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# Territoriality, Narratives and Violence: Stories of Eight Women Living in the Presence of a Large-Scale Mine in Ecuador

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**Territoriality, Narratives and Violence: Stories of Eight Women Living in the Presence of a  
Large-Scale Mine in Ecuador**

**Chelsea Viteri**

**May 2017**

**A Master's Paper**

**Submitted to the faculty of Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts, in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of  
Community Development and Planning**

**And accepted on the recommendation of**

**Denise Bebbington, Chief Instructor**

## **ABSTRACT**

**Territoriality, Narratives and Violence: Stories of Eight Women Living in the Presence of a**

**Large-Scale Mine in Ecuador**

**Chelsea Viteri**

Women play a substantial role in communities that are affected by mining nevertheless, their role has not been well documented and their voices and experiences have not been centered in the debates around extraction. In Ecuador, local rural, campesina, and indigenous women bear much the cost of large scale development projects, as their bodies, families, homes, environments and economies are impacted. This paper emerges from eight semi-structured interviews with indigenous and campesina women from Tundayme, a small rural town which is in the middle of the first large scale mine in Ecuador. Using a feminist political ecology framework and storytelling, this paper seeks to elucidate the ways in which these women experience the introduction of a large-scale mine into their territories.

**Denise Bebbington, Ph.D.**

**Chief Instructor**

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**Date:** May 2017

**Baccalaureate Degree:** Bachelor in Theater Arts

**Source:** Clark University

**Date:** May 2016

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this work to all the women from Tundayme who spoke to me in the summer of 2016, as well as the communities who have to face the impacts of extractive industries in their environments.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to begin by thanking Professor Denise Bebbington, for all the unconditional guidance she has given me in this process. I have not only felt supported by her, I have also been tremendously inspired by the work she does. Acción Ecológica for their openness to work with me in this project. All the women from Tundayme who gave me their time and trust. Jude Fernando, and Amber Murry who have become role models in my life, as they embody what they believe in and have been there for me academically and personally. Laurie Ross, who has believed in me and supported me in various projects throughout my academic career, including this one. Zia Kandler, who conducted the primary research of this project with me, is an unconditional friend, and has inspired me with her humanity and commitment to social justice.

Both my parents, Eloy Viteri and Sarah Dettman, for their love and support in every way possible; including my mom's patience and willingness to revise my paper and catch my spelling and grammar mistakes, and my dad's moral and spiritual guidance. My sisters Natalie Viteri, and Ashley Viteri who I never stop learning from and who I know I can always count on. Jim Lochhead, for his love and the joy he has brought to my days. Katherine Esparza, for her standing my side no matter what, inspiring me to advocate for myself and love unconditionally. Lastly, all the powerful women in my life who have nurtured me, and held me through these years of growth.

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## **Introduction:**

Tundayme, a small rural town in the hinterlands of Southern Ecuador, is like most villages in the amazon region of South America, except that it also happens to be located in the middle of *Proyecto El Mirador*, Ecuador's first large scale (mega) mining project. This multi-billion-dollar Chinese copper mine, though still in the initial stages, has already made its mark on the village of Tundayme: families have been displaced, the region's main rivers have been polluted, large amounts of land have been claimed and privatized by the mine, and people's livelihoods and social relations have been radically altered. For families and communities in the sphere of the mine, life is not the same. Life's day to day rhythm has shifted, as well as community members hopes and aspirations for the future.

Both left leaning and conservative governments in Latin America are pushing for mining agendas with equal force (Machado Araoz, 2012). The Ecuadorian governments discourse has framed mining as the way out of poverty and the path towards development or *Buen Vivir*<sup>1</sup> (Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir 2009-2013). As such, Ecuador, which has not historically been a mining country, has proposed a plan to strategically use mining to obtain *Buen vivir* and has initiated 5 strategic large scale, open cast mining projects in its national territory. As Ecuador embarks upon a 'mining era', it is crucial to examine the effects this industry is already having on human rights, indigenous rights, women's rights, and the rights of nature , especially in areas such

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<sup>1</sup> "The satisfaction of the needs in regards to a high quality of life and death, loving others and being loved, the flourishing of everyone in peace and harmony with nature and the indefinite prolongation the human cultures. The Buen Vivir should allow free time for contemplation and emancipation and that the opportunities, freedoms, capabilities, and real potentials of individuals amplify and flourish in such a way that allows for territories, societies, the diverse collective identities and each individual – seen as a universal human being as well as particular- seeks a desirable life (material as well as subjective without perpetuating any domination to one another)" (Plan Nacional para el Buen Vivir 2009 – 2013).

as Tundayme, a village located within the fragile ecosystem of the amazon basin and inhabited by people of the ancestral Shuar amazonic culture.

Women's lives are particularly affected by extraction in ways that are only recently a subject of study. Despite the fact that women have been crucial pillars and leaders in their communities, their stories, perspectives and responses have not been well documented in the literature on social movements and extractive industry activity, nor taken seriously in decision making processes (Jenkins, 2012). While women disproportionately bear the impacts of development projects, they have little say and little power to shape if and how these projects proceed (Colectivo de Acción e Investigación Psicosocial, 2017; Solano, 2014). The impacts are felt in their bodies, their homes, their economic power and in the environments they live in (Escobar and Harcourt, 2005).

Feminist Political Ecology (FPE), is a useful framework to analyze the ways in which extractive projects impact women. This framework allows us to localize the impacts of extraction in a particular context, center the embodied, everyday life experiences of women, and make visible the way in which their identities shape their relationship to the environment which is politically mediated (Mohanty, 2003; Nagar et alt. 2002; Rocheleau et alt. 1996). Using an intersectional approach to understand and dissect the power dynamics which are embedded in the society-environment relationship is imperative.

This paper emerges from qualitative fieldwork conducted in Tundayme, Ecuador, during the summer of 2016. I conducted 8 semi-structures interviews with indigenous and campesina women who lived in the area of Tundayme including El Valle de el Quimi, Tundayme and Yanua Kim. My questions going into this research were: How are the women in Tundayame affected by the presence of the mining company in their everyday lives? What are their

perceptions of the mining project? How is it that they respond and/or resist to the presence of the mine and the changes in the territory? And what are their hopes for the future? The objective of this paper is to elucidate the ways in which women and local communities are marginalized and continue to be subject to structural violence due to the perpetuation of extractive based economies. Most importantly my research seeks to re-center the voices and experiences of local, rural, women in the debates of extraction, as a means to advocate for the inclusion of local women's perspectives in the decision-making process over extractive projects like *El Mirador*.

In this brief introduction, I briefly explained how large-scale mining is increasing in Ecuador, transforming the lives and opportunities of rural families in the process. The remaining sections of this paper will explore in greater depth the impacts of mining in Ecuador by drawing upon and analyzing eight individual stories of different women in Tundayme. Firstly, I detail my methodology to this project, followed by literature review of political ecology and feminist political ecology theory as it relates to socio environmental conflict. Thirdly, I contextualize the introduction of mega mining in Ecuador and explore the consequences of this state promoted project, while highlighting the responses of civil society. Fourthly, I go over a brief review of the history of the Tundayme. The fifth section, focuses on perspectives and experiences of women living in the presence of extraction in the Cordillera del Condor. The sixth section provides an analysis of the women's experiences and lastly I close with some concluding remarks.

## **Methodology:**

During June and July of 2016, I conducted a qualitative research project with the support of *Accion Ecologica* (AE), an Ecuadorian based NGO, which I coordinated with to carry out this research. I accompanied two AE staff members to Tundayme for a four-day visit in order to become familiar with the territory and meet the women that AE works closely with. Three weeks

later, I returned to Tundayme along with my research partner, Zia Kandler, and stayed for almost two weeks with a family in the community.

During this second visit, we conducted 8 semi-structured interviews, which lasted from approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour. We were deliberate about approaching women who lived in the area of Tundayme, and who were open to talk with us. The first women we interviewed were women we had met during our previous visit. As the days went by, the women we knew introduced us to their friends and family, allowing us to have contact with more members of the community. It is important to acknowledge that the community division around this topic limited the possibility of talking to people with an array of perspectives. Most of the women who shared their stories with us were women who have worked with AE in the past, and have been outspoken about their concerns regarding the changes in their community since the arrival of the mine. Only one of the women we interviewed felt “neutral” and no one we spoke to was in total favor of the mine.

In order to interview Rosario Wari<sup>2</sup>, AE had talked to her family, as they have very close relationships with them. Once we arrived to the territory, we visited Rosario’s granddaughter who came with us to visit Rosario, helped us as a translator and aided us with more information. It is thanks to AE that I had the opportunity to share and talk to Rosario as well as have contact with all of the women from Tundayme.

To analyze the data, I have used an interpretive feminist approach, based on the understanding that there are multiple realities, multiple stories and multiple truths. In research on extractive conflicts, where there are an array of perspectives and positions, it is imperative to understand the many truths, though contradictory to each other, can co-exist. Additionally, I make use of a Feminist Political Ecology to dissect the way in which the women I spoke to are impacted

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<sup>2</sup> Shuar woman, who is 107 years old and has been displaced on multiple times from her lands. Her story has been covered by various, media sources.

by the mine, as well as the ways in which they respond to the changes they are facing. Lastly, throughout the paper I have made use of a storytelling approach in order to respect the wholeness of the stories that the women shared with me in the context of where these stories emerged.

### **Positionality:**

It is imperative to recognize that my access to these stories is incomplete and limited due to my outsider, insider positionality, and the amount of time I spent in Tundayme.. My individual identity as a young Ecuadorean woman pursuing a degree in the USA, as well as my partnership with *Acción Ecológica*, an Ecuadorean based NGO, clearly influenced how I conducted this research project. In the research process, I was keenly aware of the insider/outsider dichotomy. I was an insider because I grew up in Ecuador, am a Spanish speaker, have traveled to the Amazon before, and am a woman. At the same time, my life experience has been very different from that of the women I interviewed. I grew up in the capital city, in a middle-class household, worlds away from the reality of Tundayme. I am not indigenous, nor do I speak Shuar. I studied and have been trained in the USA by predominantly white critical development scholars. My father is a retired military officer. I have seen up close the perspective of the state wanting to privilege state sovereignty and national security, however, I am very committed to social justice and as an Ecuadorean woman feel very concerned about the future of mining in the country. This is my baggage and it informs and limits, the perspective I bring to this paper.

The other determining factor informing my positionality in this project was the association I had with *Acción Ecológica* (AE). AE is a Quito based NGO, that has been committed to social-environmental justice in Ecuador for over 30 years. AE is known for promoting a radical activist environmentalism. AE's mission is to further defend the wellbeing of the environment and the rights of communities who have been affected by environmental threats. AE has a conflictive

relationship with the Ecuadorean government and on more than one occasion, has been the target of state criticism; In December of 2016, the Ecuadorean government attempted to close AE after accusing AE staff of inciting violence, in their support of the Shuar struggle over territory.

As I conducted my research through AE, I was seen as a part of the organization. In conducting fieldwork I experienced mixed perceptions regarding AE's work in the community. These perceptions vary depending on how community members view and relate to the mine. Importantly, these perceptions often defined who I would and could talk to. The people most willing to talk to me, were women who had worked with AE before. While the women I interviewed were open to talk to me, this was not the case across the board. There were some people and families that would not make eye contact with me and the women I spent my time with told me "It is because you are with us, they don't like us, because they are with the mine." Thus, the types of responses and perspectives represented in this paper are principally anti-mining, thought this too is complex as families can be both pro and at the same time anti-mine.

## **Literature Review:**

This section will review pertinent literature related to the frameworks and the principal concepts that I have used in my analysis of the impact of *Proyecto El Mirador* on the lives of 8 women in Tundayme. I employ a feminist political ecology approach, and begin by examining theories of political ecology in regards to mining and its role in development, notions of territory, and of structural violence. Following, I continue with a discussion on literatures regarding gender and the environment, and the importance of intersectional approaches to better understand the impact of *Proyecto El Mirador* in Tundayme.

## **Political Ecology and Mining:**

Over the past two decades, many scholars have used a political ecology framework to understand the physical and social transformations brought on by large scale extractive projects in Latin America (Bebbington, and Burry 2013; Bebbington et alt. 2008; Moore, and Vasquez 2012; Warnaars 2013). Political ecology is an interdisciplinary field in geography which focuses on the relationship of humans and the environment, and recognizes the environment as inherently political as well as socially mediated (Basset and Zimmerman, 2003). Historically, the relationship between the state, corporations, local communities and the environment, particularly the subsoil, have had a significant role in shaping not only social relations and physical space, but also the political-economy of Latin American nations.

The relationship between mining and development has been a subject of contentious debate among economic development institutions well as political ecologists (Bebbington et alt. 2008). International financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, have continued to push for development through extraction and the restructuring of economies to respond to the needs of foreign investment, with the logic that mining has the potential to foster sustainable development (World Bank, 2017). Many scholars however, contend that mining, along with other extractive activities does not ensure growth, nor good governance. (Acosta, 2009; Auty, 2002; Stiglitz et alt. 2007). There is no question that the relationship between society and the subsoil continues to transform the everyday lives of local people (Bebbington and Burry, 2013) yet, there are varying theories that account for the unequal relationships which extraction has perpetuated in the global south.

These two postures, one promoting mining as a road to development, and the other arguing that mining is detrimental from society and the environment have been at the heart of the

debate for decades. One of the most salient, in understand mining and its relationship to development has been the “resource curse”, which contends that nations with more natural resources will see less economic growth than countries who have far less natural resources (Auyt, 2002). Scholars have gone so far as to say that countries with vast natural resources remain poverty because of the same riches of their subsoil. (Acosta, 2009). Other thinkers however, argue the impact on economic growth and governance in the presence of extraction depends on the conditions under which mining takes place, and have theorized possible ways for nations to have better outcomes while extracting (Stiglitz et alt. 2007). Both the resource curse as well as the recommendations to escape to the curse, have been critiqued as they simplify and normalize the complex multilayer dynamic behind extraction. Lahiri Dutt stresses that the resource curse theory “fails to adjust to the existing inequalities in the current ‘governance’ of resources. [It] does not change the transfer of wealth from communities and does not ameliorate the policy frameworks or relocate decision-making power ” (2006:25) . This theory has been highly contested, and continues to be debated in Latin America and Ecuador as large scale mining arrives to the country.

### **Territory and Mining Conflicts**

When striving to understand social-environmental conflicts, scholars have used a territorial framework, as territory embodies many dimensions of human organization and life: struggles over control, governmentality, access to resources, human rights, the impact on the environment, and the economic gain of this activity (Avci and Fernández-Salvador, 2016; Bebbington and Bury, 2013; Little, 2001; Latorre et alt. 2013; Martínez Alier, 2002; Warnaars, 2013) Ximena Warnaars, defines territory as a “temporal process that is produced by social (power) relations and forms of enclosure and border making that are in part shaped by imaginaries and pre-conceived ideas of

space as well as by understandings of the biophysical environment and the human-nature relationship” (2013: 55). Territorial approaches are particularly powerful as territory encompasses meaning, space and power relations. Warnaars stresses that a territorial approach can be a useful tool in understanding mining conflicts as: 1) mining is an activity which radically transforms the physicality and meaning of space, 2) a territorial approach provides insights in areas of friction, as the struggle over resources is also a struggle over meaning and 3) this approach localizes and contextualizes the effects and dynamics of unequal power relations.

Environmental conflicts have been described as not only a struggle over space but also one over meaning (Martínez Alier, 2002; Ortiz et alt. 2011; Svampa, 2008; Warnaars, 2013). Svampa, highlights that the heart of the conflict around extraction lies within the articulation and definition of territory. She argues that transnational corporations create imaginaries that describe territory as “empty”, or “sacrifiable”<sup>3</sup> in order to justify extraction. At the same time, local communities and resistance movements respond to the companies’ notions, and re-signify their territories as sites of resistance (Avci, and Fernandez-Salvador, 2016). These conflicting meanings over territory give us insight into the multilayered dimensions of conflicts over space, and the divergent cosmovisions and belief systems from which actors operate.

Territory is a powerful tool to contextualize and understand the changes which are taking place in Tundayme. The creation of territory stems from a collective construction of space, which is contingent on a historical, social and political process (Little, 2001). It is crucial to take into account the pre-existing territorial dynamic, as these prior relationships of power will shape the ways in which new event unfold (Warnaars, 2013).

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<sup>3</sup> Sacrifiable environmentally or socially.

## **Violence and Territory**

Johan Galtung (1969) introduced the concept of structural violence as a way of understanding social inequality, and shed light on the ever-present violence perpetuated by institutions which uphold a system which historically benefits some while exploiting others. Murrey re-articulates the theory of structural violence and describes it as embodied, hyper visible, historically rooted, gendered and spatially compounded (2015). She argues that structural violence in the presence of extraction becomes not only more visible but is exacerbated. Peluso and Watts, conceptualize violence as site specific, and contingent on social and historically rooted processes connected to transnational material changes, political power relations and conjunctures (2001: 30). They draw connections between violence and environment, and expose the power that different actors have in their access to resources within a particular political economy.

The acknowledgement of structural violence(s) as site specific, historically rooted, embodied, gendered, and part of the continued transformation of territory allows us to engage in a more explicit discussion about the ways in which Proyecto El Mirador is part of a continuation of historical unequal power relationships that further impact already marginalized peoples.

## **Feminist Political Ecology: Gender and Environment**

Feminist political ecology (FPE), emerged from the tradition of political ecology, however it distinguishes itself for its focus on gender, positionality and intersectionality. Both political ecology and feminist political ecology localize the effects of macro level processes, and expose the way in which axes of difference<sup>4</sup> (race, gender, class, ethnicity, age, geography) determine and shape how humans relate to their environment (Escobar, 2006). Feminist thinkers recognize the environment as socially mediated and have made use of intersectional frameworks (Crenshaw,

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<sup>4</sup> Refers to the ways in which humans are different and hold different amounts of power depending on their identity.

1991) to understand and deconstruct the nature-society relationship, while placing a focus on gender (Colectivo de Acción Psicosocial, 2017; Kaijser and Kronsell 2014; Nagar et alt. 2002; Rocheleau. et alt. 1996; Truelove, 2011). FPE strives to rethink neoliberal extractivism and violence through a process of de-colonial development practices, political ecology and feminism (Rocheleau et alt. 1996)

Gendered power relations permeate all human endeavors and are determined by the social constructs about the feminine and the masculine (Comesaña Santalices, 2004). Women are engendered subjects, who are and have been historically marginalized by patriarchy, and neoliberal and colonial systems, which inform the way in which the environment is transformed and how environmental changes take place (Buechler and Hanson, 2009; Solano, 2014). This patriarchal legacy continues today, as people who are differently sexed do not have access to the same resources, do not receive the same pay for their labor, nor use the same energy and obtain the same outcomes from the environment (Salleh, 2009). The many large-scale development projects invading communities all around the globe produce gendered impacts (Jenkins, 2015). Additionally, women have a particular stake in environmental destruction and the transformations of space, as because of their gender roles they tend to be responsible for maintaining the household and looking after the livelihoods of the next generations (Harcourt and Escobar, 2005).

Mining is not gendered neutral. On the contrary, the impacts of mining fall disproportionately on women's shoulders, particularly on those of indigenous and rural poor women, exposing them to greater levels of violence (Colectivo Psicosocial, 2017 Jenkins, 2015). When concessions for exploitation are granted, cycles of violence unleash upon women: the means by which they sustain themselves becomes limited; the vast presence of men masculinizes the

territory; prostitution and interfamilial violence tend to rise; and women who are part of resistance movements become criminalized (Solano, 2014).

Who has access and control of space and who has the responsibility to maintain a healthy environment for communities? The answers continue to be gendered. Women don't tend to be the decision makers, yet it is women who have the major responsibilities and who provide much of the unrecognized labor to keep families and communities functioning (Solano, 2014). It is important to note that even though there are social hierarchies which limit women's power and access, that is not to say that women have no agency. Communities affected, marginalized and exploited by globalization systems do not accept these processes willingly (Harcourt and Escobar, 2005). Women cannot be reduced to victims; rather they are human beings with agency who deserve equal rights as men and have proven to be in the forefront of grassroots resistance movements globally (Lahiri-Dutt, 2012).

### **Intersectionality:**

While gender significantly shapes women's experiences, it cannot account for all which constitutes them. Women's identities cannot be reduced to gender, as doing invisibilizes the other identities which women embody. Thus, a feminist intersectional approach is imperative when exploring gender dynamic in a context of extraction. Hill Collins defines intersectionality as "the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities" (2015:2). Every human interaction, at a micro level and institutional macro level, is infused with power dynamics which manifest themselves through the identities we carry. As Tundayme is a rural, historically Shuar community and has been subject to various colonization processes, we cannot solely view this problematic through a

gendered lens.

FPE, as well as the broader feminist praxis has been criticized for focusing solely on gender, while engaging and acknowledging other axes of difference too superficially. Scholars like Mollete and Faria (2013) urge FPE to center race, as the racialization of bodies goes hand in hand with the gendering of bodies in shaping social, political, economic and environmental life. The tools which are granted by a deep intersectional engagement, can be useful in combating the de-centering of relevant identities which shape women's experiences.

Women need to be conceptualized not solely in their relationship to men, as their identities are much more complex. Their ethnic identity, age, educational level, race, primary language, place of origin as well as well as their position in regards to transnational structures of power need to accounted for (Yuval-Davis, 1997). To do justice to an intersectional approximation of the experiences of the women in Tundayme, we must expose the national power dynamics which exist within Ecuador as well as the development narratives which have been crafted by the legacy of colonial and patriarchal domination that have benefited from 'othering' peoples from the global south (Dussel 1993; Said, 1979). Since colonial times, race has been central to legal access to resources. Ecuador has been deeply influenced by a racial hierarchy, where the Spanish white bodies have access to resources and services, while black and indigenous bodies do not. This racialized thinking informed the construction of nation states in the nineteenth century and continues to be informed by a violent racist past, which privileges whiteness above indigenous and black peoples. (Beck et alt. 2011; de la Torre 1999)

Systems of racialization have come into being through environmental formations that embody a historical articulation between environmental imaginaries, natural resource allocation and political economies (Sundberg, 2008). Additionally, it is through a racial ideological

construction (Foucault, 1982) that environmental injustices have been and continue to be justified. As we think of the struggle over resources in Latin America, we cannot be blind sighted to the history of colonization and the genocide towards indigenous peoples, the enslavement of black peoples, and the way in which history seems to repeat itself through the continuation of structural violence through neocolonial processes, where again the well-being of indigenous and black people is sacrificed (Machado Araoz, 2012).

Rocheleau describes FPE as a work in progress and hopefully a path to decolonization through reflection and critical thinking. FPE provides tools to elucidate the gendered implications in regards to access and control of resources, as well as to visibilize the interaction of gender with class, race, ethnicity and culture in shaping ecological changes and the struggles that communities have in sustaining healthy livelihoods (2015; Rocheleau et alt. 1996). Additionally, FPE, in hopes of a de-colonial praxis, calls upon researchers to engage in an honest dialogue about the co-creation of knowledge, power dynamics within the research process and an examination of the researcher's positionalities and limitations in their work. This research project strives to humbly follow the powerful lessons of intersectionality that feminists and FPE thinkers offer, while engaging with eight stories of women in Tundayme.

## **Mining in Ecuador**

### **General Overview:**

*Our defeat was always implicit in the victory of others; our wealth has always generated our poverty by nourishing the prosperity of others—the empires and their native overseers. In the colonial and neocolonial alchemy, gold changes into scrap metal and food into poison.* (Eduardo Galeano, 1971, p.16)

The thirst for precious metals is not a new phenomenon in Latin America. Spanish conquistadores conquered the Americas with their minds set on the treasures of the subsoil. In recent decades, however, this thirst has gained new force; extractive industries have flooded national development agendas throughout Latin America. Regardless of political ideology, liberal

and conservative regimes in Latin America, have subscribed to the continuation and expansion of the extractive model which principally includes oil drilling and mining of a variety of minerals (H. Machado, 2012). Ecuador is no exception. With the discovery of oil in the 1960's in the Amazon, Ecuador's economy turned to oil as its main export and motor of the economy (Latorre, 2015).

Today, oil is not the only desired material from the Ecuadorean subsoil. Since the establishment of Rafael Correa's government in 2006, Ecuador has gradually begun a process of transforming itself into a mining country (Acosta, and Caicedo, 2016). While small scale mining has been present for centuries in Ecuador, large scale mining as a *strategical political project* is a new development. Scholars have warned about the negative economic, social and political repercussions of furthering the extractive borders, and question how an extractive model can be in line with the proposed *Buen Vivir* project that the *Citizens Revolution* of this government proposed (Acosta and Caicedo 2016; Chicaiza and Rodriguez Navajos, 2012; Machado, 2013). Even though a significant portion of civil society has manifested its deep concerns through years of resistance to extraction (Latorre, 2015), the Correa administration has managed to open the door not only to mining, but to strategic<sup>5</sup> large-scale open pit mining projects that will be part of a mining districts<sup>6</sup>.

### **A brief history of extraction in Ecuador:**

"The recolonization of our America was tragically marked by different cycles of imperial violence: the extreme violence of terrorism of the seventies, that eliminated with blood and fire the "national populist" attempts for liberation, or at least "peripheral autonomy" rehearsed in previous years; later on the rationalized discipline of the economy of expropriation, that began with the implementation of foreign debt and structural adjustment programs in the eighties and completed with the wave of privatization, opening of markets, financial deregulation and labor flexibilization in the nineties." (Machado Araoz, 2012: 52)

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<sup>5</sup> The five strategic mining projects consist of: 1) El Mirador with an estimate investment of \$1.5 billion, 2) Fruta del Norte with an estimated investment of \$960 million, 3) Rio Blanco with an estimate investment of \$88.8 million, 4) Loma Grande with an estimate investment of \$244 million, and 5) San Carlos Panantza with an estimate investment of \$3 billion. (Ministry of Mining, 2016)

<sup>6</sup> A mining districts refers to an area that is not only specialized in mining, but also has all the infrastructure to support this production. This will include, high quality roads that lead to ports for exports, as well as hydroelectrics to provide the energy needed for the exploitation of materials (Corral, 2014).

Ecuador's extractive history follows on the trajectory Horacio Machado Araoz describes above. While agricultural products such as cacao and bananas were the motor of the economy through the late 19th and 20th century, this economic dynamic shifted once large reserves of oil were found in the amazon region. With the oil boom of the 1970's the Ecuadorean economy began to shift incrementally to rely on the hydrocarbon sector as its main export commodity. The 1980's marked the transition from Keynesian economic models to Neoliberal ones with the objective of creating new structures and processes rooted in free trade, privatization, and a drive to establish globally integrated production and financial systems. The Latin American debt crisis of the 1980s, followed by the implementation of structural adjustment programs, re-configured the relationship between foreign and local governments regarding the extractive sector. Transnational capitalist investment deepened; the market for raw materials increased significantly and geographical inequalities continued to be perpetuated. (Latorre, 2015).

In the 1990's, resistance to extraction, mostly oil drilling, took force as a response to the social environmental impacts these projects had on communities (Orijuela and Thorp, 2012). During this period, various social conflicts in the amazon emerged as oil operations were expanded deeper into indigenous territories, pipelines were constructed, and accumulated impacts of pollution affected communities (Rival, 2012). While indigenous organizing over the defense of their territories began with the discovery of oil, the 90's marked a decade where social movements became powerful actors in the political agenda, making the implementation of neo-liberal policies difficult for the Ecuadorean government (Crabtree and Crabtree Cónedor, 2012). Oil-extraction continues however the implementation of environmental frameworks and regulations around extraction emerged to significantly constrain further drilling.

Mining only emerged as an important extractive activity in Ecuador after 2000, when international prices of minerals increased. In the early 2000's, many concessions were granted within Ecuadorean territory. By 2006, 20% of the Ecuadorean territory was concessioned for mining purposes (Latorre, 2015). The concessioning process was met with resistance by local communities and environmental NGO's. In response increasing act of resistance, the president at that time Alfredo Palacios, decided to stop the most contentious projects in Intag, Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe (Moore and Velásquez, 2012). This political conjuncture coincided with the emergence of *Alianza País*<sup>7</sup>, led by Rafael Correa, and its political platform that assured it would consider a post-extractivist model and work to create a national assembly, reclaim *La Patria*<sup>8</sup>, and reconstruct the social pact between the state and the population (Latorre, 2015).

The prevailing neoliberal ideology was significantly challenged and “transformed” by *Alianza País*'s nationalist, social justice discourse which promoted *Buen Vivir*, a concept based on the notion of Sumak Causai<sup>9</sup> (Secretaría de Planificación y Desarrollo, 2013). However, for some this rhetoric was a rebranding of the same old extractive narratives as the intention to promote large scale mining became clear (Dávalos and Albuja, 2014). The Correa administration justifies the expansion of mining as a means to achieve *buen vivir*, providing economic resources to support social welfare initiatives such as health care and education (Corral, 2014). In other words, for the state to accomplish its social in needed to turn to mining in order to fund its ambitious social agenda. Evidently this model has many contradictions. The effects of mining do not align with the concept of *Buen Vivir* as mining practices are not in balance with nature, they dispossess people of their land and homes, affecting livelihoods and jeopardizing cultures.

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<sup>7</sup> Political Party which emerged with the presidential candidacy of Rafael Correa.

<sup>8</sup> The nation

<sup>9</sup> An indigenous concept about a way to live life that is in harmony with nature, and honors the lives of all beings, supporting them with the basic elements to live a good life. (Secretaría de Planificación y Desarrollo, 2013)

## Tundayme and Proyecto Minero El Mirador

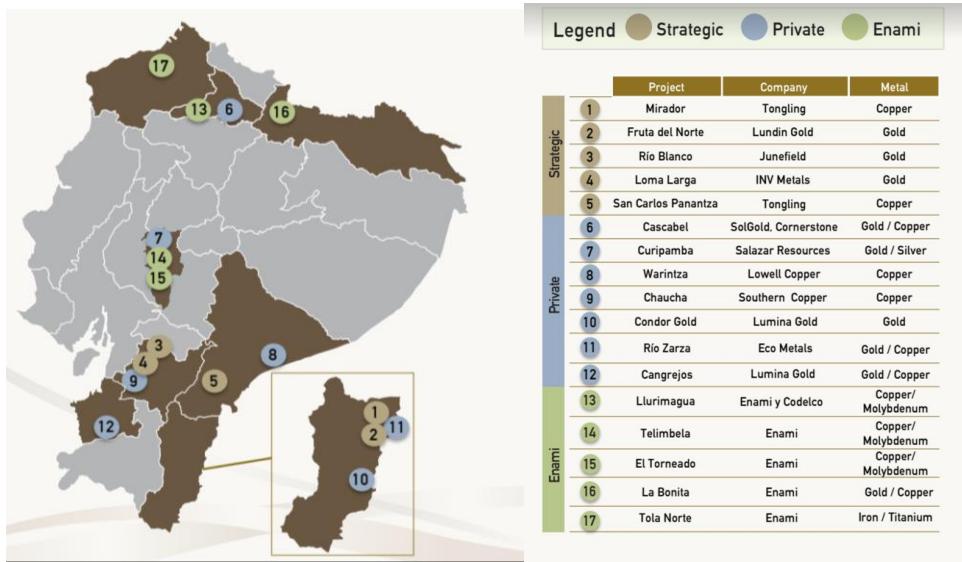


Figure 1. Map of Mining projects in Ecuador (Ministry of Mining, 2016)



Figure 2. Map Zamora Chinchipe- Tundayme (El Universo, 2014)

### Proyecto El Mirador

Proyecto el Mirador, the 10,000 hectare Chinese mining operation, is one of five *strategic* projects in Ecuador's Plan for *Buen Vivir* (2013-2017). *Proyecto El Mirador* was the first of five mega-mining projects to be approved and therefore, it holds particular significance as an example

of what a ‘responsible mining’ project could look like<sup>10</sup>. This project is also emblematic because its location was the scenario for the Ecuadorian-Peruvian war in the (1993-1995). The concession is in the middle of the bi-national park El Condor<sup>11</sup>, on the Ecuador-Peru border in the south-eastern part of the country, and home of the Shuar peoples for centuries<sup>12</sup>.

The project was originally owned by Corriente Resources, a medium sized Canadian company, which in 1999 created its Ecuadorian extension *Ecua-Corrientes S.A.* (ECSA). On December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010, *Corriente Resources* sold *Ecua-Corriente S.A.* to the Chinese public company called *China Tongling Nonferrous Metals Group Holdings Co. Ltd.* and *China Tailway Construction Corporation Limited*. On March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012 ECSA signed its first contract with the Ecuadorian government to begin the exploitation phase. The company estimates a production of a total of 208,800 tons of copper over a period of 17 years, exploiting 24 h/365 days per year (Chicaiza and Rodrigues Labájos, 2012).

The *parroquia*<sup>13</sup> of Tundayme, lies in the middle of the concession of Proyecto El Mirador. This small community is part of the *cantón*<sup>14</sup> El Pangui in the province of Zamora Chinchipe and its estimated population is 2000 people. Tundayme is comprised of 5 different communities: Tundayme, San Marcos, Churuvia, El Valle del Quimi, and Yanua Kim. This territory was home to the Shuar prior to the arrival of the Spanish in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and even prior to the arrival of the Incas. By mid 20<sup>th</sup> century outsiders began arriving to the territory, initially military and religious congregations, followed by *campesinos* and *kichwa* highland migrants who saw better opportunities for their families in this region. The arrival and colonization of Shuar territory by

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<sup>10</sup> Rafael Correa has carried out a discourse of mega as responsible claiming that the last technologies will prevent the country from undergoing environmental and social destruction.

<sup>11</sup> Established once the war between Peru and Ecuador ended in 1995.

<sup>12</sup> One of the 14 recognized native nations of Ecuador.

<sup>13</sup> Parish

<sup>14</sup> District

outsiders was the beginning of vast change that has only been magnified by the arrival of mining.



**Figure 3. Map of Tundayme once Mining Operations Begin (Presidencia del Ecuador 2009)**



**Figure 4. Map of Tundayme prior to the mining operations. (Presidencia del Ecuador 2009)**

#### **History of the Territory:**

The history of the Cordillera del Condor is one of colonization, dispossession, invisibilization, war, and resistance (Colectivo psychosocial, 2017). The story begins with the arrival of the Shuar people; there is no precise information about when this took place, however, it is known that the Shuar peoples were well established once the Incan empire began to expand. The Shuar are

characterized as warrior people because they resisted domination by the Incas and later by the Spaniards. Additionally, they fought side by side with the Ecuadorean army during the *La Guerra del Cenepa* , (1993-1995) a war in which their role was considered decisive in the victory of Ecuador over Peru.

For several centuries, this region of the Cordillera was inhabited solely by the Shuar people. The earliest documents of land ownership reveal a Shuar family was the first to legitimately own the territory (Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos, 2014 ) however, the notion of private property was not part of the Shuar cosmovision. As Shuar communities did not hold land titles officially recognized by the state, by mid of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the government declared large portions of the territory as *terrenos baldíos*<sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, agrarian reform programs distributed land to other indigenous peoples or *campesinos* who were not from the area.

In the 1950's life in the Cordillera began to change as more people arrived to the territory. *Campesino* families arrived first as part of colonization schemes. In 1957 the Salesian mission built a church and a school meant exclusively to teach indigenous children. In 1958 a military encampment was created and named "Tundaymi". As the years went by, what was once solely Shuar territory began to morph into an array of diverse communities. With the arrival of other communities into Shuar territory, land disputes became frequent, as the process of land distribution and titling was not clear and the Shuar people were not included in such decisions.

In addition to tensions over territory within national borders, there have been historical conflicts with Peru over borders. The conflict between Peru and Ecuador began in 1941, when Peru annexed to their territory a large portion of the Amazon that had once been Ecuador. The conflict between the bordering nations escalated between the years of 1993-1995, and violent confrontations took

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<sup>15</sup> Empty land.

place. In 1995 the Ecuadorean Army along with the Shuar Peoples won the war, leading to the final signing of peace with Peru in 1999. Since then, the Shuar peoples have been remembered as the *Heroes del Cenepa*, however, what remains unsaid frequently is that Shuar peoples from both brothers were placed to fight against each other (Ling, 2017).

Prior to the arrival mining, there was already a history of tension, war, and colonization in Tundayme. As mining companies enter communities, they further complicate existing territorial disputes and dynamics. However, the introduction of extractive industries is infused with a further power imbalance where the consent of local communities was completely neglected, and there was no space for negotiation.

### **The mine arrives:**

After 2002 the mine's presence was strongly felt, as families and communities were displaced to make room for the mine. The initial process of the selling and buying land displaced people in the area in a gradual manner. The *Contraloría General del Estado*<sup>16</sup> found that in 2003 the ECSA had hired *comisionistas* (land agents), who coerced the community members to sell their land at very low prices (US\$400 -\$600 per hectare when the land had a market rate of at least \$1000 per hectare). The *comisionistas* told the community the land they were buying would be used for agricultural purposes and it was not until 2006 that the communities learned the land would be used to establish a mine (Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos, 2014).

One of the town most affected was San Marcos, a town that has literally disappeared. Until 2003, there were nineteen families living in the area. Gradually ECSA did 'business' with all the families and eventually they were all forced to leave in order for the company to build the camp to house the workers. At the same time, there were also cases of forced displacement; the most

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<sup>16</sup> The General Accounting Office of the State

salient case is that of Rosario Wari, a Shuar elder. Workers burned her house to the ground and forced her and her son to leave immediately. Rosario did not hold a legal title to the property though she and her family had lived here for generations.

Approximately 49 families reached out to the Ministry of Environment to complain that the company had taken advantage of their naiveté, and had pressured them psychologically to sell their land. They argued that their lands had been sold legally but not legitimately (Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos, 2014). The families (peasant farmers) asked the state to intervene with no results. The families decided they would give up their land if they could relocate, but the company did not respond nor acknowledge their demand.

In 2014 the former residents from San Marcos and members of nearby communities, symbolically came together as they used to, celebrate *Las Fiestas de San Marcos* on March 26th. Two months later the mining company, backed by 50 men in uniforms destroyed the school, and the church of San Marcos. Though these communal spaces were no longer in use, for the people it represented a symbolic loss.

As a response to the displacement and the gradual loss of San Marcos, the community was rebuilt on land donated by the community organization of Cascomi<sup>17</sup>. The *Viejo San Marcos* used to be the biggest town in the area and was a gathering place for all the communities' festivities and celebrations. Cascomi and the broader community were highly invested in working together to nurture a space that would be similar to the *Viejo San Marcos*. Cascomi authorities distributed plots of land mostly to young couples who did not have land to establish a home, but in general to people who were landless (Colectivo de Investigación y Acción Psicosocial, 2015). The *Nuevo San Marcos* was a place of hope. Many young couples had saved up what they could to build

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<sup>17</sup> Comunidad Amazónica de Acción Social Cordillera del Cónedor Mirador/ Amazon Community for Social Action in the Cordillera del Condor.

homes. Residents also invested time and energy in building together a new church, school, community garden, and soccer field.

In 2015, Cascomi residents travelled to Quito to present a preventative measure to protect the new community from being affected by the *Ley de Servidumbre*<sup>18</sup>. Later that year the Judge from the *Unidad Judicial de Violencia contra la Mujer y la Familia*<sup>19</sup>, denied their request (Colectivo de Investigación y Acción Psicosocial, 2015). On September 30<sup>th</sup>, *El Nuevo San Marcos*, was bulldozed.

From this brief overview of the history of the territory of the Cordillera del Cónedor we can appreciate that it has been characterized by territorial disputes, that have extended from nation conflicts between indigenous peoples, the state and rural compassion people, to international wars over borders, to most recently transnational mining conflicts. It is imperative to recognize that in most of these conflicts the Shuar people's have continued to be the most impacted and marginalized and, in the name of other 'national' interests.

## **Women in Tundayme**

This research project is centered on women's experience living in the presence of mining. I use their stories to both highlight and explore how mining shapes their physical movement and social relationships. I refer to this as physical and social space. The stories presented here do not have a specific format or structure. I have done this purposefully in order to share these stories as authentically as possible. I strive to remain as true to their actual words, and use storytelling practice rather than directly insert my analysis. Therefore, all these stories ask the reader to understand their experience on their own terms. First I present a brief biography of the different

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<sup>18</sup> The Ley de Servidumbre refers to a law which establishes that privately own land can be legally taken away for citizens if the state deems this necessary for the well-being of the rest of the country. The law suggests people who are disposed from their land should be remunerated, or relocated accordingly.

<sup>19</sup> Judicial Aparatus Against Violence towards Women and Families.

women. Second are the stories of Mariela, Catalina and Emilia, which are woven together to tell the broader story of displacement in San Marcos. Third are the stories of three sisters Daniela, Olivia and Carmen who have experienced and understand the changes in Tundayme in different ways. Fourthly, is the story of Alma, a Shuar women who is also a community organizer. Finally, there is a section dedicated to Rosario Wari's story and experiences in the territory.

## **Introductions**

### ***Mariela:***

Mariela is 24 and was born in El Valle del Quimi. She, her husband and their toddler moved to San Marcos when Cascomi was giving land to young couples to create the *Nuevo San Marcos*. While living in San Marcos, she participated in collective *mingas*<sup>20</sup> to build a new school, a new church and a soccer field for this community of mostly young families. On September 30<sup>th</sup> of 2015, she and her family were forcefully displaced. She describes the event as a nightmare.

### ***Catalina***

Catalina has lived in la Cordillera del Condor for over 30 years. At 19, she moved to El Valle del Quimi, where she raised her 4 children. Three of her children, including Mariela, were displaced during the events on September 30<sup>th</sup>. The mining company offered to buy Catalina's *finca*<sup>21</sup> on several occasions, but Catalina refused, because the amount of money they offered was too little and wouldn't afford her another plot of land..

### ***Emilia***

Emilia is 19 years old and currently lives with her mother Janet in Tundayme. She was born in Gualaquiza, 34 km to the north but has lived in Tundayme since age 11. She has a 4-year-

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<sup>20</sup> Minga is a word of quechua origin which describes a coming together of community members to carry forth a particular activity like building a road, cleaning the street, building a house ect.

<sup>21</sup> Finca is the commonplace word to describe the plot of land which people own that generates income in some way.

old daughter and a partner who she calls *marido*. She and her family used to live in San Marcos, in a house they had built together before they were displaced. After being displaced, they found no other alternative than to go to Janet's house, where she and her *marido* must pay rent. Emilia barely leaves the house for safety concerns and feels not only sad, unsafe and frustrated but also bored.

***Daniela, Olivia and Carmen:***

Daniela, Olivia and Carmen are sisters. Their stories have points of convergence, as well as of difference. Their mother Elisa was originally from Churuvia, a Shuar community that is on the other side of the Río Quimi. Their father Jaime, is mestizo and originally from Lago Agrio. The eldest sister Carmen is 35, and was the only one born in Churuvia. When Carmen was still very young her parents moved to Lago Agrio where Daniela and Olivia were born. They returned to Cheruvia when Daniela was 1, Olivia was 10 and Carmen was 13. Elisa fell ill and passed away and , Jaime found a job in the company. This was 16 years ago, when the company was barely entering the exploration phase.

***Alma***

Alma is a 39-year-old Shuar woman, who has lived in the Cordillera del Cónedor since birth and her ancestors have been in the area for as long as she can trace back her lineage. She is originally from the Viejo San Marcos, the town that was destroyed by the corporation to build its camp years ago. She now lives in the Shuar community of Yanua Kim with her husband and 12 children. Alma feels that to live and work in the Amazon as a woman is not easy. She is very vocal and feels unafraid of fighting for her land, as she feels it is her right to do so. “To live and work here in the Amazon as woman is not easy. Before it was easier. We could hunt and plant our crops. Now the reality is different.”

### **September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015: Dispossession and Displacement from San Marcos**

“The authorities never came to notify anyone. There were just seven families here that day. It all happened so fast, it felt like there was no way of stopping them. They destroyed everything and then put a sign of private property over what used to be our community.”

*Emilia*

#### ***Mariela***

Mariela was one of the young couples who obtained land in the *Nuevo San Marcos*, where she and her partner built their house and were living with their child. On September 30<sup>th</sup> 2015, without any prior notification, her family had to leave everything behind. She describes this day as a horror story.

Mariela woke up that day around 5:30am due to the sound of the machines and the arrival of vast numbers of policemen. As they arrived, the police took the task of banging on people's doors waking everyone up, telling every family they had to leave that day, because the *Ley de Servidumbre* gave the rights of that land to the company. All the people were in shock, but the machines did not give them time to recover. All the families went into survival mode: moving as many of their things as they could to the street to salvage them before the machines came towards their homes. Mariela said that during that the process of displacement the police and the workers, were very aggressive and disrespectful. “They were rude and aggressive no matter if they were dealing with women or children”

Mariela remembers at least 200 police officers as well as mine workers and guards. “They outnumbered us by far. We could only follow orders.” Mariela called her mom and family to find support, however, others with families in Gualaquiza could not call for support as the police had blocked the road. “It was awful, the workers just wanted to get the job done. They didn’t care if they destroyed all our belonging along the way”.

#### ***Catalina***

On September 30th 2015, Catalina began the day making breakfast for her family. She was serving the coffee when she suddenly got a call from her daughter Mariela who said: “Mami you have to come and help us. The police are here to displace everyone in San Marcos, and they are already destroying our gardens”. Catalina left El Valle del Quimi and headed towards San Marcos on the first *turno*<sup>22</sup> she could. When she arrived, she encountered a devastating scene. The workers were making holes in the ground to bury the houses after bringing them down with bulldozers. She also remembers the police far outnumbering the people that lived in the community.

Catalina asked the police for the legal permit that stated they could do this, but they had no permit, nor did the workers or the guards. The man she spoke to responded that the person with the official order was coming later. Catalina wanted to argue, but she felt it made no sense to do so. Catalina began helping her daughter take all her belongings to the street. They needed to take the house apart, board by board with the hopes of rebuilding her daughter's home somewhere. By noon, the workers and the police grew impatient, saying “You have ten minutes. We need to see all these houses down by then”.

Catalina was in dismay. She grabbed a rock, and went towards the police and workers to tell them there was no way she would let them destroy her children's houses before taking them apart. “*Acaso son Gallinazos?*<sup>23</sup> We are poor and you are leaving us with nothing.” Somehow they agreed to the request. “The day ended with all my daughter's things on the street including the boards that used to make up her home. She lost her chickens and her crops. The next task was to figure out what to do from here?”

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<sup>22</sup> Turnos are referred to the buses that bring people back and forth to Gualajiza and El Valle del Quimi. They come every 2 hours.

<sup>23</sup>“Are you vultures?” expression used to describe someone that is willing to take and benefit from the most poor or vulnerable.

### *Emilia*

It was 5 AM, Emilia was making breakfast for her husband who was about to leave to work in his mother's *finca*. She saw the police arrive and the machines approach the town. The police knocked on her door and told her: "You have to leave today. You are now on the company land." She and her husband immediately questioned them because they knew this land was legally theirs. But the police and workers mocked them and said "You have been foolish to have built your home on this territory."

The police began to force people out of their homes and the workers started to destroy crops and gardens. Next, they began to dig holes on the ground to bury the houses with the bulldozer. Emilia said they had no shame in destroying anything that was in their path. However, some of the workers were neighbors that live in other communities nearby. One worker who knew Emilia told her "mija I am so sorry, this breaks my heart but I need to feed my family too, so I need to follow orders." Emilia and her family didn't eat that day: they just focused on saving whatever they could. That day she lost her chickens, her garden, her home and the amount of independence that she had struggled to gain.

### **"What do we do from here?"**

### *Mariela*

After September 30<sup>th</sup>, Mariela and her partner were forced to move back with their parents, bringing many changes in Mariela's life. She does not have a home nor space she can claim her own; She has to depend on the work opportunities that her family members can provide; she feels uncertain and anxious about the future; and she has a vast list of safety concerns. The future is one of her biggest concerns. Her mind is constantly thinking about the possibility of being displaced again. When she was displaced, there was no warning so she fears someday the company workers

and bulldozers will come with the sun to El Valle del Quimi. “If they do, there is no other place we can go to.”

For her mental, physical and emotional health, Mariela has decided to avoid Tundayme altogether. Despite her isolation, she prefers this rather than to see what is taking place in Tundayme. She says the effects of the mine are everywhere. “Here, we are still protected, but we know the effects and consequences of the mine will come here too.”

### ***Emilia***

Emilia feels lied to and betrayed by the company. The company promised to relocate the families which had been affected, but that promise was never kept. “There was no recognition that they took it all from us.”

With some boards from his mother’s finca, Emilia’s husband built a room underneath the house of Emilia’s mother Jacky. Jacky agreed to have them in her property but with a set of conditions. One was that they had to pay rent. “My mom did this so that my husband would be more responsible. Both of them still fight with each other a lot.”

Emilia and her husband have applied to work in the company but they have never heard back. She thinks this is because they have participated with Cascomi. She says that “if you ever organized against them, or worked with Cascomi they will never give you a chance”. Her husband currently works cutting wood in random fincas near El Valle del Quimi. For a month or so Emilia attempted to create a restaurant from her mother’s home, mostly for the workers of the mine. However, very few people came so she was not able to sustain this project. Emilia has strived to find ways of contributing to the household income but this has not been easy. Her family currently depends mostly on her partner’s income. She feels frustrated with this fact. In the past, she was

able to raise animals and harvest food, so today not only does she not have her own financial resources but she finds herself feeling bored and sad.

Emilia feels constricted by the space she lives in. The space is very small and she rarely leaves the house because of safety concerns. One day when she left her house someone broke in. Since then she decided she would not leave the house unattended. Additionally she worries about walking around alone mostly during the night time. “There are so many people who we don’t know anymore. We used to know everyone. We don’t know what people are capable of doing.”

When Emilia lived in San Marcos, she also spent a lot of her time hickens in her house however “It was different to be there.” She had garden, cand *cuyes*<sup>24</sup> to look after. She feels this would be impossible to do at her mom’s house. Since her relationship with her mom is unstable, she fears they might be kicked out of the space again so, she does not attempt to live her life the way she used to. What she has not given up has been her *cuyes*. She built a little wood barn for them so she can sell and eat them.

Emilia and her partner have encountered several economic challenges. “It has been hard to survive and it is awful to have to be *mendigando*<sup>25</sup>.” In addition to these concerns Emilia and her marido have had a plethora of complications in their relationship. As their life circumstances got harder, their relationship became less healthy. Her partner cheated on her and began visiting the brothel frequently. “I sometimes tell my husband when I am cooking dinner: “I wonder what would have happen if we were still in San Marcos. Things would have been better. We didn’t fight, we didn’t have to pay rent, maybe you wouldn’t have cheated on me.””

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<sup>24</sup> Guineapigs

<sup>25</sup> Begging

### **Three sisters from Churuvia and Tundayme**

Each of the following stories sheds lights on the complexities of living near a mine. Daniela, Olivia and Carmen are sisters, yet their perspectives and life experiences are not homogeneous. All three women have indirectly benefited economically from the mine, however their positions regarding the mine do not fall into a binary of good or bad. They have benefited but they also recognize the negative impacts on the community and themselves.

#### ***Daniela:***

Daniela is 24. She has a four-year-old child with her husband Jorge, who has worked in the mine for several years. They sustain themselves economically from the income that comes in from Jorge's salary, while Daniela works at home taking care of their child as well as cooking and cleaning.

Daniela arrived to Tundayme when she was very young and has seen to what extent the mine, as well as her community has changed over the years. Daniela and her family live in a house in the middle of Tundayme, with her sister Olivia and her children. The house originally belonged to their father Carlos, who bought the property and built the house years ago using his salary from the mining company.

Daniela has indirectly "benefited" from the company. She and her family depend on the income that her partner receives from the mine; when she was younger her father sustained their family by working in the mine. However, Daniela is not content with the mine nor the changes it has brought to Tundayme. She is frustrated with all the false promises of the company and is very concerned about the safety of women in Tundayme; she does not feel a sense of belonging anymore and she feels that "*Tundayme se está yendo a la perdición*".<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Tundayme is in a state of decay.

The mining company had promised to create jobs for men and women. Although the company does hire a lot of local men, women have been left behind. The few job openings for women have been filled by women who are not from the area. The company had also promised to expand and support the health center and the school, however, Daniela feels there is no progress in these areas of her community. Though the health center has expanded, they are not open frequently and they do not offer quality service so many families decide to go to Gualاقiza for their health care.

Besides Daniela's frustration with these failed promises, she is sad because of the way in which the space around her is transforming. Most of the territory around her has been privatized, so she feels that everything outside of her house is *ajeno*<sup>27</sup>. She cannot walk freely because now the territory has "private property" signs everywhere. Additionally she feels scared by the vast number of unknown men around. During the weekends and especially at night, there tends to be many drunk men around the town. Daniela has opted for staying at home as much as she can to avoid any issues.

As the number of outsider men has increased so drastically, other changes have also taken place. Even before the mine finished constructing their encampment for the workers, a brothel had popped up. Daniela says this has destroyed many local families. In addition to the brothel many more liquor stores and discos emerged. She has also noticed that people use drugs in addition to alcohol. "Before you never saw thing like this in Tundayme. Now are kids are growing up with different influences."

***Olivia:***

Olivia arrived to Tundayme at the age of ten. Some of her most impactful childhood memories are here; therefore she feels her life story is rooted in Tundayme. After her mother died,

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<sup>27</sup> Expression to describe something which is not yours.

Olivia, became the caregiver for her younger siblings. Despite her household responsibilities, Olivia was always very perseverant, graduating from high school and studying accounting for a couple of months; Although she strived to finish her University studies, she did not have the economic means to do so. Olivia currently has four children, aged one, nine, twelve and fifteen. After her husband died 5 years ago, more challenges arose in her life. Not only does she have to care for her children and the chores of the household, she also is the breadwinner of the home.

In order to provide for her children, Olivia currently works in a Chinese restaurant where she earns minimum wage and has no legal health or retirement benefits.<sup>28</sup> . Olivia, however is glad she has a stable income for now, as the job opportunities available for women are very scarce. “The mine is the main employer here, but they have jobs for men not for women. Outside of the mine there was also been growth. There is not a lot more money moving, but it does not support local people, people from outside have come to create business that benefit from the mines presence local people at the most are employed but not business owners.” Olivia however is concerned about her job. Every six months they let people off and keep only a few. She was going to find out the next day if they were going to keep her or not.

Olivia lives in her father’s house, because having her own space would require sacrificing the resources she directs to her children’s education and well-being. Still, Olivia had wanted to move out and envisioned moving to the *Nuevo San Marcos* where she received land from Cascomi. Olivia kept a garden there but was hesitant to move because she had heard from her father that there were rumors in the company that people might be displaced. “I am a single woman, I had the option to build my own house to live with my children and that possibility was taken away. I have nothing now, my plants were destroyed so I have to continue to live in the house of my father.”

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<sup>28</sup> Full time workers must be ensured to the IESS in Ecuador.

Safety is another very significant concern in Olivia's life. She feels there is no safety for women in Tundayme, and especially worries about her 14-year-old daughter Camila. Both of them experience catcalling everyday by mine workers and Camila has already been a victim of harassment. Olivia's sister's husband, a worker from the mine, drinks and does drugs. One day he arrived to the house very drunk and entered Camila's room and began to touch her. Camila immediately left the room. She was able to escape but since then Camila shares her room with her two younger brothers as a form of protection.

Olivia feels that alcohol and drug consumption has skyrocketed and she worries about the impacts this has on younger generations. One day Olivia got a call from the school teacher who said she was concerned about Camila and her son Julian, saying that they had "been acting strange". Olivia later found out that Julian had been sniffing glue, and that Camila had been using other drugs. "I cannot blame the company for the changes in Tundayme, but since they arrived Tundayme has more drugs, alcohol and I have seen how it has affected my children directly".

Olivia has been very involved with Cascomi since it was created in the early 2000's. She has done this because so she feels "as a mother, a woman I need to look out for my children's future." Many community members and workers from the mine have shamed her for the work she does with Cascomi. "They say we are making the community look bad and being foolish but I just let them know that I am involved with Cascomi in name of mother earth, we live because of her, and without her we won't be able to breathe." Olivia hopes Cascomi can manage to win at least the small battles, because the big ones like getting rid of the mine look very far from reach. She is certain that the mine won't leave until it has extracted all that it can.

"People have become selfish and grown more divided. If people work for the mine, they look down on those who don't." Olivia is sad to see how divided her community had become over

the presence of the mine. She remembers Tundayme and all the communities around were very united but since the growth of the mine the tensions have just gotten worse. There is conflict within and between families. Olivia has had strong confrontations within her family. Her father, who has worked in the mine for more than 16 years, is in favor of the company. Olivia has tried to explain to him she is not against the company itself but all the pollution which is coming from the company, and the lack of respect for the people who were here before. Her father like many other workers, is convinced that the technology the company will use will save the community from environmental damage.

***Carmen:***

Though Carmen, the eldest of the sisters was born in Tundayme, she has lived much of her life in other areas of Ecuador. She left Tundayme when she was a teenager to study to be a seamstress in El Pangui and at 17, she moved to Loja to work. Carmen, now married and with three children has recently moved back to Tundayme after her husband got a job in the mining company and to make ends meet, she began working in the Chinese restaurant with her sister Olivia. During the school year, her children have had to live on their own in Gualaquiza, since Carmen does not think the school in Tundayme is as good.

Carmen feels Tundayme has changed a lot from what she can remember. She thinks it has grown in positive ways, but is also concerned with the injustices that are perpetuated by the mine. “The school seems to be better now, the roads are paved and there are more jobs for people.” However, Carmen notes that Tundayame strongly depends on the mine now in way that might not be just for all. “There is more work available in Tundayme however, if you don’t work for the mine there is nothing else for you here. You would have to eventually leave” Carmen remembers

that in the past her family members used to hunt, gather and grow crops to sustain themselves.

Now these activities are no longer possible.

Carmen shares the safety concerns of the other women. “During the day it is fine because you don’t see many men on the street, but at night it is more dangerous. We cannot trust people we don’t know. If you are a woman, we always have to go out with someone, we cannot just go out on our own.” Carmen told us she had heard that the reason why the brothel appeared was to protect the local women from sexual violence.

In terms of the environmental destruction, Carmen says that company tells workers they will fix damages to the environment with the advanced technology that they have however she thinks, “that is not possible and everyone knows it.” Carmen is concerned that the mine cannot co-exist with other traditions and ways of creating livelihoods. She is sad for the people that have to adapt to the lifestyle of the mine because they saw no other option. “People have had to assimilate. If they don’t work for the mine how will they feed their families? I do wonder what would happen if the company fires people. If they do that they really put people in vulnerable positions. People would have to leave.”

### **“Shuar Significa Tronco”<sup>29</sup>**

#### ***Alma***

Alma lives in the Shuar community of Yanua Kim. Alma is originally from *El Viejo San Marcos*, but moved to Yanua after she got married to Mauricio. When San Marcos was destroyed and her relatives’ homes were expropriated, she cried. All the places she grew up around, and the land where her ancestors are buried was not only inaccessible but she felt like it was erased.

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<sup>29</sup> One of the meanings of Shuar, is tree trunk. We were told by Alma, that Shuar means tree trunk, which means the Shuar do not leave their land, just like a tree, they bear their fruit right by the place they were born.

As far as Alma can trace her ancestry, her roots are in the Cordillera del Condor. She feels very frustrated with the government's policies which allow foreign companies to take and destroy her and her ancestors' land. She and her husband are community organizers who strive to defend the rights of their people. This journey has not been easy or simple for them. They realize the stakes are very high and after seeing what happened to Jose Tendetza<sup>30</sup> the fear of criminalization or death became more significant.

During the electoral campaign of 2006, Alma voted and supported Rafael Correa because he had an anti-mining platform and the rhetoric he used advocated for the wellbeing of indigenous people. Alma is not satisfied with the lack of accountability from the authorities to follow through on what they initially promised.

“The government treats us like little animals, but they don’t know how challenging it is to be women in the amazon. He [Rafael Correa] refers to us as insignificant cuatro pelagatos<sup>31</sup> that are making noise. He [Rafael Correa] lies that technology will be the key to save us from destruction and pollution. He is supposed to be educated but that idea is ignorant.”

Alma is frustrated with the way in which the company invisibilizes the negative impacts the mine has brought to her community. The company has affirmed in the past that the communities in the territory have agreed to the plans of the company, however, there was never a process of free and informed consent. Additionally, on several occasions the company posted on Facebook and created short videos presenting Alma’s community as more “developed” due to jobs the mine generates.

“But in what way have our life conditions improved? What have they given us? A week ago they flooded our community and a couple of months ago they destroyed all my crops. How can they have the decency to say they are contributing to our wellbeing?”

Yanua Kim lies on the banks of the Tundayme river. This river has been polluted by the construction material from the company, and is not safe to come into contact with its waters.

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<sup>30</sup> Jose Tendetza was a Shuar leader who fought for the rights of the Shuar territory. In 2014 he was killed by workers from the mining company. There has yet been no accountability on this case.

<sup>31</sup> Expression which has been commonly used by Rafael Correa to diminish Environmental activists referring to them as very few in numbers.

Fifteen days before we interviewed Alma, Yanua Kim was flooded, with the water from the river because the company was taking the sand from its banks for construction purposes. The community remained flooded for 3 days and they fear it will continue to happen as the banks which protected them have become weaker.

On May 13 2016, the company workers of Simar, a subcontractor company, arrived to the community of Yanua with machinery, attempting to enter the area where women from the community had planted their crops. Alma along with other women from the community came out to stand in front of the machines with sticks and rocks. Most of the men had gone to hunt, or work in El Pangui. As the women were so persistent and refused to move, a couple of hours later a number of engineers and lawyers arrived to try to convince the women to go home. They offered the women \$100 dollars, but they all refused to take the money. “What is \$100 compared to the land our ancestors have passed down to us? How would I be able to feed myself and my family for the rest of my life with \$100?” The machines left that afternoon and the women returned exhausted to their homes. The next day when Alma left early to sell her crops in the market of El Pangui, she returned to find that the workers had come in the middle of the night and had destroyed all the crops.

Alma’s crops were one of the main sources of income for Alma and her family. Losing this source of income presented a difficult challenge. In the past Alma and her family used to hunt, fish and take care of the crops in order to sustain themselves. Today, all of these activities are impossible, due to the privatization of the land around them as well as the pollution of the rivers. Her husband refuses to work for the mining company because of his ethics, so he must go to El Pangui to find construction jobs or any kind of manual work he can. Alma says now they depend

solely on his income and it is very hard, because he might make \$20 or \$30 dollars every now and then, and this is not enough to sustain themselves.

Alma cannot live the same way her great grandparents lived and she worries that her culture is becoming even weaker with the newer generations. “Many members of our community have opted to work for the mine, but they are foolish. The mine won’t give them work forever and once they are left with no work, they will realize that the land is what gives us life.” Additionally she fears the company will destroy the sacred waterfalls of her peoples. Alma feels a great sense of loss, not only because her life circumstance have become more challenging, but because she feels her culture as a whole is being harmed.

Alma feels the government has once again failed the Shuar people and is doing more harm than good. She does not feel, nor represented heard additionally, she feels targeted. “There are military and police but they don’t come to protect us.” Alma told us that mine workers would pass by taking pictures of people and giving strong looks of disapproval especially if there were outsiders visiting. After the murder of Jose Tendetza, people from her community became more fearful. However, Alma feels committed and is not afraid because she feels she has the right to this land. “We are the owners of the Amazon, how is it that the Chinese people can come and prohibit our entry to our land? In this struggle I am not afraid. Why would I if I am sitting on my ancestors land.”

## **Rosario**

Rosario Wari, is a 107 year old Shuar elder. She is the oldest person who was born and raised in the area Tundayme and is still alive to tell her story. She was alive when this area was inhabited only by the Shuar people; when the Salesian missionaries arrived to convert the Shuar people to Catholicism; when mestizo *colonos* arrived seeking land as part of state sponsored

colonization schemes linked to the agrarian reform; when the military arrived and built a base to protect the national territory from Peru; when the war between Ecuador and Peru broke out in these mountains; and when the minerals beneath her ancestral land began to stir the interests of the investors. Since Rosario is 107 years old, her memory is blurry and remembering the past is not easy. My research partner and I had the privilege to talk to Rosario about her memories and feelings, doing this with the help of one of her grandchildren Julia, who translated for us as Rosario does not speak Spanish and we do not speak Shuar. Additionally, we talked to a number of her children and grandchildren who shared more stories about the life of Rosario as well as the Shuar people from this territory.

Rosario was born and raised in the Cordillera del Condor. All her ancestry is rooted in this area; her parents and grandparents are buried in different parts of the mountains of the Cordillera del Condor and she learned the stories of her ancestors who also inhabited these mountains. She remembers that during her childhood everyone she was exposed to was Shuar and it was not until she was an adult that she came into contact with non-Shuar people. Rosario learned all she knew from her parents and grandparents and has strived to pass down as much knowledge and wisdom as she could to the younger generations.

Rosario married and had eight children. She was one of two wives. Rosario and Claudia, the other wife, lived and raised their children in the same house in the *Viejo San Marcos*. They were friends and kept each other company after their husband died and their children grew up and moved on to take care of their own families. Claudia died several years after their husband did and at that time Mariano, one of Rosario's sons moved in with her. They have kept each other company ever since.

Rosario was described by her children and grandchildren as a powerful and magical human being. They remembered her in her younger years as a strong independent woman who was unafraid. One of the main examples they used to describe her was how much she liked to hunt. Hunting was generally an activity carried out by the men in the household, who would occasionally be accompanied by his wife/s. However, Rosario loved to hunt on her own. “My grandma would not wait for her husband, if she desired to go hunt a particular day so she would do all the chores she had to and then leave to see what she could find.”

One of her granddaughters, shared with us a memory of her grandmother and the moment when she was convinced Rosario was magical and would live for many years. Julia, the granddaughter, said one day she was waiting for her grandmother to come back from gathering food from the mountain. She had seen her coming on the other side of the mountain, so she ran to meet her at the river to help her carry all she had brought to the family. Julia waited and waited at the river but Rosario never arrived. She returned home and after several hours, Rosario arrived. Julia told her grandmother what she had seen. Rosario explained to her that her soul sometimes is ahead of her body.

### **The mine and Rosario**

Rosario’s later years have been some of the hardest. The impact of outsiders in her life was never felt in such a violent way before. It started with the arrival of the Canadian company which began to explore the territory in search of minerals. Since the company’s arrival to the area in 1999, Rosario, has been forcefully displaced twice, and has seen the territory that she grew up in privatized and slowly contaminated and transformed.

Rosario was displaced for the first time in 2003. She was living in the house where she had raised her children, along with her son Mariano. That day Mariano had left the house to work and

her other son, Angel, was visiting. Mining workers came into their house and told them they had to leave the property, that this territory had been given to the company. Angel refused and the men who came tied his hands and feet so he could not fight back. The men forced them both outside, took Rosario and Mariano's belongings out of the house and burned the entire house down. Rosario watched as the home where she had given birth to her children was burned into pieces in a matter of minutes.

Mariano and Rosario immediately went to ask other community members if they could stay with them until they found a more permanent place to live. A man who owned land on a hill close to Tundayme, said that Mariana and Rosario could build a home in a ravine on his property. Mariano and Rosario managed to build a small house however there were many limitations especially for Rosario who did not have the strength she used to.

Currently Rosario continues to sustain herself from what Mariano and his other siblings can afford to provide for their mother. Mariano used to hunt but this activity is harder and harder to do as most of the land is privatized and the animals are becoming scarcer. Mariano thinks the loud noises from the company scare the animals away and that the pollution of the river does not help. Unfortunately sustaining themselves has not been the only problem they have encountered over the past years. The owner of the land sold his property to the mine. "He saw no other choice." one of Rosario's children says.

### **Whose land is it anyway?**

Since the land is "legally" the property of the company, lawyers and engineers have repeatedly come to harass Mariano and Rosario while asking them to leave. Each time Mariano and Rosario have communicated that they will not leave the territory because this territory is also their ancestral land.

One day the people who came did not come to talk. Company workers arrived alongside people from the *MIES*<sup>32</sup>, and without asking any questions forcefully took Rosario on an ambulance bed. The *MIES* had convinced Mercedes and Elisa, two of Rosario's daughters to take her into their home in El Pangui. Mariano tried to stop them but there was nothing he could do. After the workers had taken Rosario, Mariano called Julia, his niece, to ask for help. Together they got into contact with various community organizers and organizations in Quito to fight for the rights of Rosario.

The company had given Rosario a mattress, a bed and had built a small bedroom on the side of Mercedes' house for her. Rosario had never slept on a mattress before neither did she desire to do so. Shuar people traditionally sleep on platforms made of wood. Rosario was not happy and wanted to return to her house. In contrast the rhetoric that the company and the government used portrayed the actions of the *MIES* and the company as acts of kindness (El Universo, 2016).

On the following days Rosario attempted to escape on several occasions. She had told her daughters "I prefer to die trying but if I have to, I will cross el Río Quimi. I am not staying here". Mercedes and Elisa could not stand to see their old mother suffer in such a way. Therefore, they called Mariano and Julia to tell them they would let them take her back to Tundayme because the change had not been good for her in any way.

After Julia's calls to various organizations in Quito there were many articles shared by national and international organizations condemning the actions of the state and the mine by forcefully displacing a 107-year-old Shuar woman. One of the main organizers from Tundayme told Julia to bring Rosario back as this land is her ancestral right. The next day Julia and Mariano went to retrieve Rosario. Since that day the workers from the mine have not returned as frequently.

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<sup>32</sup> Ministry of Social and Economic Inclusion

They see them walk by and look into their home from time to time, Mariano and Julia just hope nothing like what happened will repeat itself.

We asked Rosario about the future and what are her hopes and dreams are for the future generations. She worries for them, because the forest is getting smaller and the company is taking over. She has seen how much reality has changed over time and she just hopes they can have a good life.

### **Analysis:**

While each of these stories and experiences is unique and shaped by each woman's identity, life experience and perspective, together they tell the broader story of how large scale mining impacts women's lives and the lives of their families, communities and environments. After reflecting on these stories and how they relate to the frameworks of feminist political ecology, I outline three main arguments:

- 1) Extractive industry activity, in this case mining, represents a violent encroachment on the territories and the space that women feel is their own;
- 2) Living in the presence of extraction hyper-visibilizes and exacerbates the structural violence that women are subject to – such violence is experienced in different ways dependent on the intersection of their identities;
- 3) Acts of solidarity, and resistance by women, in the context of extraction, are firmly rooted in their desire to persist and to ensure the survival of their families and livelihoods, rather than in ostensibly notable acts of resistance.

### **Encroachment and shrinking of territory:**

What is clear in Tundayme is that over time women's physical and social space continues to shrink. The spaces women can access have become more limited since the arrival of the mine.

Areas for cultivating crops, fishing, hunting, walking, and living, are no longer available, or no longer carry the same meaning. The vast privatization and land expropriation by the mining company and the state, the forced displacement of families, the masculinization of the territory, along with contamination and environmental destruction are just some of the forces that drive this encroachment on women's spaces.

Forced displacement is one of the clearest forms of the violent shrinking of space that women face. Mercy and Emilia, after being displaced, no longer have access to a space they can call their own. As they are forced to live with their parents and in-laws, their agency over space and their independence is no longer what it used to be. After becoming independent and forming their own families, they now return to a situation of dependence, in which they are guests in their own living space. What pertains to them no longer includes having their own chickens, or gardens, therefore they cannot sustain themselves and their children as they used to. Additionally, they both fear being displaced again and worry about the future prospects for their children.

The shrinking of space has multiple iterations. Tundayme has experienced a large influx of outside workers who dominate the space and predominantly male, thus women find themselves more spatially constricted. Emilia and Daniela spend most of their time in their houses, either due to fear of catcalls and sexual harassment, or fear of their houses being robbed while they are away. What was once home to their communities no longer feels as if it belongs to them. In addition, as the community has become more divided, the motivation to go out and socialize has decreased.

Alma no longer can fish, nor grow her crops, nor visit her ancestors who are buried in San Marcos. Alma says that the space which tells the stories of her people is being erased with the transformation of the territory. Space carries meaning and stories from the past which inform the present. As the Shuar people from Tundayme are traditionally land-based peoples, the destruction

of their sacred sites and the restrictions the company has created on accessing the forest, not only threatens their livelihoods, but limits the possibility of exercising their traditions as well as passing them down to the younger generations.

The ramifications of this shrinking of women's spaces are multiple. In their stories, the women spoke of feeling isolated, bored, and unsafe in their own homes, reflecting the various ways in which their psychological, physical and emotional wellbeing is being compromised. There is significant anxiety about their future and that of the generations to come. Additionally, the health of their bodies is compromised, as the environment becomes more toxic with the increased pollution generated by the mine.

### **Intersectionality and structural violence:**

There are multiple examples of this new wave of structural violence and the way it has impacted the women interviewed. They feel their voices do not matter, and do not feel that their opinion and their realities have been taken into account by the state. Despite government promises that the local community would benefit from the concession, they have seen no improvement in access to job opportunities, adequate health care and quality education for their children. Public health issues, such as the increase in alcohol and drug use in the community have received no attention by the Ecuadorean government. A culture of shaming organizers who advocate for environmental and human rights has been planted by the state and the mining company. Women have had to deal not only with the increasing masculinization of their communities, but also with an increased militarization of their living environments. When conceptualizing these violence (s) together, they tell a broader story of structural disenfranchisement, marginalization and violence, which precedes the mining project, yet is most certainly exacerbated by it.

The various forms of violence that women in Tundayme have to face are all part of a bigger structure which continues to marginalize poor rural campesina and indigenous women. However, as we think about women's experiences in the face of structures of violence, we need to be specific. What embodied experience of which women are we talking about? Despite similarities in the stories presented here, the impacts that each woman faces is not homogenous. To understand how violence impacts women, it is imperative to use a feminist intersectional lens. If we think about the way in which each woman is individually impacted, we can appreciate that the particularities of each case are shaped by their intersecting identities.

The story of Rosario Wari highlights how race, status, age and gender combined has shaped her experience living in Tundayme. In honor of specificity, we will delve into the second-time Rosario's Wari was displaced, and explore how this experience was shaped by her identity as a rural Shuar woman, who does not speak Spanish, and is 107 years old. Though her identity cannot be reduced to her ethnicity, the language she speaks, and her age, these are elements which significantly molded her experience and the way she is treated by the state and the mining company. The second time she was displaced, she was forcibly physically removed from her home by a medical emergency team. They took her to the home of her daughter and gifted her a bed with a corresponding mattress. After, taking her to the city without her consent, the Ministry of Mining posted an article titled "Adulta Mayor Paso de la Indigencia a Tener un Hogar Junto a Sus Hijas"<sup>33</sup> (Ministerio de Minería, 2016) , which featured a picture of Rosario in her new bed.

The Ministry of Mining and the company physically displaced Rosario without her consent. She was a Shuar woman, with a frail body, who did not speak Spanish and was poor thus, she had little power, treating her as incapable of acting on her own behalf. The people who took removed

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<sup>33</sup> Elderly woman went from being indigent to having a home with her daughters. <http://www.mineria.gob.ec/adulta-mayor-shuar-paso-de-la-indigencia-a-tener-un-hogar-junto-a-sus-hijas/>

her from her home were predominantly male, young, stronger bodied, mestizo and from more urban areas. While she was being displaced, she was complaining in her native language, making it justifiable to neglect her pleas.

It is curious to think about the symbolism of the gifted bed Rosario received. In the article, they described her prior living conditions as impoverished. After she had a bed and was living in a more urban house, they describe her finally living in a ‘proper home’. There is an underlying commentary on what is the better or more civilized way of life. This is a cultural insult to the Shuar way of life. We see not only cultural violence towards her roots and forms of life, but also an entitlement over her body due to her gender, age and way of life. Additionally, there is the ever-present discrimination based on language. As the predominant language is not Shuar, the authors of the article have further license to distort reality and eliminate Rosario’s voice and story from the headlines.

In this short analysis of this one event, we can evidence how the multiple layers of identity shape the experience of women in the face of extraction. If Rosario spoke Spanish, had a younger body was male, mestiza, or was from an urban area the story might have been different. It would be limiting to solely conceptualize Rosario slowly as a woman or as a Shuar elder when it is the combination of her identities that mold the experiences she has had. The multiple identity layer that constitutes each of the women who talked to me are a part of the story, neglecting any piece of them can be limiting to our understanding of their experiences and the impacts that mining has had in their lives.

### **Resistance and solidarity:**

Resistance can take many forms, the most notable being active community organizing against extraction in local territories. Just as important, yet rarely recognized, are the day to day

acts of resistance we can appreciate from the everyday lives of the women who shared their experiences with me (Scott, 1985). While striving to make a living, and caring for their families, resisting might not take the form of marching toward the capital. However, the active presence and persistence of these women in pursuing a healthy, meaningful life in the midst of such territorial transformations is resistance. The environments of these women have become their sites of struggle, as the project creates a more toxic less livable environment. Their commitment to sustaining themselves and striving to maintain healthy livelihoods for themselves and their families is a form the way in which they oppose and defy the project. These women do not willingly accept the changes in the territory, however they innovatively find alternatives to adapt to their current reality. The refusal of Rosary Wary to leave her ancestral lands, the courage of Catalina to question police officers and delay the demolition of her children's homes, the work Olivia does in organizing with Cascomi, the bravery of Alma to stand up to the bulldozers that threatened her crops, the willingness of all of the women to talk to outsiders or collaborate with Acción Ecológica, and the everyday work they all put into sustaining their families are forms of resisting the mine.

This is not to say that everyday acts of resistance are the only way in which communities stand up to these project. Ecuador has a long history of resistance NGO's like Acción Ecológica, political organizations like CONAIE, and local organization such as Cascomi are prime examples of ways in which resistance is alive and growing in Ecuador. Since the beginning of the boom in mining projects, communities have resisted through nonviolent demonstrations, which have at times escalated to violent confrontations with the armed forces of the state and have resulted in criminalization of indigenous leaders and militarization of territories. Different forms of responding to these projects co-exist and impact each other. Each form of resistance in does not

exist in a vacuum, and we need to come to terms with the fact that forms of explicit resistance can help as well as put local communities at risk.

## **Conclusion:**

Ecuador has embarked on a new era in its economic development, where mining is center stage. With the furthering of the extractive agenda, and projects such as El Mirador, social conflicts continue to rise, and the full impact on communities and the environment is yet to be seen. Mining transforms territory, and preexisting forms of structural violence take new shapes, which continue to disproportionately impact women. Additionally the decision making tables around extraction neglect the experiences of local women.

The eight women who shared their stories, are a testament of how the different identities of these women impact not only the way in which they relate to the environment, but also how they are able to respond to the territorial transformations. The presence of the mining camp, the increasing contamination of the environment, the masculinization of the territory, the tensions within the community and the ever-growing property owned by the company are some of the forces which have redefined the territory, and perpetuated legacies of structural violence (s). Despite these challenges, the women of Tundayme continue to exercise what power that they can, and resist by looking after their own wellbeing and that of their families. We can see this persistence and resilience in the commitment Rosario has remain on her land; the courage of Alma and the Shuar women from Yanua Kim had in defending their crops, the strength of Catalina to confront the police during the displacements, and the everyday work Olivia, Carmen, Daniela and Mariela contribute to their homes and communities.

Proyecto el Mirador represents a continued, yet intensified legacy of colonial and patriarchal relationships, where local communities do not have a say, where the health of women's

bodies, homes and environments, are compromised in the name of foreign investment. The stories from Emilia, Catalina, Mariela, Alma, Rosario, Daniela, Olivia and Carmen reflect a piece of the puzzle which tends to be silenced. Their stories are a testament of the significant challenges that arise in women's lives when mega mines arrive to their territory, as well as to the resilience women must endure to continue to look after themselves and the wellbeing of their communities.

This small representation of women who find themselves in situations like the one in Tundayme, has been an attempt to not only listen to the voices of local women, but center them in the conversation over the mining project El Mirador, as a way to challenge the notion of who the 'experts' are. Those of us who seek to stand in solidarity with these communities, must see ourselves within the equation, and be mindful of our own identities and positionalities, constantly questioning the power we hold or the power we might be taking away. Though social change is messy, and the consequences of activism and advocating for justice are not always straightforward, a good start is listening and centering the voices and desires of those who are most affected by these issues. Since both human and environmental rights are at stake, society must stay attentive and vigilant. As Ecuador's mining future unfolds, the people who are directly impacted by mega mining, such as the women I talked to in Tundayme, should be included and centered in the debates and negotiation tables around extraction.

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