning" (Moore 1996, p.127). The various and often contradictory views of "nature" and natural resource use held by people in El Pangui have played an important

role in the processes of territorialisation and settlement as well as their impact on the environment. My goal was to explore whether and how these ideas of nature have historically motivated social conflict along the Cordillera del Cóndor, the material changes in the environment that they have generated and the ways in which they have repeatedly reconfigured territorial dynamics.

Land disputes are historical and highly politicised in the canton El Pangui. Prior to the arrival of the mining companies, the town and various communities in the canton had witnessed many struggles and conflicts over land ownership, rights, demarcation and natural resource use. All of this is a product of a long history of the coming and going of different actors as well as the boom and bust cycles of capitalism and its interest in natural resources. These disputes over land and resources also have affected how social actors relate to each other and their environment.

A point of departure in my research is the idea that human-nature relationships lie at the heart of territorial dynamics. Ideas about nature motivate the ways in which territorialisation occurs through settlement, nation building, or local and global economic development. Nature also has a certain level of agency and exerts influence over humans and society (Morse and Stocking 1995). If we consider that nature has agency and that not all agency is necessarily human (Mitchell 2002; Raffles 2002; Kosek 2006), the role of nature in territorialisation processes must be taken seriously (Rubenstein 2004).

The concept of territorial dynamics used here rests upon definitions of human territoriality that I borrow from Paul Little (2001), who presents a political ecology of Amazonian territorial disputes. Little defines human territoriality as "the collective effort of a social group to identify with, occupy, use, and establish control over the specific parcel of their biophysical environment that serves as their homeland or territory" (Little 2001, p.4). He builds his definition on Robert Sack's description of human territoriality as "the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area." (Sack 1986, p.19). Both of these authors see territories as both process and product.

Brogden and Greenberg (2003) describe territorialisation as the "historical product of contestation and negotiation for access and control over natural resources among competing groups, interest and classes."(Brogden and Greenberg 2003 p. 291) They argue that conflicts develop the ground and in political arenas, where people with different interests seek to influence or gain control over agencies, laws or regulations

that govern natural resources. This theme is also present in the work of Little, where he describes contestation over territory as the result of a clash of different 'cosmographies,' which he defines as "collective, historically contingent identities, ideologies, and environmental knowledge systems developed by a social group to establish and maintain a human territory."(Little 2001, p.5) The superimposition of cosmographies brings about direct conflict in which different interest groups exert power and push for the hegemony of their cosmography and then make territorial claims. These territorial claims are inherently political and involve social behaviours, such as social organising, direct action or legal appeals, which play out in a specific Bourdieuan "field of power." As such, each new actor with its distinct cosmography tries to establish a new territory in areas in which people have established territories. As this process repeats itself, a layering of conflicts or territorial disputes develops over time.

I infer that 'cosmographies' of different social actors implicitly contain the ways we understand and engage with nature, which in turn influence the processes of human territorialisation. Little suggests that Amazonia has been impacted by a history of colonisation, development and environmental cosmographies leading to different patterns of human territorialisation. I hold that the cosmographies and historical territorial dynamics that produced present-day relationships – including the construction of a collective identity- are the setting within which social mobilisations function. The social movement in south-east Ecuador may be trying to (re)gain control over territory, to maintain or assert a certain cosmography or respond to real or perceived threats to livelihoods. Here is where I would like to make the link between social movements and territorial dynamics.

Bebbington et al. argue that social mobilization in the mining context can be understood as "a response to the threats that particular forms of economic development present, or are perceived as presenting, to the security and integrity of livelihoods and to the ability of a population in a given territory to control what it views as its own resources." (2008b, p.6) In addition, social movements are deemed relevant because they have the ability to challenge dominant powers by accentuating other sets of values in pursuit of alternative forms or models of development (Bebbington 2007a).

During one of the first waves of migration by colonos to El Pangui, people sought to acquire land to farm and raise cattle. Due to the absence or negligence of State institutions, they negotiated territorial demarcations amongst themselves and with each

indigenous community. Some organised established cooperatives or organisations that helped formalise their claims for land titles. Later, the alliances and networks that were forged in this process were called upon as populations mobilised (often successfully) to make other collective claims, including demands for infrastructure.

However, with the arrival of mining companies, the efficiency of these networks and alliances are being challenged. Furthermore, new alliances are being built and others are being broken. Some colonos are seeking alliances with indigenous communities, and some indigenous leaders seek alliances with ASM workers to fight a 'common enemy' even though these alliances might not have been so straightforward prior to the mining conflict. In yet other cases, previous alliances among indigenous communities or colonos and indigenous families are broken, as the selling price for land has risen, motivating some individuals to sell lands to the mining companies and upset the dynamics of family-owned or communal lands.

The social movement that is responding to mining in Ecuador –if we can speak of just one consolidated movement- appeals to existing collective identities while constructing new ones through an assortment of discourses that range from sovereignty to land rights to indigeneity, environment, democracy and participation and the right to employment and development. Movement strength and cohesion seems to derive from a strong identity in "which members are aware of sharing a number of cultural and socio-political commitments and attributes."(Bebbington, Abramovay and Chiriboga 2008a , p.14) However, as social movement scholar Alberto Melucci has argued, this identity is a process that constantly needs to be negotiated and activated or constructed through a continuous process of the production of meaning (Foweraker 1995).

Social movements often are fragmented, heterogeneous and based on vulnerable and fluctuating alliances with members who have diverse interests. This appears to be the case in El Pangui. This type of weakness has to do with movement's breadth, though as Bebbington et al. point out that this same breadth also can be its strength in terms of range and geographical presence (2008b). While this idea can be applied to the social movement in my study, I argue that movement strengths and weaknesses also depend on the degree to which existing and prior territorial dynamics can facilitate alliances, resources and local politics.

4. Territorial Dynamics in the Cordillera del Cóndor

The Cordillera del Cóndor is one of the most bio diverse areas in the world. It forms part of the sub-Andean mountain range and is located in the provinces of Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe along the border with Peru. The Cordillera del Cóndor is part of the Tropical Andes Hotspot that runs from Colombia to Chile, one of the richest and most diverse hotspots on the planet, according to conservationist Mittermeir (1999; 2004) and the environmental NGO Conservation International. Along the border of Ecuador and Peru, it is known as the Conservation Corridor of Abiseo-Cóndor-Kutuku that extends from Sangay National Park in Ecuador all the way to Blue Cordillera National Park in Peru, covering some 13 million hectares[1]. It is a key area for the water cycles of the Amazon and its vegetation is significant as it is unique in the world. The Cordillera has a series of unique water cycles, originating in the cloud forests, rivers, streams, waterfalls and underground water systems. The water reserves feed the five most important rivers in the area: the Catamayo, Santiago, Mayo, Jubones and Puyango (Niel 2000).

[1] See http://www.conservation.org.ec.

Fig 1. Political map of Ecuador showing the area of the Cordillera del Cóndor[2].

The Cordillera is located in the cantons of Limon Indanza and San Juan Bosco, running south to Gualaquiza in Morona Santiago. It then continues into the province of Zamora Chinchipe in the cantons of El Pangui, Yantzaza, Centinella del Cóndor and Nangartiza. Zamora Chinchipe province covers an area of 20,681 km2 with a population of 76,601 (0.56% of the national population)[3]. The provinces and cantons of the southern Ecuadorian Amazon are relatively recent. El Pangui and Yantzaza were recognised as independent cantons just a little over 20 years ago. Zamora-Chinchipe has a very varied geography due to the influence of the Eastern and Cóndor highland areas and is situated at the confluence of the Zamora and Bombuscara rivers. Podocarpus National Park (PNP) is located in the south-western part of the province. This cloud forest stretches west to east from the city of Loja to Zamora. Its 146,200 hectares are home to many rivers, over 100 lakes and various species of bird. Elevations in the park range from 1,000 to 3,000 meters with temperatures varying from 8 to 20 degrees centigrade.

[2] The map was made by Instituto Geografico Militar, but the highlights are mine.
[3] See www.zamora-chinchipe.gov.ec

The Cordillera del Cóndor is also rich in minerals, particularly copper, gold and silver. In the 1670's and late 1800's, gold rushes led to the establishment of the towns Sevilla de Oro and Logroño de los Caballeros in Morona Santiago. The southern part of Gualaquiza has had small-scale mining, particularly in the district of Bomboiza, where there is some archaeological evidence of small-scale alluvial gold mining[4]. In Zamora Chinchipe, it was not until the late 1980's and early 1990's that large-scale mining exploration was initiated by mining giant BHP (now BHP Billiton) in the Cordillera del Cóndor and by Rio Tinto Zinc further south in the PNP. The Northern Miner's "Mining Person of the Year" award for 2008 went to three Aurelian Resources geologists for their discovery of a 'buried system of gold' at the Fruta del Norte project (now the Cóndor project owned by Kinross-Aurelian)[5]. North of this gold deposit is Ecuador's south eastern 'copper belt,' which extends over a 20 x 80 kilometre area and is considered by the mining industry to be one of the only undeveloped copper districts available in the world today[6]. There is small-scale alluvial and tunnel mining of gold deposits in Zamora Chinchipe, predominantly in the cantons of Yantzaza and Zamora. These deposits are most likely connected to the underground gold system of the Cordillera del Cóndor.

4.1. Settlement in the Amazon

Historically, frontier lands such as the Amazon have ignited the social imagination as a "no man's land" destined to be settled and tamed on the inevitable road to modernisation. The eastern Amazon in Ecuador has been far from uninhabited, having been home to the Jivaro and other indigenous peoples for centuries. The Shuar, a Jivaro people, mainly inhabit the areas of the Kutuku mountain range and lower Amazonian basin in Morona Santiago and the Cordillera del Cóndor in Zamora Chinchipe, though they also have settled further north in the Pastaza and Sucumbios provinces. Today, Shuar territory covers 900,688 hectares, although only 718,220 of them are legally recognised[7].

The Incas, Spaniards, missionaries and mestizo settlers made many attempts to invade and colonise the Ecuadorian Amazon, but their attempts were futile, particularly in Shuar territory. Many processes of settlement and territorialisation of the Amazon have been

[4] Interview with a teacher from the Salesian Mission of Bomboiza, June 15, 2009.
[5] TNM's Mining Persons of the Year: Aurelian's Anderson, Barron, Leary, The Northern Miner, Dec. 24 2008.
[6] See www.corriente.com.
[7] See www.codenpe.gov.ec

motivated by the search for natural resources such as rubber, wood, oil, minerals and, most recently, water; the search by mestizos for more pasture and "empty" lands; and military objectives to set up live borders during wars and disputes with Peru.

Ultimately, settlement by non-indigenous peoples throughout the Ecuadorian Amazon began at the beginning of the 20th century, mainly through the establishment of the Salesian, Franciscan, Jesuit and Evangelical missions. Each took on specific roles in "taming" the Amazon and making the area inhabitable (Báez, Ospina and Ramón 2004). The Salesian mission[8] was and still is of particular importance for colonisation and settlement in the area of the Cordillera del Cóndor. It was charged with mediating land issues in the name of the indigenous people to the extent that the Ecuadorian government officially recognized its authority to settle land disputes and land distribution in the area in the 1960's. The mission continues to play this role. The group rejects mining activities, supporting the decisions taken by local, regional and national indigenous organisations on this issue. It is thus a powerful ally of both colonos and the Shuar. However, the mission owns a large amount of land that falls within the mining concessions, further motivating their opposition to the company and the national government. Although there are occasional public criticisms of the work of the mission, its members continue to enjoy a great deal of power and influence in the area. Said influence is challenged by the companies in indirect ways.

The Cordillera del Cóndor saw some attempts at colono settlement motivated by interests in natural resources, but many ended quickly due to the hostilities encountered with the Shuar or the changing market demands for natural resources. However, settlement took place more systematically in the second half of last century through the government colonisation programs and the Agrarian Reform of 1964, which paved the way for mestizos and highland people to inhabit the Amazon. As a consequence of settlement and loss of land, the Shuar have been displaced and forced to migrate deeper into the forests; acculturate into capitalist market-based societies; attend mestizo educational programs; and accept their incorporation into a nation-state that never fully recognized them as holders of rights to their lands, territory and natural resources (Descola 1985).

It was not uncommon for indigenous peoples to be cheated into selling their lands, signing over communal land deeds under the influence of alcohol. Later, as indigenous peoples became exposed to and incorporated into monetary systems, individuals would

[8] The Salesian mission is located in the canton of Gualaquiza, north of the canton El Pangui. However, the influence and control of the mission developed prior to the establishment of the cantons. The mission continues to be of great importance for communities in both cantons.

voluntarily sell communal lands, their own land and property belonging to other families. The loss of land has meant drastic changes in the lifestyle of the Shuar. Discrimination towards the Shuar and other indigenous peoples is not uncommon in this and other areas of Ecuador. Nonetheless, as time passed, people began to co-exist in the same geographical space, mixed family and friendship ties were established, and working relationships and political alliances emerged. While disputes still occur, they are as much among colonos and among Shuar as they are disputes between different ethnic groups.

Local populations recall the desperate search for available fertile land in the 1970's and 1980's that began due to devastating droughts and environmental degradation in the Andes mountains ranges, particularly in the southern provinces of Azuay, Cañar and Loja. In addition, many colonists were driven away from the agricultural sector in the Andes as haciendas made cut-backs that affected labourers in the 1960's. The government program and agrarian reform that promoted the colonising or "settlement" of the Amazon opened the doors for people to gain access to lands for subsistence farming as well as speculation and accumulation. As a result, land acquisition was seen as a business in itself and land trafficking started to emerge (Báez, et al. 2004).

In the 1980's, there was also a gold rush in Zamora Chinchipe in the area of Nambija south of El Pangui that attracted men and women from around the country. Many stories circulated about the abundance of gold and the ease with which it could be mined, collected, washed and sold. The gold rush attracted many small-scale and artisanal miners (ASM) as well as farmers from the Andean highlands. The resulting social and environmental impacts are remarkable. Many of the colonos who live in El Pangui today are former small-scale mine workers. They arrived in El Pangui as a result of a devastating accident in which more than 300 miners lost their lives in a land slide[9]. Many lost family members as well as all their investment in machinery and tools. These people remember mining activities with remorse and have memories of hardships and trauma from the terrible accident.

The colonists who used to be farmers-turned-miners have returned to farming. However, many still have ties with ASM networks, are members of ASM cooperatives that hold concessions, or have family members still working the mines. ASM activities are not found in the canton El Pangui, but are present in many cantons in Yantzaza, Los

[9] Mineros habían convertido montaña de Nambija en colmena, May 11, 1993. Explored: Archivo digital de noticias desde 1994 (www.explored.com.ec -viewed May 4, 2010).

Encuentros, Nambija and Zamora and in neighbouring cantons north of El Pangui in Gualaquiza in Morona Santiago province. Others have connections to the mining industry through their previous work with medium and large companies such as BHP Billiton during exploration work in the 1980's. During my visits to communities, the most militant of activists would speak proudly of the times they worked for the companies or boast of their access to specialised knowledge of uranium findings in the Cordillera del Cóndor[10]. Today, this group of people with ongoing or prior ties to the mining industry are one of the strongest groups resisting large-scale mining companies in the province either because of their knowledge of the harmful effects of mining, their bad memories of mining or their motivation to protect their ASM interests. Still others have adopted the ecological discourse as a means for an alternative development. As one informant said when asked why he rejected mining, "We are no longer miners. We are ecologists." [11]

4.2. Economy and Use of Natural Resources

Vast areas of the Cordillera del Cóndor have been transformed by the chaotic and unorganised expansion of animal husbandry and subsistence farming, which are the main activities of the population of Zamora Chinchipe.[12] There is some farming of coffee and cacao as well as dairying, and products are sold in Loja for processing and export. There is no processing of agricultural products in Zamora Chinchipe. Fruits and grains are produced to a lesser degree, and there is some fishing. In general, the land is used for subsistence farming and grain production for cattle. According to the Integrated System of Social Indicators of the Ministry of Social Development Coordination, the Amazonian provinces have the lowest monetary values of total gross agricultural production per farmed hectare in the country[13].

The town El Pangui is located in a valley between two mountain ranges and has abundant water resources. In fact, there may be too much water for the highland farmers who are accustomed to different geographical conditions. Large areas are deforested in order to

[10] Uranium mining is different from other metal mining because it is of military interest. Although uranium findings in the Cordillera del Cóndor have not (yet) been confirmed, activists speculate that it is an additional reason for the war between Ecuador and Peru.

[11] Field note recording, group interview in El Pangui, March 20, 2009.

[12] The current prefect of Zamora Chinchipe province, Salvador Quishpe, is a key actor in the anti-mining movement. As one of the discourses against mining is the promotion of agricultural activities, Quishpe envisions the province as home to the manufacturers and producers of their agricultural products. The idea behind this is to dismantle dependence on the export market in Loja, strengthen the province's agricultural sector and thus strengthen the argument/position against large-scale mining.

[13] Informe Social 2003, Desarrollo Social y Pobreza en el Ecuador 1990-2001. Capítulo 11: Productividad agrícola y pobreza rural. SIISE. See http://www.siise.gov.ec/Publicaciones/2inf11.pdf.

make way for pasture lands and the thin layer of rich soil nutrients that once covered the jungle floors have been depleted as a result of the need to clear more and more land. Many small and large animals have died off, and some are close to extinction. Endemic and unique flowers, plants and flora suffer the same fate as the jungle is transformed and "tamed" for production objectives.

Local governments have made an effort to remedy the continuous deforestation and environmental degradation with very little success. Municipalities like El Pangui have developed projects aimed at re-forestation. For example, local inhabitants are given small trees, which are gladly accepted but then sold for profit rather than planted in the canton. There also are projects to educate and provide technical assistance to farmers in order to intensify livestock activities with the introduction of stalls or semi-roaming techniques. However, the municipal authority executing these new projects says that they have failed because people do not want the local government to tell them what to do with their cows and pigs.

Some anti-mining actors are unaware of the environmentally devastating effects of their animal husbandry and happily claim to be becoming more ecological (strategically incorporating a new identity) since they do leave some trees when they clear grasslands. Nevertheless, their ideal vision for the future is shot through with discourses of development and progress that imagine ever-expanding agriculture and industrialisation. Ironically, it is in part thanks to the entrance of mining projects that these actors have revalorised their agricultural activities and begun to reflect (albeit minimally) on the physical impacts of their activities on the environment.

Agriculture lies at the core of the arguments used by both promoters and detractors of mining. Agricultural projects are presented by the "anti-miners" as ecologically sound and sustainable. Local anti-mining leaders and the newly-elected prefect promote agriculture as their choice for a sustainable development model. However, the same activity is used by the company to promote mining. Biologists hired by the company argue that scientific studies –carried out elsewhere in the world and that only they understand- prove that cattle-raising impacts the environment more than mining[14]. When he visited Gualaquiza, the canton that lies just to the north, in June 2009, President Correa said that "every human activity impacts the environment, and animal husbandry impacts the environment more than the responsible mining" that his government is

[14] Radio Limon in Limon Indanza. Interview of Corriente Resources employees, November 19, 2008.

promoting[15].

4.3. Indigenous Economy and Ecology

Traditionally, the economy of Amazonian indigenous peoples, including the Shuar, has been based on the cultivation of tubers and complemented by hunting, fishing and the collection of fruits and insects. Slash and burn practices are still used for agricultural activities where manioc, sweet potato, peanuts, corn, chonta palm and banana are grown.

It is often argued that as indigenous people become more acculturated and their traditional lands more populated by mestizos, they begin to exploit the Amazonian forests in a manner similar to that of their mestizo neighbours. The process of acculturation is a result of an educational system imposed and controlled by missionaries and a combination of forced sedentary lifestyles in which groups of families were re-organised and grouped into centres and exposed to and adopted monetary and market-based economies (Descola 1985; Taylor 1985). This is evident in land use changes. Indigenous communities had used land for horticulture activities, but slowly replaced them with cattle grazing, which involves clearing land, planting pastures and acquiring cattle. However, in spite of these trends, the Shuar tend to reforest their lands, cultivate former garden crops like coffee and cacao as cash crops, and thus maintain more biologically diverse landscapes than their mestizo neighbours.

As a result of these processes of acculturation and adoption of new practices on the part of the Shuar, the differences between their production systems and those of colonos are not that great. However, land clashes remain. The colono will often see the Amazonian forests as claustrophobic, with thick vegetation that prevents the free roaming of their cattle and offers shelter to threatening animals like boas, which are feared and killed. When viewing vast areas of low flat lands, they may dream of converting them into pasture for their cattle. Water sources and flat lands are valued for their use in productive activities, which is reflected in property values. "Oh, look how nice and flat those lands are! They must cost a lot!" is a phrase I heard from my hosts whenever we travelled back and forth from El Pangui to Gualaquiza on the narrow wooden board of a ranchera (small open air bus).

[15] Field note recording, Presidential visit to Gualaquiza for a Saturday morning Radio Show, June 6, 2009.

In contrast, when forests are cleared, the Shuar see a loss of trees that once gave shade to animals and homes to birds, forcing the species upon which they depend for hunting to move further into the forests. They see such processes as a disturbance to the delicate balance of local ecosystems and water cycles in which cloud forests play a crucial role. Areas of fundamental spiritual importance for the cultural survival of the Shuar, such as the waterfalls where the Spirit of Arutam dwells or where the great boa resides, also are disturbed. "Arutam is angry. The environment cannot continue to be destroyed like this. We need to care for it…. He (Arutam) is going to come and teach us a lesson. He is testing us. Why else do you think this (meaning the mining conflict) is happening?"[16]

These differences have material and social implications. While the colono farmers will clear vast areas of land for cattle and aim to produce large amounts of grain to feed their animals or sell in local markets, the Shuar have typically used slash and burn practices, clearing only the land that they need for their family or community. Both practices have material effects on the environment as well as social and political consequences for territorial dynamics in El Pangui. When I would travel with a group of colonos through the mountainous areas of the Cordillera, I would see smoke rising in the middle of the forests in the distance. When I asked what it was, I was told that it was probably a group of Shuar clearing land to farm. I was immediately given the explanation that one "still finds Shuar with those practices" because they do not 'yet' understand that their practices are inefficient. On the other hand, when I spoke to the technician in charge of the municipal agricultural department about the burning in the forests, I was told that it was probably a colono clearing land since "they'll clear even the steepest hills, hammer a wooden peg into the ground and hang their cows from it."

These differences, their meanings and the social tensions that derive from different ideas about how land should be used seem to have been played down or minimised since the mining conflict began. It has become more important to accentuate the importance of agricultural activities in general, regardless of differences over how to use land or which form of production is more 'sustainable or ecological.' The focus is instead the development of a more all-encompassing anti-mining argument which says that people in El Pangui, both Shuar and colono, choose agriculture above mining and that these two activities cannot co-exist. In this case, tensions between people are strategically minimised, though they remain as latent tensions or prejudices. This may make it easier to establish strategic alliances between groups that had been rivals. However, as we shall

[16] Field note recording, group interview in El Pangui, March 20, 2009.

see below, in some cases the opposite can occur, and existing tensions can be accentuated in order to mobilise people in response to mining activities.

4.4. War, Parks for Peace and a Mountain of Gold

In addition to the confrontations and struggles that have developed between cultural groups and their borders, this geographical area has experienced violent national border disputes with its southern neighbour, Peru. In fact, the two countries fought wars in 1941, 1981 and 1995. The 1941 war was temporarily resolved by the Protocol of Peace, Friendship and Boundaries signed in Río de Janeiro in 1945. However, hostilities re-emerged with the "discovery" of a geographic flaw in the maps used in the negotiations. This was based on later studies of the Cordillera del Cóndor area conducted by the United States Air Force, which elaborated a new areal map in 1946 that revealed information that eventually led the Ecuadorian government to demand the annulment of the Río Protocol. Although the border disputes between Peru and Ecuador can be understood through the interest of each nation in expanding or establishing their sovereign territories and control geographical areas, the local population believed that the war had a great deal to do with the existence of minerals such as gold, copper and even uranium in the area. In 1995, Former President of Peru Fernando Belaúnde stated that "it is not true that the disputed area contains petrol. But there is a mountain of gold."[17]

The 1998 Brasilia Peace Accord between Peru and Ecuador sought to promote the development of the border region, facilitate transport integration between the two countries and encourage free trade across the frontier. Various development plans and projects were elaborated as part of the accord, including the Broad Ecuadorian-Peruvian Agreement for Border Integration, Development and Neighbour Relations that refers to strengthening bilateral cooperation and makes specific mention of the promotion of mining.[18]

Another important aspect of the peace accord was the creation of a protected ecological area on both sides of the border also referred to as transboundary areas (TBA's). In Peru, the Zona Reserva Santiago Comaina and the Ecological Protection Zone were created and included Cordillera del Cóndor National Park. Ichgkat Muja National Park and Reserva Comunal Tuntanain were created inside Zona Reserva Santiago Comaina in 2004. The following parks were created in Ecuador: the Binational Park Cordillera El

[17] See "Una Guerra en El Cenepa: Un Cerro de Oro."Revista Vistazo, Feb. 2 1995, p. 11.
[18] See "Acuerdo amplio Ecuatoriano-Peruano de integración fronteriza, desarrollo y vecindad", Appendix 5 under the Project of Program D of the Bi-National Ecuador-Peru, as well as http://www.planbinacional.gov.ec.

Cóndor and later the Bosque Protector Cordillera del Cóndor, Refugio de Vida Silvestre El Zarza and the Biological Reserve El Quimi (the last three in Zamora Chinchipe).

The parks were created as part of the 'Cordillera del Cóndor Binational Peace and Conservation Project,' which included the involvement (and financing) of international conservation organisations[19] as well as multi-level NGO's, indigenous organisations, the government and conservation organisations from both countries. This project is conceptualised as a complementary strategy to peace accords through the establishment of transboundary protected areas or "Parks for Peace." The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) define Parks for Peace as: "transboundary areas that are formally dedicated to the protection and maintenance of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and to the promotion of peace and co-operation." (Sandwith, et al. 2001 p.3)

However, the creation of the parks does not guarantee an end to the conflict. Disputes along the Cordillera del Cóndor may have merely shifted from war between countries to mining conflicts. The creation of the Parks has not kept mining interests from advancing within the conservation areas as the organisations involved in their development had expected. On the contrary, in Ecuador, although 'nature' has constitutional rights and conservation parks protect a given area, the President has the power to declare a mining project necessary for the nation even if it is located within a conservation park, reserve or on indigenous lands. In Peru, the President has similar powers and the national government is susceptible to lobbying pressures by the mining industry. For example, the Zona Reserva Santiago Comaina was reduced by 40%. A few months later it was given in concession to the Canadian company Dorato Resources (previously Minera Afrodita)[20].

In addition, security laws and articles in both Constitutions that once prohibited economic activities and industries within a certain distance of the border (Peru within 50 km; Ecuador within 20km) have been modified to suit the needs of mining projects in those areas. Considering that Chinese companies own projects on both sides of the border, we might even be on the verge of a Chinese mining enclave along the Ecuador-Peru border. It would seem that the Peace Accord is becoming functional for the mining industry, as

[19] International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO), Conservation International, IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas, Global Trans-Boundary Area.

[20] The concession is part of the Cenepa mining project. It totals approximately 60,000 hectares and covers the projection of a 20 kilometre north-south mineral belt. It is adjacent to the Ecuadorian Mirador projects held by Corriente Resources (11,000 hectares) and the Cóndor project held by Kinross Gold (90,000 hectares).

government institutions responsible for implementing the Accord prioritize mining activities along the border. This raises questions about the role of mining in cross- border politics, territorial sovereignty and national security.

4.5. Post-war Pangui

While in recent years residents of El Pangui and members of the Shuar had identified themselves as Ecuadorian and fought in the war, today there is an accepted notion of peace with Peruvians and between colono and Shuar even though the acknowledged border with Peru is less than 20 years old. On many occasions during my fieldwork, people told me that they live in times of peace now, and that Peruvians were their brothers.

However, there are still active military posts all along the border, such as the one that is within the mining company's concessions in El Pangui and that one must cross in order to get to the mining camp. The physical area along the border is still full of land mines and trenches, some within the mining concession areas of Corriente Resources. According to Mine Action, an NGO dedicated to eliminating land mines from post-war areas and providing assistance to local populations, the minefields along the Ecuador–Peru border still pose a threat to local populations. There are still about 1,090 anti-personnel mines along the border and in the provinces of Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe, which cover an area of approximately 56,000 square meters. Since the NGO launched a local program in 2001, impact surveys have registered six mine incidents involving injuries to eight civilians.

Though colonos and Shuar fought together during the war of 1995, , the Shuar were often placed on the frontlines because they knew the jungle the best and their culture was warrior-based. The Shuar had the misfortune to fight a war in defence of a national border that cut right through their territory and nation, which meant that their adversaries were sometimes family members. However, many Shuar were motivated to participate vigorously in the war in order to counteract national discourses that considered indigenous people's claim to land a threat to national sovereignty.

The local populations are very much aware that their settlement, which serves as a "live border," was part of a military strategy to prevent the constant invasion of Peruvians. Having actively protected their sovereign lands, many now feel betrayed by the national government because those same lands are being "sold off to a new foreign invader." The promotion of mining by the national governments in both countries is instilling

resentment among the population that fought in the war or offered to go to the towns on the borders to be part of the "live border" military strategy. Memories of the war are still very present in the local population, particularly among women who remember feeding and supporting the troops. This memory was repeatedly evoked by women when they expressed their frustrations with the mining conflict, since the soldiers they fed during the war are now security guards for the mining company and point their guns in the "wrong" direction. Although the company claims that it needs security forces to protect its property from vandals and violent protestors, the use of armed security guards has been described by movement leader Rodrigo Aucay in El Pangui as a clear sign that the population is in the midst of another armed conflict.

4.6. The Mining Projects

The two most important large-scale mining projects in south-east Ecuador are located along the Cordillera del Cóndor and owned by Canadian Corriente Resources and Kinross-Aurelian. Corriente has four known copper and copper-gold deposits: the Mirador Project in the canton of El Pangui and the Panantza and San Carlos Project in the adjacent province of Morona Santiago (see Fig. 2). Kinross-Aurelian has a few concessions in Gualaquiza, Morona Santiago but most of its concessions are in four cantons in Zamora Chinchipe: El Pangui, Yantzaza, Centinella del Cóndor, and Nangaritza. My focus here is the projects in El Pangui: Mirador and part of the Cóndor project (previously Fruta del Norte)[21].

Corriente Resources is a Canadian junior mineral resource company that has been pursuing the development of its mining concessions in the Corriente Copper Belt in south-eastern Ecuador, most notably the Mirador project since 2000. Corriente bought the mineral exploration properties from BHP Billiton Plc., which originally identified the deposits. The total areas of the concessions in both provinces are about 15,000 hectares[22]. The Mirador project has a measured and indicated amount of 11 billion tons of copper, while the Panantza San Carlos project has an inferred 6.7 billion tons of copper. The package of projects that the company needs if it is to successfully extract,

[21] Though this study considers the projects of both Corriente and Kinross-Aurelian, the conflict has been primarily aimed at Corriente Resources. There are many readings for this but I speculate that the Cóndor project is located in a less-inhabited area and the Kinross-Aurelian project did not engage in the conflict or have as much of a public presence as Corriente.
[22] See www.corriente.com.

process and transport the minerals includes the construction of the open pit mine, infrastructure (local roads and improvement of existing ones), a port (Puerto Bolívar in Machala) and systems for the provision of energy (hydroelectric plants of varying sizes and types) and, most importantly, water.

Kinross Gold is a Canadian mid-tier mineral resource company that bought the Canadian junior company Aurelian Resources in September 2008. Aurelian had initially made the "discovery" of the copper deposit consisting of 38 mining concessions totalling approximately 95,000 hectares. The Cóndor Project, which was previously known as Fruta Del Norte, consists of a total measured and indicated amount of 13.7 million ounces of gold and 22.4 million ounces of silver[23]. Kinross currently has four active drill rigs on the project and intends to complete a pre-feasibility study in 2010. The Cóndor Project includes some concessions in the canton Gualaquiza then runs south, circling around the Mirador project then all the way down to Nangaritza.

[23] See www.kinross.com.

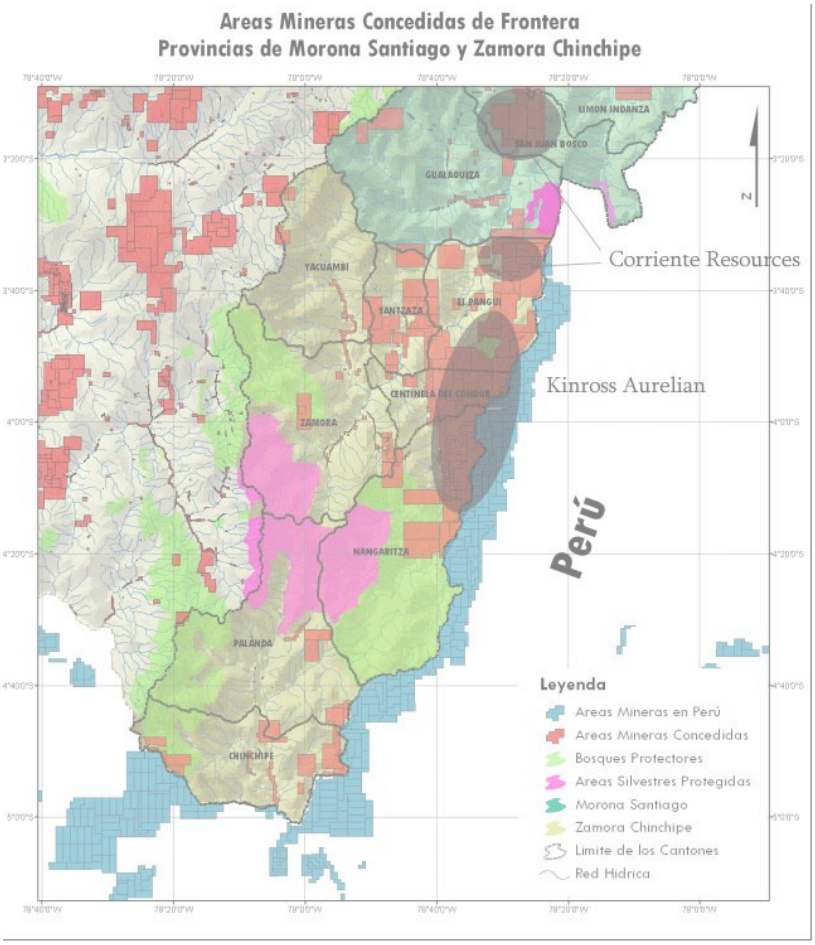

Fig 2. Map of southeast Ecuador showing the concession blocks in Ecuador and Peru and highlighting the general area of the mining projects of Corriente Resources and Kinross-Aurelian[24].

The projects of these companies are in the exploration stage and the permits required to move forward with their activities under the new Mining Law[25] have been secured. Kinross Gold has experience in exploration and production in other countries and is advancing with project in Ecuador. Corriente, on the other hand, is mainly an exploration

[24] Map made by Acción Ecológica in June 2009.

[25] The new Mining Law was passed in January 2009 and its regulations went into effect in September 2009. The new law came about almost a year after the passing of the Mining Mandate that was supposed to have halted all mining activities, revert all concessions to the State and bring about a review of contracts. Much to the dismay of the environmentalists who appealed for the Mandate, it was not carried out in full. The anti-mining movement demanded that the government carry out the Mandate. In some parts of the country, it opposed the passage of the Mining Law rather violently for various reasons, including legal contradictions with the Constitution.

company and has been looking for a buyer for its Ecuador projects since 2008-9[26].

These two companies are heralded and vociferously promoted by the government of Rafael Correa as having the most important large-scale mining projects in Ecuador. The authorities argue that these corporations will establish the modern and socially and environmentally responsible mining industry that the country needs in order to bring about economic development and fill gaps in an economy that is so dependent on depleting oil reserves. During Correa's March 15, 2008 radio program, he said, "At this moment the largest copper reserves in the world are in Chile. The initial studies tell us that we have larger reserves than Chile. We could become the principal exporters of copper in the world." He went on to say that "responsible mining could become the future of our country and open the doors to come out of underdevelopment."[27] Correa also famously stated that "we cannot sit like beggars on a mountain of gold."

5. Disputing Territory: Mining and Movements

There is no specific date or action that marks the beginning of the mining conflict triggered by these two mining projects. However, many people in El Pangui and neighbouring cantons describe its origins as a series of events that took place during the last four months of 2006. The first set developed in the province of Morona Santiago in relation to a much-questioned hydroelectric energy project which had direct links with the Corriente projects. The actions, meetings and mobilisations in Morona had a significant impact on the development of the mining conflict in El Pangui (and in Southern Ecuador in general) in terms of shared networks, actors, resources, mining company and perceived threat[28].

In El Pangui, the conflict became violent and militarised during the first few days of December 2006. There were three days of meetings, marches and then open confrontation between a large group of people from El Pangui and Gualaquiza and company personnel and paramilitaries. The more violent actions took place in Tundayme near the campsite of the Mirador project, a few kilometres from a military post. There

[26] Corriente Resources sold the company to a consortium of three Chinese government companies on December 30, 2009, although it has been postponing the finalisation of the takeover. Currently, it has been postponed until May 28, 2010. See www.corriente.com/news.

[27] "Message by the President to the Legislative Commission in his second year of government." 15 January 2009. See: http://www.elciudadano.gov.ec/info2008.pdf.

[28] By threat I mean the perception that mining activities and the development of the projects would bring about socio-environmental impacts, increased conflict, breakdown of livelihoods, etc

were human rights abuses, kidnappings, paramilitary intervention and physical abuse[29]. Following negotiations held some days later, the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum announced the suspension (though it was never fully implemented) of all of Corriente's mining activities in both provinces. Other violent confrontations have developed since them, but none has been as severe.

Life in El Pangui after that incident changed profoundly, taking us back to the core questions addressed in this paper: How has conflict over mining transformed territorial dynamics? and How do these territorial dynamics then influence social mobilisation? My fieldwork revealed changes in territorial dynamics in five main domains.

First, the conflict has brought about the creation of new networks and coalitions and the rupture of others. In earlier sections, I described some of the relationships that have emerged and developed over time among different actors in El Pangui in relation to their shared or conflicting interests in land, settlement and territorialisation. Since the arrival of the mining companies, new and quite distinct coalitions have formed. In some cases, this has happened among such unlikely allies as small-scale miners and environmentalists (who otherwise have contradicting land use interests) or between colonos and Shuar (who have had prior tensions in relation to land ownership). Meanwhile, other coalitions have broken down, and new divisions within groups, organisations and communities have emerged. Furthermore, the arrival of the company has increased interest in acquiring land and may have (inadvertently) encouraged illicit land trafficking, an activity that also benefits from new coalitions.

Parallel to the changes in these coalitions and perhaps in order to facilitate the new relationships, new mining discourses are adopted and identities seem to be redefined and rebuilt. The role of identity is important in social movements and needs to be constantly negotiated and constructed through a continuous process of the production of meaning (Foweraker 1995). The effects of identity construction are multiple in this sense. It can

[29] I collected these allegations from varied sources during my fieldwork, though some information comes from my visit to Gualaquiza and El Pangui in January of 2007 before I enrolled in graduate school. My sources include documents, interviews, statements, reports, audiovisual material and press releases from the Provincial Police Command of Zamora Chinchipe, Comité de Defensa de Naturaleza, Salud y Vida del Pangui, Federación Shuar del Pangui, COFENIAE, Coordinadora Campesina Popular, Acción Ecológica, Ecumenical Human Rights Commision, the regional and national press, Municipality of El Pangui, Municipality of Gualaquiza, Ministry of Defence, Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de América Latina and Mining Watch Canada during December 2006 and January 2007. See: "Informe sobre la situación de las personas y pueblos afectados por las actividades mineras y petroleras en el Ecuador" presented to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on March 2, 2007 at www.cidh.org.

facilitate the emergence of new coalitions, justify breaking old alliances, foster the adoption of new discourses and serve to legitimise new positions. Identity is thus shaped by interaction in various social locations such that individual identities and collective ones are mutually constitutive (Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar 1998). Equally important is how Shuar identity is becoming a means to legitimise quite different positions in the struggle. In some instances, Shuar identity is used as an argument for defending ancestral land rights and rejecting mining; in other cases, "being Shuar" and having the right to choose one's own model of development is used to support mining.

The changes in coalitions may not necessarily be a novel point considering the impacts of other mining conflicts in the world or the difficulties that social movements generally have in managing their internal coalitions (Bebbington 2007b). However, the case in El Pangui shows that in an area where land and territory have long been objects of dispute and where there is a layering of conflict, the building and breaking of coalitions can be a volatile process. This brings me to my second point. In El Pangui there is a certain level of routinisation of conflict since territorial conflict is present in everyday life. Daily activities such as buying groceries at the neighbour's food store, using the internet services in the house across the road and choosing which taxi to take or which hotel to stay in all depend on whether "they are with us or not." Of course, El Pangui also illustrates that stances are often not rigid but flexible and changing stances is not uncommon.

It follows that conflict has become immersed in cultural practices and government institutions in these areas. Since the violent confrontations that took place during the first few days of December 2006, social relationships as well as local politics are assessed in terms of one's stance on mining. The mining issue is present in town activities such as Carnival or the street march celebration of the "cantonisation" of El Pangui. Every February, onlookers of the march tell their stories of the open confrontation between "us and them" that had happened in previous years as they wait to see if anything will happen this year. At the elementary school, name calling, arguments during class and small brawls have known to take place between children of parents with different views on mining. Finally, all of the candidates in the 2009 local elections had to state their position on the issue. Candidates' views on mining blared from loudspeakers and bus radios for weeks. While the promotional song of the Pachakutik political party waxed lyrical about "…defending life and the environment … large-scale mining has no place here," the opposing MAS party's promotional song chanted "…More work! More construction! More mining!"

Third, the social movement to reject mining activities does not map neatly onto prior identity based movements like the indigenous movement. As we have seen, the mining projects affect a wide array of people. As a result, social mobilisations rejecting and in favour of mining include this array of 'identities.' This is reflected in the fact that a variety of existing and new organisations have become involved in mobilising around mining issues including ASM associations, local government, environmental NGO's, indigenous organisations and the Catholic Church.

Fourth, territorialisation processes of land ownership, distribution and resource allocation have been changing drastically since the projects began in ways and on a scale that has not been seen before. Almost the entire canton has been divided into mining lots, most of which are held in concession by Corriente Resources. The company has acquired land progressively from individuals, families and indigenous communities that are within and on the border of their concessions. This has impacted the geography of ownership, as the company has become the sole owner of almost half the district of Tundayme[30]. If we consider the historical processes of territorialisation in El Pangui, these changes also affect people's understandings of rights, property, land and resource use.

Lastly, conflicts involving the environment are about both land and meaning (Peet and Watts 2004) and symbolic struggles affect material transformations. In El Pangui, mining conflicts have brought about changes in the meanings that are ascribed to conflict as well as physical changes in the Cordillera. The meanings associated with land disputes during settlement processes, with the wars with Peru and with contemporary mining in the same geographical area are quite different even as key words (eg. sovereignty) in one conflict continue to resonate, though with different significance, in subsequent conflicts. While the war left its marks in the physical geography of the region in the form of trenches and land mines, mining will leave others; and while the Cordillera invokes memories of violence and international armed conflict, today it is just as likely to conjure up images of the physical force associated with mining conflicts.

Processes of resignification also occur at a much more local scale, as in land disputes between neighbours. In one case, a longstanding disagreement over boundaries in which one party has physically moved boundary fences and has taken legal actions against the other was exacerbated by the two parties' stances on mining. In addition, the way the

[30] This point was made by the NGO ArcoIris during a workshop held on May 15, 2009. The information was confirmed by an engineer in the Municipality of El Pangui.

company has acquired land, the rise in land trafficking, the revival of land disputes and confrontations between land owners all point to old conflicts acquiring new meanings. Territorial conflicts and land disputes may not be new in El Pangui, but the ways in which they are interpreted and the socio-political resonance of these different interpretations most certainly are new and have been permanently inflected by the rise of mining in the region.

6. Conclusion

As my fieldwork came to an end, I took a look back at the town from the bus and saw the same scene that I had observed when I arrived: people outside of the municipal building smoking cigarettes, a vendor with his wheelbarrow full of fresh fish, and ladies sitting in front of the beauty salon watching passersby. The green Cordillera with its hovering clouds stood in the distance and beyond it, Peru. At first glance, one would never think that conflict is part of everyday life here or that a mining project is being developed in the Cordillera. However, significant changes and transformations are taking place in El Pangui.

Throughout this paper, I have aimed to show how the arrival of mining projects is affecting territorial dynamics in El Pangui. Conflict over mining is shaping everyday life and is given new meanings that set it apart from previous land disputes and territorial conflicts. The social mobilisation responding to mining has built upon these same dynamics though it too is undergoing transformations as the mining conflict influences coalitions, identity and organising and actions related to the movement. In view of these transformations, it is important to get inside social movements to better understand the range of motivations, interests and meanings at play. In addition, people's own logic regarding the relationship between the environment and human beings may provide further insight as to why and how people in different locations respond to mining conflicts.

It is also important to point out that conflict over the environment is part of and constitutive of territory. The ways in which people view nature, resources and the physical environment influence settlement patterns and processes just as much as visions and models of development. However, the environment also plays a role. The physical geography of the Cordillera del Cóndor with its mineral deposits, biodiversity, areas of ecological sensitivity and environmental conditions apt for agriculture all feed back into the forms taken by territorial dynamics.

If the past is any indication of what will occur in the future, the conflict in El Pangui will likely affect future dynamics and development options for the territory. If the large-scale mining projects go forward, the changes described here will most likely persist, intensify and play a significant role in further territorial transformation. Daily routines, government policies and forms of social protest and mobilization will continue to unfold in ways affected by mining conflicts. The challenge will be to elaborate democratic and peaceful channels for debate in order to avoid the further sedimentation of conflict.

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