



The socionature that neo-extractivism can see: Practicing redistribution and compensation around large-scale mining in the Southern Ecuadorian Amazon[☆]

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ABSTRACT

In this article I address the complex processes of transformation taking place due to industrial mineral extraction in the Ecuadorian Amazon through a focus on state and company led practices of redistribution, social investment and compensation. The analysis of three empirical examples related to the Mirador industrial mining project is viewed in relation to a more extensive assembling of a mining surface. I introduce the concept 'surfacing' to refer to discursive and material practices that state and corporate actors make use of to manage, facilitate and enact a redistributive economic policy, and at the same time produce value in and for the global capitalist market. A main argument is that these practices make certain socio-natural relations visible to the project of large-scale mining while obscuring affected peoples' 'place-based life projects'. Restricted by neo-extractivist modes of recognition, of 'seeing' and 'not-seeing', indigenous Shuar, and mestizo livestock peasants, *colonos*, respond to mining intervention based on their differentiated engagements and trajectories with the Amazonian landscape and ecology. The paper is an intent to understand geosocial transformations and the differentiated practices of non-recognition while analyzing these responses.

Located in the Cordillera del Cóndor mountain range in the Southern Ecuadorian Amazon, the site of the project Mirador is one of many faces of industrial mining. Since the first geological and geochemical studies was carried out in 1994, this area has been in a process of transformation. The copper mine, operated by the Chinese consortium, ECSA, was officially opened the 18th of July 2019 and started to extract minerals in December the same year. Constructing the Mirador project has required a substantial land allocation, the displacement of families, and the converting of dwellings, pastures and gardens into an industrial extraction site. It entails the clearing of forest, the digging out of earth materials, the sedimentation of rivers and streams and the release of acids and heavy metals into the hydro-landscape. New techno-nature designs change the shape of the landscape and the course of rivers. Use of heavy machinery in a highly biodiverse environment causes

species reduction and the fleeing of animals. The people with longer engagements with this landscape and ecology are marginally incorporated into the industrial mining-economy as temporary workers. Constructing the Mirador project has so far not eliminated the rural livelihoods of the indigenous Shuar and the mestizo peasants, the *colonos*. Rather we see the assemblage of a new mining reality that is superimposed on other forms of life.

Under the previous Correa-regime, the Mirador project was categorized as a strategic project in Ecuador's neo-extractivist economy. Although still modest compared to the revenues generated in the oil sector, authorities viewed mining rent as a future source of income for the Ecuadorian state that could continue and strengthen its redistributive politics.¹ In the Tundayme valley, the area officially designated 'under direct influence' of the mining project, redistribution of

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¹ The takeover of Lenin Moreno as president after the elections in 2017, the new government's signing of the a 4,2 billion USD loan agreement with the IMF in March 2019, the subsequent introduction of neo-liberal economic reforms and severe public protests in October the same year, indicate a marked political re-orientation within the Alianza País movement. This implies a clear brake with the redistributive politics of the Citizen Revolution of the Correa regime, and at the same time a continuity in the government's mineral policies as part of a strategy to reduce the country's dependency on oil revenue.

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extractive rent came together with other social investment and compensation schemes carried out by ECSA and the Ecuadorian state. These schemes and mechanisms formed part of a regime that promotes a redistributive economic policy, and at the same time produces value in and for the global capitalist market (Bebbington, 2009; Gudyas, 2009, pp. 187–225). Defenders of industrial resource extraction often associate the socio-environmental degradation it generates with a necessary sacrifice that ensures a larger return, a greater common good (Reinert, 2018). Redistributive and compensatory schemes offer substitutional resources of survival in the ‘zone of sacrifice’ (Kuletz, 1998) that render local socio-nature intelligible to the needs and conditions of the neo-extractive economy. These schemes favor certain relations, and disregard and negate a complexity of others.

Associated to the way Robertson (2006, p. 369) thinks of ecosystem services commodification as a production of nature “intelligible in the logic of capital”, i.e. the ‘nature that capital can see’, I view how a mechanism for the redistribution of extractive rent, a corporate social responsibility (CSR) intervention and an indemnification scheme, make certain socio-natural relations visible to the project of large-scale mining in Southern Ecuadorian Amazonia – while obscuring others. Making visible and obscuring relations as part of the same mechanisms and interventions, imply a form of incorporation by non-recognition. Incorporation refers here to responses designed and enacted by public institutions and the company that are combinable with the specific mining endeavor in Tundayme, and with industrial extractive development and economy in general. Human and non-human life are through these responses taken into consideration. Non-recognition has to do with the ways these responses are rendered commensurable (Espeland & Stevens, 1998; Povinelli, 2001) with restricted modes of accounting for harm and loss and managing social investment. Rendering commensurable in this sense leaves crucial dimensions of socio-natural existence out of the frame.

Analyzing three empirical examples, I seek to understand the ways non-recognition is practiced by combining two theoretical approaches. One draws from political ecology and political geography literature that inform a perspective on governance and the geosocial (Clark & Yusoff, 2017; Dittmer, 2014; Whatmore, 2014, and also informed by; Latour, 2005), while the other builds on an anthropological perspective on place-based life projects (Blaser, 2004). Combinations these approaches establish between horizontal and vertical dimensions of analysis are especially useful (Bridge, 2013; Clark, 2017; Elden, 2013). Geosocial perspectives help me connect the horizontal assemblage of what I associate with a mining surface to the transformative surfacing process that bring a vertical subterranean volume up to the aboveground. Surfacing refers to the unearthing process and earth processing enabled by what historian Timothy LeCain (2009) calls ‘technologies of mass destruction’.² The concept of place-based life projects considers two interrelated and mutually constitutive dimensions; on the one hand, the alliance-building, negotiation, resistance work and social connections that establish horizontal trans-place linkages to state institutions, the company, a range of civil society actors, and to relatives and acquaintances. On the other hand, the concept includes a perspective on vertical connections people have to a specific place – in this case to the human and non-human environment of Tundayme, and to specific histories of engagement with this environment.

Discussing the dynamics of incorporation by non-recognition, I focus on what Jaqueline Best describes as the “messy intermediate level” of governance (Best, 2014, p. 8) – the everyday work of heterogeneous actors facilitating the process of mining transformation. Engaging with Science and Technology Studies this approach opens also for an understanding of the materiality of governance, akin to what a current within political geography deems *geo-politics*. With *geo* here understood

² ‘Mass’ in LeCain’s use alludes to a large body of matter and to a kind of earthly materiality.

as ‘earth’ rather than ‘space’ or ‘the global’, *geo-politics* refers to the exercise and contestation of power related to “the material-energetic possibilities of the geological strata” (Clark, 2017, p. 215). Indicated here is an extended understanding of the political including a wider association of human, biotic and abiotic entities. Thinking of governance in this extended sense allows me to take the heterogeneous entities into account that contribute to transform a vertical extractive operation into a horizontal plane of interaction, and as a result constitute a surface out of a surfacing intervention. I argue that practices of redistribution, social investment and compensation operate on a horizontal plane because they are made intelligible to and dependent on the needs and conditions of the neo-extractivist economy.

Affected people’s responses to the governance implied in these practices are diverse, and the ways the Shuar and the *colonos* engage with their life projects in situations of non-recognition are multiple. As suggested by a new line of studies (f.ex. Geenen & Verweijen, 2017; Hall, Edelman, Borrás, Scoones, & White, 2015), these responses are best understood moving beyond categorizations of ‘resistance/repression vs. collaboration/cooptation’ often assumed in studies of natural resource conflicts. Moreover, the mutually constitutive dimensions of horizontal interlinkages and vertical engagements help me avoid applying a binary conception of life projects as standing in an undifferentiated and essentialist opposition to the project of mining modernity. The trajectories of the Shuar and the *colonos* constitute distinct vertical connections to the Tundayme human and non-human environment, and I argue that we need to consider these distinctions when analyzing affected people’s reactions to a large-scale mining intervention.

Research to this study was carried out in the period 2014–2017. The Mirador project case study formed part of a project financed by the Norwegian Research Council (grant ID 236912, see Leifsen, Gustafsson, Guzmán-Gallegos, & Schilling-Vacaflor, 2017). I had repeated research stays in the Southern Ecuadorian Amazon in the periods November–December 2014, March and August 2015, and January–February 2017. A collaboration with a research team at the Observatory for Socio-Environmental Conflicts (OBSA) at the Technical University of Loja provided valuable empirical material to the case study.³ Research to the Mirador case also benefitted from a field-collaboration with Karolien van Teijlingen at the University of Amsterdam. The main method strategies employed include semi-formal interviews and informal conversations with Shuar and *colono* population in Tundayme, with functionaries in different state institutions at local, regional and central levels, representatives from the mining company and civil society organizations. Participatory observation of a territorial planning process in the parish administration during 2015, combined with the study of planning documents are also important sources of information. I have additionally made use of a range of secondary written and digital sources. Finally, I have benefitted from empirical and theoretical insights achieved through another research project carried out in the same Amazon-region by María Antonieta Guzmán-Gallegos at the University of Oslo.⁴

The discussion that follows is divided into five sections. First, I outline the meaning of geosocial politics and the practices that

³ The article is in line with the Vancouver recommendations on authorship. Some of the empirical material presented is a product of a collaboration with the researchers at OBSA and based on joint decision-making regarding method concerns and strategies. Participating from OBSA: Luis Sánchez Vázquez, Maleny Gabriela Reyes Conza and María Gabriela Espinosa. Thanks also to its leader, María Beatriz Eguiguren Riofrio, for facilitating my research stay at the university, and to Sebastian Niesar who accompanied me on several field trips and shared of his insights. Information about the interviews and other sources used to substantiate the analysis is specified in footnotes. The analysis is completely my own and views presented here are not necessarily shared by these researchers.

⁴ Interviews carried out to this research were generously made available to me during the writing of this paper.

contribute to the assembling of a new mining surface around the Mirador project. This section is followed by a discussion of place-based life projects, explicating the main characteristics of the life projects of two rural populations affected by the mining project. The paper ends with three sections where I scrutinize the notion of 'incorporation by non-recognition' through the analysis of empirical examples of a redistributive mechanism, a CSR intervention and an indemnification scheme.

1. Surfacing value – forcing up subterranean materiality

The work of making and operating a mine implies a "deeper engagement with the subsoil" (Bebbington & Bury, 2013, p. 3), carrying with it powerful and transforming consequences for human and non-human life and their interrelations. Behind the notion of 'mountain top removal' (Scott, 2010), and the technical term 'the cut'⁵ lies a giant effort to wrest materials from the earth (Bridge, 2013). The target of the explorative and extractive endeavors is the mineral ore body or deposit (*yacimiento*). In the Mirador case this body is especially rich in Chalcopyrite, and "progressively towards the surface" there are appearances of "secondary minerals such as Bornite which is in the Chalcocite family" (Cardno Entrix, 2015, pp. 4-5). In geological terms it is identified as a volumetric extension with a cylindrical elliptic form approximately 1400 m long and 1200 m wide, and approximately 500 m thick (Cardno Entrix, 2015, pp. 4-4).

Mining forces subterranean materials up to the surface, increasingly interlinking the below- and aboveground, turning minerals into resources, commercial value and waste (Smith & Smith, 2018). The work of perforating, blasting and digging produces new calculable volumes of mineral ore (cf. Elden, 2013) measured in Wet Metric Tons, and volumes of 'sterile' rock and earth materials. Hydro-processing of mineral rich material produces fluid volumes (cf. Steinberg & Peters, 2015). Subterranean materials are in these ways turned into transportable volumetric entities. While the ore is transported to the coastal port of Machala and shipped overseas, refined as metal and abstracted into market value and extractive rent, sterile material and liquid waste are stored in the Tundayme environment. Surfacing, then, enables both the extensive circulation of mineral value and the local circulation of extractive waste.

As Clark and Yusoff (2017) indicate, the complex and extensive work of large-scale mining establishes new geosocial formations and relations that transgress the human – non-human, social - discursive and material divides (Dittmer, 2014; Kinchy, Phadke, & Smith, 2018). Surfacing as material, techno-scientific, and discursive practice involve a large and heterogenous assemblage of human, biotic and abiotic entities. Together they partake in the everyday governance of the mining intervention that produce new surface conditions. One could think of this as a geo-politics with capacities to erase, reduce, replace and reify existing human – non-human living spaces. As an introduction to a discussion of the three empirical examples below, I will here briefly outline the main dimensions of the new mining surface under construction in Tundayme. The first of these dimensions regards the processing of earth material through *trituration*, *condensation* and *concentration*, activity which reduces rock and other substances into smaller particles, and which reduces material complexity through mechanic and hydro processing that separate the mineral content from other substances. As indicated above, this processing transforms geological strata into transportable volumes that circulate horizontally through the company's supply chain and connect to abstract economic value in the global mineral market. Processing of this kind also includes the production of *waste deposits* which physically superimpose rivers, forest, pastures, and dwelling spaces. In designated storage areas sterile material and liquid waste are piled onto and poured into the landscape.

A second dimension could be captured in the images of *turbidity* and *toxicity*: It regards the filtering of waste substances into the hydro-social and biophysical environment. The local storage of waste also implies continuous reactions and releases of earth substances as they are introduced into the tropical environment (Sacher, 2011). Waste deposits and toxic exposure through drainage and overflow, together with sedimentation of waterways, constitute a new unstable materiality that accumulate in and flow through the waterways. A third dimension relates to the techno-scientific making of membranes and covers that produce an (visual) idea of *containment*. This activity implants into the environment a vision of a delimited and regulated contact between the above- and the belowground. One example is a re-vegetation scheme introduced by the company to reduce the danger of landslides, and where workers apply the method of 'hydro-seeding' to literally spray Fragrant flatsedge (*Cyperus odoratus*) on unearthed slopes in order to fix the soil. This creates a new homogenous green surface on the intervened mountainsides. As the project evolves and minerals are extracted from the ground, new methods will further contribute to the material assembling of the mining surface. These include the making of 'impermeable membranes' to cover toxic surfaces of waste deposits, and containment walls to hinder waste from running into the river-system. Pipelines for the transport of waste and treated water and drainage canals from tailings reservoirs and landfills, also form part of the 'containment' infrastructure.

Eradication and *relocation* constitute a fourth dimension. Surfacing minerals requires the displacement of people and animals, the eradication of livelihoods, and a considerable biodiversity reduction. The emblematic example is the demolishing of the community of San Marcos. The community, located within the area of a planned waste deposit pond, was completely erased in September and December 2015. Related to the construction of the waste deposit infrastructure there are also other and less noticed examples of erasure. The preparing of the most extensive tailings reservoir meant the complete clearing of all forest-cover within a 550 ha extension. In addition to primary and secondary forests, farms, gardens, pastures, fishing places and water catchment sites were removed. Eradication is combined with rescue and repatriation schemes, which establish the idea that relations of life are exchangeable and replaceable with replicas established elsewhere (Sullivan, 2013). Relocation of *colono* families, forms part of the state's indemnification schemes, and animals and plants are also repatriated. A reduced collection of plants is placed in a vivarium adjacent to the mining site as part of an ecological restoration scheme, constituting a simplified 'archive' of the original life of the mining site.

A fifth dimension concerns the production of *accountability* around the mining endeavor – an exercise of epistemological politics, i.e. the state's granting of mining concessions, laying out a grid of formal-legal rights over this part of the Cordillera del Cóndor. The mining company and a consultancy firm's elaboration of Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) establishes the geological, chemical, physical, biological and social inventory of the area of intervention, as a representational surface richly illustrated by colorful maps. Their making of Environmental Management Plans (EMPs), and the environmental authorities' granting of environmental licenses, introduce an apparatus for 'accountable' operation and forecasting through the establishment of standards, thresholds and measurement methods (Hébert, 2016; Leifsen, 2017a; Li, 2009).

The dimensions outlined here envision the surface that also redistributive mechanisms, social investment and compensation schemes related to the Mirador project move on, and herein lies the issue of non-recognition. The most commonly non-recognized impacts of large-scale mining interventions are in the environmental justice literature described as 'externalities' (Martínez-Alier, 2004). Attempts to improve affected people's living conditions through governance mechanisms and schemes ignore, however, also other crucial dimensions of affected lifeways. In this article I focus on the place-based life projects that people connect to, defend and articulate in relation to the mining

⁵ *El tajo* in Spanish – the immense crater shaped through open-pit extraction.

intervention.

2. Life projects

Mario Blaser makes use of the concept 'placed based life projects' to discuss the relationship between development interventions and people affected by them. He argues that people do more than resisting and/or adapting to development projects, they also sustain life projects which co-exist with and diverge from development projects. Life projects come into being based on people's life trajectories in specific places, their awareness of these places, the knowledge produced from them, and their visions of preferred directions that life should take. Moreover, life projects are constituted in interaction with development interventions that carry with them universalist solutions and are promoted by developers that tend to obscure their coexistence. In this sense life projects emerge at an interface where one of the parties does not recognize the particularities that make the other divergent. Thus, the concept of life project challenges us to view the difference that affected people articulate and enact beyond developers' rationalizations of them.

The 'place-based' in placed-based life projects alludes to the notion of the local but also more than local connections. Employing the image of "a knot made of a particular mix of threads", Blaser (2004, p. 29) draws a complex idea of the kind of relationality characterizing life projects: Threads spun in a specific local place combine with threads stretching far beyond it. Life projects take form through space specific and trans-place interaction, negotiation, resistance-work, and alliance-building with relatives and acquaintances, representatives of state and company institutions, and civil society actors. As a result, life projects are localized and at the same time horizontally interconnected. Blaser emphasizes the importance of vertical threads as well; people's connections created through their own and their ancestors' engagements with and in a specific landscape. Over time these engagements build socio-natural genealogies that nurture people's sense of origin. Based on the understanding that horizontal ties and vertical anchoring are continuously in the making, this notion of relationality is non-essentializing. Life projects emerge through people's responses to the transformative processes they form part of.

As indicated above I consider two intertwined, yet distinct life projects that coexist with the Mirador mining project in Tundayme. I focus on the affected rural populations, the Shuar and the *colonos*, and emphasize the different time depths of these two groups historical trajectories. In order to draw the contours of these two trajectories I present some elements of the history of transformation of the Tundayme valley. These elements tie to a larger history of colonization in the Ecuadorian South-East, initiated by the Salesian and Franciscan missions in the late 19th century. In collaboration with the military and secular authorities, the missions set out to 'civilize' the natives and at the same time facilitate human settlement in the disputed border zone between Ecuador and Peru (Ortiz Batalla, 2019).

Elderly Shuar as well the first generation of *colonos* in Tundayme do not specify the time-length of Shuar presence in the Tundayme valley, but they unequivocally confirm the existence of Shuar prior to the arrival of the first *colonos* and the military in the late 1950s. Local written and oral accounts suggest that the Shuar arrived from the north and settled in the Tundayme valley in the 19th century (GADPRT Tundayme, 2014; Van Teijlingen, 2019). Tundayme is in relative geographical proximity to Gualaquiza to the North.⁶ Populated in the 19th century by a small group of settlers, Gualaquiza was the first site in the Amazon where the Salesian Catholic mission established itself in

1894 (Estervit Cobes, 2014). The earliest knowledge of the Shuar language and their horticulturalist life form, combining gardening and hunting, was reported by missionaries pertaining to this station. It is plausible that Shuar in the Gualaquiza area moved south as a result of the missionary and colonial expansion. Up until the 1960s, the Zamora-river floating in a South – North direction, functioned as a barrier for further *colono* expansion, marking an ethnic division (Rudel, 1993) between the West and East sides of the river. The first school run by Salesians and the military post established in the area in 1950s, as well as the first *colonos* who settled were located on the West-side. The Tundayme valley lies to the East of the river. Colonizers exceeded, however, this barrier in the following decades. Vinicio S., a Shuar leader portrayed in the section on CSR below, describes this change in the following manner:

Our grandparents lived here, we are the natives⁷ of this place and we don't want to leave. The whole Tundayme area had Shuar inhabitants. Then came the colonization, and the *colono* always is ambitious, they tried to change us, with rifles, radios, and the tremendous ranches. In this way, the Shuar started to disappear (...) all of this were native lands, the *colonos* didn't live here, but when the military barracks were established the *colonos* came looking for land. The militaries were on the other side of the river, there they were, and on this side lived the Shuar, up there in the Wawayme, Quimi and Tundayme rivers (...)⁸

In response to state politics of agrarian reform and colonization, peasants from the highland province of Azuay settled in what became the parish of Tundayme. In the decades before and after the agrarian reform in 1964, the Ecuadorian state facilitated and promoted agriculture and especially livestock herding as the core elements of a new Amazonian economy. This new policy built on legal norms regarding the utilization of 'vacant land', a notion based on the definition of 'non-exploited' areas in the Amazonian lowlands as non-inhabited state property apt for colonization (Guzmán-Gallegos, 2010; Hendricks, 1996). Agrarian expansion came together with the reduction of Shuar spaces and the establishment of formal land tenure and a peasant livelihood as functions and signifiers of 'civilization'. The two main elements of this new economy were cattle and timber, and both 'resources' generated deforestation and the conversion of forest into pasture (Rudel, 1993). Colonization integrated Shuar gradually into the livestock economy and transformed their horticulturalist way of living as they adapted to a sedentary lifeway (Bustamante, 1998).

Agricultural expansion and the colonization of the Shuar also generated a process of political identity formation and indigenous organization (Rubenstein, 2001). The Salesian mission in the province of Morona Santiago facilitated this process which resulted in the early establishment of the Interprovincial Federation of Shuar centers, FISCH, in 1964.⁹ Central to this mobilization were the protection of Shuar land against *colono*-expansion, and the establishment of collective spaces of living; the Shuar centers. The Shuar of Tundayme, populating the borderland between this province and the province Zamora Chinchipe to the south, had different kinds of connections to the new ethnic political Shuar mobilization. One community in the valley (discussed in the section on CSR below) accomplished formal status as a Shuar center in the early 1970s. Confined spaces restricted Shuar's semi-sedentary resettlement practices and fixed them in specific places. At the same time these spaces have served as a base for the defense of a Shuar way of

⁷ 'Originario' in Spanish.

⁸ Interview carried out in August 2015.

⁹ FISCH (Federación Interprovincial de Centros Shuar) forms part of the regional Amazonian indigenous organization, CONFENIAE, and the national indigenous organization, CONAIE. Today FISCH is one of three Shuar federations in Ecuador. The other figuring in this text is FESZCH (Federación Shuar de Zamora Chinchipe).

⁶ Historically, Tundayme was in the border zone between the Salesian and Franciscan missions' jurisdictions and influence. Today, the valley is included in the Franciscan vicariate and forms part of the province administration of Zamora Chinchipe. Gualaquiza, in contrast, forms part of the Salesian vicariate and the province of Morona Santiago.

life. Demarcated and confined spaces contribute in these ambiguous ways to sustain a Shuar life project. Contrastingly, individual land tenure constitutes the basis for the *colono* life project.

Locally, the *colonos* have been strongly involved in anti-mining activism. In an early stage of the mining conflict, broader civil society networks mobilized around alternative development models that combined agriculture and artisanal mining with proposals for local and national sovereignty, and environmental conservation (Van Teijlingen & Warnaars, 2017). Parallel to the construction of the Mirador-project, however, the anti-mining mobilization has increasingly become a rural struggle for the defense of a specific agrarian way of life. The mining project is located in a part of the valley where *colonos* owned land – and it is their livelihood which has been under the most direct pressure. As reactions to what many land-owners conceived of as an irregular and desinformed land purchase process, and a process of dispossession due to forced expropriation of land, a new anti-mining association took shape in 2013, today named CASCOMI.¹⁰ Mainly recruiting local *colono* families, the association had at the time of this study strong ties to the parish and provincial autonomous governments, the GADs,¹¹ and collaborated with national human rights organizations, environmentalist activist groups and the indigenous movement.

Moreover, the modern history of Tundayme is especially marked by the presence of the military and corporate mining interests. *Colonos* entered early into an exchange relationship with the military, both as users of their infrastructure and purchasers of military held land. In the 1980s the military donated a piece of land to facilitate the establishment of a rural center. In the following decade, this part of the Cordillera del Cóndor was rather abruptly thrown into geopolitics as the site of a low intensity war in the undefined frontier zone between Ecuador and Peru. The Shuar and *colonos* were recruited as soldiers fulfilling roles as pathfinders and transporters of ammunition. Moreover, new realities of industrial mining exploration emerged in the area. Through these transformations, Shuar and *colono* lives were intertwined with the interests and concerns of the central authorities. In the period of becoming an administrative unit in the first half of the 1990s, Tundayme gradually received basic public infrastructure and service provision. However, the population was incorporated into a progressive redistributive policy regime first with the Ecuadorian Citizen Revolution in the period 2007–2017.

The Correa regime practiced a progressive extractive rent policy (Acosta, 2009, p. 2013; Iturralde Ruiz & Jarrín Hidalgo, 2015, pp. 121–144). Legal reform in the hydrocarbon sector increased significantly the level of the state's oil revenue. The new Mining Law, ratified in the National Assembly in 2009, also established favorable conditions for state participation in mineral rent (Riofrancos, 2017). For instance, the contract signed between the Ecuadorian state and ECSA for the exploitation of copper in Tundayme in March 2012 included the figure of 'anticipated payment of mineral rent' of a total of 100 mill. USD. In 2011, the state agency Ecuador Estratégico (EE) was established in order to administer the specific funds that these new policies generated. The agency invested rent from extraction of oil and minerals back into the provinces where large-scale projects considered 'strategic' or vital to the Ecuadorian economy are located.

This brief outline seeks to highlight dimensions in the co-existing trajectories of the Shuar and the *colonos* that in different ways are made relevant in the following discussion. The Shuar and the *colonos* engagements in the Tundayme-valley are of distinct origins and orientations, and the two populations' histories are structured differently by external influences over time. In the remainder of this article I intend to

show that Shuar and *colonos* mobilize, connect and allude to proper place-based life projects through their distinct responses to the everyday governance of the mining intervention.

3. Revocation: Redistribution through planning

In my first empirical example I consider a public mechanism for the capturing of extractive rent, namely development and territorial planning.¹² In the context of intensified conflict around the Mirador-project in 2015, the local administration (the parish GAD) in Tundayme in collaboration with the anti-mining association, CASCOMI, made use of a formal planning instrument in resistance-work. Their new Plan for development and territorial use (PDOT)¹³ envisioned an alternative to the development and modernization model promoted by the neo-extractivist government. I intend in this section to show that this alternative could be understood as an expression of the life project of the *colono*-population in the valley. Planning authorities' response, first by facilitating the process, secondly approving the plan, and finally rendering it technically inadequate, implied a formal incorporation by revocation. The revocation signaled that territorial development in the area hosting the Mirador project could not be disarticulated from the implementation of the mining project, from the development model it assumes, and the new mining surface it produces.

Redistribution of mineral rent under the Correa-regime, happened through the state's general modernization policy and mechanisms of social investment, and through exceptional returns to the sites and people 'hosting' mining projects. The state agency Ecuador Estratégico, EE, was in charge of administering the specific funds destined to the areas of extractive projects considered vital to the national economy. Public officers¹⁴ told me that the provision of basic services was necessary to combat poverty and modernize the rural communities in the influence zones of large extractive projects. Modernization also included measures to facilitate 'ordered development' through the building of Millennium Community Projects (Vallejo, Valdivieso, Cielo, & García, 2016). Envisioning modern life, large-scale mining projects present themselves as releasers of economic and social potentials. The intervention itself generates, according to public and corporate discourse, economic dynamism in terms of new income and employment opportunities and facilitates additionally exceptional social investments. Consequently, this development regime emphasizes people's adaptive capacity – their ability to reconfigure their lives according to new conditions and standards.

Arguing that industrial mining is on the increase and has come to stay, public officers emphasized their role in guiding and training people to take advantage of the new mineral wealth and its possibilities. This implied, among other issues, a more active use of zonal and 'micro' planning in decision-making regarding social investments and the allocation of resources. Territorial planning became in this period an overarching instrument to define needs, to take marginal populations and environments into account, and foment and administer development at multiple levels. A planning-based approach implied that the PDOT, a document that GADs at all levels make during the first year of governance, was turned into a key instrument for the capture of extractive rent. It also meant that central planning authorities took on a more active role in redistributive politics, as the designer, facilitator,

¹² The redistributive policies considered in this section relate to the period of the Correa-regime (2007–2017). Since the Moreno-government (from 2017) is in a process of reorienting policies the relationship between extractive economy and public social welfare characteristic of the neo-extractivist economy of Correa changes. See also footnote 2.

¹³ Plan de Desarrollo y Ordenamiento Territorial.

¹⁴ Interviews with the leader of the provincial administrative of EE, 2.2. 2017, with a functionary at EE in Quito 2.3. 2015, and functionary at SENPLADES, 7.2. 2017.

¹⁰ CASCOMI – Comunidad Amazónica de Acción Social Cordillera del Cóndor.

¹¹ There are GADs (Gobiernos Autónomos Centralizados) at province, municipality and parish levels, and they are elected government/administrative bodies. For the period 2014–2018, the political opposition led the GAD of the parish of Tundayme.

adviser and approver of planning processes. In 2015, the newly elected GAD in Tundayme elaborated its PDOT for the period 2014–2019.¹⁵ The National Planning Institute, SENPLADES was actively involved in this process assisting local administrations. It involved a participatory process coordinated by a civic committee and a private consultancy firm, which gathered the necessary information to draft the different elements of the plan.

The work with this plan took place in a period of increased tension around the Mirador-project. In March 2015 the mining company presented plans for an extension of the mining project which sparked new concerns among the affected people about the environmental impacts, particularly regarding the project's waste management and storage design (Leifsen, 2017a). Moreover, the planned Millennium Community Project for Tundayme had at this moment in time been suspended for so long that people and public officers assumed it would never happen. Contrastingly, another prolonged process around land expropriation in Tundayme, came to an abrupt end around the time of the final approval of the PDOT in September 2015. As the first of three actions against *colonos* who refused to give up their landholdings, a police force of around 300 surrounded the community of San Marcos and forced the families out of their houses which were demolished soon after.

The newly elected parish GAD in Tundayme made use of its active collaboration with the anti-mining association, CASCOMI, to bring resistance into the work with the new PDOT. Through innovative and political use of the formal planning procedure, the parish GAD formulated an alternative development model for the people in the valley. Employing one of the formal instruments, 'participatory diagnosis', the local organizers of the planning process, predominantly of *colono*-background, engaged the rural neighborhoods and Shuar communities in a participatory consultation. Contrary to public institutions' emphasis of the opportunities created by industrial mining, the dominant focus voiced through the participatory diagnosis was on the degradation of peasant livelihoods. The outcome of this process fed into the state of the arts section of the new plan and consequently informed the strategic territorial analysis and action plan that define priorities and are meant to determine future allocation of resources in the parish. Two features stand out in the PDOT of Tundayme. First, it does not grant large-scale mining any significant future role in the local economy, and second, it proposes a development model based on sustainable livestock agriculture.¹⁶ This orientation of the PDOT articulates what could be considered the life project of the *colonos* in Tundayme.

By navigating institutional relations and roles in the interface between public administration and civil society and negotiating political leverage using a formal instrument of governance, the parish authorities managed to center stage the value of an Amazonian peasant lifeway. And at the same time, this orientation of the PDOT linked to a specific story of belonging. As it was pointed out to me, the historical chapter in the plan was more elaborated than what is expected and common for this genre of public documents. There was a specific purpose behind this. Emphasizing the unique history of Tundayme visualizes a specific local life trajectory distinct from the new mining modernity. In this account the *colono* is the historical protagonist. The Shuar, in the capacity of firstcomers, are briefly mentioned. But the focus of this history is on the peasants and their 'search of shelter for the welfare of their offspring' (GADPRT 2015, p. 1). It tells the story of the *colonos* gradual expansion into the valley, and their collaboration with the Catholic mission, the military and public authorities in 'opening' the area, securing

connectivity and facilitating settlements; building tracks and roads, schools and chapels, establishing community centers, and advocating for basic services and the formalization of Tundayme as an administrative unit (GADPRT 2015). The account draws heavily on the narrative imagery of the first generation of *colonos*, the parent generation of the people involved in drafting the PDOT.

Recalling the past, first generation *colonos* tie a strong sense of belonging to their journeys – with their livestock – from the highlands into the Cordillera del Cóndor, crossing rivers, opening paths in the forest, and struggling to find, clear and gradually build habitual spaces. Often expressed in a subdued manner, they indicate that the land they turned into their property, either through customary use or legal titles, were 'empty' or 'idle', purchased from military officers or other 'first' landowners, or formed part of barter arrangements with the Shuar. In their stories of settlement, they emphasize the hard work and hardship it implied to make the forest accessible and transform it into pasture, timber and productive land. The meaning of work is crucial in this respect both because of the rural habits the peasants brought with them from the Andes, and because the Institute of Land Reform and Colonization (IERAC) in the Amazonian lowland employed the principle of labored land as a conditioning principle for formal land tenure. The *colonos* conceptualize land as work, literally they can refer to a plot of land as 'hectares of work'.

Looking back on their lives, the *colonos* now coming of age also emphasize the fragility and instability of their livelihoods. They point out they had to learn to manage livestock agriculture in an unknown tropical environment. Moreover, the process of converting land 'possessions' into 'properties' was associated with risk of losing land to others who claimed or occupied it. They also had to come to terms with their role in a military strategy of creating populated 'live' borders (*fronteras vivas*) under circumstances of low-intensity warfare between Ecuador and Peru. And more recently industrial mining has become a new challenge and to some degree also an opportunity. Against the backdrop of shifting life circumstances, the land, the village, the school, the church and the administrative center are institutions that constitute continuity, stability and embeddedness. The mobilization against the mining company in the years around the escalating land conflict concentrated on the defense of the village center of San Marcos, its school and chapel, together with a revitalized cherish of the Catholic (Andean) tradition of the patron saint of San Marcos. Facing a major threat, the *colono* community of Tundayme reverted to the religious and secular institutions defining their existence. Underscoring these institutions remind us at the same time of the practices that colonized the Shuar - the making of reductions (populated centers), conversion to the Catholic faith, and the incorporation into 'civilization' through education of the ethics of agrarian productivity and the gospel of progress.

Most of the actors negotiating the content and orientation of the PDOT were affiliated with the anti-mining association, CASCOMI. This association emerged in 2013 in response to the land conflict. Mobilizing around this issue and influenced also by growing environmental concerns, they decided to shift their resistance strategy the year prior to the PDOT-process. CASCOMI started to self-identify as an indigenous community and "to craft a discourse around indigeneity and ancestral territory" (Van Teijlingen, 2019, p. 240; see also; Sánchez-Vázquez & Leifsen 2019). This shift implied an intensification of CASCOMI's horizontal trans-local alliance building to the indigenous movement, to environmental activists and to human rights organizations. The life-project expressed in the PDOT, could be viewed as the complex outcome of this resistance-work and horizontal alliance-building, *in combination with* the vertical experiences of belonging evoked in *colono* narratives of their past experiences.

Planning authorities' reactions to this resistance-work illustrates some important features of the everyday governance that assembles a

¹⁵ Together with a research team from the Observatory of Socio-environmental conflicts (OBSA) we participated in 2015 in a preliminary (24th March) and a final revision (7th September) of the PDOT. Additionally, we revised all audio-visual material recorded of the participatory diagnosis process carried out as part of the preparation work, together with the GAD in Tundayme, 17th and 18th March 2015.

¹⁶ For further details regarding this process, see Leifsen (2017b).

mining surface. A representative from SENPLADES I talked to in 2017, stated that the problem with the Tundayme PDOT was that it “did not have any project, vision or strategies that permit an articulation with mining”.¹⁷ He agreed that this disarticulation reflected a serious local conflict regarding large-scale mining. Despite of this, he and other public functionaries emphasized that the PDOT was the result of technical incompetence and failed planning. From this moment of planning policy reform and increasingly thereafter, conflict and anti-mining resistance in Tundayme were translated into a de-politicized idiom regarding affected people’s failing *planning capacity*. Planning authorities could not control the PDOT process in order to hinder the formulation of an alternative development plan. The institutionalized processes of participation was after all encouraged by the government’s Citizen Revolution policy. However, state functionaries could disqualify the outcome by rendering the process technically inadequate.

Revoking the PDOT in this way implies an incorporation by non-recognition. Authorities incorporate the plan as a formally registered document, but disregard the ideas, experiences and visions that give it direction, and which draws the contours of the *colono* life project. Non-recognition of this kind is a response to a development and territorial plan which is not in assemblage with the knowledge practice that produces the mine: The elaboration of the EIA and the EMP, and the multiple rounds of approvals by the environmental and mining authorities, lay the ground for the licenses the company needs in order to carry out prospecting, build the necessary mining infrastructure and extract and process subsoil material. The problem with the PDOT of Tundayme for the period 2014–2019 was its dissociation from this knowledge production. Within an emerging neo-extractive economy, the plan promoted another and inappropriate model of modernity and progress.

4. Collaboration: Corporate social responsibility

CSR is a parallel activity to the public redistribution of extractive rent, one that adheres to a logic of compensation and social investment. The company’s investments in the zone affected by its intervention supposedly make up for the burden of hosting the project. The aim is to build confidence towards the project through an imagery of responsible conduct. Critics argue that the industry implements CSR schemes to mitigate, delegitimize and disarticulate conflict (Bebbington, 2010), and to build, together with a range of other activities, ‘accountability’ around the extractive enterprise (Li, 2009). According to Brock and Dunlap (2018), CSR should be considered part of a more extensive set of ‘counterinsurgency techniques’ with the aim to render resistance illegitimate. Adding to this critique, I focus in this section on another aspect of CSR, namely on the practice of non-recognition implied in the way the mining company manages a CSR scheme in a Shuar community. In the following discussion, I consider a place-based life project of the Shuar and discuss how the logic of the company’s corporate social responsibility approach obscures this life project.

The ‘productive projects’ offered by the ECSA Department of Community Relations in Tundayme, are incentives to create new rural income generating opportunities through poultry and fish farming. A prerequisite for carrying out CSR projects is that people in the zone of direct influence recognize the company as a relevant exchange partner. Functionaries at the company office pointed out, however, that CSR is hard to practice because people do not know how ‘to participate in the benefits’.¹⁸ In their view, people are easily carried away, they join resistance without thinking about future consequences. This understanding of the people affected or influenced by the project builds on a notion of a lacking entrepreneurial capacity. Carrying out CSR projects depend, in the company functionaries’ view, not only on people’s

willingness to participate, but also on their knowing how to collaborate.

A tilapia fish farm project carried out in a Shuar community in Tundayme serves here to discuss the company’s approach to CSR-exchange when reflected against a Shuar life project. The current leader of this community, Vinicio S., was considered a collaborator by the company officers, and he was talked about in positive terms as an innovative and smart person taking advantage of the presence of the Mirador-project. The project, which was in the construction phase when I visited it in mid-August 2015,¹⁹ consisted of the building of four extensive fishponds (10 × 40 m) with the capacity to farm approximately 40 000 tilapias. Fish-farming aims at turning the community into a provider of fish to the workers at the mining camp. It forms part of what Vinicio and his fellow community members envision as part of the future community wellbeing – one oriented towards productive activity combinable with wage work at the mining company, and compatible with small-scale agriculture. As discussed by Rudel, Bates, and Machinguiashi (2002), a diversification of productive and income-giving activities of this kind could be understood as a Shuar livelihood strategy to stay relatively independent of livestock and livestock markets associated with the *colono*-economy.

The tilapia project forms part of a more extensive collaboration between the Shuar community and the mining company. Over its years of existence, this community has received different kinds of financial support from ECSA, including assistance to formalize their community a decade ago. The community came into being when a faction of a 3800 ha collective land title decided to separate out their plots and formalize this land as a separate unit (Fernández-Salvador, 2017). The larger community is the only in the Tundayme parish with a legal collective title as a Shuar center. The separation of the faction that Vinicio S. forms part of, was a response to a long-standing family conflict “in which differing positions towards the Mirador project had become a key point of contention” (Van Teijlingen, 2019, p. 267). The consolidating of the smaller community within the larger implied a process of formalization and the involvement of several external actors. One of the provincial Shuar federations²⁰ offered its assistance in legally recognizing the faction as a Shuar community. As part of the requirements the new leadership had to present maps for a planned populated centre. Vinicio donated a part of his land to this project, and the formalization work was coordinated with the municipality and other public institutions. The ECSA company payed an engineer to measure the area and draw a map of the planned center.

Vinicio views his dealings with the mining company from the perspective of Shuar sociality and leadership. As a leader, he cares for the wellbeing of the people that elected him, and his continuous concern is to improve the conditions of life for them. As he sees it, the dealings with ECSA is one of many ways he manages external relations, public authorities and private actors, in a constant effort to return something to the community; to reciprocate with work and projects (*devolver con trabajo y obras*) to his fellow community dwellers. Managing changing circumstances and conditions for existence, his relations to powerful others, to Apachis,²¹ form part of the way he constitutes himself and is valued as a Shuar leader.²² Vinicio’s approach to external institutions and actors and his understanding of leadership are not unique to him and his community, nor a symptom of assimilation, acculturation or community disintegration. They rather characterize contemporary

¹⁹ If not specified otherwise, all references and citations related to Vinicio S. are taken from an interview in August 2015.

²⁰ The Shuar Federation, FESZCH, is an independent organization and does not form part of the regional (CONFENIAE) and national indigenous (CONAIE) organizations.

²¹ Apachi is the Shuar word for stranger - people of a different kind.

²² A pro-mining stance is not the only Shuar approach to change in Tundayme. In the parish, there are Shuar communities that resist the Mirador-project, and some Shuar leaders support the *colono*-based anti-mining mobilization.

¹⁷ Interview with a functionary at SENPLADES, carried out 7.2. 2017.

¹⁸ Interview carried out with functionaries at the ECSA community relations office in Tundayme.

Shuar – Apachi relationships. As Buitrón observes, Shuar leaders “are expected to stake a strong claim to external resources”, and to funnel them “so that people can live well” (2020:49; for a related perspective see Guzmán-Gallegos, 2015).

The constant challenge of Shuar leaders is to manage external relations in ways that balance access to services, resources and knowledge against the expansive and transformative forces that accompany exchanges with for example a mining company. The purpose of this balancing is, however, the capture of external wealth and the learning of external lifeways in order to strengthen the wellbeing and autonomy of their own communities (Rubenstein, 2001). Autonomy, writes Buitrón, is one of the core values “animating Shuar ideas of the good life. Autonomy means both the capacity to live with a measure of economic sufficiency and the freedom to live and work as one wishes within one’s territory” (2020: 49). The dilemma is that autonomy must be managed in response to actors and forces that threaten to encroach on Shuar territory and undermine their lifeway. Leaders as Vinicio face the pressure involved in managing external relations with negotiating astuteness vis-à-vis powerful others. Regarding contamination from the mining project, for example, Vinicio has forcefully expressed his critical opinion in a range of meetings with the company as well as in other fora such as the civic committee of the PDOT (commented on in the section above).²³ Despite of accepting that industrial mining necessarily contaminates he has been vocal in remarking that there are limits to what could be tolerated. He insists that the company and its subcontractors must comply to legal regulations, and he has warned about the irreversible harm that some of the company’s plans will have for the forest and life in the rivers. (Van Teijlingen, 2019).

A perspective on Shuar sociality and leadership briefly discussed here can also help us understand other social dynamics such as the way community members implement external development projects or handle internal conflict. To capture these dynamics, we need to consider the historical context of change in which the Shuar populations were forced to live in reductions and went through a process of organization in community centers. As well established in the literature, the social organization of the Shuar prior to colonization was characterized by “atomized nuclei of extended households in dispersed settlements”. This settlement pattern was favored by a “relative abundance of land” (Rubenstein, 2002, p. 33). Despite of social restructuring, the autonomous domestic unit continues to have crucial cultural meaning and value. One can for example observe a tension internal to Shuar communities between the concerns and interests pertaining to the larger collective which has negotiating legitimacy vis-à-vis the external world, and the care for the smaller extended domestic group. Buitrón (2020) sees the constitution of Shuar autonomy gravitating towards the sustenance, thriving and vitality of the domestic group – the group belonging to the same household.

One illustration of this is the way the tilapia fish farm project was implemented in Vinicio’s community. The ‘productive project’ aimed by the company’s community relation officers to benefit the center as such involved only some of the families. He pointed out that it is up to each person “to spend work on what they receive [from the ‘productive projects]”. If people do not want to take part “we cannot oblige them”. In his formulation the tilapia project was separate from the community (*aparte de la comunidad*). It involved several *socios* who together were in the process of forming an association. These *socios*’ implementation of the community development project follows a pattern also reported from other Shuar contexts: The access to external ‘productive projects’ is negotiated on behalf of the collective at large, but people “try to de-collectivize the actual implementation of projects to preserve domestic and personal autonomy” (Buitrón, 2020, p. 57). Cooperation between community members around projects of this kind is voluntary and based on the understanding that each person owns his or her own work (and in

this case Shuar conceive of productive projects as work).

Now, shifting from cooperation to conflict, an inclination towards autonomy came also into play in the process resulting in the separating of Vinicio’s faction of the community in 2007. Conflict between brothers is a recurrent theme in the ethnography of the Shuar, and *relocation* has been a common solution to such conflicts (Rubenstein, 2002). Speaking about his ancestors’ way of life, Vinicio gives us an idea of earlier times’ changeability: “They lived temporarily in one place, for two or three years, because of the hunting and the conflicts they went and left behind, the house decayed (...) they moved from one place to another”. Within the current land tenure structure based on property rights formalized in individual and collective titles, the moving from one place to another is no longer an option. Vinicio and his faction could not move outside the area collectively owned by the larger Shuar center. An alternative was the separating out of a new nucleus within the larger collective. This kind of ‘relocation’ implied an extensive coordination and collaboration with external actors – the ECSA mining company included.

The life project we get some glimpses of here has been influenced by external actors and structuring forces over the whole of Vinicio’s lifetime. Being born in Tundayme in the early 1960s, in the initial period of colonization in the valley, he, his family and larger community has formed part of a major transformative process. *Colono* expansion did not only imply the loss of land and the reduction of their spaces of existence. Becoming sedentary and adapting to the Christian faith, the Shuar were inserted into a new economy that at the same time rendered their modes of being ‘savage’, irrelevant and even non-existent. Vinicio received his formal education (including training as a leader) from Catholic institutions. He became familiar with the work of delimiting and formalizing Shuar territories that the Salesian mission initiated and coordinated with the Interprovincial Shuar federation (FICSH) and State authorities. The collective title of his own community formed part of this process of Shuar organization for the defense of living spaces and a proper life project. Considering this story of change, the community relations officers of the company are merely the latest of a series of external actors adding to the ‘knot’ of horizontal and vertical relations constituting this placed-based life project.

At the same time, this placed-based life project is clearly not recognized by the external agents conditioning its existence. In the view of the company and the community relations functionaries, the making of Vinicio’s community facilitates the establishment of a CSR relationship. In order to appear responsible, the company needs to set up compensatory schemes with the affected population and to find people willing to share the benefits. Sharing of benefits turns into a visible sign of allegiance to the mining project, which contributes to the building of corporate accountability and confirms the model of development and modernization promoted by the Ecuadorian state. The CSR schemes contribute in this way to construct collaborators and assemble relations of support. At the same time, this CSR scheme is directly integrated into the circuit of the mining economy, the economic opportunities it envisions are embedded in its logic. In the view of the company functionaries, the Shuar leader and his community are involved in this CSR scheme as beneficiaries, and in the capacity of collaborating partners producing value as potential social entrepreneurs. The concern and care for the life project that motivates the Shuar leader to collaborate with the company and accept the tilapia project are not recognized nor seen.

5. Rejection: Expropriation and indemnification

The last example considered is a type of compensation for the expropriation of land. In the process of constructing the mine, ECSA became the largest landowner in Tundayme parish. In order to access the subterranean minerals and build the necessary infrastructure to operate, the company needed to control an extension of approximately 5500–6000 ha. Intervening in a populated rural landscape, the company applied an active, and according to many, a manipulated and irregular strategy for purchasing individual landholdings. Making use of a

²³ Vinicio was the only Shuar member of this committee.

common practice (White, Borrás, Hall, Scoones, & Wolford, 2012), the state also ceded what it defined as ‘vacant’ land to the company. These are extensions with no legal title-holders, but that might have long-time users (mainly cattle herders) who never formalized their land use relations.²⁴ However, a considerable number of individually owned plots of land that ECSA needs to control, especially in areas destined to the building of waste deposits, were not on sale because the owners refused to leave their properties. In these cases, the state opened an administrative procedure through the legal figure of *servidumbre minera*. Difficult to translate, this figure is formulated as a use permit but operates as expropriation. *Servidumbre* is a scheme imposed and administered by the state, which comes into force when landowners block a market exchange. It is a last resort in a situation of conflict where the ultimate outcome is violent eviction. As argued in this section, the ceding of land for a monetary value written on a bank check, does not only operate on a mining surface. The transaction also contributes to assemble this surface by enabling the eradication of the life spaces of persons involuntary included in this scheme.

Servidumbre is a formal resource used in different types of state interventions, especially in relation to public construction work. In this case the Sub-secretary of Mines granted the company permits for the use of land over 30 years with the possibility of an extension period. This kind of land use is always related to an indemnification, a monetary compensation issued as a bank check handed out by the state Agency for Mining Regulation and Control (ARCOM). As emphasized by state functionaries, *servidumbre* does not imply a purchase of land but rather a payment for ‘the services that the property will lend’.²⁵ The size of the compensation is determined through a valuation (*avalúo*) based on sector-based value standards defined in the land-register (*catastro*). Interestingly, these standards are related to the surface soil that is removed in order to extract minerals, and not to the access to the underground fixed in mining concessions, nor to mineral value brought to the surface.

Minister of mines, Javier Córdova, stated in a TV-interview²⁶ in January 2016 that all land disputes related to the Mirador project were resolved. His statement came soon after a coordinated state – company undertaking displaced over 30 *colono* families in the Tundayme valley (van Teijlingen & Warnaas, 2017). ‘Resolved’ refers in the logic of the minister to the fact that all controversy was converted into value written on bank checks that the affected families could cash in at ARCOM. What he ‘forgot’ to tell was that a considerable portion of indemnified *colonos* rejected the checks. For these *colono* families, the logic of exchange broke down altogether – the value on the check was in these landowners’ view incommensurable with their stakes and concerns. Their refusal to move contested the equivalence (Li, 2013) established by this indemnification.

Many of those displaced by the Mirador project are first generation *colonos*. One of them, Doña Cornelia, shared with us her understanding of incommensurability regarding *servidumbre minera* in a conversation about her and her husband’s rejection of the check waiting for them in the ARCOM office.²⁷ Doña Cornelia’s perspective forms part of a story of settling and of establishing ownership to land by transforming it. She emphasized the need they had to escape poverty and land scarcity as the

main motivation for migrating. The move implied a long and dangerous journey, on feet and mule and with their domestic animals on routes with poor or makeshift roads and paths. Settling was an unpredictable endeavor and implied major efforts to transform tropical forest into dwelling spaces for themselves and their animals. The story of constant work to make and keep the land, marks the deep, and in a certain sense primordial connection Doña Cornelia and other *colonos* express they have to their living spaces. She recognizes that the Shuar were there before them, and she makes a distinction between themselves and those who took (*quitar*) the land from the Shuar, by emphasizing that they rightfully purchased it and worked it for the common good (*por el bien*). The value of settling as a permanent activity and existence is, as Doña Cornelia tried to make us understand, not comparable with the *avalúo* determined by the authorities. What *servidumbre minera* produces is in her experience not an exchangeable value, but a separation of them, including their animals, from their home and dwelling space and from a specific way of becoming *colonos* in Tundayme.

Refusing to leave her land, Doña Cornelia, together with other Tundayme-inhabitants, constituted islands of a rural *colono* lifeway within an emerging industrial mining site, and more specifically within a part of it destined to the project’s ‘containment’ infrastructure. These islands were incompatible with the needs of the Mirador project to empty the landscape of existence that made claims of belonging to other life projects. The *servidumbre minera* process could have no other outcome than people’s acceptance of the ‘price’ on the check as a replacement for the loss of land. Consequently, and as a series of reports have documented (CEDHU et al., 2015; Colectivo de Investigación y Acción Psicosocial, 2015; Sacher, Báez, Bayón, Larreátegui, & Moreano, 2015), when the *servidumbre minera* did not achieve its objective, and land was not transferable by any form of exchange, the mechanism of eviction replaced it. When faced with the persistent resistance of Doña Cornelia and other *colonos* in Tundayme, the state-company alliance shifted strategy from soft to hard violence (Dunlap & Fairhead, 2014) in order to continue the work of assembling the mine.

6. Final remarks

The discussion of the three examples above has been guided by two analytical concerns. On the one hand to detail the discursive and material practices that perform non-recognition, and on the other hand to give a sense of the life projects that are obscured through these practices. Additionally, I argue that the redistributive mechanism, the CSR intervention and the indemnification scheme form part of a larger work of assembling a mining surface. I think of this as a geo-political work of governance that involve heterogenous entities, human, biotic and abiotic, in a giant effort to wrest materials from the earth and process them into volumes that circulate on the surface, locally and widely. This geo-politics establish the mine and a mining economy, and it produces waste and socio-environmental impacts. Through its many and complex interactions, the geo-politics of the Mirador project engages with the socationature of a rural valley in the Ecuadorian Amazon in profoundly transformative ways. Only some aspects of the ongoing transformation are accounted for and recognized, and hence subject to social investment and compensation schemes. This reduction constitutes the basis for what I have suggested to call incorporation by non-recognition. Incorporation is based on a highly restricted understanding of the intervened reality, one where the rationale of the assembled mining surface predominates. When the everyday governance of the project incorporates affected people in their schemes, they apply the logics of surface making. Affected people are extracted from their lifeworlds by categories (territorial development planning, productive projects, social entrepreneurship, *servidumbre minera*) that cannot contain them.

These exclusions, or non-recognitions contribute to shape the reality that the Shuar and *colonos* live by. The socationature that neo-extractivism can see and all the rest that it obscures condition these peoples’ struggles to sustain life projects. I have in this article insisted on paying attention

²⁴ Communal Shuar territories, formalized or not, fall outside the area now owned or claimed by the company, although these communities are within the zone of direct influence of the Mirador project.

²⁵ ‘por los servicios que va a dar el terreno’. The information in this part is based on an interview with a legal advisor at ARCOM’s main offices in Zamora on 1 August 2015, and with a functionary in the planning department, carried out by Gard Vangsnes, on 1 December 2017.

²⁶ Interview with Córdova on GAMA Vision, 5.1 2016, you-tube recording (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M641zLyLs3c>).

²⁷ The OBSA research team carried out the interview with Doña Cornelia in 2016.

to some of the particularities of the distinct life projects of the Shuar and the colonos. Their struggles are intertwined and co-exist with the mining project, and they have clearly divergent life trajectories. The attention I grant this divergent co-existence suggest, perhaps, the need for another analytical sensitivity. Faced with neo-extractivism and its transformations it is a common (and tempting) research strategy to order affected people's reactions into the schema of resistance vs. acquiescence, contestation vs. collaboration. Ordering of this kind might lead us to draw misinformed conclusions about affected peoples and their responses, a problem that probably concerns researchers with an inclination for ethnographic detail the most. A more serious problem, though, is that dichotomous thinking of this kind might lead us to partake in an analytical surface making that employs principles of non-recognition comparable to those scrutinized in this article.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

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