

# Education and Indigenous Territorial Struggles

**A study on the Sapara people's experiences with the  
education system in the Ecuadorian Amazon**

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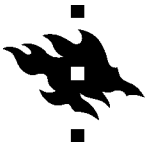
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Tiivistelmä – Referat – Abstract <p>The focus of this thesis is on the education of indigenous peoples, especially on how education can facilitate territorial self-determination and political emancipation for them. Indigenous movements world-wide and in Ecuador have focused on creating education respectful of and relevant to indigenous cultural background and knowledge. This thesis explores further the interconnectedness of education and indigenous territorial politics, as they have been together in the forefront of the indigenous movement in Ecuador, and they link the epistemological struggle of recognising Indigenous knowledges to environmental issues prevalent in the country dependent on extractivism. As indigenous peoples often inhabit environmentally vulnerable regions, this thesis examines how for the indigenous groups of Ecuadorian Amazon the relationship between education and territory can aim to be mutually beneficial, encouraging both preservation of the diverse cultures and environment in the biocultural landscapes.</p> <p>The research was conducted as an ethnographical case study on the province of Pastaza, situated in the Ecuadorian Amazon with a special focus on the indigenous group known as Sapara, who are the smallest of 14 indigenous nationalities recognised under the plurinational state of Ecuador. The data of the study consisted of 27 semi-structured interviews and participant observation recorded in the field diary, accompanied by historical analysis of intercultural bilingual education in Ecuador.</p> <p>This thesis illustrates the place-making practices and histories of indigenous peoples, acknowledged under the term Indigenous knowledge, as they form a foundation for territorial politics. Possibility for epistemological diversity in the education system is understood through principle of interculturality, as articulated by the indigenous movement itself as a radical project of recognising lived heritage of cultural and historical differences in dialogue between various segments of society. The topic is examined through the concept of territory, which emphasises a question of governance in plurinational Ecuador, where indigenous nationalities struggle to exercise control over their respective territories. Territory is formed of competing political projects that aim to define and redefine its meaning, which also opens up a definition of territory to scrutinise what type of power actually operates in these political projects and rejects assumptions of simple top-down governance as the only possible territorial form. This theoretical framework facilitates the analysis of education as a part of territorial strategies.</p> <p>The main argument of this thesis is that education constructs a significant part of reinforcing political emancipation and territorial self-determination of indigenous peoples. Based on historical and ethnographical analysis, the thesis illustrates how education functions as a privileged arena of cultural struggle to achieve epistemological diversity that includes Indigenous knowledges alongside with Western science. Simultaneously, education, which is perceived pivotal for living well, acts as a societal force that can transform material foundations of life, since indigenous peoples modify their residential patterns in order to access education. As indigenous territories remain only partly autonomous, since the nation-state retains control over subsoil resources, land continues to be an arena of competing political interests. This accentuates the importance of planning education practices to facilitate living inside the whole territory, since inhabiting space asserts the claims of indigenous groups effectively, allowing them to practice a strategy of dispersal.</p>			
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## List of Acronyms

<b>AAA</b>	American Anthropological Association
<b>CMP</b>	Colonial Matrix of Power
<b>CONAIE</b>	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador)
<b>CONFENIAE</b>	Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana)
<b>DINEIB</b>	National Directorate of Bilingual Intercultural Education (Dirección de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe)
<b>IBE</b>	Intercultural Bilingual Education
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organization
<b>LOEI</b>	Intercultural Education Act (Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe)
<b>MOSEIB</b>	Intercultural Bilingual Education Model in Ecuador (Modelo del Sistema de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe)
<b>NASE</b>	Sapara Nation of Ecuador (Nación Sapara del Ecuador [English translation by the author])
<b>OPIP</b>	Indigenous People's Organization of Pastaza (Organización de los Pueblos Indígenas del Pastaza)
<b>SEIB</b>	Secretariat of Intercultural Bilingual Education System (Secretaria del Sistema de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe),
<b>SIL</b>	Summer Institute of Linguistics
<b>TENK</b>	Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity (Tutkimuseettinen Neuvottelukunta)

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# 1. Introduction

In this thesis, I will explore the relationship that prevails between territory and education. If we trace the history of colonisation, it has an intimate connection to place and space. That far becomes clear, if we listen to Doreen Massey's insight on violence of colonial eye that defines space as a surface on which people robbed from their histories lie waiting to be discovered in stories exemplified by such tales as the ones told about voyages of Cortés and the Aztecs. How way too often still in the popular imagination of global north, the peoples who were colonised are perceived as beings loitering in a space not yet realised (Massey, 2005: 4). My purpose in this thesis is to illustrate the place-making practices and histories of indigenous peoples, acknowledged under the term Indigenous knowledge, as they form a foundation for territorial politics. In all of this, education is a platform for epistemological struggle, where space becomes defined as a particular type of place and territory. Indigenous politics in Ecuador have aimed to define the terms of this struggle for decades, as intercultural bilingual education, IBE, has been a priority in their agenda.

My focus is on the education of indigenous peoples, especially on how education can facilitate territorial self-determination and political emancipation for them. As the environments inhabited by indigenous peoples have experienced rapid and extreme changes, and many of these areas are seriously threatened by such change-inducing forces as extractivist industries (oil drilling, mining, logging, etc.), and global climate change, in my thesis, I aspire to examine how for the indigenous groups of Ecuadorian Amazon the relationship between education and territory can aim to be mutually beneficial, encouraging both preservation of the diverse cultures and environment in the biocultural landscapes.

Territorial politics and education furthermore provide me with a foundation from where I can consider how epistemological diversity impacts ecological diversity. A recent study by Gorenflo et al. about co-occurrence of linguistic and biological diversity strongly suggests that "indigenous economies and management practices essentially enable high biological diversity to persist" (2012: 8037), which supports the view that

diverse epistemological place-bound knowledge has a direct link to the ecological diversity of areas habited by indigenous communities. Hence, education has a central role in maintenance and development of epistemological diversity, since it can support local knowledge and establish a fundamental space for encounter and interaction of different knowledge structures (Rodríguez Cruz, 2008a: 143).

My case study is on the province of Pastaza, situated in the Ecuadorian Amazon with a special focus on the indigenous group known as Sapara, who are the smallest of 14 indigenous nationalities recognised under the plurinational state of Ecuador. In Pastaza alone, there are seven different indigenous nationalities (Viatori 2012: 406; Gutiérrez et al. 2015: 848). The indigenous movement in Ecuador has both been one of the most prominent ones continentally and relevant nationally, and played a crucial part of almost every major protest starting from the 1990s (Jameson, 2011: 63). Some of the main demands advanced by the indigenous movement have been about plurinationality, education and territorial demands (Jameson, 2011), echoing indigenous uprisings for rights for land, culture, autonomous governing and identity internationally since the mid-1980s (Ranta, 2014: 2; Fabricant & Postero, 2013; Hertzler, 2005; Laing, 2015). In Ecuador, political autonomy and self-determination over environment have been principally articulated through the concept of territory that forms a basis for their self-determination and politics (Radcliffe, 2014: 856).

Education, on the other hand, has tremendously affected indigenous peoples worldwide, as the “conventional education system” has disintegrated Indigenous knowledges and cultural heritages enforcing cultural assimilation to the mainstream society (Battiste, 2008: 497). Hence, the indigenous movements in Ecuador and globally have focused on offsetting such negative impact and instead they have aimed to claim education for themselves (Battiste, 2008; Walsh, 2012: 157–161). In Ecuador, IBE has been developed for this purpose. It has incorporated Indigenous knowledges and languages as a part of the education program (Walsh, 2012: 157–161). Education sensitive to indigenous forms of pedagogy is in itself a central way to relegate cultural heritage, and IBE has intended to bring together community members, teachers and organisations to a mutual setting of social discussion fostering learning for whole

communities (Oviedo and Wildemeersch, 2008). This has not been a straightforward process, as I will further explain in chapter 4, as autonomy of IBE was dismantled during the government of Rafael Correa (2007-2017), although currently negotiations between indigenous organisations and the current president Lenin Moreno have launched a reintroduction of IBE.

In this thesis, I will explore further the interconnectedness of education and indigenous territorial politics, as they have been together in the forefront of the indigenous movement and they link the epistemological struggle of recognising Indigenous knowledges to environmental issues prevalent in the country dependent on extractivism (Lalander and Merimaa, 2018). My research question is: What kind of educational practices can strengthen political emancipation and territorial self-determination of indigenous peoples and what challenges must be faced by indigenous groups building such practices?

To answer this question, I followed an ethnographic method and conducted fieldwork between 15.9.2018-31.11.2018 in the province of Pastaza. The most significant part of this fieldwork I conducted among the indigenous nationality Sapara (sometimes also spelled Zápara or Záparo, but I opted for the official spelling of their organisation). By analysing their situation, I intend to shed light on complexities of the Indigenous people's struggle to exist as a separate people with rights and territory and how education constitutes a central technique in the process. With the focus on an individual group, I attend to what Rodríguez Cruz notes, when she states that currently IBE is based on a simplistic understanding of complexity of Indigenous realities (2008b: 209). My case study brings forward parts of the complexities that require attention when planning and implementing IBE based on the experiences of the Sapara. Meanwhile, their experience also reflects multiple similarities among other indigenous groups in Ecuador as well as elsewhere in the world.

Conducting research on education, especially among the Sapara people, is further important, since in my experience there seems to be a gap in research on education concerning the group. Furthermore, the majority of research on IBE in Pastaza region



that I have encountered focuses on the larger groups such as Kichwa and Shuar and hence, my fieldwork with the Sapara provides an alternative perspective on a smaller indigenous group, whose education is further challenged, because of the problems of access, as their territory is situated far from the provincial capital of Puyo. Furthermore, Sapara territory is situated inside the expanding oil frontier of Ecuador, which establishes territorial self-determination in the prominent position of the group's politics and poses a real threat of environmental and consequent cultural loss. The Sapara people are a particularly interesting example also due to their strong cultural practices that they aim to maintain by myriad techniques, including their successful plea to include their oral heritage and cultural manifestations as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by Unesco in 2001 (UNESCO, n.d. [2019b]). The struggle of the Sapara to maintain a separate identity and living culture is also important as it provides an example of how a group very few in numbers can flourish after its decimation due to historical factors. Responding to these matters, education constitutes a vital part of revitalising culture and establishment of territorial self-determination.

The structure of this thesis will be as follows. After the introduction, in the second chapter I will introduce my methodological choices, as well as discuss briefly the benefits and limits that these choices entail with a special focus on ethics. After that, I will introduce Saporas, my focus on this case study, as well as a brief history of Ecuador as a background of my study to provide the context of my ethnographic research.

From this, I shall proceed to the fourth chapter, where I analyse the historical development of IBE in Ecuador and illustrate what kind of education indigenous peoples have been struggling for and how this links to territorial self-determination. The fifth chapter focuses on territory. Here I bring together a literature review, legal overview in Ecuador and an ethnographical perspective on the concept.

In the sixth chapter, I proceed to analyse my ethnographic material, and deal with topics essential to my research question. I begin the chapter by presenting how Indigenous knowledge is defined in academic discussion and how this compares to how my Sapara informants understood their knowledge. In the next subchapter, I continue by depicting

the hopes and goals that my informants had for incorporation of Sapara knowledge in the education system. This I follow by illustrating challenges embedded in this process, also drawing from fieldwork experiences with Kichwa indigenous groups, who have pursued rigorously for the restoration of IBE. After these subchapters on Indigenous knowledge, I move to discuss cultural contradictions currently faced by indigenous students and their implications on indigenous political organisation, which is followed with the analysis on spatial organisation of education and its impact on territorial control.

In chapter 7, I move to the discussion, where I bring together all previously discussed topics to present their influence on territorial self-determination and political emancipation of indigenous peoples. I display how right educational practices can contribute to Indigenous political governance, be respectful of their worldviews and how education could be organised to benefit territorial self-determination. Finally, I conclude this thesis in the eight chapter that discloses the findings of my study.

## 2. Methodology and ethics

In this part of my thesis, I aim to highlight the more methodological influences that have moulded my research lens, but as I have been greatly affected by subjects of decolonial theory and indigenous methodologies, for me, the line between theory, methodology and ethical questions is a blurry one. In his proposal for Indigenous research paradigm, which demands recognition of interconnectivity of methods, ethics and theory as they form a whole that is greater than its parts dissected, Wilson argues convincingly that a researcher must take into account the relationality between himself/herself, collaborates and particular histories that tie them into the present moment.

Theory is closely related to what a researcher considers to be his/her founding ontology and epistemology as theory forms a basis upon which he or she builds a conception of reality. The act of research brings different actors together, which offers a possibility for something new, the research, to emerge based on newly formed relations (2008: 70–71). As Wilson describes a role of ethics and methodology in a research, they “are based upon maintaining accountability to these relationships” (2008: 71). For a study to grasp especially Indigenous realities and epistemologies, consideration of ethical questions must be taken also as an integral part of the whole process including how to approach theory, for their absence would lead to misunderstandings of these important relationalities between researcher and collaborates.

In the following subchapters, I will first explain more about the role of relationality regarding my ontological and epistemological standpoint, since my research has dealt extensively with questions of epistemology. In subchapter 2.2, I will introduce my methodological approach, disclose details of my case study, explain what type of material I have and discuss ethical questions alongside the reasons for my methodological choices. In the last subchapter 2.3 I will display how I have analysed the material for this thesis.

## 2.1 Epistemological and ontological standpoint

As my thesis deals extensively with a theme of epistemology, my purpose here is to illuminate my ontological and epistemological standing. Furthermore, I provide it to give transparency to my approach, as Marsh and Furlong claim that: “[a] researcher’s epistemological position is reflected in what is studied, how it is studied and the status the researcher gives to their findings” (2002: 21). In my view, my personal intake in epistemology has influenced my study in multiple ways, such as the choice of topic and status of my finding, though I also see that the nature of a research problem also determines the best way to study it.

So, to describe my standpoint, this is a study partly on Indigenous knowledge and how to incorporate that knowledge in the educational system, which demands a researcher to acknowledge epistemological differences that arise during fieldwork. Regarding my research question, this topic demands particular attention, as historically Indigenous knowledges have been dismissed in the name of scientific rationality, based on the Western tradition, that could be utilised as a tool for disqualifying other forms of thinking as inferior (Smith, 1999: 170), though scientific research today contains elements of multiple knowledge systems, albeit they might influence it unequally (Smith, 1999: 43). As I am a person who comes from a different cultural background than the people with whom I conducted my fieldwork, I encountered differences regarding ways that we perceived the world. For me to understand, acknowledge and appreciate these differences, I see my epistemological and ontological standpoint closely aligned with perspectives that come from research on Indigenous methodology as well as the recent focus on multiple ontologies, though at the same time I do not claim that I could fully present Sapara knowledge due to my limited understanding as an outsider.

To further comment on my utilisation of the word Western in relation to the words epistemology, knowledge and schooling, I acknowledge that this is a generalisation that does not correspond neatly to reality, as things such as sciences commonly portrayed arising from ”Western epistemology” also contain diverse influences as observed by

Smith (1999), not to mention the fact that knowledge systems that commonly fall under the category of Western are far from uniform in their manners of thinking. For reasons of convenience, however, I have decided to use the word in these contexts to signify a specific rationality commonplace in the majority of basic educational systems rooted in historical development of discourse known as “science” depicted as universal and separated from subjective culture, characterised by possibility of dissecting knowledge in parts, ”book learning” and Cartesian dualisms such as subject/object and, perhaps most importantly, division between nature and culture (for further discussion see for example Quijano, 2007).

One position arising from Indigenous methodology is developed by Wilson (2008), who outlines his view as a response to his quest to discover an approach to science that would fit in the existing standards of academia and yet respect his indigenous heritage that greatly defines his cosmovision and stance on ontology. Wilson has written a definition of ontology, with which I agree, for in my opinion it offers a very insightful departure to prospects on the issue: the ontology is a person’s relationship with the truth (2008: 73). This statement carries its value in research as it emphasises the importance of relationality in the most fundamental level, since the definition demonstrates reality as a process that is formed through relationships (ibid.). Relationality also applies to a person’s relation with people, earth and non-human beings. Basically, relationships bring the world in to being, and same goes for research. In the Indigenous methodology presented by Wilson, relationships form a fundamental part of research, which is a sacred ceremony and “all about building relationships and bridging this sacred space” (2008: 87). I align myself with this type of ontological standpoint, since it describes my view on reality and research. This was most helpful for me, as I came to understand people, whose experiences of the world are vastly different from mine (see. Subchapter 6.1).

To further illustrate this approach, I share here a small excerpt from my ethnographic field diary. When I was in Llanhamacocha, which is one of the Sapara communities that I visited, one member of the community, Julio, who had been working intensively with development of schooling and with whom I had spent many evenings chatting

about the theme, shared some thoughts with me. This happened during one early night that we spent together sharing a fermented beverage called chicha, which is prepared from yucca and functions as a basic food staple among the Sapara people. I quote his words as paraphrased in my ethnographic diary:

With colegio, it had a rough beginning, especially because they had other path in life. The western system was killing the life in the communities. The government did not do the effort to know their path. Correa did not come to share chicha and dreams with them, and therefore he did not have a clue of their reality.

His purpose behind the words was to show me how the only way to share and understand their experience demanded the sharing of drink and reality in the same place together, relating to one another and learning through this experience. His words relate closely to Wilson's on how to approach relationality of research.

Furthermore, I find my standpoint to be closely aligned with the recent focus on multiple ontologies. In this matter, I align myself with a perspective provided by Mario Blaser, who has utilised the term political ontology to emphasise that what is at risk on a debate on multiple ontologies is actually diversity (2013). For him, the debate is about opening spaces for a variety of ways of being and dwelling in the world and by referring to pluriverse he aims to invite and support multiple world-making practices to exist openly (Blaser, 2013). Political ontology is about respect and as such, to talk about ontology is a political act (Blaser, 2013). In order to present Indigenous realities as people shared them to me, and to support epistemological recognition of their knowledge, I have followed rigorously these guidelines. To summarise, these two approaches to ontology have guided what I study in this thesis, how I conducted my research and how I have presented my results.

## **2.2 Ethnographic method, fieldwork material and ethics**

In this subchapter, I will outline my methodological approach (ethnographic fieldwork), illustrate what kind of material I have and speak about research ethics throughout the subchapter. I also explain my methodological choices in relation to presentation of my research material and how I have aimed to reach sufficient data saturation while doing ethnographic research, as these are influenced by literature on Indigenous methodologies.

As the main method of data production for this thesis, I have utilised ethnographic fieldwork. Participatory observation and conduction of interviews (structured, semi-structured, non-structured depending on the situation) have been my main tools during research. My choice to utilise ethnographic research as the main method of my study comes from the aforementioned focus on relationality and the thought that in order to know people's hopes and experiences related to education I have to relate to their reality and experience. I agree with Lappalainen, who describes ethnographic research as being special, as a researcher conducts it emotionally and physically present, since it is an ethical encounter, where a researcher respects and aims to understand knowledge and experience of participating people, even though their knowledge can never be understood completely by the researcher (2007: 10).

Ethnographic research offered me a chance to engage with themes of education and territory further, because of its experiential character that allowed me as a researcher to observe and immerse in the subject of study. Rather than to only approach territory from perspective of reflective speech provided by interviews, I have been able to share experience of place that is territory with my informants. Places often hold meanings that are revealed only when one is situated in the intimate context of everyday involvement. In this regard, ethnographic research offered me a privileged position to observe and understand such experiences.

To reach sufficient data saturation, I aimed to triangulate my methods. I approached the research problem through ethnographic study that incorporated multi-sited ethnography

as a part of the research process and hence, helped to triangulate my data by place (Marcus, 1995). Otherwise my main methods were participant observation and interviews, which provided me with data that varied in its form, while improving the quality of my data collection with triangulation (Fusch and Ness, 2015). These processes were accompanied by personal reflections conducted in the form of a personal research diary, which supported reflexivity both to improve my practical research skills and guide my understanding of my subjective bias. By the end of my fieldwork I had 23 recorded semi-structured interviews with 25 people, 4 unrecorded semi-structured interviews, 122 pages of detailed ethnographic diary and 47 pages of personal field diary that were collected in the duration of two and half months.

Many of my preliminary contacts in Ecuador were a result of me working as a part of a research team Goal 4+: Including Eco-cultural Pluralism in Quality Education in Ecuadorian Amazonia, which aims to conduct a comprehensive study on the subject. The opportunity to work in a team benefitted me greatly, since it enabled me to reflect my work with people involved in the same research settings and I have had access to a larger data set about the topic.

For the majority of my fieldwork, I was based in Puyo, which is the capital of the Pastaza province and home town for the province's university, Universidad Estatal Amazonica. In Puyo, I conducted most of my interviews with the university students, participated in multiple different events in the university and visited the only IBE school in the city, Amauta Ñampi, where I interviewed one teacher and the director. Additionally, Puyo was a convenient base for visiting the places close by such as a small town of Santa Clara, a village of Canelos that hosted Kichwa assembly on education and was home to an institute for prospective bilingual teachers. To gain perspective of challenges faced by far-away communities I also visited Sapara communities for 16 days with the purpose of gathering data on local perspectives, visiting schools and attending educational assemblies. I will disclose further details of schools and communities in subchapter 3.2. The Sapara territory itself is only accessible by monoplane, though it is possible to walk and navigate rivers to move between the villages as I did. I also had two interviews outside Pastaza, one in Quito with a



university student from Pastaza and another one in Otavalo with a researcher working on the theme of Kichwa language.

For my interviews, I had 23 semi-structured interviews that I recorded and transcribed and four unrecorded semi-structured interviews, which results in 27 semi-structured interviews in total. Of this interview set, 18 were men, 9 were women. There were 5 university students, 1 community-student, 2 teacher-students, 6 people working in indigenous organisations, 7 teachers and 8 persons who were parents of students attending the schools in the communities. I have decided to omit some information such as exact names of the organisations, as they are very small organisations, and to name them would risk the anonymity of my interviewees, who were talking to me as private persons and not official representatives of their organisations. I managed to interview representatives of five out of seven indigenous nationalities present in Pastaza (Kichwa, Shuar, Sapara, Andoa, Achuar, missing only Shiwiar and Waorani). This describes my whole interview set that contains also interviews that were not directly related to the Sapara people, but I have used all these interviews to answer my research questions. I chose the interviewees based on their knowledge on the education system as representatives of different roles (students, teachers, activists, parents of students). Nevertheless, I have payed special focus for interviews directly related to the Sapara people, which I describe next.

I had 11 semi-structured interviews that were directly related to Sapara, of which 8 were recorded and 3 three longer semi-structured interviews that were not recorded. The unrecorded interviews were with a person working for the Ministry of Education, the leader of education in the Sapara organisation (Nación Sapara del Ecuador, NASE) and a former teacher who was also a parent of students in a Sapara community. Of the interviewees, 8 were men and 3 were women. There were 5 teachers, 7 were parents of students attending the schools in the communities, one student and 4 bureaucratic officers. Besides these I had multiple ethnographical conversations concerning my research subject with different people that I met in the Sapara territory. Especially, I chatted with and asked questions from students in Sapara communities to find out their ideas and perspectives. They were still quite shy with the idea of a recorded interview,

and for this reason I found it easier to talk casually with them as a part of the daily ethnographic fieldwork. I also collected questionnaires (on identity, access to education, school attendance, future plans) filled by 12 students in Llanhamacocha for the research project, and though I did not analyse them rigorously, I contemplated on the answers together with my other fieldwork material. As I will use part of my interviews or ethnographic conversations in my thesis, I will provide short descriptions of the people in question to provide context for their words.

My self-reflection formed a big part of the research, since it was both a therapeutic relief and guided my self-inspection. Such practice is promoted by Laws, Harper and Marcus: “Finally, an important way of maintaining quality in research work is to pay attention to your own feelings and actions, and how others respond to you, and to reflect on their impact on the research process” (2003: 269). They also suggest keeping a personal diary as a partner to a more detailed ethnographic diary. Also Fusch and Ness remind the researcher of importance of observing personal bias and its impact on the quality of data: “The better a researcher is able to recognize his/her personal view of the world and to discern the presence of a personal lens, the better one is able to hear and interpret the behavior and reflections of others” (2015: 1411).

From my perspective, triangulation can help to improve the quality of research a great deal, yet I am not entirely comfortable with some of the criteria set on qualitative research. Fusch and Ness for example advocate a perspective, according to which a marker of successful data saturation is the situation where the data collected is sufficiently large for the study to be replicated, there are grounds for gaining additional new information, and there exists no rationale for further coding (2015: 1413). This perspective offers insights on the importance of judging credibility of research done, but it is also representative of a point of view that Wilson calls “more traditional academia”, where validity and reliability are key words, but which fits poorly to indigenous research paradigm (2008: 101). Wilson states that for him, and for indigenous research, it is more meaningful to speak of credibility or authenticity, which are concepts that highlight contextuality as well as truthfulness (ibid.). Those still serve as criteria that help both the researcher and readers to judge if results are credible and tell something

meaningful, but they respect the importance of context and impossibility of replicating a qualitative study that is a product of unique collaboration between people who are part of the study.

For a development researcher like myself credibility appears as a good judgment criterium, and I find it to hold significance also as it directs attention to issues of accountability. Does analysis appear truthful for people who contributed to research? A dynamic where a community is a source of material inspected by an objective researcher who presents the findings for an audience of western scientists mirrors colonial knowledge production models and power relations. To prevent such scenarios and check the truthfulness of results, a good strategy would be to share, check and collaborate with people in order to analyse the results. As suggested by Wilson: “[O]ne method through which authenticity or credibility may be ensured is by continuous feedback with all research participants” (2008: 121). Feedback during this part is helpful and shows a level of engagement and prevents putting people under the metaphorical science microscope. Quite the contrary, this method could develop more democratic research that is truthful and accountable to a community.

Personally, I have attempted to engage with this process by consulting people who collaborated with my research especially during my fieldwork. I have continued this process afterwards as much as possible, although physical distance between me and my field creates some challenges for communication. Hence, I have discussed with various involved actors, mainly through social media, about my research and consulted the opinions of people who participated in my research as much as possible.

This also intertwines with considerations on issue of power dynamics between a researcher and minority groups, since a researcher has power to present others and benefits have often favoured a researcher. Regarding the issue, a researcher makes choices on what to share or how it is framed, for example, theoretically and besides conscious decisions, values and assumptions of a researcher might also guide his/her analysis and presentation (Smith, 1999: 176). On this subject and aspects mentioned above, sharing knowledge gained from a study is also crucial, since it is a step that can

help the people involved to learn and benefit from the outcome of the research and extends research under the scrutiny of research participants. To deal with these issues, I will write a summary of my study in Spanish, so that my collaborators/informants can read, comment on and hopefully also benefit from it. This also enables feedback after the research is done, as people can comment on the final product and develop the discussion on the theme further. Depending on my financial and temporal ability, I also aim to return to the places of my fieldwork in near future, though I do not know how soon I will have the economic means for travel. These reunions would allow me to present my research results in person and discuss them further with people.

Moreover, ethical self-reflection impacted my fieldwork both during and afterwards. Owing to resentment that has been voiced by groups who have been historically objectified in the name of science, ethics are an integral part of any contemporary research done with indigenous communities (Smith, 1999: 1–2). As a researcher, I have been actively aware of the colonial history of exploitation, in order to be able to conduct research that is ethically sound and does not continue the legacy of colonialism. This has impacted my choices in presenting material as well, for example in relation to Indigenous knowledge. I will discuss issues of exploitation and commodification of Indigenous knowledge in subchapter 6.3, but ethics of this issue have also influenced my choice of fieldwork material presented. Smith (2012) has emphasised indigenous peoples' self-determination about how their knowledge is researched, what aspects of that knowledge are shared in the publications and how that knowledge is utilised. I refrained from presenting any detailed information of that knowledge, such as use of specific plants beyond what is already widely published, since from my ethical stand point such research should be conducted in closer cooperation with the people in question to work out what aspects of their knowledge they want to be shared and assure that they receive credit for their role. I have committed myself to assuring that anyone participating will not suffer from mental, social or financial harm according to the principles set by the ethical guidelines from the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity, TENK, (2009) that I follow and sharing such details about Indigenous knowledge could even have financial implications for communities as exemplified with the cases of biopiracy (Mgbeoji, 2006).

Similarly, I have omitted also other information that I see possibly harmful to communities and people participating, especially as my role as an ethnographic researcher is at times ambiguous, as people also share with me things in confidence, treating me as a friend, who I also am, but they do not necessarily want those things published. I have paid attention to such ethical issues throughout the research process in order to respect everyone participating. As I have described above how I have intended to engage with ethical conduct after my research, I now move to issues I encountered during my fieldwork.

For reasons stated above, during my fieldwork I utilised ethical guidelines available with all my research collaborators, especially TENK (2009) and the American Anthropological Association, AAA, (2012) guidelines as they are specific for anthropology. Obtaining research permits was made easier by the fact that I co-operated with a research project, but as noted by Hanna et al. (2014), for example guidelines suggested by Free Prior and Informed Consent should be promoted as a continuous process instead of being a singular report, and should be managed as an informed discussion with community on respectful and equal grounds throughout the project. This I intended to do during my fieldwork in personal and communal discussions with people. To illustrate such process, when I conducted my research with the Sapara communities, I sought permission to conduct the research at multiple occasions. First, I visited the Sapara organisation, NASE, where I presented my research topic to the NASE-representatives and I gained a permission to enter their territory. Secondly, in every community that I visited, I also participated in communal assemblies, where I presented my research and there was a communal discussion, where I was questioned, and my presence was accepted. Thirdly, I explained my research and asked for permission in personal discussions and interviews with people. This way, I could seek permission to conduct research from everyone in a free, prior and informed manner and my permission could be constantly scrutinised.

Moreover, self-reflection, and feedback have had a major part to play throughout and after my fieldwork, for as argued by Jones and Jenkins (2008) the constant re-evaluation

between researchers and collaborators can help to overcome power relations and build what they call “Indigene-Colonizer Hyphen”. What is meant by the hyphen refers to a relationship, where a point is not learn about the Other, but from the Other, or in other words, learning about the difference (2008: 488). By participating in assemblies, for example, I constantly received feedback and my research was challenged, obligating me to engage with ethics and reflect my research. This process I accompanied by keeping a personal field-diary that facilitated my self-reflection.

Smith’s (2012) work on decolonizing methodologies, and Battiste’s (2008) notions on responsibilities of researchers, when conducting research with indigenous groups both helped me to plan my research so that it could be most useful to the indigenous peoples’ movements in Ecuador and globally, and respectful to the collaborating groups’ multivocal morals, aspirations and wishes. To examine one’s own research and level of engagement, I find Smith’s questions helpful: “Who defined the research problem? For whom is this study worthy and relevant? Who says so? What knowledge will the community gain from this study? What knowledge will the researcher gain from this study?” (2012: 175). Researching education was widely regarded as beneficial by people who participated in my research and my fieldwork experiences had a decisive impact on my final research question, as I wanted to focus on issues emphasised by my informants leading to my focus on territory.

## **2.3 Analysis**

In the previous subchapter, I already discussed some guidelines on how to approach and evaluate results of the research, but in this subchapter, I will explain more in depth how I conducted the analysis of my fieldwork material. I have approached my interviews by loosely following thematic analysis and this has been accompanied by a strong focus on the context provided especially by ethnographic diary.

For my interviews, I transcribed everything after my fieldwork, which allowed me to review their content with fresh eyes and helped me to avoid possible misinterpretations. Already during this part, I paid attention to possible similarities, differences and

important themes emerging that guided me to find my system of coding. For transcribed interviews, I applied thematic coding derived from my theoretical interest on territory, place, extractivism, governance, politics, Indigenous knowledge and education. During the first phase, I picked detailed codes that represented one aspect of an issue that I later sorted out under more general themes that I discuss in my thesis as well. I connected these also with excerpts from my ethnographic diary dealing with similar themes and analysed those together. This has helped me to organise my research data to better observe repeating patterns and it has been a useful tool in conducting analysis.

However, I accompany this sort of analysis with more general and context-specific reading of my interviews and more importantly, my ethnographic material and personal diary to provide context for the thematic analysis. This approach follows my emphasis on decolonial methodologies as I also consider Wilson's suggestion that "[A]n Indigenous style of analysis has to look at all those relations as a whole instead of breaking it down" (Wilson, 2008: 119). For this reason, I shy away from approaching my data analysis from the perspective of thematic analysis only, though it was a helpful tool, since I could better understand the purpose of words said to me in the interviews when I considered them together with the context that I also researched. I have also approached my material with the aim of being faithful to perspectives provided by the people who had collaborated with my research, determined the most important themes in my research.

I also agree with Tim Ingold's insight on principles of "[R]igorous anthropological inquiry— including long-term and open-ended commitment, generous attentiveness, relational depth, and sensitivity to context" (Ingold, 2014: 384). Unfortunately, I did not have a chance to engage in fieldwork lasting at least one year yet, though I hope that I can continue my commitment to undertake further research with my collaborators. Nevertheless, I believe that my research of three months has been enough to answer my research question and that it was more than sufficiently long for the scope of a master's thesis.

Below, I summarise the principles that I found especially important for this thesis. I have paid considerable attention to context in every step of my analysis and it has been influential in my thematic analysis as well, since I do not want to dissect people's words from the context, but only find clearer ways to understand them. In my opinion, my research question demands a considerable amount of attention to the context of perspective, since ignoring it would be ignoring the complex history of colonisation and resistance that has impacted lives of indigenous people of Ecuadorian Amazon. Relational depth helps to connect different parts of the research together and not only consider individual interviews apart from others and the context, but it guides towards paying attention to the bigger picture. Lastly, attentiveness refers also to personal relationship and commitment to understand, communicate, share and learn in the process of research as well as analysis. This I already discussed in the previous subchapter in relation to communication with people both during and after the fieldwork, but I conclude here that as a researcher, I engage in the process of attentiveness and learning from fieldwork to analysis, but I also intend to provide answers beneficial to the collaborators.



### **3. Background of the study: Ecuador and Sapara history and people**

In this chapter, I will introduce the context of my fieldwork, first briefly outlining social and economic history of Ecuador to provide context on political issues of territory and education. After that I will move to my main focus that is on the Sapara people of Ecuador. I will discuss their history and current life in order to display their reality.

#### **3.1 Ecuador**

To illustrate the social and economic situation of Ecuador, which impacts educational and territorial policies important to my thesis, in this subchapter, I will present a brief historical background of the country. Ecuador's dependence on extractivist economy, including oil, has shaped its politics since the colonial times, even though it conflicts with a famous state-discourse on *buen vivir* that was developed as an alternative to the capitalist development. These opposing tendencies of politics remain in conflict and they are played out in political struggles of indigenous peoples to attain territorial self-determination and political emancipation.

As with most contemporary states situated in Latin-America, after the Spanish invasion of the 16th century the society of Ecuador was divided into social classes based on ethnic division between the people of "solely" Iberian origin controlling most of the nation's wealth, followed by groups of "mixed" ethnic background, such as mestizos, with groups of African origin and indigenous peoples situated at the bottom layers of social hierarchy. This colonial division, though not only embedded in "actual" ethnic background, but also on personal wealth, bares a great influence to this day on power relations with cases like unequal distribution of arable land, state system and economy that concentrates on primary production of cash crops and extractive industries such as mining (Keen and Haynes, 2009: 3, 110–116). Furthermore, within the indigenous groups there exists a certain division based on colonial heritage between the highland groups, and the groups occupying the lowland regions of Amazonian rainforest. This

division originates from the distinction made by the colonising Spaniards between the “civil” highland population already subjugated under the Inca-empire, and the “unruly” and “savage” lowland population, to whom the presence of the state structure to this date is somewhat contested (Keen and Haynes, 2009: 110–116; Ranta, 2014: 8). Since independence, Ecuador has faced multiple military coups, failed attempts with land reform, economic booms, such as the 1970s oil boom and ever-rising national debt that has placed Ecuador’s sovereignty under international influence of countries like the United States (Keen and Haynes, 2009: 413–415, 547–552), and, more lately, China that has increased its importance to the country as Chinese Policy Banks have provided more than USD 10 billion for projects in Ecuador (Gonzalez-Vicente, 2017: 890)

The introduction of the structural adjustment programme, demanded by the International Monetary Fund, by the governments of the mid 1980s, following the 1972 military junta, has often been depicted as the starting point of influence by indigenous movements on Ecuadorian politics, but already during the military rule multiple movements for social justice, trade unionism and women’s rights had considerable indigenous representation, and had allied themselves with the 1979-founded Indigenous People’s Organization of Pastaza, OPIP (Organización de los Pueblos Indígenas del Pastaza), (Keen and Haynes, 2009: 413–415). This anterior alliance is worth mentioning, for too often the rises of indigenous movements are presented as reactionary forces against globalisation, while the long-term construction of anti-colonial unity, reaching as far as the days of the Spanish invasion, is left disregarded. The Inti Raymi uprising of 1990, spearheaded by the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador, CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador), and OPIP, was a major event that I will discuss also in chapter 4, as it led to the acceptance of indigenous rights by the government of Rodrigo Borja. Though, due to pressure from the landed elite, Borja was quick to abandon part of these concessions, the event marked a symbolic turning point in Ecuadorian politics, as thence forward the ensuring of “indigenous vote” became an important part of election campaigns (Keen and Haynes, 2009: 548). From 1990s to mid-2000s Ecuador faced many short-term populist governments, which, after gaining power, promptly deserted any promises made on social justice and redistribution of wealth in favour of neoliberal policies.

Throughout these political turmoils, CONAIE continued to construct alliances with the United Workers' Front, popular coalition and university students, and, after a successful campaign for the impeachment of President Lucio Gutiérrez, this powerful coalition was able to secure 57% of the presidential vote to left-wing populist Rafael Correa of PAIS Alliance (Keen and Haynes, 2009: 549–550).

This is the background for the rise of Correa, who emphasised his opposition to the US hegemony of the international economic system (Bravo and Moreano, 2015: 332). Regardless of the neoliberal restructuring of Ecuador, its debt surpassed \$10 billion in 2007, even though Ecuador had paid the borrowed principal together with interests and penalties (Davidov, 2012: 13). After his election, Correa's government decided to assess the "legitimacy, legality, and appropriateness" of Ecuadorian debt and created the independent Public Debt Audit Commission (ibid.) Another big project of reconfiguration of economical relation by the Correa government was to restructure control of oil. Correa bolstered the state oil company, the present oil contracts were abolished, the state restored a great deal of existing concessions and the increased percentage of oil incomes acquired by companies were demanded by the state (Andrade, 2016: 123). Correa's political project had its achievements, as during Correa's reign, the poverty rate was reduced by 38 percent and the extreme poverty by 47 percent (Gonzalez-Vicente 2017: 887). Ecuador's health care and education system were the main receivers of funding generated from the extractivist industry (Lalander, 2016: 625) and: "[T]he relative share of the GNP invested in social welfare has increased from 6.1 per cent in 2005 to 14.7 per cent in 2011" (Lalander, 2016: 637). This shows how the use of natural resources changed as Correa distanced himself from the neoliberal model of development, and the flow of natural resource incomes was redirected to social services unlike before, when the majority of revenue left the country (Gonzalez-Vicente, 2017: 893; Lalander, 2016: 623).

Nevertheless, the extractivist basis of state revenue was contradictory with many of CONAIE's agendas cemented in the new constitution of 2008 that was based on the indigenous post-developmental ideology of Sumak Kawsay. The constitution "presents the world's most far-reaching constitutional protection of nature and the

environment since 2008” and it also acknowledges rights of indigenous peoples to a great extent with, territorial autonomy, and declares Ecuador as a pluri-national state (Lalander and Merimaa, 2017: 2). The ideological roots of the constitution were grounded in the recognition of indigenous cosmologies, as articulated through the concept of *Sumak Kawsay* in Kichwa, or *buen vivir* in Spanish (ibid.). *Sumak Kawsay* roughly translates as living well, with emphasis on the word “well” instead of better, as the concept challenges the idea of development. Hence, it is often described as post-developmental, as it highlights harmony among environment and its beings (Lalander, 2014: 154). The concept has been contested in the Ecuadorian politics, since it offers a platform of critique against extractivist policies of the government, but there are also proponents, who emphasise pragmatism as the poor country needs funds for its welfare projects: “[W]hat we say is that we need to use the resources of Pachamama [Mother Earth] with responsibility” (Lalander and Merimaa, 2017: 23). This debate is an integral part of the use of natural resources in Ecuador and it offers a perspective on how the progressive constitution can translate to ostensibly contradictory action, where the official rhetoric does not respond to reality, at least in a straightforward way.

The presidential elections of 2017 culminated with the triumph of Correa’s hand-picked successor Lenín Moreno, whose political decisions have, however, differed in a stark manner from those made by his predecessor. Moreno has been critiqued for returning to neoliberalism (Le Quang, 2019), but he has also shown more enthusiasm for incorporating indigenous actors in his political decision-making as evidenced for example by opening negotiations for bringing back IBE that I also discuss in chapter 4 (Vargas, 2018). During my fieldwork, I conversed with a person working for an indigenous organisation and formerly employed as an expert by the Correa government, who commented on the change of regime that Moreno appeared to be more willing to discuss with political organisations than Correa, but the action rarely followed. How the change in politics will impact Ecuador overall is probably best seen in retrospect. To conclude, Ecuador’s dependence on extractivism impacts indigenous peoples in the country, as many of their territories form part of expanding mining and oil frontiers that produce a crucial part of Ecuador’s national income. Ecuador’s progressive constitution opens up channels for struggle and negotiation, including the ideal of plurinationality

that I will come back to in chapter 5, but the discourse fails to live up to its ideal from an environmentalist perspective.

### 3.2 Sapara: history and people

As I focus in this thesis extensively on the Sapara people, it is important to outline main aspects of their current socio-economic and cultural features and historical background that influence their existence. In this subchapter I will briefly introduce places that I visited and prevailing educational circumstances there as well as illuminate daily life. This is accompanied by a history of organisational struggle for cultural revitalisation and territory and a short general history of the Sapara people. Finally, I elucidate the context of prospective oil exploration, since the Sapara territory is situated inside the expanding oil frontier in Ecuador, which is an ongoing source of friction and worry among communities in respect to the future of the Sapara territory.

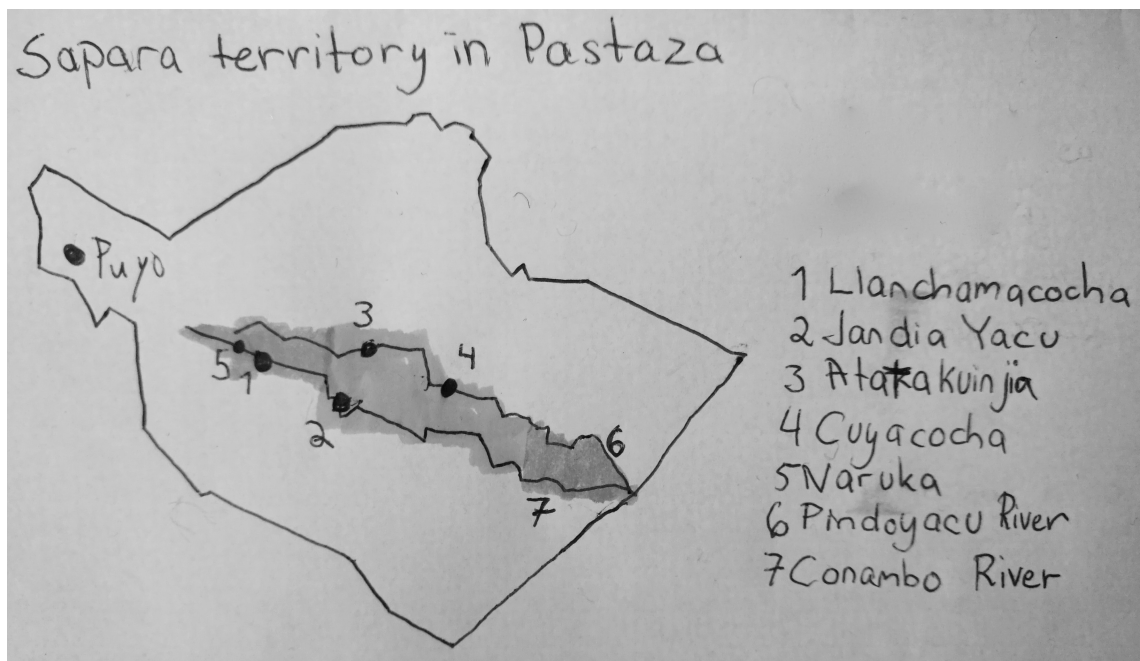


Figure 1. An illustrative map of locations of the Sapara communities visited. Coloured area marks the Sapara territory. Drawn by the author.

During my fieldwork I travelled in Sapara communities to observe and participate in their daily reality, so that I could learn and understand their hopes and needs for education. I visited five different communities: Llanhamacocha, Naruka and Jandia

Yacu in the river Conambo, as well as Atatakuinjia and Cuyacocha in the river Pindoyacu, as illustrated in Figure 1. The most convenient access to the territory is via air-travel and I first arrived to Llanhamacocha by a mono-plane that landed on a small runway. Llanhamacocha differs from other villages, as it is the only one with upper schooling including the upper basic school for 8th, 9th and 10th grades (ages 12–14) and a high school (1st, 2nd and 3rd). It had been organised with funding from the tourist project Naku functioning in the community. Naruka is a neighbouring community, easily visited from Llanhamacocha as it is only a 45 minutes' walk. From Llanhamacocha, we continued to Jandia Yacu in a canoe equipped with an outboard engine and the travel took us the whole day. From there the travel became more demanding as we had to walk 12 hours to Atatakuinjia, as it was situated along the other river. From Atatakuinjia, it was another day of travel in a motorised canoe to Cuyacocha.

As for educational circumstances, from these communities, Llanhamacocha, Jandia Yacu and Cuyacocha had primary schools during my time of fieldwork, whereas children from Naruka walked to Llanhamacocha as did students from Matsakau, but in the case of Atatakuinjia, there were no schools nearby. Llanhamacocha had the upper school, where one teacher taught all grades from the upper basic school to the high school. The high school is an extension from an adult education centre in a town of Shell, which means that they are not currently following a model of IBE. Nevertheless, the lack of IBE for high school was not experienced as a big disadvantage at the current moment, since the educational reform by Correa had already taken a considerable amount of autonomy away from IBE. My informants worried more about the fact that due to the reform, they had to give up their previous curriculum that they had planned specifically for the Sapara under the jurisdiction of the National Directorate of Bilingual Intercultural Education, DINEIB, that had provided indigenous nationalities with larger autonomy regarding their education. I will further explain the reform in chapter 4. My informants were also compensating for loss of bilingualism by organising language classes of Sapara independently with *abuela* (grandmother) as she was most often referred to by community members due to her position as one of the last remaining fluent Sapara speakers. Similarly, they organised cultural teaching with *abuela* or some

other member of community willing to volunteer for the school. To illustrate such projects of cultural teaching, a former teacher, Julio, whom I already mentioned in subchapter 2.1, was an active volunteer and he was planning to construct a *casa cultural Sapara*, a Sapara cultural house, where they could illustrate Sapara history, handicrafts and other culturally important elements.

As for the social reality of Saporas, they are dispersed in small communities, that have an average size of about 40 residents (Viatori and Ushigua, 2007: 8) and their main subsistence activities involve cultivating horticultural gardens attended by women called *chacras*. Plantains and yuca are the most prevalent and from the latter, women ferment a drink of *chicha*, which is served and enjoyed throughout the day, which usually starts at around 4 am., when families start their day sharing dreams that help to plan the day ahead. Agriculture is paralleled by hunting, fishing and gathering of different forest-products such as hearts of palm-trees that are mainly activities for men. Also, medicinal plants are commonly cultivated as well as gathered from the forest, which is the source for the most materials required in daily life such as suitable palms and trees for constructing blowpipes, canoes, houses and shelters. Other common activities involve participation in *mingas*, which are communal work-parties, where a whole collaborate for a common project or community gathers to help someone, who in return supplies everyone with plenty of *chicha*.

Nowadays, it is common to use products acquired outside the Sapara territory, such as axes, outboard engines and petrol for boats, clothes and salt. To purchase such items Saporas also engage in activities to gain monetary assets. The activities vary in their nature, but to exemplify what I learned during my fieldwork, people might send natural medicine and handicraft for sale in Puyo or participate in the tourist project Naku in Llanhamacocha. Sometimes one member of family might leave to work for some time, usually men, who might also leave for military service (Viatori, 2008: 195). For most parts of their subsistence I found that Saporas do not rely on monetary economy, but changing circumstances of life such as educating children outside communities have increased the pressure to find monetary sources.

Saparas have their own language, which has marked them as a distinct identity in Ecuador. However, as mentioned above, it is not commonly spoken, and their usual vernacular language is Kichwa, which has been a lingua franca of the region historically and today only less than ten individuals speak Sapara fluently. Language is a principal tool for Saparas to portray their distinctiveness from other indigenous peoples in the region, as the idea of indigenous nationality in Ecuadorian Amazon is based on separate languages, as they are seen to demonstrate continuity in culture from times before colonialism (Viatori and Ushigua, 2007: 8–10). Both Amazonian and national indigenous federations, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon, CONFENIAE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana), and CONAIE accepted Saparas officially as a separate indigenous nationality soon after their organisation was created. The identity project also granted Saparas national and international acclaim after Unesco recognised their language and oral culture as an intangible masterpiece of humankind in 2001. This provided three years of funding in order to document and rejuvenate their language and benefited the development of the educative model specific for the Sapara that they had received permission to create earlier, but lacked funds to achieve (Bilhaut, 2011: 40). Consequently, Saparas have been recognised nationally in the state administration as a separate indigenous nationality (Viatori and Ushigua, 2007: 11).

Their current organisation is called Nación Sapara del Ecuador, NASE, which has united together all Sapara communities previously represented by two distinct organisations. It was in 1998, when the first Sapara organisation representing communities among upper Pindoyacu and Conambo rivers was established with the objectives of recuperating language, shamanism, territory and history (Viatori and Ushigua, 2007: 8; Bilhaut, 2011: 62). Nowadays also communities closer the Peruvian border participate in the same organisation (Viatori and Ushigua, 2007: 8). According to Bilhaut, when Saparas decided to organise themselves, they recognised dreaming as a principal tool that guided action in all important matters, be they quotidian, social or political (2011: 189). The NASE office is located in Puyo and the organisation represents Saparas in the national political arena. With a population estimated ranging



from less than two hundred to a bit over three hundred, they are the smallest indigenous nationality in Ecuador (Viatori and Ushigua, 2007: 8).

Historically, Saporas have been great in numbers as illustrated by approximations of tens of thousands of people who were decimated as a result of disease, assimilation to other indigenous communities, enslavement and forced migration. According to an Italian traveller Gaetano Osculati there were around 20 thousand Saporas in 1846. One of the main accelerating reasons for the population collapse was the inhumane practices utilised by rubber barons during the Amazonian rubber boom from 1880 to 1920 (Viatori and Ushigua, 2007: 8–10). Also, the war between Ecuador and Peru in 1941 demolished Sapara communities, since they became separated by the new border between the countries (Bilhaut, 2011: 44). So devastating were the effects that Saporas were even declared extinct by Ecuadorian anthropologists until Saporas started their project for revival of their culture and identity (Viatori and Ushigua, 2007: 8–10). In fact, Saporas claim that they purposely enforced the belief on their extinction between 1970s and 1990 to escape from old enemies (Bilhaut, 2011: 61).

I was often told that life among the Sapara had changed during the last decades with the establishment of permanent communities, inspired by hopes to gain access to state services such as education, in comparison with a previously more mobile lifestyle (Andrade Pallares, 2001: 24). Consequently, they have a complex network crisscrossing their territory of old hunting paths utilised according to family ties. Traditionally, they followed animal cycles to determine where and when to hunt moving along the paths, but nowadays the school calendar is a more pressing motive, since the trips consume time as the places are far (Castillo et al., 2016: 47). The distant place going hunting is called *purina*, which as a verb has also described their previous mobile settlement patterns (Moya, 2007: 22). Saporas had previously incorporated *purina* in the education system administrated under DINEIB (discussed in chapter 4) by recognising a time of hunting as a part of curriculum under the title of *convivencia comunitaria* that translates to living with the community. This took place during a school holiday, when parents were supposed to have children accompanying them for hunting expeditions to cultivate cultural learning from community (Moya, 2007: 218).

Currently, Saperas are threatened by prospective oil extractivism in their territory. The pressure for oil extractivism has intensified in Ecuador, after the Correa administration decided to seek the Chinese loans-for-oil to gain access to credit otherwise forbidden in international markets as a result of the partial debt default (Escribano, 2013: 157; Wilson and Bayón, 2017: 61). As an outcome, environmentally fragile places have been included in the concessions of new oil blocks that are offered in bidding rounds organised by the government (Wilson and Bayón, 2017: 61). In 2016, blocks 79 and 83 situated in the Sapara territory were contracted to Chinese operators China National Petroleum Corporation and China Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec) for oil exploration and exploitation in cooperation with Andes Petroleum from Ecuador (Castillo et al., 2016: 62). Their potential exploitation poses a great risk for biodiversity and health in the territory, if the plans to advance are realised.

During my fieldwork, I witnessed strong opposition towards any form of oil extractivism. Negative attitudes among Saperas towards oil are also a product of certain histories and different actors influencing the decision-making. The social imagery of what the future with oil would look like has been moulded from experiences in the Northern Amazon (Vela-Almeida, 2018: 131). This is complemented with the powerful cultural ethos that enforces harmony and well-being between all beings inside the territory, including non-human actors such as animals, trees and spirits. However, as I was made aware by my informants, some Sapara communities have more favourable opinions on oil exploration, since the communities are still somewhat divided along the old division between the two Sapara organisations. The communities closer to Peruvian border with the stronger influence of evangelisation have been more agreeable in relation to oil extractivism, which in return is fiercely opposed by the other cluster of communities, where I spent my fieldwork. Additionally, the Sapara territory includes many communities that are not predominantly Saperas, but people from other indigenous origins. These dynamics have created some tension on who has the right of decision-making in the territory especially in relation to oil-prospecting.

In this subchapter I have given a short presentation of historical events and the current social reality of the Sapara people. Saporas are the smallest indigenous nationality of Ecuador as a result of historical turmoil and currently they struggle to revitalise their language and culture as well as defend their territory. To achieve the goal, they have organised themselves to assert their rights over their territory and to have education that supports their identity. Currently, the possibility of oil extractivism looms over the future of this project. These political processes have induced substantial transformations in their lives such as the establishment of permanent communities that are not without their friction, which is a topic that I will return to later on.

## 4. Intercultural bilingual education in Ecuador

IBE has been in the centre of a struggle led by the indigenous movements of Ecuador (Rodríguez Cruz, 2018a: 21). Interculturality as understood by the indigenous movement of Ecuador refers to a radical political project that aims to transform a colonial and capitalist society into the new possibility by engaging in dialogue between different peoples, where lived heritage of cultural difference, but also oppressions are recognised (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 57–60). It aims for transformation of social and political structures of state together with epistemic decolonisation, where Indigenous knowledges are revived and professed equally within the society including inside its institutions, such as public administration (*ibid.*).

In Ecuador, interculturality became ideologically and politically central for CONAIE beginning from the late 1980s and gradually, interculturality has gained a strong stance and grown into a paramount doctrine for dealing with cultural difference prevalent in the country (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 57; Radcliffe, 2012). The process culminated with the 2008 Constitution, when Ecuador was declared as plurinational (República del Ecuador, 2008). Thus, the 2008 Constitution acknowledges cultural and historical differences between citizens following principles of interculturality (Radcliffe, 2012: 244).

As often is the case, interculturality as a state discourse has not translated in its full potential as articulated by the indigenous movement, but has been realised in a form closer to multiculturalism, which sets the Western cultural standpoint as the elemental beginning that governs paternalistically over other forms of being based on assumptions of individualism (Rodríguez Cruz, 2018b: 209; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 58). For example, in Ecuador the 2008 Constitution's declaration on plurinationality has not guaranteed a complete self-determination over indigenous territories, because collective lands persist to be the subject of alternative claims (Radcliffe, 2012: 247).

Walsh further contextualises interculturality in Ecuadorian political action by stating that interculturality is realised in Ecuador through a double proposal of action and

struggle, where the first stands for restructuring state institutions, and the second refers to inclusion of epistemic diversity in the public administration (Walsh and Mignolo, 2018: 59–60). Action in this case refers to such aspects as increasing indigenous participation in state governance. Struggle, on the other hand, is an ongoing attempt to include Indigenous knowledges in practices governing state action. It stands for fighting for profound reforms that build “a new social condition of knowledge” (Walsh and Mignolo, 2018: 60).

Both action and struggle for interculturality are present in IBE. The Intercultural Bilingual Education Model in Ecuador, MOSEIB, sets forth the mission of the system of IBE as development of language and culture of peoples and indigenous nationalities through processes of teaching-apprenticeship of quality that favours development of people in the context of plurinational and intercultural state of Ecuador (Sistema de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe, 2017: 6). In this manner, the education system aims to enforce Indigenous knowledges in the schools and beyond, since it is also a tool for integrating different forms of thinking in the Ecuadorian society generally. The education system, in this sense, is an ongoing struggle that aims for epistemic diversity.

Moreover, IBE also represents action, since its history demonstrates increasing indigenous participation in one of the major state institutions and broadening self-determination. The establishment of CONAIE in 1986 was a decisive step, marking the surge of indigenous peoples’ voices in the national political debate represented by an organisation that in itself embodied the ideals of plurinationality, since it was an ensemble of jungle, mountain and coast groups’ federations recognised as “nationalities” (Jameson, 2011: 65). From the beginning, increased self-determination in education formed a central pillar for the movement’s demands and a 1988 agreement to establish DINEIB with the Borja Administration imprinted the first victory for the organisation and the movement itself (*ibid.*). It represents the beginning of successful intercultural action that aims to include indigenous peoples in the state institutions, as it meant that indigenous peoples could begin to administer their own education.

For the indigenous movement globally, a possibility to administer their own education system is essential, since historically Indigenous knowledges have been excluded from schooling, which has contributed to their wider marginalisation in society (Battiste et al., 2005: 13). Education in modern context has appeared as a benevolent system that can liberate people by providing tools for thinking and lead to intellectual growth and creativity, which has justified compulsory schooling in many parts of the world. Nevertheless, historically consequences have been dubious for indigenous peoples, who have suffered from Eurocentric basis of schooling that either has excluded their world-views or deformed them, leading to experiences of inequality and oppression. Consequently, education is a key aspect of decolonial struggle, as the legacy of colonialist history has shaped the forms it has taken and continues to influence indigenous peoples' lives (ibid).

A history of state education, or more appropriately educating indigenous peoples in Ecuador before the participation of indigenous movement, has followed similar global trends, where Indigenous knowledges have been excluded. In 1950s and 1960s just after Truman's The Point Four Program, which launched a discourse known as developmentalism that encouraged less developed countries, including Ecuador, to harness their potential resources in order to produce economic growth and catch up with more developed nations, a measure largely based on gross domestic product (Escobar, 1995), Ecuador conformed to an ideology that was based on the idea that developing countries could modernise their economy largely based on exporting primary products and become industrialised through this process. This project required "skilled labourers and modern citizens free of divisive ethnic allegiances, ignorance, and backward religious beliefs" and the key-aspect in the attempt was education (Rival, 1996: 153). In Ecuador, the development followed the general trend and especially 1970s was a time for addressing illiteracy and deficient educational services in the country, so that industrialising and modernising the productive system would have required skilled labourers (Moya, 1990: 332). In the centre of this educative project "the creation of a 'national and nationalist' conscience" was a major factor and cultural difference was incorporated as a part of the program only as far as it promoted integrating people from all social sectors in the national development (ibid.).

However, indigenous peoples also resisted their marginalisation in the education system, which illustrates the depth and complexity of indigenous struggle in Ecuador. Already in 1945, Dolores Cacuango pioneered in creating indigenous schooling that would respect and integrate indigenous languages and knowledges (Oviedo and Wildemeersch, 2008: 456). Her initiative commenced three indigenous schools near Quito, reflecting her lifelong work of fighting for the Kichwa language and land rights. This project encountered its end in 1963 with the reign of military government, when the last school was closed and the use of Kichwa was abolished in teaching (Oviedo and Wildemeersch, 2008: 457). Also, other sporadic projects were taking place throughout Latin America to enable community participation in schooling illustrating historical impact of indigenous and other minority groups (ibid.).

Nevertheless, these developments were accompanied by a tremendous impact that missionary schools had on the indigenous peoples, especially in the Amazonia, where indigenous communities were situated in remote corners of the country. State-sponsored education suffered from limited economical resources and hence, the modernising state collaborated with the private actors to take care of remote areas (Rodríguez Cruz, 2018a: 27–36). These actors consisted of missionaries in the mission of bringing “pacification” to indigenous groups (Rival, 1996). One important evangelical mission in this respect was the Summer Institute of Linguistics, SIL, which began its work in the 1950s with the purpose of introducing and translating the Bible to indigenous groups in their own indigenous languages, and finally displacing deviant indigenous practices with Christian morals (Freeland, 1996: 172). This meant that SIL undertook linguistic research among indigenous groups, including the Sapara, with whom two missionaries Catherine Peeke and Margaret Sargent spent time in the course of a few years from 1952 onwards (Andrade Pallares, 2001: 104–105; Moya, 2007: 75).

Illustrating complex links between the state, extractivism and education, the missionary activity in the Sapara territory was also intertwined with early oil exploration, since the oil company Shell had been responsible for better land access to Amazonia by creating and maintaining new paths in the forest (Bilhaut, 2011: 39; Moya, 2007: 74). This ease

of access enabled the penetration of SIL and Catholic missionaries into the region and some Sapara children attended these schools constructed in the 1970s (Bilhaut, 2011: 39). These included the village of Moretecocha along the Bobonaza-river, but there were no schools along Conambo and Pindoyacu rivers. It was only during the time of intercultural and bilingual education program that the first school was established in Llanhamacocha (Conambo) in the mid-80s and its first years were fraught with difficulties as teachers frequently deserted the school after the first vacations (Bilhaut, 2011: 39).

In the indigenous movement territorial and educational demands have formed the centre of the struggle from the beginning to this day illustrating their interconnectedness. A history of early indigenous movement and rise of core demands of education and territory has its roots in agricultural reforms and the agrarian movement of the mid-1960s to 1970s (Moya, 1990: 332). Firstly, reforms mainly concerned fixing land ownership rather than redistribution alongside with modernisation of agriculture and setting national standards for wages. The rural and indigenous movement responded to this reality and began demanding land and recognition of their local organisations and after some time the movement grew to include other requests including ones for acquiring education. This development was very strong in Amazonia, where land rights were extended to become a right for ancestral territory, which illustrates incorporating cultural reality of indigenous peoples in the analysis of the prevailing situation. Regarding education, the Federacion Shuar was a forerunner that already had organised bicultural and bilingual distance education among Shuar communities from the end of 1960s to 1970s and the organisation appealed for financial support. Territory and territoriality were tied up with culture to constitute a view on territory as a material context for realising “socio-cultural relations of the indigenous peoples” and hence, the movement delineated how Ecuador is constituted of different indigenous “nationalities” and initiated the ideal of plurinationality (ibid.).

The indigenous uprising of 1990 consolidated the indigenous movement in the Ecuadorian political arena, when the central government was obliged to read 16 demands as a result of effective road blocking (Jameson, 2011: 65; Mignolo and Walsh,



2018: 60). After the educational triumph of 1988, the movement moved to focus on territorial concerns and the first two points aspired to declare Ecuador as plurinational with official and lawful recognition of indigenous territories without the need to engage in pricey legal procedures, hence reflecting centrality of double demand for plurinational territorial control achieved through indigenous decision-making processes. Nevertheless, it was only with the 2008 Constitution that the demand was finally realised (Jameson, 2011).

The current form of intercultural bilingual education was initiated with the establishment of DINEIB, which took responsibility for indigenous education at all levels and for all 13 indigenous nationalities (Moya, 1990: 339; Oviedo and Wildemeersch, 2008: 457). DINEIB has utilised MOSEIB as the curricular model from 1993 onwards and it was originally created to reflect indigenous languages and knowledges in the education system, after bilingual intercultural education was officially recognised in 1989. The official curricular system in Ecuador consists of two curricular models, which are MOSEIB and the “Hispanic” system (Oviedo and Wildemeersch, 2008: 457).

In this system, IBE was further organised to allow each indigenous nationality to integrate their own language and knowledge in the pedagogy and curriculum, which enabled Saparas to create the trilingual model of education (Moya, 2007: 84; Oviedo and Wildemeersch, 2008: 458). Use of Spanish language characterised intercultural relations and it was assigned as the second language in the program (Oviedo and Wildemeersch, 2008: 457).

However, the government of Rafael Correa (2007-2017) indicated shifts for IBE especially, since the autonomy of DINEIB was annulled in 2009 (Veintie, 2018: 13). The Ministry of Education acquired authority over the IBE system, after it was integrated within the national educational system, conferred by the Executive Decree 1585. This signified that indigenous peoples of Ecuador lost to a considerable degree their self-determination over the education system. Even though IBE still existed, indigenous organisations no longer held the opportunity to select their own national and provincial authorities to govern IBE which became a responsibility of the minister of

education (ibid.) The situation did not recuperate with the introduction of the Intercultural Education Act, LOEI (Ley Orgánica de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe), in 2011, (Rodríguez Cruz, 2017: 43). LOEI set interculturality as the intersecting theme in the education system, which would encompass integration of Indigenous knowledges in the whole national educative model, including the mestizo population (ibid.). This however has not translated into actual achievements and in practice, the level of integration of Indigenous knowledges remains generally low (Veintie, 2018: 13).

Similarly, IBE suffered a great backlash of modernisation ideology during 2013-2014, when over ten thousand community-based schools were closed and funding reallocated for “millennial schools” (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 67). After the initial constitutional success, the government of Rafael Correa (2007-2017) adopted an authoritative top-down control over the state administration illustrated with increased centralisation of authority and criminalisation of protest (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 68). In educative policy this has meant a breach of collective right agreed since 1988 for “socioculturally and linguistically appropriate schooling”, since closing local schools has limited access to education (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 67). Losing local schooling can have a devastating impact on communities, since schools in rural areas often function also as a place of “community-based intergenerational education and sociopolitical organization”. The consequent political and cultural fracture combined with increased pressure to relocate closer to schools threaten these communities. Other possibilities include organising schooling privately or not sending children to schools. Walsh notifies how this dynamic resembles the 1950s, when aforementioned SIL and other missionary groups intertwined with Rockefeller oil were organising education (ibid.).

Similarly, modernisation continued in the level of higher education, which was epitomised in the closure of Amawtay Wasi, the Intercultural University of Indigenous Nationalities and Peoples of Ecuador (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 69–71). From its foundation in 2000, the university had pursued wider epistemological diversity, as its objective was to produce intercultural knowledge derived from Indigenous knowledges and challenging academic assumptions founded upon supposedly universal Western knowledge. The project faced its end in 2013, because it did not meet the standards set

by the National Council of Evaluation. These standards were criticised for cultural inappropriateness, since the reasons for declaring the university below the standards included such aspects as the lack of academic departments and centralised campus and faculty, both things that were consciously organised otherwise (ibid.). This illustrates how the standards set for education become problematic if they are applied and developed without intercultural consideration.

Nevertheless, currently the future of IBE appears more hopeful, as the presidency of Lenin Moreno has initiated negotiations for restoration of indigenous peoples' self-determination in respect to their education. In 2018, Moreno firmed a decree for establishment of a secretariat of intercultural bilingual education system, SEIB, (Secretaria del Sistema de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe), an agreement between the indigenous organisations and the Moreno government. SEIB has financial, administrative and pedagogical autonomy and its role is to guide a reform of IBE to restore education supportive of indigenous peoples' cultures (Vargas, 2018). Indigenous organisations worked on this reform during my stay and the final form and scale of the reform remains to be established in the future, as IBE is still under the Ministry of Education and not independent of the general state-education, but the situation appeared more hopeful than for the past ten years, as a member of CONFENIAE informed me during our interview.

As my main research question in this thesis is what kind of educational practices can strengthen political emancipation and territorial self-determination of indigenous peoples and what challenges must be faced by indigenous groups building such practices, it is imperative to discuss and analyse how different actors have aimed to answer these challenges in a concrete form in the past. History demonstrates challenges that indigenous people have faced to achieve education that they see appropriate, which is respectful of their knowledge and language and moreover strengthens and values them. In this chapter I have outlined the history of IBE to illustrate events that have impacted its development and the value that education holds for indigenous peoples. By discussing the particular history of Ecuador, I have demonstrated how education is a particular historical and cultural product that impacts people in manifold ways. In

Ecuador, education has been both a tool for “civilising” and modernising minority groups, but it has also been appropriated by indigenous peoples to revitalise culture. As education continues to influence people every day, it is a privileged arena of cultural struggle to achieve epistemological diversity and maintain indigenous cultures alive. This is why the indigenous movement in Ecuador continues to put tremendous effort to achieve self-determination over education, and this project is intertwined with territorial struggles as illustrated above.

## 5. Territory

As my research question addresses possibilities to achieve territorial self-determination and political emancipation through educational practices, the concept of territory forms a central part of the thesis and I explore its meaning in this chapter. As I illustrated in chapter 4, the struggle for territory and education have largely defined indigenous movement's demands and they have been closely aligned in the movement's history. Similarly, territorial concerns are not independent from educational practices, as displayed in the entwined history of oil, education, religion and state encroachment in indigenous territories. In this chapter I will outline what territory is to guide my understanding of the issue throughout this thesis and establish how territory functions as a principal tool to gain political rights for indigenous peoples in Ecuador.

Territory has been a topic of study in multiple disciplines including geography, anthropology, international relations and political science, which has led to diverse understandings of the concept (Delaney, 2005: 34–35). In my thesis, I will concentrate on geographical and anthropological literature, for geographers have provided probably the largest array of territory related studies, while anthropologists have paid special attention to indigenous territories. In this chapter, I will first outline the theoretical conceptualisation of territory regarding my thesis. From here I move to present the legal and organisational framework that territory has in Ecuador. Finally, I will display how territory was understood by my informants in the Sapara territory and concluding the discussion, I will summarise all presented perspectives to formulate what territory signifies in this thesis.

### 5.1 Theoretical overview on territory

Delaney (2005) provides a good overview on the subject, since he has examined how the concept has been developed among different disciplines, in addition to his own expertise on geography, without forgetting multi-disciplinary approaches such as border theory. His analysis brings forward an essential aspect of power as it relates to territory:

“What makes an enclosed space a territory is, first, that it signifies, and, second, that the meanings it carries or conveys refer to or implicate social power” (Delaney, 2005: 17). Indigenous territories signify multiple things beginning with a sense of home and place (Basso, 1996), but in my thesis, I place special focus on the social power that indigenous territory implies. Indigenous peoples have struggled to gain territorial recognition to have control over their land, but territory also implicates a larger political project to attain self-determination. Furthermore, as territory has implications on social life, this struggle includes the right to define how territory is understood, which is itself political.

Recognising his merits, I agree with Halvorsen’s critique of Delaney on how “there remains a constraint implicit to most Anglophone readings of territory that ties it to the top-down control and regulation of space by dominant forms related to the modern, colonial state” (2019: 791–792). This prevails significantly especially for analysis of other-than-modern territories, where Delaney shows simplistic understanding of an issue showing his lack of attention to territories that are not constituted following logic similar to a modern and colonial state (2005: 20–21). Delaney opposes modern with pre-modern that according to him “may continue to exist in isolated pockets”, even though he first reserves the difference between the two as a temporal one and hence, he risks casting various groups of peoples to a different, ahistorical time, a topic strongly criticised by Fabian (1983). Delaney does extend his discussion from temporal category of modern to modernity, but he does not further problematise the presented category of heterogeneous pre-modern, which leads to a sense of duality, where the rest of peoples are cast on the side of modernity which he defined as follows:

[A] particular way of life (an “episteme” or a culturally distinctive mode of thinking, feeling, and being) that began to emerge as a rather local cultural transformation in western Europe in the middle centuries of the second Christian millennium. Through the complex processes of imperialism, colonialism, world-wide capitalism, and literacy it came, in the middle decades of the twentieth century, to comprehensively, if quite unevenly, embrace the planet as a whole.  
— Delaney, 2005: 21.

From the perspective of my case study, this type of approach to relationship between territory and modernity simply does not explain indigenous territories in Ecuador. The illustrated episteme for example includes capitalism as the central form of economy, which is not true for the Sapara communities that I visited, whose production/consumption could be defined as a subsistence economy though in a way that Marshall Sahlins would describe as affluent society (1972). Nevertheless, my informants also interact with capitalist economy in multiple ways, which illustrates how their life is constituted in relation to modernity, though, at least according to Delaney's definition of the word, it cannot be defined as such. Neither is pre-modern a satisfactory category for the Sapara informants, if the previously mentioned critique by Fabian is remembered. Delaney continues to refer to how modernity's grip of the whole globe is incomplete, but this does not save his analysis from the fact that it does not cover in depth indigenous territories formed in the complex interplay of state and non-state actors, who do not entirely respond to the definition of modernity advanced by Delaney.

Furthermore, though Delaney brings the issue of power into the discussion, there remains a question about what power exactly means in this context. This brings me to studies that have contributed to other dimensions of territory and especially developed analyses based on indigenous territorial struggles that have aggrandised in Latin America during previous decades. Clare et al. (2018) clarify how territorial politics also exist in contrast to hegemonic state-centric territories as exemplified with cases from Buenos Aires, Argentina and Zapatistas. Their argument is that territory and power is often understood too simplistically through a state-centric lens on sovereignty and power over something that corresponds in their view to Spanish word *poder*. Hence, they pair *poder* with *potencia*, a power to, another Spanish word that shows the multi-faceted nature of power. An excessive focus on *poder* risks losing sight of how *potencia* also works in constructing territory, when people engage with counter-hegemonic strategies to develop territory in order to build autonomy and well-being for themselves. Losing sight of those strategies can lead to marginalisation of social movements and even people. However, Clare et al. emphasise that the discussed "territories of contestation" should not be seen purely representing *potencia*, but are formed in

interaction with state-actors and thus, can only be understood if both forms of power are attended to.

Territory has also been investigated in the context of Ecuadorian Amazon by Erazo (2013) who demonstrates how indigenous territory is far from a bounded entity, but many influences shape indigenous governing of territories from far and wide, ranging from international environmental organisations to the nation-state to the peoples themselves, who challenge their leaders by undertaking strategies such as “government through distance”. This refers to not showing up to events organised by unpopular leaders and hence, questioning the legitimacy of their power. Nevertheless, his analysis lacks attention to *potencia* emphasised by Clare et al. (2018) of how indigenous governing also employs horizontal power and counter-hegemonic innovations that aim to reduce *poder* in the working of bureaucratic practices demanded to sustain indigenous territory inside of the plurinational state of Ecuador. Eroza perceives leaders and people in opposition to each other, which can reflect reality. After all, leaders mainly negotiate relations between the nation-state and the people, leading to their differentiated position and possible alienation from communities themselves. At the same time, however, people of indigenous territories also drive to shape forms of appropriating space to include horizontal forms of power that do not respond to the binary of leader/people, which necessarily implies verticality.

Halvorsen attends to this complexity of territory and opens up its definition to include territorial projects different from “the context of the modern, Eurocentric state” (2019: 790). In this thesis, I define territory following his words: “*the appropriation of space in pursuit of political projects* – in which multiple (from bottom-up grassroots to top-down state) political strategies exist as overlapping and entangled.” (2019: 791 [italics in original]) This view catches how territories are formed in the pursuit of political aims such as autonomy with certain geographical space as a basis for organisation, yet it leaves space to act for multiple actors who employ both hierarchical and horizontal power.



Another important addition to this debate is the connection between territory and place, as *territorio* has a somewhat wider meaning in comparison to the Anglophone treatment of the term, since it bears a significance closer to the concept of place (Halvorsen, 2019: 795). Escobar echoes this by claiming that one (ecological) perspective on territory utilised by Afro-Columbian communities of the Colombian Pacific is “a representation of the collective ecocultural practices” (2008: 59). Halvorsen citing Santos (2014) discusses a need for “intercultural translation” to explain *territorio* and its difference to territory (2019: 795), a task that I see as important for my thesis, since the language of my fieldwork was Spanish, and I too witnessed the different understandings that *territorio* holds. To respect the vision of territory that people with whom I worked hold, I also attend to this dimension of a territory as a place, though I will clarify the different usage of the term. I will return to this point at the end of this chapter as I analyse the ethnographical treatment of *territorio*. Before this, it is however important to bring forward the legal and organisational side as it presents itself in the context of Ecuador.

## **5.2 Organisational and legal situation of indigenous territories in Ecuador**

As I already mentioned in chapters 3 and 4, indigenous territories are a central organising principle for indigenous self-determination and political participation as realised in plurinational Ecuador. Their jurisdiction is based on the 2008 Constitution, which “permits the creation of indigenous territorial circumscriptions (...) and indigenous authorities are to exercise judicial functions on the basis of ancestral traditions and forms of law”(Radcliffe, 2012: 244). This has guaranteed indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians rights as autonomous groups, whose cultural distinctiveness is recognised and respected as separate peoples with their own collective lands inside the Ecuadorian state. This has transformed Ecuadorian politics and administrative structures to some extent, since indigenous organisations have assumed new roles as an outcome of decentralisation associated with the plurinational state (ibid.). Also, Ecuador has ratified the International Labor Organization, ILO, 169 Convention that declares collective rights of indigenous peoples (ILO, 1989).

Nevertheless, subsoil and non-renewable natural resources are owned and managed by the state, which means that ultimately indigenous territories are not completely autonomous units from the state (Vela-Almeida, 2018: 130). They have a right to free, prior and informed consultation in the case of extractivist projects, but their autonomous decision-making is debilitated to some extent by centralised national planning, which governs natural resources deemed important for national development, while not all state institutions have guaranteed indigenous representation (Radcliffe, 2012: 246; Vela-Almeida, 2018: 130). In Ecuador's law concerning subsoil riches, the continuing legacy of colonialism demonstrates itself in the historical continuity, since the claim on underground minerals has its roots in the Spanish crown (Vela-Almeida, 2018: 130). Hence, the legislation maintains a certain level of political autonomy and self-determination for indigenous peoples, but ultimately the state retains its control over territories rendering them vulnerable to extractivism.

To conclude, contrastive definitions of territory prevail beyond the academy as Ecuador's post-neoliberal regime and indigenous peoples claiming their right for their territory in plurinational context struggle for their respective understandings of sovereignty. Indigenous peoples claim their right for autonomy inside their territory, where they can realise socially and materially their ways of life enacted with the surrounding environment, whereas Ecuador's government aims to hold control over natural resources inside the country's borders. Indigenous territories have administrative power over their land, but the ownership of subterranean resources remains in the hands of the national government, resulting in two opposing views on territorial sovereignty (see also, Vela-Almeida, 2018). Next, I will formalise the ethnographical perspective presented by Saporas who participated in my fieldwork to illustrate how this legal category of territory is understood in practice and to tie up these multiple approaches, I will end with the conclusions.

### 5.3 Engaging with ethnographic perspective

To provide intercultural understanding on what *territorio* signifies for Saporas that I met, I will illustrate perspectives that I encountered during my fieldwork. In conversation with Saporas, they for example referred to territory as something that they should take care of by allowing old *chakras* to hollow, so that they can recover as rainforest, or by planting more fruit for animals to eat, as was told to me by my friend Julio, a member of one of the larger villages in the Sapara territory and a former teacher. Julio also thought that they should formulate a formal plan for sustainable use of the forest to avoid deforestation and other menaces. In his view, territory was also something that brings rights that should be respected by outside actors: “Respect our rights as pueblos, as communities as a territory”.

For Julio, territory was the fundamental basis for preserving their culture and life, because collective land titles recognised as the Sapara territory could bring them protection and autonomy. He referred to ongoing land struggle, as NASE was still seeking to have a large area of land that they inhabited to be recognised as their territory. Nevertheless, he wanted to convey to me that he saw territory also as something distinct from political discourse, something relating to living with nature and life itself:

If we do not have territory (...) we will be there, lost. For this it is one of the things to create titles, for protect territory, create autonomy, self-determination, self-identify us as Sapra pueblo that we are living here as a community in the territory well connected with the nature. It is not a political discourse. It is a discourse that you live here a life with nature. Maybe some people from outside do not understand, they say that you live in the forest, in the forest, they say. No, here it is a life, where you learn many things, because here it is a university of forest, the plants help you to vision more with the globalised world that will move forward.

In another interview Jesús, a teacher regarded by his fellow villagers as an expert of Sapara language, explained to me how:

Territory is us. It is not the forest, it is us. We are thinking about our grandchildren, culture, as they say generations. We are *mono coto* [Ecuadorian mantled howler]. We are Sapara. We will

live, but maintain the forest, I always say, territory is not nobody. It is not the forest, the territory is us, the lands is us. (...) Territory is us, territory is us people. Therefore, we have to take care of ourselves. If I destroy territory, I do harm for myself. Hence, for this reason I say that the territory is us, we are Saparas. That is territory, it has to be taken care of. I cannot divide territory to parts and lands, no. For this reason I say that the territory is us and we have to take care of it.

Another explanation was from señor Juan Vargas, an elder official of NASE:

The territory... it is, where to create life, men and women and children... which... I lament a lot that it is the territory. Our territory. I tell you, it is not a piece/part/chunk like that, the territory is in global. Marked from old times of ancestors and globally they did not have earlier informed... there were not territory of Napo, of Pastaza and in those they lived. And now, the government says that it is necessary to limit, and they are limiting in a global form of territory. It is a territory.

Also, Irma, a student attending a *collegio* in the Sapara territory, 40 years of age and a mother of three, told me about territory in this manner:

The territory is... what we eat cultivating and the territory is from where we have remedies in the forest and inside this territory, there are many things. Other thing is what they say outside, mestizos, for them it is a piece.

These statements reflect multiple understandings of territory among the Sapara. On one hand it is perceived to be a governmental structure, an organisation, which reflects a view on territory as “a top-down control and regulation of space” mentioned by Halvorsen. This view came forward with señor Vargas, who was critical of territorial partitions and limitations that did not reflect ancestral ways of dwelling in the forest.

Territory was also perceived in terms of rights that belong to Saparas in respect to other actors such as government and extractivist enterprises, as a judicial concept that granted certain rights for Saparas. This correlated also to the definition of territory from Halvorsen, which is: “*the appropriation of space in pursuit of political projects* – in which multiple (from bottom-up grassroots to top-down state) political strategies exist as overlapping and entangled” (2019: 791, [italics in the original]). This type of thinking of territory as a political project was also evident, as my informants said that without it, they would be lost, and it is the foundation of Sapara identity.

In addition to previous stances, the interview excerpts also illustrate a type of thinking that combines territory with place. For example, Irma emphasised how it is what they cultivate and eat referring to experience of territory in her everyday life. She also shows how she relates to *territorio* as she interacts with land in the cycle of cultivation and consumption. Such connection is taken a step further by Jesús, since he defines territory as Sapara people, showing simultaneously a political dimension of territory, but defining it separately from top-down form of governance, as for him territory is all people, not just leaders. Jesús also demonstrated the fundamental connection between people and forest that both depend on each other, so that territory itself is a result of relations between people and environment that mutually constitute each other to form it, as Jesús demonstrated by highlighting the importance that they as Saporas have for well-being of territory. They are the ones who can prevent the threatening process that might transform the territory into an exploitable natural resource.

The relationship between the indigenous understandings of territory and the state-centred legal and organisational framework is at times contradictory. Some friction is caused because the bureaucratic organisational structures are simultaneously an effective strategy to obtain rights and self-determination, but they also demand adjustment to political practices set by the nation-state, which poses a risk of weakening indigenous political structures. This was an ongoing worry among Saporas according to one of the NASE-representatives, and for this reason, they intended to visit Sapara territory for consultation before important decisions to gather different voices. They remembered some bad experiences of authoritarian decision-making and corruption, which they were determined to avoid.

From the analysis of my fieldwork material, I conclude that presenting territory in terms of place is also an attempt to redefine territory through indigenous categories. Illustrating a sense of place that people had in relation to territory alleviated pressure to adjust to overly bureaucratic definitions and rather approach the issue through a relationship that they had with the place. In a way this is a political redefinition where the Saporas that I met aspire for wider self-determination and political emancipation,

since they modify the concept to territory to better suit their worldview and bring these views forward in conversations that they have with outside actors and potential allies. In other words, it is a strategy to open up political discussion to include Indigenous knowledge in its categories. This adds to the conceptual scrutinisation by Halvorsen through which I also define territory, as it brings forth how people engage in different types of strategies to exercise politics to appropriate space, while some of these strategies might not seem as political in the first glance. The thoughts of Julio on the grander well-being of harmonious living in, and with, the territory, and Jesús's widened view of territory as something that: "is us". This brings to mind Vela-Ameida's thoughts concerning standardisation of territory: "It is critical to stress the risk of producing standardized models of territory under the label of 'plurinational' in order to essentially enhance state control of territories within national land. Such state rationalities reduce the significance of plural meanings and diverse territories." (Vela-Ameida, 2018: 134). The reworking of territory that I have done in this chapter is a prerogative for this thesis, for as I start to analyse my ethnographic material in relation to my research question, these place-bound political dimensions are at the heart of my findings. This conceptualisation of territory guides the understanding of what signifies territorial self-determination as well as what political emancipation can entail.

## **6. Ethnographic analysis: Incorporating Indigenous knowledge in the education system**

According to my informants, the integration of Sapara worldview in the education system is in many ways a principal means to defend their territory. This worldview, as presented by them, contains a deep connection to the surrounding environment and their interrelatedness to their surroundings demanded responsibility that could cultivate care among the youth towards their territory. For this reason, in this chapter, I will evaluate how Indigenous knowledge could be incorporated in the education system and what important issues have to be considered in the process. I will begin by introducing the topic by illustrating what Indigenous knowledge means and its significance especially for the Saperas that I encountered during my fieldwork. From there I will turn to discussing what their hopes and aspirations for incorporating their knowledge into the education system were. This part will delineate the importance of Indigenous knowledge for territorial defence. In the following subchapter, I move on to analyse the possible risks that have to be accounted for in this process and I also include ethnographic material from my fieldwork with other actors than Saperas. After this, I illustrate some cultural problems in the current education system faced by indigenous students that I observed during my fieldwork. Then, I focus on the significance of locality in organisation of education, as I describe the impact of migration and relationship between Indigenous knowledge and place. Subsequently, after illuminating the ethnographical context, I shall move to a concluding discussion on how to integrate indigenous knowledge in the education system with respect to the aforementioned topics.

### **6.1 What is Indigenous knowledge?**

Indigenous knowledge as a term comprises diverse knowledge systems held by numerous indigenous peoples that each have their own distinct history and culture. In order to illustrate what the term signifies while being respectful to the diversity that it entails, I approach the topic from the perspective of my case study with Saperas. In this

subchapter, I will discuss Sapara knowledge as presented to me during my fieldwork in relation to the literature on Indigenous knowledge to demonstrate existing similarities without losing a sense of diversity. This approach enables analysis on Indigenous knowledge as perceived by my informants, but also provides a general picture of the concept.

To provide one type of definition to introduce the topic, I refer to an institutional perspective on local and Indigenous knowledge, as presented by Unesco on their website:

Local and indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. For rural and indigenous peoples, local knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, ritual and spirituality. These unique ways of knowing are important facets of the world's cultural diversity, and provide a foundation for locally-appropriate sustainable development.

— UNESCO, n.d. [2019a].

Firstly, this definition associates indigenous with local knowledge, which marks how place and Indigenous knowledge are deeply intertwined, a topic often reflected in literature, where Indigenous knowledges are associated with locality, as they are derived and tangled with the specific environment (Berkes, 2012; Veintie and Holm, 2010: 331; Battiste, 2008). Second point worth noting here is how the definition provided by Unesco further shifts attention to how Indigenous knowledge is recognised as important for sustainable development projects. These type of studies often discuss Indigenous knowledge under the term “traditional ecological knowledge” that is more limited in its scope, as it focuses on the environmental dimension, whereas Indigenous knowledge comprises knowledge in its totality (Berkes, 2012). Finally, as the definition also notes, Indigenous knowledge cannot be described solely as a collection of information, but forms “a complete knowledge system with its own languages, with its own concepts of epistemology, philosophy, and scientific and logical validity” (Battiste, 2008: 500). This means that Indigenous knowledge forms a total whole that the Unesco definition calls



“cultural complex” or as Battiste refers to it, “knowledge system”, a term that I will employ in this thesis to illustrate a different form of knowing utilised by my informants.

Keeping these general notions in mind to augment understanding of the topic, I move to discuss how my Sapara informants presented their knowledge. Saporas, with whom I conducted my research, are deeply proud of their own culture and knowledge, which has received international acclaim in the form of an Unesco status. I share the following excerpt from my ethnographic diary, where Fernando, a former teacher and a born member of the community Llanhamacocha describes Sapara knowledge that he playfully calls the university of forest (*la universidad de selva*):

Fernando established that education was not unique to western society, but Saporas also had their own system, only it was more practical. They had learned walking and dreaming. The jungle was full of life such as variety of plants that they learned to recognise by living in the environment. Dreams contained knowledge that they learned understand by sharing them during the early mornings with the family, where they are interpreted. According the dreams, the day was planned. It was not only dreams, but also people’s ability to read the environment that would provide ways to plan and live well. Birds were messengers, whose news could be understood those who knew how to interpret them. Fernando added that in his view, Saporas had their own “writing system” that instead of being based on letters, functioned by interpreting knowledge stored in signs perceptible their environment: they could read environment to know how old is the forest or where there has been a community and so on. Their writing system contained knowledge about how a person’s life stories can be observed in the forest. Children learn through practice, when they help their parents the ways of the forest. Their life flourishes through the connection that they have with the nature.

— Author’s ethnographic diary 2018.

In this excerpt, Fernando gave a few examples to illustrate Indigenous knowledge that in his perspective Saporas have. They have a wide knowledge of flora and fauna present in their surroundings and they can interpret changes and cycles in their environment that offer a foundation for their actions, for example, in regard to subsistence practices.

Fernando’s explanation links to many usual features of Indigenous knowledge, since it illustrates environmental knowledge and sustainable subsistence practices, also prevalent in the discourse on traditional ecological knowledge. Fernando also spoke about ways of transmitting knowledge and how it is learned. This coincides with Battiste’s description about how Indigenous knowledge is usually transmitted: “Often

oral and symbolic, it is transmitted through the structure of Indigenous languages and passed on to the next generation through modelling, practice, and animation, rather than through the written word” (2002: 2).

Another term applied almost synonymously with Indigenous knowledge by my informants is traditional knowledge or in Spanish *conocimiento ancestral*, which was often employed in conversations that I had during my field work to describe Indigenous knowledge. For example, Irma emphasised the intergenerational quality of Indigenous knowledge in the following fashion: “I have all that my grandparents left for me, all of this, I have in my body, I have been delivered the knowledge how to cure, all of this we know. We know how to share this with our cousins and children.” This illustrates how knowledge has continuity, but also how knowledge is embedded in the network of relations, where people maintain and share knowledge with others (Veintie, 2018: 19).

However, Indigenous knowledge transforms in time and develops in different directions, even if it is called traditional or ancestral (Veintie, 2018: 19; Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2008). Indigenous peoples have suffered from how their cultures and knowledges have been portrayed through essentialism in academic literature, which signifies “the belief that a set of unchanging properties (essences) delineates the construction of a particular category” (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2008: 142). Fabian (1983) for example critiqued cultural anthropology for assigning people in a different ahistorical sphere of existence. The term ancestral knowledge was also critiqued in one of my interviews with a Shuar poet and political activist, Rebecca:

I don't call it ancestral knowledge, I call it Shuar knowledge. Because... the ancestral is what my grandparents had, only theirs. But in reality, Shuar knowledge is our knowledge, it is my knowledge. Therefore, I acquire like that, knowledge, not ancestral, but Shuar knowledge.

In her statement Rebecca attacked essentialist notions connected to Indigenous knowledge and emphasised how it is alive in her person. This also reflects a conversation on cultural difference in Ecuador, as indigenous peoples struggle to show their rights for autonomy and difference in changing circumstances. Essentialist portrayals of indigenous people produce a constricted category of indigenous identity

that do not comprise lives of actual indigenous peoples, who are hence “deemed unauthentic” (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 2008: 142).

Returning to Fernando, in the end of our conversation he told me that his hopes for his children were that they would not lose their culture but learn how to maintain the forest alive and learn what matters, which is not material aspects, but their vision of life. In his examples of their knowledge, it became clear that practical skills and techniques, such as hunting, function as more than a subsistence strategy, since they also serve as a way of relating to a complex web of life in the forest. In his view, Saparas know how to cultivate suitable plants and take to consideration time and soil, and before all else, they apprehend how to cultivate in a manner that sustains enfolding life around them. For that reason, they rotate their gardens and exercise restraint in hunting. For Fernando, subsistence strategies also tie together with other aspects of Indigenous knowledge that include awareness and interpretation of their environment, which demands noting any changes, for example on which flora and fauna are prevalent and in what quantities in their surroundings. Principally, knowledge achieved its full significance, when information was interpreted together with worldview and vision illustrating the holistic quality of Indigenous knowledge.

As illustrated above, the world inhabited by the Sapara as described by my informants could be described from the perspective that Escobar calls “relational ontology” (2016:18). According to Escobar the world is brought into existence through relations experienced between different beings and life forms and the relations are enacted “through an infinite set of practices carried out by all kinds of beings and life forms, involving a complex organic and inorganic materiality of water, minerals, degrees of salinity, forms of energy (sun, tides, moon, relations of force), and so forth” (ibid.). Basically “*nothing preexist the relations that constitute it*” (ibid. [italics in the original]). A similar viewpoint on Indigenous epistemologies in Ecuador is shared by Reascos as presented by Veintie: “Indigenous epistemology is relational; it starts from the premise that nothing in the universe is meaningful on its own and that everything has value in relation to the totality” (2018: 21). Moreover, many scholars emphasise the holism of Indigenous knowledge, which is also a quality shared by the

Sapara knowledge, as it was presented to me (Berkes, 2012; Cajete, 2008; Wilson, 2008).

This relationality guides understanding of nature of Indigenous knowledge and has implications for possibilities for passing knowledge from one generation to another, as knowledge is constituted by the network of relations. In this thesis, my understanding of Indigenous knowledge is based on relational ontology in a sense that I treat Indigenous knowledge more as a way to inhabit the world guided by learning intergenerational knowledge rather than as a defined set of information and its relation to individual. This is also inspired by Quijano's view that shows communality of knowledge: "Knowledge in this perspective is an intersubjective relation for the purpose of something, not a relation between an isolated subjectivity, and that something" (Quijano, 2007: 173). In other words, knowledge does not exist independently from its bearers nor can it be discussed outside the context of community. Knowledge is ancestral, but living, because world-making practices carried out by the Saporas that I met, are taught to them by their elders, yet practices themselves achieve the world daily bringing it into existence. Thus, it is a living knowledge that can also change and take new forms, especially, because it becomes in relation to beings and life forms in their surroundings.

For the Saporas who participated in my fieldwork, the most emphasised demonstration of their knowledge was dreaming. For example, Irma explained how she saw their knowledge and culture, which in her speech became one and the same: "But our culture that we know in the nature, we know, it informs us, tells us, because in truth, we dream these realities, what will happen to us, what won't happen to us." Dreaming and visioning with help of plants revealed hidden reality and Saporas could learn things in their dreams. Dreams helped them to plan their day and often they assured survival, since they could avoid accidents or change their bad fortune, thanks to the information that they had had from their dreams.

The importance of dreams further marks how Sapara knowledge also contains aspects incomprehensible for a person accustomed to the Western epistemology. This gap in understanding was described thus by Irma:

Because we cannot speak about all the knowledge that we have here, because for us this knowledge is sacred. Of course, yes, we can speak about some parts, but not about all that we know. You cannot know which are medicines, who they are or from where a spirit comes from, no, because you will not know nor see. Because we already are connected with the nature and we know.

In Irma's opinion, much of their knowledge was simply incomprehensible to outsiders, who had not learned to connect to nature in similar manner to them. This incomprehensibility resembles what de la Cadena (2015) recognises in her work, founding her argument partly on the concept of coloniality of power by Quijano. De la Cadena argues that coloniality of power is founded upon nature/humanity-division, first endorsed by the Christian faith and later by "reason" (2015: 92). Nature/humanity dichotomy, though increasingly questioned, still persists through indiscriminate utilisation of representation. Other knowledges are recognised, but they are articulated by means of "the abstract language and the local practices of academic disciplines, politics and religion" that enables representation, where the subjective translation of culture brings forward diversity, and science upholds universal reflecting nature-humanity divide (de la Cadena, 2015: 99). She poses the relations between certain Andean indigenous groups with earth-beings as an example. To uphold a dichotomy between nature and humanity, earth-beings need to be represented as a cultural belief that denies relations between them and *runakuna*, as the Quehua community that she discusses call themselves (ibid.).

Similarly, Irma recognised how her knowledge on the reality that she experienced could be misunderstood and misrepresented by an outsider, probably in terms of a cultural belief that would deny the reality of relations that she had with her surrounding environment. I would like to argue that her knowledge is denied as knowledge as it is represented as culture. The problems arise as her knowledge is represented in terms of science and culture, where her vast expertise on plants can be filed together with science, but her ability to know and learn through practices such as dreams is part of culture. This approach dissects her knowledge and transforms it. Her words question the ability of a researcher such as I to represent her knowledge adequately, which is also a

way to refuse my representation of her knowledge. This illustrates limits of the Western epistemological standpoint to adequately address her experience that does not abide the nature-humanity divide in a similar manner as my knowledge of the world.

Moreover, my Sapara informants often defended the value of their knowledge in relation to Western knowledge during our conversations. This brings me back to the coloniality of power. For example, Fernando and Julio both used the term “the university of forest” to claim equal importance of their knowledge and to counter the historical experience of coloniality of knowledge that had disclaimed their knowledge. With coloniality, I refer a use of word as utilised in a line of thinking originating from the work of Quijano (2000), who defined coloniality and coloniality of power to describe legacies of colonialism operating for example together with capitalism. To explain the concept briefly, coloniality of power is intimately tied to racial hierarchies and operates around Eurocentrism that established the bottom-line rationality of this composition of power (de la Cadena, 2015: 294; Quijano, 2000). Quijano speaks about a colonial matrix of power, CMP, which is heterogeneous as well as discontinuous as it is sustained by independent domains such as politics or economy, which however are subsidiary to knowledge operating around Eurocentric rationality that has displaced knowledges of colonised peoples (de la Cadena, 2015: 294; Quijano, 2000; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 141–145). All dimensions, coloniality of power (including imposed racial hierarchies), capitalist economy and Eurocentric rationality intertwine, and the decolonisation of society requires changes with each one of them (de la Cadena, 2015; 294; Quijano, 2000). Also Mignolo (2011) elaborates Quijano’s concept and illustrates how CMP functions. One example is about how the logic of coloniality dictates dissemination and production of knowledge that is reflected in such aspects as epistemic hierarchy further institutionalised by the global academy and publication industry, where Western knowledge is advantaged at the expense of non-Western knowledges (Mignolo, 2011 17–19). This illustrates how emphasis on Indigenous knowledges links together with other levels of struggle such as political participation, control over land, or a historical disregard toward their knowledge.

My informants' insistence on the equality of their knowledge illustrates a pervasive presence of coloniality in people's lives that continues to impact ways how people view the world. Irma, Fernando and Julio were all respected members of their community, who had taken a stance to defend their culture and territory and they were also ready to defend their world. Nevertheless, the experience of coloniality of knowledge prompted their defence of their knowledge, showing how they themselves were not foreign to the phenomena as Julio explained: "It is a discourse that you live here a life in the nature. Maybe some people from outside do not understand, they say that you live in the forest, in the forest, they say." Larger Ecuadorian society still holds prejudices against the value of Indigenous knowledge and life, which appear as uncivilised and backward as a result of historical disavowal of indigenous experience and knowledges echoing above discussion on CMP. Nevertheless, the Saporas that I met were fighting to maintain their own knowledge and were eager to pass it on.

To conclude, in this subchapter, I have brought up how Indigenous knowledge is understood by my Sapara informants in a holistic and relational way, and how it is deeply imbedded in the territory of the group, in the land, the spirits, the rivers, the flora and fauna, and how the group interacts with these entities and vice versa. Indigenous knowledge, as mentioned above has historically been marginalised through coloniality of knowledge creating epistemological knowledge hierarchies, and to bring these different epistemological systems on an equal footing was seen by my informants as one of the most important ways through which the Sapara could retain and strengthen their culture and territory. As education is self-evidently a major part of this task, I now turn to presenting my observations and analysis on the motives and goals that were present during my fieldwork for integrating Indigenous knowledge with the education system. For now, I want to emphasise that the difference between these knowledges was not expressed by my informants, nor should it be understood in a mystified and exotic form, but rather I have aimed to describe how their knowledge differed from learning practices of schools. As I will argue in the next subchapter, what my Sapara informants aspired for is an education system that would enable the teaching of both knowledge systems in a complementary fashion and by this, hoped to benefit from different knowledges present in their lives.

## 6.2 Hopes for education and motivations and goals for integrating Indigenous knowledge

In this subchapter, I present aspirations that people had for education in general and especially for integrating their knowledge in the education system. During my fieldwork among the Sapara, my informants explained to me that their knowledge and worldview needs to be shared with the youth, since it teaches to respect and connect with their environment and ensures that they will continue protecting the territory. Guillermo, a father of four and a husband of Frida, an elementary school teacher who had moved to teach the children in his village many years ago from another community, illustrated this point during an interview I had with him and his wife:

We have strengthened (territory) up to this moment. Without any problems. Our culture what you are now sharing with us. This was what strengthened it. We here apply how to hunt and fish. We share with our families. We gather fruits and forest products. It is our education. We have to teach this to our children as such, we have to live without destroying our forest, without selling it.

Guillermo perceived their knowledge as a foundation that would help protect their environment. This corresponds to studies on how indigenous peoples and their knowledge are fundamental for preventing deforestation (Gorenflo et al., 2012), and further illustrates the importance of integrating Indigenous knowledge in the education system as a strategy for conservation of biological as well as cultural and linguistic diversity, jointly described as “biocultural diversity” (Burford et al., 2012).

Guillermo’s statement also reflects how territory as a term encompassed aspects of place, discussed further in subchapter 5.3, in a sense that the defence of Sapara territory is perceived in terms of conservation of environment and not only through political practices, even though the two are interrelated. The statement however aligns with a definition of territory as “*appropriation of space in the pursuit of political projects – in which multiple (from bottom-up grassroots to top-down state) political strategies exist as overlapping and entangled*” (Halvorsen, 2019: 791, [italics in the original]), because it reveals how the Saporas that I encountered appropriate space, when they incorporate it in their network of relations that are re-affirmed in the process of dwelling. The



process is not solely political, in a sense that Saporas have inhabited the landscape in question before it became a territory in the context of plurinational Ecuador. However, in the current situation the landscape also has a political quality as territory, leading to the present situation where the ways of “inhabiting it” have become political as well. This is why Guillermo’s words were meant as political. He aimed to demonstrate how Saporas were qualified as caretakers of land. They have a right to it, since they know how to protect it, but only if their knowledge is passed on to future generations. In that respect, for Guillermo, education was crucial for accomplishing this political strategy.

The Saporas with whom I conversed on these subjects of territory, education and Indigenous knowledge, were keen to share what they hoped education to be and how their own knowledge could be integrated in the education system. I will present excerpts from the interviews with people to illustrate what kind of hopes and ideas they had. In one of our recorded conversations, Julio summarised many of the sentiments for the importance of an integrated curriculum of knowledge systems in the following manner:

In practice they are necessary tools for the youth in the present moment. Because we are in other generation, new period of life, where there are more extensive influences from the western system from outside. For that reason now, every time, a law from politicians, the country, the institution, the constitutional law will be changing things. And for this reason it is important that we construct tools for the youth that they can defend their territory. For example, for having the youth prepared for different changes in the natural environment and in this manner it is important now, but also as I told you, it is about having balance which would be combined education with two knowledges and the relationship to the nature. Therefore, in this manner it could contribute something more for the nature, because we are part of the nature. Hence, as human beings and as people from here, from the community, the objective that serves to take care and protect the territory.

For Saporas, education is perceived as necessary for preparing the youth with tools for the reality of the present moment with environmental changes and extensive outside influences. From the point of territorial self-determination, it is paramount to prepare people in the territory for future challenges including the establishment of suitable subsistence practices that reflect transformations in the environment. According to Julio, combination of different knowledge systems anchored in the nature could create the most appropriate tools for this task. In other words my informants appreciate learning the “western knowledge”, since it offers new information and tools that help combatting

unprecedented challenges that happen for example due to climate change. Nevertheless, Julio also clarified that learning of the “new” should not happen at the expense of their own knowledge, but the solutions should be searched for by combining these knowledge systems.

This highlighting of the importance of combining knowledges reflects on how Indigenous and Western knowledges were often described as complementary by my Sapara informants. For them, education is perceived to enhance possibilities for this combination for purposes such as sustainable development. One example of this in a larger indigenous context of Ecuador was given to me by an Achuar university student Poté who was majoring in biology. To illustrate this type of possibilities in an interview that I had with him in Quito he told me of his initiative to replace hunting with rifles with the use of blowpipes in his community. Especially their proximate territory had suffered from over-hunting, which Poté had observed from the diminishing numbers of wild animals. Poté was worried about this decline, which he analysed based on ecological categories of Western science. As he returned to his community after two years of studies, he successfully called an assembly to introduce a rule that would restrict hunting so that only a blowpipe would be utilised. Hence, he employed Indigenous knowledge of subsistence strategies as a solution to a problem that he had recognised due to his knowledge on ecology, and finally, he introduced the proposition by subjugating it under a scrutinisation of indigenous community in the assembly. As in this example given by Poté, the Saporas that I encountered wanted to utilise both knowledge systems to combat challenges of new environmental pressures and construct suitable tools for life in their territory.

This reflects a principle of interculturality discussed in chapter 4 and underlined in IBE of bringing different knowledges in dialogue and furthermore displays how these different knowledges do not exist in isolation but influence each other and change in accordance to time. Incorporating Indigenous knowledges is hoped to signify dialogue and learning by means of interculturality, not preserving authentic traditions as “noble savages”. This corresponds to what Nygren (1999) discusses that building spaces for alternative ways of knowing sometimes risks constructing unnecessary oppositions

between Western and non-Western knowledges portraying especially non-Western in isolated pockets of primordial wisdom and omitting complex socio-political realities influencing thinking. Rather, knowledge emerges from the reality of heterogeneous processes and factors, including elements ranging from economics to environment, which I will examine in this subchapter. As Nygren also notes, it is the equal co-existence of knowledges that matters. In the preceding text, I have depicted how knowledges are far from opposing each other but intertwine in reality and education especially is aspired to as a possibility for learning that responds to their reality and benefits people in their struggles to live well.

Furthermore, what concerns interculturality is not only if Saparas would benefit from incorporating their knowledge in the education system, but also other students could learn from them, which however is poorly reflected currently in the education system. Rodríguez Cruz criticises how interculturality is most often depicted as something addressing indigenous peoples, but not the other way around as displayed in school subjects that for IBE include things such as Intercultural Art Education (Educación Estética Intercultural) or Ethnohistory, but for the “Hispanic system”, subjects lack nominations of interculturality or ethno (2018b: 126–129). In relation to schooling, this topic was discussed among my Sapara informants to a point of exhaustion particularly in Llanhamacocha, where the community had grand plans to create a sort of exchange student system between universities and their members, while in other communities my informants expressed more modest eagerness to teach people visiting their territory either independently or through tourism about their knowledge. As among my informants living in their territory there exists a clear will, it is important to consider how dialogical learning between knowledges could also benefit other segments of society and increase understanding within Ecuadorian society. Yet Indigenous knowledges are devalued in relation to “normal science” and only discussed in very general and stereotypical terms in educative materials even inside IBE (Rodríguez Cruz 2018b: 144–145).

Another important aspect brought up by Julio in the interview extract above is how education should also prepare for encounters with outside influences. For the Saparas

that I met, there exists a need for strategies to deal with outside actors that impact their territory, which for example demands familiarity with the law. André, a young university educated teacher in one of the few *colegios* in the territory pondered upon this point when he stated that: “if they are educated, they can resist in better ways, [influential outside actors e.g. oil company]” as he spoke of struggle against oil extractivism that was taking place in the territory. Similar thoughts were also shared by señor Vargas, when I had a conversation with him in the office of NASE:

Education helps us to live in better conditions, because it gives us knowledge. Already I told it, that it will not be as easy to trick us, because many people go outside and people that do not know are tricked a lot. For this reason, for not to fall, education is very important, because the youth goes prepared and it won't be like before. (...) Now we want that Sapara education will return to us.

Señor Vargas felt that education helps the youth to deal with the outside world and influences as people would know how not to be tricked. Tricks have multiple meanings here: it can be exploitation of individual people or it can refer to negotiations with oil companies and questions of free, prior and informed consent to oil exploration.

Accordingly, all of my informants saw education as a strategical tool for preparing the Sapara people to negotiate with outside influences in an appropriate way, which would entail familiarity with the outside world without forgetting cultural practices of the Sapara themselves. This reflects on how education is expected to function as a “cultural broker” as discussed by Cajete (2008). Veintie furthers this discussion as she explains that crossing “cultural borders between (Western) school knowledge and Indigenous knowledge” (2013a: 251) could be facilitated by teachers acting as cultural brokers after they are educated in both indigenous and Western knowledge systems incorporated equally into teacher training programs. This would help students to understand the culturally foreign knowledge of Western schooling, since it would be contextualised and it also guides students on how to retain their own culture as they cross borders “into the subculture of Western science (Cajete, 2008: 491). In this case, “the subculture of Western science” encompasses a variety of knowledge ranging from “hard” to social sciences, where the most appropriate knowledge for indigenous peoples to learn should

also be determined “with reference to economic development, environmental responsibility, and cultural survival” (Cajete, 2008: 492).

Conforming to aforementioned views, André also offered contextualisation of learned material as a common tool for achieving education that successfully helps people to negotiate between cultures, which in itself is an idea closely aligned with principles of interculturality. He explained to me that: “Education is a tool, I repeat this, that will liberate people, but it will not liberate it unless it is contextualised”. A focus on a type of education that builds consciousness by contextualising knowledge, as building of consciousness was also emphasised by some of my informants, brings to mind Pedagogy of Oppressed by Freire (1972), where he emphasises the importance of participatory education that encourages dialogue in order to achieve critical awareness.

Education as a cultural broker is additionally significant in relation to another important institution for indigenous peoples: territorial governance. Indigenous peoples participate in territorial governance meaning that they have to be prepared to cope with state bureaucracy, and during the formative years of indigenous movements in Ecuador, people worried that intensified participation in administrative roles, including organisation of intercultural and bilingual education, could contribute to bureaucratisation of indigenous organisations and consequently, lead them to assimilate in the state apparatus (Moya, 1990: 341). Simultaneously, assuming roles of responsibility for administrative affairs is crucial to self-determination. André for example recognised education as a pivotal tool for strengthening indigenous organisations in the following manner: “You can also form a strong social fabric in the same organisation and make effective decisions that prevail. I think that all these components have something to do with education.” In his view, education could and should help people to be more informed in their decisions concerning communal affairs, but only if it acts as a cultural broker, helping people to comprehend both worlds.

In our lengthy discussions it became clear that for André as well as for Guillermo and Julio, it was crucial that people will follow the Sapara vision instead of acquiring an occidental vision that emphasises individualism and anthropocentrism over

communality and biocentrism. André, born to an upper-class family in one of the largest cities in Ecuador, was especially passionate about how Saporas should learn from the forms of organisation that they had had before in order to apply indigenous vision better in decision-making. In one of our long, recorded conversations he clarified this point thus:

I think if we talk about a plan (for education) in general, they (government administrators) should abandon what they have learnt theoretically and return to their roots, how they take decision and how they can organise. Yes, they have to generate newly administrations of the time that they need, totally need, but they have to know how to contextualise. And stop bringing in individualism when they are inside indigenous organisation.

In André's vision for the future of education, new administrative forms are necessary during these "modern" times, but they should be contextualised to suit the Sapara worldview, so that they could organise better and in ways that are more respectful towards a community as well as the environment.

Refortification of identity and (particularly) language was also perceived by my informants as an important motivation for integrating Indigenous knowledge in the education system, especially since a separate indigenous language validates territorial claims as I mentioned in subchapter 3.2 on Saporas. On this subject señor Vargas stated that: "If we reinforce language, we will reinforce the cultural identity of the nationality [Sapara]. It is very important, because a nationality has to be recognised for its language and for its territory." Here, señor Vargas demonstrates the importance of language as a foundation on which the Sapara people retain their identity as a separate indigenous group who has a right for their own territory. The theme has been analysed by Viatori and Ushigua (2007), who emphasise the role of the Sapara language in gaining support of national and international actors for the re-emerging indigenous nationality and their self-determination. To follow this line of thinking, reinforcing language is also a strategy for territorial self-determination. However, the researchers also warn against identifying indigenous identity only in terms of language as a self-evident symbol of authenticity especially in formal institutions, since the complex histories of indigenous peoples have impacted the language-use in various ways. Such strategy would risk

repeating colonialist policies of marginalising people, if communities that had lost their language are denied their rights for self-determination (ibid.).

Moreover, language teaching demonstrates the unique needs that Saparas have in respect to education. Their previous system was described trilingual, since it combined Sapara, Spanish and Kichwa. Only a few Sapara speakers remain and Kichwa has become the most common vernacular language in the communities. Hence, the education system should facilitate the needs of students, whose mother tongue is Kichwa, which means that understanding of Spanish is limited at times, but it would also need to rejuvenate the Sapara language. Currently, IBE primarily attends to Kichwa-speakers, (though Spanish is still the most important language) and other indigenous languages are not employed in educative materials (Rodríguez Cruz, 2018b: 97). This is further complicated as written materials in Kichwa represent a unified Kichwa that is far away from the quotidian Kichwa (Limerick, 2018) used by Saparas, which means that books written in Spanish were almost easier to understand for students, even though they struggled also with Spanish from time to time. This is similar to other Kichwas, whose spoken language differs radically from the form utilised in the educative materials (Rodríguez Cruz, 2018b: 97). To attend to these needs, my informants wanted to develop their own curriculum inside IBE that would facilitate multi-lingual needs and reality.

In this subchapter, I have outline what the Saparas participating in my study hoped to achieve with education, in order to build a clarified picture of what is expected by them from educative institutions. They are passionate about integrating their own knowledge and culture in the educative model in a holistic and relational manner that would not lose the essence of their worldview, including respect for the environment that they inhabited. This would include teaching indigenous languages in a manner suitable for Saparas that respects their needs for trilingual education. Saparas also hope that education would prepare them to act in both worlds, which was also a strong motivation for them to combine indigenous and Western knowledges according to principles of interculturality. Furthermore, incorporating Indigenous knowledge in the education system and the subsequent revitalisation of culture is also a territorial strategy, since

Saparas have to demonstrate their distinctive identity in order to claim rights over their territory and they enforced this strategy also by illustrating their responsible relationship with the land intertwined with their knowledge. Now that I have summarised these aspirations for education, I will move on to discuss what are the challenges that appear, when Indigenous knowledge is incorporated in the education system.

### **6.3 Challenges of incorporation**

In the previous subchapter, I outlined aspirations for education and the motivations and goals for merging Indigenous knowledge with the educative curriculum of Ecuador among the Sapara. Nevertheless, there exists grave challenges in combining these two knowledges. One of these is the perseverance of coloniality of knowledge, which I discussed in subchapter 6.1 of this thesis, since it works to privilege Western knowledge over Indigenous knowledges in the education system. In this subchapter, I will especially focus on the Kichwa assembly of education, as a discussion there epitomised many of the problems involved in the process.

Coloniality of knowledge became obvious to me as I witnessed teaching in action as it was practiced in IBE schools of Pastaza region. During the classes on Indigenous knowledge, the multiple epistemologies and cosmovisions of the 7 nationalities of Pastaza were mostly discussed in terms of cultural particularities and ethnographic examples, and Indigenous knowledges were not incorporated into the curriculum holistically. Rodríguez Cruz has analysed materials utilised in IBE and concludes that a portrayal of indigenous peoples and knowledges remains one-dimensional and depicts them mostly through stereotypical imagery of tradition, which bypasses such elements as historical and contemporary indigenous intellectuals and political movements (2018b: 144-145). Teachers in the school of Camilo Huatatoca explained to me that educational reforms implemented during Correa's era focused on strict evaluations that only assessed knowledge in terms of Western science marginalising Indigenous knowledge in teaching. They expected that the ongoing educative reform, initiated by Moreno that I mentioned in chapter 4, would correct some of the wrongs and teachers, intended to apply Indigenous knowledge where they found it appropriate, but during the



time of my fieldwork it still had a secondary place in comparison with the Western knowledge.

During my stay in Pastaza, I attended a Kichwa assembly in Canelos that focused on the upcoming educational reform, announced by the current president Lenin Moreno, and the theme of Indigenous knowledge was discussed extensively during these meetings. The assembly took place in the communal buildings of the community, and we all were sitting in a circle inside a *choza* (a type of traditional building). During the afternoon, a proposal for a new model to correct the flaws of the old one was presented by docents who had been working on a topic in Amauta Ñampi. I had sat down next to Andrés, a researcher working with the project 4+, and one of my key contacts to the indigenous communities of Pastaza. We chatted for a while about the research project until a presentation on a new model for IBE was started by Silvana, a docent of Amauta Ñampi, where the model had been primarily developed. This model only addressed basic schooling and excludes high school, though I provide the model here to introduce ideas on how to apply interculturality in schooling also in general. The presentation on the model went as follows:

Firstly, the education consists of two visions; indigenous and occidental knowledge and it is formulated around the concept of *sumak kawsay*, which refers to being well with oneself, others, nature, as well as spiritually. In the curriculum, the concept of *Sumak Kawsay* can be presented thoroughly with help of four “harmonisers”: 1. living land and territory 2. familiar life 3. cosmology and plurinationality 4. science, technology and production. All of them should be discussed from both perspectives, indigenous and occidental. For example, the fourth, which deals with technology and science, can include technologies such as computers, but also cultural technologies as knowledge on how to build a traditional hut. As for the other harmonisers, the first is about nature and locality, the second about community and third about values and philosophies of indigenous peoples with acknowledgement and acquaintance of multiplicity of visions.

From these principal points of the model, Silvana continued to address the role of the student:

Students should also direct youth to take right actions and think with values as demonstrated by different types of *alli kuna*: well-being and good heart that together create beautiful life, being well with oneself, with others, good relationship with nature and spirits, and good thinking, good action and good words. Furthermore, the ideals of education can be realised with alignment tools

such as didactic resources, curriculum, teacher training and monitoring action. Hence, this model represents Sumak Kawsay as understood by the Kichwa, wellbeing with community of beings. It includes good nurture of body and mind, which means that it matters what food one eats and from where it comes from. The same goes for the health, our medicine from the forest should be recognised and prioritised instead of everyone immediately resorting to *pastillas* (pills).

Silvana finally addressed the question of how objectives and pedagogical methods of education will affect the reality and development of the indigenous communities of Pastaza:

Furthermore, this model is a proposition for how we will develop. The purpose is to also develop thinking and hence knowledge as well as we should do things well and thus, teach the students to do their tasks well. Learning should not only aim for evaluation! Moreover, oral learning and practicality should form part of intercultural education as wisdom and knowledge consists of more than only the written word. Values help to give sense to information. Pedagogical methods can harness resources around us, as we are not poor, but we have our environment. It is possible to use our eyes and see our nature and learn. Possibilities exist. Neither the educational model should forget about teachers, since they are central to the process. They should be educated accordingly as well.

The topics raised by Silvana illustrate how indigenous peoples aim to overcome current problems of education. The model she was representing respects holistic ideals of Indigenous knowledge, since it aims to move away from the model where knowledge is fragmented to different subjects, preferring to utilise themes or harmonisers. A problem concerning the fragmentation of Indigenous knowledge is also discussed by Veintie (2013a), as she emphasises on how it is harder to implement Indigenous knowledge if instructions occur according to different subjects, distorting holistic and relational knowledge. However, the proposal encountered critique as some of the panellists were concerned if the proposal truly could attend to different knowledge systems equally or if Western knowledge would continue to triumph over Indigenous knowledges as the case was, historically speaking, portraying difficulties to overcome epistemic hierarchy. Coloniality of knowledge is challenging to transform and continued to trouble people.

Another interesting critique that I witnessed during the assembly touched upon how Indigenous knowledge could be shared by community members in the schools, as presenters discussed about the subject of *minga* (roughly translated a communal work

party), which was presented as an example of community integration respectful of a relational ideal of knowledge in the education system, as it brings community and students together in a collective effort. Furthermore, it was proposed that schools could invite local experts to share their knowledge. Silvana, for example told us that she knew something about guayusa, but not that much of ayahuasca. Therefore, some experts on that topic could be invited as an outcome of collective education. However, this suggestion did not seem to please the audience, and the next comment from a community member critiqued Silvana's suggestion as "a possibility for exploitation" resulting in some quarrel among people present. The same person continued on a topic elaborating on the theme of coloniality and Indigenous knowledge. He explained how picking only a part of Indigenous knowledge and enforcing specialists to share openly their knowledge is a form of colonialism and exploitation. In his opinion, indigenous peoples should learn to appreciate their knowledge: "Otherwise gringos come and take it and present it in their universities of Yale and Harvard without ever having to give anything back. Only if we the indigenous peoples venerate our knowledge and teach the youth the same respect, we can prevent such stealing."

This critique illustrates a problem of decontextualisation that can happen when Indigenous knowledge is incorporated to the education system. The proposed example would disconnect Indigenous knowledge from its communal network of relations that had preceded the sharing of the knowledge. To take an example of ayahuasca, it has been a common practice among the Sapara that a person prospecting to be a shaman should seek advice of someone experienced in the role and follow education, assuming that the shaman accepts the person under his guidance. This education takes a considerable time and effort including times of exclusion in the forest learning about plants and spirits. Indigenous knowledge is shared by individuals unequally, because of various reasons, and knowledgeable elders are respected. Furthermore, an example presented about how Saporas have traditionally passed shamanic knowledge inter-generationally shows also how knowledge is embedded in the environment. Exclusion in the forest enables people to learn about and relate to their surrounding environment and spirits.

Escobar for example, has criticised detaching Indigenous knowledge from the surrounding totality:

“Modern social theory continues to operate largely on the basis of an objectifying distancing principle, which imply a belief in the ‘real’ and ‘truth’ –an epistemology of allegedly autonomous subjects willfully moving around in a universe of self-contained objects. This ontology of disconnection ends up disqualifying those knowledges produced not about, but from the relation.”  
—Escobar, 2016: 29.

Escobar’s critique can be extended from modern social theory to conceptualisations of Indigenous knowledge, because it shows the problem of excluding knowledge from its relations, replaced with knowledge about things. If Indigenous knowledge is defined only through individual cases such as a knowledge about plants, it loses an essential dimension of relationality, which is a quality of living Indigenous knowledge. A lesson in school about Indigenous knowledge is not a substitute for a comprehensive experience where people learn about plants while roaming around the forest where they can observe in what type of habitat a plant grows, in what quantities, how is a plant’s fellow vegetation and when is its a growing season. In other words, Indigenous knowledge loses its essence, when it is alienated from the totality of knowledge.

This reminds me of a panel discussion I had attended in Helsinki, where Sami handicraft, *duodji*, was a topic (The National Museum of Finland, 2017). One of the participants told that traditionally specific techniques in the art of *duodji* could only be learned if a knowledgeable elder accepts their apprenticeship and negative responses simply have to be tolerated. In other words, knowledge is inseparable from people holding it, which aligns with a view that was argued by Reascos as presented by Veintie: “the subject that produces and holds the wisdom (about the totality) is more important than knowledge (about separate things)” (2013a: 245). If people holding knowledge are simply invited to present their knowledge, they are separated from relationships of accountability that follow from formal apprenticeship and people are separated from their right to decide to whom they pass their knowledge, itself an integral part of the knowledge system. Dissociating knowledge from the network of relations, where it has

been embedded, can result in denying relationality of Indigenous knowledge, which emphasises importance of cooperation between communities and schools.

Another serious concern that arises from integrating Indigenous knowledge in the education system is a commodification of knowledge, which can occur as a result of alienating people from their knowledge. Generally, this was something that Saporas were aware of when they were working with outsiders. For example, Irma stated the following on the matter: “They come and what they do? They make a book, take photos, they take everything, they start to sell. They are selling our knowledge.” Saporas had had a lot of experience in the past on exploitation of their knowledge by researchers seeking individual gain. This problem can also occur in the education system, when Indigenous knowledge is systemised and recorded and consequently, easier to exploit for economic benefit (Kincheloe and Steinber, 2008: 152).

A rather extreme example of this type of exploitative dynamic happened in the public university of Ikiam (jungle in Shuar), located near Tena, a city in Ecuadorian Amazon. The university focused on mapping the genetic wealth of the Amazon, but severe budget cuts reduced its capacity to advance laboratory studies and instead, researchers mainly generated information about samples taken from local indigenous peoples (Wilson and Bayón, 2017). This conduct provoked critique among communities, and the university reacted by assembling a workshop in November 2015 to create a “Code of Ethics” to revise research conditions, but in truth, the main point of the workshop was to establish “a pay scale for the provision of services to Ikiam’s researchers by members of the indigenous communities”(Wilson and Bayón, 2017: 61). Facilitators inquired what would be a sufficient pay for what type of information from participants that often had had experience working with different researchers, but more radical activists were excluded from the list of invitations. This example illustrates how educative institutions can function to exploit Indigenous knowledge in the process of recording it. Protecting Indigenous knowledge from exploitation is important for collective self-determination in general and besides that development of economical viabilities for indigenous territories, often focusing on Indigenous knowledge, are also endangered through these types of practices of biopiracy (Wilson and Bayón, 2017).

To conclude, integrating Indigenous knowledge in the education system is a challenging project, where a wrong approach can lead to further exploitation of indigenous peoples. The major problems that concerned people were that firstly, Indigenous knowledge would not be an integral part of the model, but only an add-on left to the shadow of Western knowledge. Secondly, incorporation risks fragmenting Indigenous knowledge from the context and relations where it originates from, and essential for its nature. Such process can lead to loss of knowledge, exploitation of indigenous peoples and commodification of Indigenous knowledges, which itself is a danger, when Indigenous knowledges are systematised. As I have summarised here the general problems that were discussed in the assemblies and emerged examples from similar situations, I now move on to look at problems experienced by indigenous peoples, and especially by Saparas themselves on a more local level.

## **6.4 Cultural contradictions in local education**

Formalities in the educational system is one area, where I witnessed cultural contradictions take place. Here, I will discuss school settings, starting with the buildings and education's spatio-temporal arrangements, but I also comment on possible alternatives utilised by teachers. With ethnographic commentary, I will move on to analyse a subject of discipline and how it is understood in educational setting and among indigenous communities causing cultural contradictions.

To begin the description, I invite the reader to think all those school buildings that s/he has seen in the course of her/his lifetime. I imagine all the school buildings I have seen, beginning with the elementary school that I attended in a rural village of Lapland, Finland and from there I travel in my mind to Kingdom of Eswatini and to Llanhamacocha in the Sapara territory. In all of those places, I can always immediately recognise a classroom, when I see one, even if all other buildings vary from one another, there are some remarkable similarities between the schools. To name a few similarities to illustrate my point, there are square walls, books, school desks and a chalk board that convey an atmosphere of school.

Similarly, Veintie has noted a cultural dimension of spatial arrangements in IBE. She cites a regional education directorate document called “Innovations of Education” that states that in IBE a semi-circle, where a teacher sits among students should replace rows as a seating arrangement to better reflect egalitarianism in indigenous worldview (2013b: 54). Every classroom that I visited in the Sapara territory followed this model in terms of the semi-circle, but a teacher’s desks were still in the front of the class with the chalkboard.

Accordingly, people, including teachers, mentioned multiple problems that they had experienced and observed with school settings. Firstly, classrooms were confined spaces and they became very hot especially in the midday and mosquitos started to bother seated students. The buildings also deteriorated easily in the rainforest, for example a leaking school roof in Llanhamacocha prevented holding classes there during rainy days, and the class had to be moved to the library building situated 0.5 kilometres away. Evidently the classrooms were not suited for the ecological conditions of the rainforest and neither did the state adequately support the maintenance of the buildings. I was told in Cuyacocha that though materials and even new desks had been allocated to schools, there was no funding for transportation. A teacher in Llanhamacocha bemoaned that the classroom resembled a prison more than encouraged learning. I also heard a complaint about rigid schedules from Fernando, the former school teacher mentioned earlier. He explained that their children were free, which meant that hours spend without speaking and moving in the classroom became especially unbearable to them.

Moreover, schools structure the days of the students and required every weekday to be the same as yesterday, that led to a situation where the children grew tired of repetition. In comparison, during the days without school, every day was different and before school years they did not have a rigid concept of a week either. Fernando described a possible calendar in the following manner: “first (day) walking, second fishing and swimming, third gathering fruits, fourth insects fifth, preparing yucca, sixth *minga*, where all houses are invited to help and offered food and drink in exchange”.

In these examples on the cultural friction concerning schools, I want to pay special attention to the concept of discipline as it is enacted through spatial-temporal arrangements. Veintie (2013b) explains how a Spanish-speaking teacher criticised modifications on formalities in the schools such as giving up standing in lines during assemblies, because these practices teach students about “punctuality and social skills, such as queuing, necessary for town-life” (2013b: 55). This demonstrates how spatio-temporal arrangements have further objectives on disciplining students’ behaviour to follow standards exemplified by town-life. If similar analysis is applied to other mentioned details, situating a teacher in front educates students about hierarchy and sitting through repetitive days shows how to follow authority. This was what Fernando criticised, when he referred to their children as free. He did not appreciate the coerciveness of the education system.

To contrast this type of coercive authority present in the education system, I draw an example from a school of Amauta Ñampi in Puyo, where principal Alba Castillo innovated integrating indigenous forms of discipline and will in the school setting. She had started arranging ceremonies of guayusa, which is a caffeine containing plant similar to yerba mate and consumed by various indigenous communities in the Ecuadorian Amazon. The ceremonies began typically at 4 am., which obviously meant that people wanting to participate were forced out of bed at the exceptionally early hour. Alba later explained to me that one (of many) educative quality in this ceremony was that it improved discipline, since nobody was forced to attend, and it was only the voluntary will of a person that brought them to the ceremony. This highlighted the indigenous concept of discipline in contrast to the concept that the Spanish-speaking teacher mentioned by Veintie had, since for Alba, discipline was something that cannot or should not be forced. Someone should not do something, just because they are told to do so, or in other words they should not learn only to obey authority. Instead, they should have sufficient self-control to bring themselves to commit actions that they perceive beneficial to themselves or to their community, even if tasks demanded exertion. Similar ideas about educational objectives of schooling were shared in the Kichwa assembly of education analysed in the previous subchapter, where participants



emphasised that schooling should educate values too, which bears particular significance to these cultural practices that are instructed through the education system.

Likewise, to counter the impact of alien spatio-temporal realities, some of the teachers had developed creative uses of spaces that brought more natural environments as part of the education in order to contextualise education for students. Hence, teachers could facilitate bridges through different knowledge systems by utilising for example gardens in the teaching. Rodríguez Cruz also notes how people emphasised incorporating learning inside and outside schools, which supports a holistic vision of knowledge and aims to incorporate a variety of learning practices into the education system (2018b: 139). Such bridges could serve in both directions: for students who had grown in the city, gardens could serve to preserve knowledge already in danger of being lost.

In this subchapter, I have introduced some of the spatio-temporal problems that my informants explained to me and I observed during my fieldwork. Discipline is developed in spatio-temporal arrangements both in the Western education system as well as by indigenous teachers. However, employed strategies vary, as the meaning of discipline also diverges based on cultural background. Furthermore, school orders space in a larger scale as well, which is a topic of the next subchapter, as I discuss place and Indigenous knowledge, territorial claims, patterns of settlement and their relations to the education system.

## **6.5 Local Education and Problems with Migration**

Another aspect that appeared extensively in conversations with Saporas was how Indigenous knowledge was shared and lived locally, and consequently, people also were concerned about access to education. My informants felt that living in the territory was the best if not the only way to connect with fundamentals of Indigenous knowledge, when I asked them how Indigenous knowledge could be reflected in education. Julio exclaimed this in a following manner:

Here you reflect the life again, as you live that life yourself. For example, when you connect to dreams, converse with people here, with experienced people and elders, with women, you have conversations with and say, look, this happened this way, this I dreamed. That's how here it is more about dreams. You dream. And this activity maybe can be negative or positive, but you connect with it.

This statement reflects the communality and relationality of Indigenous knowledge discussed in subchapter 6.1, as people learn by conversing with elders in the course of mundane life.

André also spoke of the same theme. In his opinion, Sapara knowledge was reflected in education every day, since it was a part of lived reality that people reflected on and shared with him, their teacher, who himself was an outsider to the community. Every day, he could observe how people knew how to cure with plants and live in their environment with knowledge that he did not possess. For him, it was important to develop education that could help people to reflect and act in the reality that the students were facing currently, but André also felt that only living and studying in the territory could help them truly. It is also noted by Rodríguez Cruz how education and family form the most crucial parts in the process of enculturation of people and accordingly, migration poses a challenge to this process (2018b: 95, 118). As we spoke about the subject, André presented the following conclusion:

In reality, you will study for being capable to develop a critical perspective on things happening in your surroundings. And I feel that a direction of classes that we are giving in the high school can do this and focus on problems that are inside the territory and through education, through these things, we can resolve these problems. (...) We can generate real changes. Hence, these changes, they will see, reflected here in the territory, I repeat this, here in the territory and not outside.

André's thoughts reflected the conversations I had with members of many communities, as they strongly felt that only living inside the territory could help them gain knowledge on how to act in the appropriate manner for the future of the territory. Their perspective was that moving away to study would alienate them from the indigenous reality. Because of this, living in the territory would be the best strategy for revitalisation and maintenance of Indigenous knowledge, since it would enable learning from community

and environment as people utilised Indigenous knowledge in the course of their daily lives.

This theme also extended to revitalisation of local political structures that had guided people to take decisions in an appropriate manner, based on indigenous values of democratic participation and community well-being. André talked about this theme one evening after a meal:

Theme of *minga*, theme of *chicheria*, theme of organising for taking decisions. These are things that have disappeared because of the many jobs that indigenous people are doing outside their territory. There was one program, where the government helped indigenous students to graduate so that they can develop according to their local decision-making systems. But it did not happen and later these students that went to study outside the country, returned and they are working in the state institutions in a bureaucratic manner.

André felt that indigenous political structures suffered as people focused mainly on participating in jobs offered by institutions other than indigenous, be it a non-governmental-organisation or a state institution. André had observed that as people left for outside to study or work, they became more involved in the standards set by outside influences and gradually they forgot indigenous practices of communal organisation. In his opinion, indigenous political structures and forms of organisation should be revitalised both by focusing on them more in education, which he intended to achieve by making his students to participate in *mingas* as part of classes, but also by enabling students to study and work further inside the territory. Educated people often gave up traditional organisational structures, which meant that indigenous organisational structures risk losing their legitimation, since many possible community leaders focus on work and standards from outside. This increased the importance of these outside standards inside traditional organisational structures as people grew more accustomed to work in the manner set by them.

To provide a context for these statements, I compare them to an example provided by Rival who studied impacts of education on Waorani. Rival's analysis suggests that attending school, with the associated declining time spend in the forest, causes

deterioration of some forest knowledge especially in terms of practical skills (Rival, 1996: 159–160). “Children, who progressively become full members of the longhouse through their increased participation in ongoing social activities, learn to be Huaorani experientially by getting forest food and sharing it, by helping out in the making of blowguns, pots, or hammocks, and by chanting with longhouse coresidents” (ibid.). Rival suggests that education had the impact of distancing the youth from daily chores of life previously undertaken with parents to learn Waorani knowledge and culture (Rival, 1996: 157). This shows how learning Indigenous knowledge also demands time spent engaging with the activities.

As I argue above, education in itself can contribute to cultural loss, but IBE has aimed to transform this process and focused on intercultural dialogue that respects and supports Indigenous knowledge and simultaneously provides indigenous peoples with new knowledge derived from Western science. As demonstrated with the Waorani experience, learning Indigenous knowledge demands participation in indigenous life, where skills and knowledge are acquired. Therefore, if IBE truly aspires to respect cultural diversity and Indigenous knowledges and claims for territory, it must be stated that the education system needs to provide possibilities for students to engage in daily life inside their respective territories. Bilhaut also recognises how among the Sapara there exists knowledge that cannot be transmitted in the school only, such as dreaming (2011: 72). The best possible way to do this is to organise education locally enabling students to participate in daily life alongside education.

Furthermore, educating people locally has another level of importance recognised by my Sapara informants, namely, territorial politics of dispersal that are utilised to claim territorial control. According to Bilhaut, Saporas originally employed dispersal as a political strategy to claim control over their territory (2011: 61). Saporas had to demarcate boundaries for their territory in the process of legalisation and during the early years of the 1990s, they decided to divide Llanhamacocha in three giving birth to new communities of Masaramu and Jandia Yacu. This permitted them to assert a larger territorial space and to cement their demand, as all of the communities had at least one

individual who spoke Sapara (ibid.). Community dispersal, thus, has been an essential strategy for claiming territory from the beginning of the Sapara's territorial project.

Consequently, education is a fundamental requisite that enables community dispersal, which is illustrated in the fact that a decision to establish current permanent communities and to give up the previous *purina*-system mentioned in subchapter 3.2, was based on hopes to gain access to state services, including education (Andrade Pallares, 2001: 24). Saporas have transformed some aspects of their previous lifestyle in order to gain access to services such as education, which means that organising education in different communities contributes to the possibility of dispersal and vice versa, difficult access to education can lead to centralisation of the Sapara population. In order to have a stronger claim on their whole territory, Saporas need to have dispersed communities, and education is one of the fundamental services that enables this political strategy.

Building on these thoughts, André speculated that a government might be deliberately engaging in a reverse process, where institutions inside indigenous territories were weakened in order to undermine indigenous institutions opposing oil:

I can see that these are strategies for diminishing the indigenous institution inside every territory and afterwards they leave a door open for use of natural resources. Ecuador is a country of primary exports, where its principle dynamism is in natural resources and access to these natural resources are threatened, when indigenous territories have power in the territory. Therefore, there will be conflict, if the territory is defended. Thus, maybe for the theme of education and for standards that there are it is actually a strategy for disintegration of indigenous institution so that they (the government) can utilise resources. (...) It is one of the strategies that I told you about, abandonment. Outsiders are waiting urgently that all the people will leave the territory to gain the access to exploit the resources.

André recognised educational policy as a possible part of political strategy for developing the extraction of Ecuador's natural resources. Though, Ecuador has gained international fame for its progressive statements that concern replacing conventional developmental standards focused on economic growth with principles of Sumak Kawsay, in practice, it has been a difficult road to transform the economic policy based

on extractivism that has financed government spending and aligned welfare-projects of the state. Consequently, Ecuador still relies heavily on extractivism and it has not succeeded in utilising so-called infinite resources exemplified by biodiversity and scientific knowledge as an economical alternative (Wilson and Bayón, 2017). André speculated that in practice the policy has focused on the exact opposite, limiting educational and economic opportunities inside territories, creating pressure for indigenous peoples to migrate outside. Consequent abandonment of territories leaves them vulnerable for exploitation of natural resources such as oil, which potentially benefits the state economy based on extractivism.

To overturn a process of abandonment, André recognised that education should serve to develop productive possibilities inside territories. He thought that school should also participate in the development of economic possibilities inside the territory, since having economic and productive opportunities locally would increase the self-determination of people, as they would not need to rely on outside actors or migrate in order to access something that demanded monetary resources. Education could prepare students for employing local opportunities, if students would recognise possibilities already in the school and understand how to engage with them. Besides common economic opportunities such as introducing cash-crops, education could support other options as well such as engagement with the environment scientifically, since Sapara territory is rich in knowledge both culturally as well as in terms of biodiversity. Thereupon, education could encourage students to take upon scientific careers to study their environment themselves.

On a related note, probably the most vocal demand that I heard from people with whom I spent time in Sapara territory, was their need for schools. As I stated earlier in subchapter 3.2, Saporas are struggling with access to education after 7th grade, which approximately translated to age of 11. In the area that I visited, only one of the communities, Llanhamacocha, has recently opened an upper school that included the upper basic school with 8th, 9th and 10th grades and a high school that people can attend to and, it is financed privately by a tourist project Naku. This means that people

from other communities have to either migrate to the city of Puyo or a community of Llanhamacocha to continue their studies at the age of 12 or drop out of school.

The problems faced when migrating to a city are serious. Firstly, the majority of Saporas who live inside the territory are not fully integrated in the monetary economy, but they live in a subsistence economy, where they receive most of the everyday products from a forest and from cultivations of mainly yucca and plantains. This means that most of Saporas do not have a regular access to money, which they have only used occasionally for special purchases such as salt or petrol for outboard motors. Money for those things has to be earned in different odd jobs such as selling traditional medicine or handicrafts for tourists visiting project Naku. The basic line is that involvement in monetary economy has been only sporadic and people do not depend on it to fulfil their everyday needs nor did they describe themselves as poor.

Consequently, it caused great pains for the Saporas that I encountered to finance studies in the city, where money is a necessity. As a member of the community in Jandia Yacu put it in the village assembly arousing laughter as he remarked that one cannot even urinate in Puyo without money. If someone wanted to continue to study, it was necessary for the family to seek for monetary sources, which meant that time had to be spent on other activities than those of subsistence economy, which leads to increasing involvement in monetary economy. Even more importantly, students often had to adjust to poor conditions of living in the city, since they rarely could rely on stable supply of money, which meant that some days they might have to go without eating, as people told me during my field work.

Being poor and an outsider in a city can furthermore predispose people for different threats such as abuse, alcohol and drug problems or prostitution. I did not meet anyone who would have confessed to having experienced these problems, but it was a commonly stated fear that parents had. It is possible that parents generically worried over their youth associating a city with vices, but it is also plausible that I just did not meet people, who had suffered from these things or that they did not want to tell me as they feared the shame it could cause.

Secondly, the city is a problematic place for people for cultural reason. A theme of cultural differences appeared especially eminent in the interviews that I had with people currently studying in cities, who represented other indigenous groups of Pastaza, but also Saparas who had lived outside the territory mentioned this. Living in a city meant that the students had to accustom themselves to a different reality, where language and food among other things were distinctive. For example, Sergio, a university student from the Kichwa community of Sarayaku explained to me how he missed freedom that he had when he lived in his community. For Sergio, life in a city meant that he had to continuously engage with different obligations. Some people also described how they had felt discrimination. For instance, Eddy, a Shuar student working with natural medicine, told me that he had had a difficult time in the city especially in the beginning, since his customs and accent was different from others, as he had grown up further away in the forest. People had prejudices about him based on his background and he had experienced discrimination.

Thirdly, leaving territory to study outside was seen as a problem as people felt that those who leave do not return anymore. This was a great concern for many, since they feared that they would not be able to preserve their relationship with their children, and more importantly, what would happen to the communities and their territory, if nobody would be there to defend the land. I did not meet people who had left permanently, but I had for example multiple conversations with the members of Llanhamacocha who had spent considerable time outside the territory, on how they had felt during those times. It had been a great cultural bridge to cross to live in a city, where they did not feel connected to their community back in the forest. After all, it was difficult and expensive to travel back to the communities, which meant that they did not have a chance to return often. This meant that they slowly accustomed to city life and, when they had decided to come back, they had felt alienated from the forest. They did not remember how to live there, and the place had felt foreign and difficult.

This further illustrates how Indigenous knowledge can possibly be forgotten as it is something that has to be learned and maintained. People who leave the territory have a



hard time returning after a long period outside, as it is not easy to get accustomed back to the forest, if they have forgotten knowledge necessary for living there. This shows how it is important for people to be able to maintain that knowledge also outside the territory in order to return back. When I visited a teacher institute in Canelos, this was actually something that came up. The director Hernan explained to me that he saw great importance in the fact that the institute was situated in the rural area. As we walked through the yard one evening, Hernan explained with pride that it was a blessing that the school was situated in the *campo* (rural area), where people had the chance to disconnect (phones did not have signal) and breathe pure air without noise of the city. This cultivated people's relationship with nature, which enforced preservation of nature. He critiqued conventional education that was focused on the ideals of modernity with the purpose of dominating nature and transforming it into productivity: "In the process everything is converted into the same form including people and this leads to contamination as people learn to dominate instead of respecting nature". Here, the school aimed to prevent assimilation, but instead to allow space for people to celebrate their identity, allow space for reflection and collective action to support their communities.

Another issue that might be linked to people's problems to return arises from a negative self-image associated with being indigenous. This was explained to me by Laura, a Kichwa woman who was born to the community of Canelos, but had moved out whilst still a young girl. Laura told me how when she had been young, she had wanted to forget everything about her identity and background, she had seen as backward and full of problems such as violence and alcoholism. Discriminatory practices and racial hierarchies that have historically prevailed in Ecuador and defined indigenous peoples in terms of backwardness and problems can cause negative self-image, which leads people to leave their identity and community behind (Rodríguez Cruz, 2018b: 116).

Remarkably, inside the Sapara territory many of my informants also recognised problems with migrating to Llanhamacocho. Most of the communities were situated far from Llanhamacocho, which meant that people would have to migrate there either for week days if the travel was not more than a day's journey in canoe, or for more

permanent periods of time. Santiago, a father of a student studying in Llanhamacocha, but originally from Jandia Yacu situated about a day's journey from Llanhamacocha, explained to me about his case. Santiago often accompanied his son to reside there for school days, but he was very unhappy with the situation. He described how producing food to eat was difficult and he was especially sorry for not having chicha whenever he arrived home, which for him symbolised the agony of being an outsider far from his family and wife. Even migrating inside the territory can cause other surprising disruptions as well, as the territorial strategy of dispersal suffers, since people experience more pressure to centralise and students have to disconnect from their kin to migrate to Llanhamacocha, where they do not have their close kin near.

As a short summary, Indigenous knowledge among the Sapara is deeply embedded in local relations and environment and to acquire Indigenous knowledge, people have to engage in activities to learn it. Education causes pressure to migrate outside the territory and even migrating inside the territory is problematic, since local ties are severed, and the context of knowledge is lost. Though education can take forms to alleviate the dangers of losing Indigenous knowledge, as exemplified by the Canelos example, my informants made it very clear that as long as education is not organised inside indigenous territories and equally distributed between the villages, these changes in practices, pondered in great detail by André and discussed more thoroughly in the previous chapter, are bandages covering an open sore. This need and demand for locally organised education was the message deemed most important by my informants, and as I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, this demand is thoroughly embedded in the ideals of IBE, indigenous struggle for self-determination of their territory, organisational worries of cultural loss, as well as in fears by individual families and subjects on their personal, familiar and communal wellbeing. I now turn to tie up all these different aspects presented above to conclude the analysis of my ethnographic material.

## **6.6 Conclusion: Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge to the Education System: Problematic Possibilities and Demand of Locality**

To conclude my ethnographic analysis on the subject of the problems and possibilities faced when incorporating Indigenous knowledge into the education system, I will start by discussing the importance of development discourse for justifying decisions that undermine indigenous institutions. In this regard, an example of millennial schools that I discussed in the chapter 4 is instructive, since they illustrate the power of modernising discourse in the state action both in terms of legitimisation and guidance.

Arturo Escobar points out how development alongside with markets and growth persists in being “among the most naturalized concepts in the social and policy domains” (2016: 25) and territories proceed becoming occupied ontologically (and physically, though the two are interrelated) through interventions justified by development (ibid.). As mentioned in subchapter 3.1, in Ecuador a state discourse has included *buen vivir* as an alternative to the prevalent ideas of development, but regardless of these statements, neo-extractivism continues to be a guiding principle of Ecuador’s economic strategy, highlighting a gap between ideals and reality. In the interviews with my informants, the gap was explained as the main difference between *buen vivir* and *Sumak Kawsay*.

Besides the economic policy, conventional instrumental rationality associated with development continues to impact the educative policy in Ecuador as well as to legitimise interventions against education organised by indigenous organisations. Allocating funding from communal schooling to aforementioned millennial schools was legitimised by stating that they would improve the quality of education based on the standards mainly focused on knowledge of Western science. In Ecuador, substituting community-based schooling with millennial schools contributes to marginalisation of Indigenous knowledges institutionally, legitimised by the instrumental rationality of development that focuses on deficiency of indigenous institutions. The case could be compared to other cases, where indigenous peoples have suffered from extension of

subtle forms of colonialism based on social indicators. Battiste et al. for example illustrate this dynamic in Canada: “Though the 1967 Canadian Corrections Association report called for “a massive educational campaign” (p. 23) to break up a vicious cycle of myth-making perpetuating stereotypes, concern with social indicators (poverty levels, employment and education, family breakdown, substance abuse, housing, mental and physical health, suicide rates) has often become only a subtler form of the colonial practice of pathologising individuals and communities” (2005: 9, [brackets with page number in original]). Similarly, inside the education system Rodríguez Cruz has noted how educative materials portray rural life by means of poverty enforcing ideas of inferiority of indigenous peoples, creating pervasive imagery of indigenous poverty and deficiency from early on (2018b: 150).

This leads me to discuss how another standard conventionally applied to legitimise state action over indigenous self-determination is poverty, which is further intertwined with the economic policy based on extractivism. Vallejo et al. describe the case as follows: “In countries with “twenty-first-century socialism” such as Ecuador, the intensification of extraction and the expansion of the oil frontier have been justified in terms of the fight against poverty, with primary-goods export surplus allocated to social programs” (2019: 183). In this argument, it is central how extractivism is legitimised by eradication of poverty. The same line of argument is repeated in the regional level, where extractivism inside indigenous territories is rationalised in the name of reducing local and regional poverty. This is often used to justify state intervention inside the territories, since the interventions are claimed to alleviate economic suffering. As I mentioned above, Saparas often argued that they were not poor, which can be interpreted politically as a refusal to give up their autonomy and accept state intervention, since they did not need poverty alleviation. In their opinion, actors who claimed that they lived in shortage were wrong as they had all they needed from their environment.

Furthermore, centralising schooling and the consequent pressure to abandon communities could function as a strategy to diminish the Sapara hold of territory in order to empty the land for oil extraction. This was speculated on by André, but the

similarity of dynamic in comparison with the earlier extractivist wave in 1950s did not escape from Walsh either (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018: 67). Nonetheless, dispersal of communities requires access to education nearby, and Saparas themselves aim to inhabit their whole territory in order to enforce their self-determination in the area.

Education does not only bring associated skills such as reading, writing and counting, but it also modifies values and attitudes (Rival, 1996). Principal Alba Castillo told me during one of my multiple school visits how she perceives education of values to be of primary importance in her educational project of Amauta Ñampi. This topic was brought up during the Kichwa assembly of education as well. In the case of the Sapara, a former school teacher told me in a personal conversation how he saw their children as free in comparison with the rigid structure of education system that forced them to spend all their days in the same place attending to similar tasks in the heat of the classroom. Regarding the research question on educational practices that support political emancipation and territorial self-determination, schooling that is culturally sensitive to subtle forms of teaching authority and discipline would clearly be more supportive of indigenous political institutions, as I have demonstrated in the chapters above. Furthermore, the ideals for interculturality as advertised by IBE support the incorporation of these practices.

According to Rival, among Waorani, harmonious social life had been established on a belief in respect and free expression of oneself, which meant that no one would have the authority to command others (Rival, 1996: 160). The belief is paralleled among the Sapara that I visited, who also refrain from such behaviour and rather trust on respectful and harmonious behaviour of each other. In this sense, education carries also the possibility of introducing new forms of authority and bringing daily constraints for behaviour. Such subtle forms of forging new indigenous identities should also be acknowledged in education especially during teacher-training. One possible solution to the issue is offered by an apprentice-system suggested by a NASE-official that allows more freedom for students to proceed at the pace of their own choosing in the studies instead of following a rigid class-system. The idea behind is to respect a student's own

pace of learning that aims for more substantial knowledge than only aiming to pass exams (Rodríguez Cruz, 2018b: 139).

All these aspects of education clarify outcomes of my research questions on what kind of educational practices can strengthen political emancipation and territorial self-determination of indigenous peoples and what challenges must be faced by indigenous groups building such practices. As I elucidate above, indigenous political institutions could be supported with respectful treatment of indigenous culture in the education system, but this can also be extended to Indigenous knowledge in general. Cultivating Indigenous knowledges in the education system could strengthen and revitalise cultural expressions of the Sapara, including decision-making practices that can contribute to political emancipation and territorial self-determination. Furthermore, Saporas emphasised how their holistic and relational world-view, which includes values and vision for themselves should be conveyed for next generations. In this project, education is indispensable. However, Indigenous knowledges should be integrated in a manner that does not fragment, decontextualise and sever links to the network of relations, where knowledge is traditionally shared, since relational and holism are innate qualities of knowledge, which loses its meaning if it loses qualities. Furthermore, a vision that Saporas hold for education would support different epistemologies as complementary. Hence, Saporas appreciate learning aspects of Western science that they perceive valuable assets in the globalised reality that they face. In this sense, education can further serve as a cultural broker that prepares Saporas with tools and knowledge to understand and navigate both worlds.

However, as I have repeated and concluded multiple times during the preceding chapters, the most important way in which education could strengthen indigenous territorial self-determination and political emancipation, advocated furiously by my informants is how it should be organised locally in a respectful manner to local particularities. Only by this manner the groups such as the Sapara can truly transfer their Indigenous knowledges to their children, avoid the problems caused by migration and monetary demands caused by intensified contacts with the capitalist mode of production. Now after these conclusions of my ethnographic material, I move next to a

broader discussion concerning the issues raised by my research questions and the answers that my analysis has provided to them.

## 7. Discussion

### 7.1 Political emancipation as building indigenous forms of governance?

In my research question I attend to education's possibility to achieve political emancipation of indigenous peoples. I have approached the question by attending to the political struggle of indigenous peoples in Ecuador to accomplish education that suits their needs, as this shows the political agency of indigenous peoples and what they aspire for in terms of connection between politics and education. As I analysed the history of indigenous education and IBE in chapter 4, it becomes evident that in the heart of the demands is to attain education that respects indigenous realities and supports their culture, language and political rights as distinct indigenous nationalities that have equal rights and voice in the national arena in comparison with other Ecuadorians. This signifies education, principally articulated through the concept of interculturality, that does not erase unique histories and current realities, but provides equal standing and well-being for indigenous peoples, who have both been marginalised culturally, as in marginalisation of indigenous languages, and structurally, as evidenced by difficulties concerning the access to education. To tackle this political, economic and cultural marginalisation, indigenous peoples have demanded equal access to education that supports their cultural vitality.

Moreover, in my ethnographic fieldwork it stood out how educational practices can also support political emancipation by means of strengthening indigenous forms of conducting politics. In this matter several points already discussed in chapter 6 emerged: values and discipline, hierarchies, political organisation inside the territory, cultural familiarity and complementary relations between knowledge systems. I will continue further the discussion based on these themes.

To begin the discussion, I return to the concept of interculturality as I introduced it in chapter 4, as it depicts the significance of Indigenous knowledge for the larger issue of



political emancipation. In chapter 4, I mentioned that it consists of action and struggle, both equally important, because action transforms structures, whereas struggle pursues profound reconstruction of thinking and doing. For such process, integrating Indigenous knowledge serves to modify the latter, as it provides manners of thinking and acting otherwise. Education offers a natural space for beginning such transformation, since it functions as a centre of knowledge production and cultivates thinking of people. Integrating Indigenous knowledge benefits the wider struggle of including diversity of knowledge in state structures, especially if incorporated with strong community-school relations that encourage extending indigenous thinking and doing with political institutions, as I will discuss later in this subchapter. On the other hand, action in relation to education entails inclusion of indigenous members in official institutions administering education as demanded by the indigenous movement. Action and struggle work hand in hand and indigenous involvement on administering education also benefits integrating Indigenous knowledge, since people representing indigenous nationalities have a more profound understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems that can be difficult to grasp from a Western epistemological standpoint, as I explained in subchapter 6.1. If this epistemic diversity was to be properly incorporated in the education system, from here it could possibly be extended to other institution, as education provides important foundations for the ways through which students learn to think and act.

As for the topic of values and discipline, I illustrated in subchapter 6.4 how discipline is also a culturally bound concept expressed in various semblances depending on a person's upbringing. In relation to indigenous forms of conducting politics, discipline and values are at the heart of the matter, since they guide political conduct. In academic literature, equality and lack of hierarchies are recognised as central characteristics that mark political organisation of indigenous peoples of the Latin America and especially Amazonia (Clastres, 1989). Similarly to Clastres, I also witnessed during my fieldwork the aspiration to equality in conversations that dealt with power in its multiple manifestations ranging from economic and social to political.

Educational practices can support indigenous values and ideals of power. I discussed this theme especially in subchapter 6.4 in relation to spatio-temporal arrangements of schooling and its impact on discipline, as well as in relation to Indigenous knowledge. I demonstrated how spatio-temporal arrangement in schooling modifies perspectives on hierarchy, as different pedagogical practices could encourage equality instead of hierarchy by forming appropriate teacher-student relationships that would be committed on respect and learning without coerciveness or demonstrations of power. Rather, a teacher would be in the role of a knowledgeable elder that shares his knowledge to students in the form of an apprenticeship. To contrast this with an example from Zapatista schooling, which was an aspired example in the minds of my informants, Zapatistas also privilege education's role in preparing the youth for political participation and indigenous governance: “[P]articipation and dialogue acts to prepare the students for the cargos– community roles – they will occupy when they finish school and for the process of community decision making, a crucial part of the Zapatista governance structure” (Shenker 2012: 436). The example from the Zapatista education brings attention to how education can prepare students for forms of governance that follow indigenous forms of conducting politics for example by emphasising aspects such as equality in the decision-making. To follow this line of thinking, education constitutes an important step that prepares students to participate in argumentation and consequent political discussion and it forms a large part of learning the conduct of conduct.

Furthermore, educational practices can vitalise indigenous forms of governance, when it is organised together with communities for example by including participation in assemblies and *mingas* in the schooling, thus supporting relationality. As I highlighted in subchapters 6.1 and 6.2, Indigenous knowledge is relational and experienced according to the relationships that form it. Simultaneously, those relationships also constitute the indigenous political conduct, which itself is founded upon knowledge that is relational and holistic as emphasised in subchapter 6.1. Education that supports forms of governance and organisation among communities can teach skills and values of indigenous politics and reinforce those institutions. Local schools can also function as a centre of “sociopolitical organisation” for the whole community in the rural areas

(Walsh and Mignolo, 2018: 67). As many of my informants in our conversation emphasised building consciousness in education through practices such as contextualisation of knowledge, this brings me to Freire (1972), who has theorised how education can liberate thinking, and consequently, encourage beneficial political action through reflection. Similarly to Freire's ideas, education can contribute to reflection and action that is informed and derived from a local context, especially if education is incorporated with participation by local institutions encouraging independent and informed thinking. Accordingly, education can form a central part of the political and social organisation of indigenous communities simultaneously upholding those institutions and passing the manner of conducting politics to the youth.

In this discussion, another interrelated point arises from challenges that stem from current forms of organisation that require involvement of bureaucratic procedures of the state. In chapter 5, I recounted Erazo's (2013) study on indigenous territorial governance, where he had marked development of hierarchical relations between leaders and community members that alienated leaders from others, as they had a differentiated position in the community as mediators between the state and community. Such bureaucratic involvement and fear of assimilation was also mentioned by Moya to be a common worry among indigenous movements during their formation period (1990: 341). In this matter, educational practices can also alleviate such tendencies. As I mentioned in subchapter 6.2, education has a role as a cultural broker that regulates relations between knowledge systems.

Firstly, as all the community members would be familiar to some extent with both knowledge systems, it would encourage participation of all the members of the community in governance, decreasing separate roles of individuals. My informants told me that in some cases they rotate leadership roles to ensure equality of political decision-making. Education could prepare for such roles. On a related note, the aforementioned preparing for conducting politics in equal manner in the education system can be beneficial here.

Secondly, locality also matters in this issue. I suggested this point in subchapter 6.5, when André explained the importance of organising possibilities inside the territory, as people who left the territory often began to follow standards set by outside institutions. In his opinion, organising *mingas* or political governance were often undermined, when people acquired new ways of doing things. This supports a view that organising and enforcing indigenous institutions inside the territory also by the means of education could mitigate alienation of leaders from the community. To follow this issue through, a distance is a real challenge among communities that are characterised by difficult access. Leaders also risk alienation from communal life as a result of the geographical distance between communities and Puyo, where they work. Erazo also explains how Kichwa of Rukullakta in Ecuadorian Amazon employ distance for their political benefit by avoiding participation in events organised by unpopular leaders and hence delegitimising their power, a practice that Erazo calls “government through distance” (2013: 176), which illustrates how distance plays a part in Amazonian politics. As I brought up before, distance was something that Sapara leaders intended to overcome, but at the same time, organising education locally can strengthen relations to communities from an early age and vitalise political and social institutions in the communities such as *mingas*.

Nevertheless, I emphasise a point I already discussed in subchapters 6.1 and 6.2 that indigenous peoples or their knowledge should not be framed or understood by means of essentialism, but complexity and transformation are equally important qualities for them as for any other form of knowledge or society. It is not my point to portray any form of authentic indigenous politics, but rather to search for possibilities to cultivate values regarded in high esteem and to integrate more diverse forms of knowing in political structures. To accomplish such goals, essentialism or the romanticised noble savage ideal do not serve the purpose as such discourses limit possibilities available for indigenous peoples. Moreover, these discourses can be utilised to discredit indigenous political leaders and public servants, as has been the case, for example, when IBE faced criticism that indigenous public servants had failed to attain sufficient standards for IBE, as explained by Rodríguez Cruz. According to some sectors of government, IBE had become a “Hispanic” school for poor indigenous people without proper care for

principles of cultural vitalisation while indigenous public servants themselves preferred better schools for their own children. Such criticism partly legitimised a dismissal of DINEIB that had assured autonomy over indigenous education as I brought forward in chapter 4. Yet any of those aspects criticised have not encountered improvements during the time that IBE has been administered directly by the state (2018a: 118–119). This type of discourse resembles the ideal of the noble savage as the only legitimate and authentic speaker for indigenous peoples, and as indigenous leaders involved in state politics are deemed to fail to fit the ideal, they are delegitimised and criticised based on the essentialist caricature. As such, essentialism participates in legitimising paternalistic control of indigenous peoples by the state, as indigenous peoples themselves are excluded from decision-making as unauthentic.

Keeping in mind these important points of caution, during my fieldwork it became evident that the re-evaluation of the relationship between the knowledge systems was at the top of the agenda for my informants in relation to their future plans. In terms of indigenous governance, cultivating values kept in high esteem, such as equality and incorporating conduct supportive of indigenous governance is an important part of education especially in respect of political emancipation and territorial self-determination, to which I now turn to.

## **7.2 Territorial self-determination**

Another important topic I attend to in this thesis is the question of how educational practices can strengthen territorial self-determination of indigenous peoples. In the course of this thesis, I have demonstrated how education and territorial struggles are intertwined historically and currently in indigenous politics of Ecuador by illustrating the case of the Sapara. Besides the historical connection of territory and education in the frontline of the indigenous political movement, educational practices can benefit territorial struggles, as I have demonstrated through the analysis of my ethnographic material. As discussed in the previous subchapter, attempts by my informants to create a multi-epistemological combination of knowledge systems by incorporating indigenous cosmology and understandings to the education system can play a crucial part in the

future reproduction of territorial relations and claims, a topic analysed in subchapter 6.2. The manner in which education is organised influences possibilities and performing of territorial politics, for example on how dispersal can be employed as a political strategy of claiming territory as I analysed in subchapter 6.5. These are the themes that I will explore below.

To begin the discussion with a relationship between educational practices and territorial self-determination, I return to the definition of territory by Halvorsen: “*the appropriation of space in pursuit of political projects* – in which multiple (from bottom-up grassroots to top-down state) political strategies exist as overlapping and entangled” (2019: 791 [italics in original]). This definition ties up divergent political action commenced by my Sapara informants, including strategies that vary from *poder* to *potencia*, also mentioned in chapter 5. Territorial self-determination consists of these myriad strategies that Saporas employ to appropriate space to realise a political project that territory signifies in the plurinational state of Ecuador.

Education comprises one political space, where these strategies can be executed. Education composes a distinct strategy for territorial struggle, while it simultaneously interweaves various complementary strategies together. To start with, education constitutes an important arena of epistemological struggle, where meanings get defined, which includes determining territorial self-determination. This relates to my discussion on interculturality in the previous subchapter 7.1 on how to integrate diverse forms of knowledge in education. I discussed in subchapter 5.3 how speaking of a sense of place and connection that people have with the environment challenges rational bureaucratic and legal conceptualisation of space and questions legitimacy of the state’s decisions. In the case of the Sapara, this is particularly important, as they still occupy much of the land that continues to lack the title of Sapara territory. By pleading to the emotional and spiritual relationship, they highlight how the environment is not just land, but something more. They question the state decision-making that has defined limits of their land by mapping official lines for administration, disregarding actual communities that extend to a much larger area.

If epistemological diversity in educational practices is to be advanced, this should happen respecting the indigenous systems of knowledge, as I argued in subchapters 6.1-6.3. My Sapara informants were passionate about integrating their own knowledge and culture in the educative model in a holistic and relational manner that would not lose the essence of their worldview, including respect for the environment that they inhabited. From the perspective of resistance against the expansion of extractive industries, integrating Indigenous knowledge in IBE can be seen as a part of the struggle against turning environment to an oil frontier that is ready for capitalist exploitation, where different actors, including locals compete for possible revenues, before there is nothing left to exploit. This nightmarish image of frontier logic is described by Tsing, which she contrasts with other forms of approaching the environment such as Indigenous knowledge: “To counter that perspective, anthropologists, rural sociologists, and geographers have drawn attention to non-frontier-like (or even anti-frontier) environmental social forms, such as common property, community management, and Indigenous knowledge. They have returned attention to the cultural specificity of capitalism and state bureaucracy” (2005: 35). Consequently, integrating Indigenous knowledge according to principles of interculturality supports the epistemological struggle for territorial self-determination, as it also resists transforming territory into a frontier, where control over space is lost.

The importance of diversifying rationalities is disclosed also by means of coloniality of power discussed in subchapter 6.1. Knowledge regulates action and according to the theory, that knowledge is composed of Eurocentric rationality that has subdued other forms of knowing as inferior to its universal reason. In respect to this theoretical idea, transforming thinking by integrating diverse systems of knowledge would contribute to a changing rationality, though this entails a larger change in thinking, especially as various discontinuous fields sustain the coloniality of power, which means that change in one field does not necessarily translate to the end of coloniality. Such dynamic could be exemplified by plurinationality in that though it exists legally, economical aspirations continue to undermine its significance. This highlights a need for changes in multiple arenas of society that are all interconnected, including territorial and educational struggles.

Education entwines with territory also if territory is examined as an administrative apparatus, which I also discussed by means of indigenous forms of governance in the previous subchapter 7.1. Historically, education has shaped territorial projects of building nation-states, as education has played a role in constructing a sense of nation, citizenship and community defined according to geographical limits shown in maps. Similarly, education and indigenous territorial projects are entangled, although heterogenous territorial projects should not be assumed to bear extensive similarities, especially as they are all individual constellations of strategies of power ranging from top-down control to the more settled utilisation of *potencia*.

One example that portrays how education impacts territorial administration happened during my fieldwork, when a leader of education in NASE pursued ambitiously to include all of the Sapara communities in the project of educational remain, despite the trouble that he had to access them without proper funding. To resolve the problem, he acted as a guide to groups that for instance wanted to conduct research in the Sapara territory, which shows his motivation and commitment to respect equality of all Saporas in political decision-making. This was also how I met and travelled with him and his family to the territory. From his perspective, politics should not be conducted in the top-down manner, but everyone should be heard in the planning of reforms for the education system for Saporas. In this case, territorial self-determination was pursued by realising territorial administration that could legitimise control over space, and education functioned as a platform for negotiating the form of administration. Education as an institution constitutes a significant part of general indigenous territorial administration, which means that strengthening educational administration has implications for territorial governance as it supports self-determination.

Moreover, employing territorial administrative control by means of educational administrative displays differences in territorial projects, as the example includes equal participation aiming to overcome top-down control that could be contrasted with state practices. Another beneficial quality of education for the Sapara governance is raised in this discussion, as education can act as a common denominator for all communities



divided by their standpoints on oil, as mentioned in subchapter 3.2, and though I could not attend more profoundly to this topic due to my limited time on the field, it still played an important role in the territorial politics of the Sapara. While not all communities agree if exploitation of oil is beneficial, they all are united in their view on the benefits of education. This process brings to mind the building of nationalist education systems that aim to unify people, but at the same time, it differs by its scale and practices, since all communities are consulted. Education could act to unify communities and encourage communication despite challenges that long distances and historical differences set.

To continue with appropriate educational practices that could strengthen territorial self-determination by participating in political strategies of appropriating space called territory, education could provide culturally relevant skills, advance economic independence, political governance and strengthen culture and language. As I discussed in subchapter 6.2, my Sapara informants hoped that learning from both knowledge systems would heighten resilience of their communities in respect to environmental and social challenges that threatened their lives. Additionally, this type of intercultural learning would help them achieve economical self-determination, especially if particular care is taken to include suitable economic opportunities inside the curriculum. Introducing appropriate economic development opportunities inside IBE is also suggested by Rodríguez Cruz to alleviate the tendency to migrate and problems of poverty (2018b: 213). In the previous subchapter, I already discussed how educational practices could assist in building a better governance more respectful of indigenous world-views, especially as skilled political organisation can more successfully claim rights, and hence achieve stronger territorial self-determination. The last point relates to already discussed benefits of epistemological diversity in IBE, but it is also separate from it, as revitalising culture and language invigorates territorial self-determination simply because they ease access to territorial rights claimed as a basis of being a separate indigenous nationality. If an indigenous nationality preserves a strong cultural identity, this eases its access to political and territorial rights and ability to search for potential allies both nationally and internationally. Hence, revitalisation of culture is itself an affective political strategy for territorial self-determination.

As a final point in this part of the discussion, educational practices also support other strategies for appropriation of space, and both state and indigenous peoples can employ these, as education simultaneously can support indigenous presence in a dispersed form of settlements throughout their territories, while its provision can strengthen the power of the state on previously ungoverned areas. I have analysed in chapter 4 how oil interest and organising education in Amazonia have been historically linked, illustrating how different actors can claim territorial control by means of provisioning education. In these historical events, I would speculate that the state has been able to claim stronger control over its land and subjugate space for its economic interests by utilising the education system. Provisioning education has extended state presence and introduced the meaning of citizenship. In essence, education has been used as a tool of state-control to involve indigenous peoples in the state structure together with their land.

Moreover, a reversal of the strategy takes place, if political decision-making causes centralisation of education, which pressures indigenous peoples to migrate from areas that lack sufficient services such as education, as I discussed in subchapter 6.5. This leaves their lands empty, free of conflict caused by locals (as they become less numerous) and easier to exploit economically by extracting natural resources. In both cases, education serves as a political tool for governing and controlling people and their movements. For these reasons, it is crucial for indigenous peoples to claim education for themselves in the form that respects their worldview and conforms to the ideal of self-determination also in respect to organising education locally.

All in all, indigenous peoples can engage in a comparable strategy of claiming spatial control, where education is an equally important tool. In subchapter 6.5 I have emphasised how education could benefit a strategy of dispersal that claims territorial control by means of showing physical presence throughout the whole territory, which legitimises their claims over land. It also facilitates control, as they can survey what kind of activities happen throughout the territory, for example, if there are any cases of deforestation. People pursue to gain access to education, which has become a basic prerequisite of life, which means that organising education throughout territory

promotes a dispersed form of living. This is a one type of strategy, where education organised locally benefits the appropriation of space for the political project that Saparas have. This concludes my second part of the discussion, as I leave the final summaries to the next chapter.

## 8. Conclusion

In this thesis, my research question has been the following: what kind of educational practices can strengthen political emancipation and territorial self-determination of indigenous peoples and what challenges must be faced by indigenous groups building such practices. In order to answer this question, I have presented an ethnographic case study on the indigenous nationality of Sapara in Ecuador and what their aspirations for education, especially regarding territorial autonomy, are. This I accompanied with historical analysis of IBE, and analysis of indigenous territorial politics in plurinational Ecuador. Through my analysis I have come to the conclusion that education constructs a significant part of reinforcing political emancipation and territorial self-determination of indigenous peoples in multiple ways, of which I intend to give a short summary below.

To begin with, it is of utmost importance that indigenous peoples themselves have a right to determine their own system of education, which has been a goal of indigenous movements of Ecuador from the beginning extending to this day. The educational institution influences thinking and organisation of indigenous peoples in multiple ways and it is a privileged arena of cultural struggle to achieve epistemological diversity and maintain indigenous cultures dynamic and alive. In order to formulate relevant educational practices, indigenous peoples themselves struggle to control IBE to establish education that serves values and objectives important for indigenous peoples themselves, including ideals such as territorial self-determination.

As to proposing specific educational practices that support indigenous territorial self-determination and political emancipation, locality of schools was the most emphasised by my informants and it has been significant in my analysis in multiple levels. As I discussed throughout chapter 6, acquiring Indigenous knowledge requires presence and time dedicated to learning it and for that reason attending a school locally is crucial, since it enables a student to learn Indigenous knowledge in the school, but also outside of the school context within communal activities. Additionally, much of the Indigenous knowledge is also dependent on local environment, which means that learning requires spending time in the place that is constitutive of knowledge. Schools are also important

centres of socio-political organisation and in that manner sustain communities. Local schools can also support indigenous forms of political organisation, as students are able to participate locally.

Furthermore, dispersal of communities supports the indigenous territorial claim and without school services, many people are pressured to migrate and abandon their home communities, leaving them empty. Migration has negative consequences for territorial control exercised by indigenous nationalities such as Saparas, whose rights for land depend on their presence in the territory. This becomes especially emphasised if territorial claims remain contested, as was the case for the Saparas who did not have collective title over whole of the land that they inhabited during the time of my fieldwork. Moreover, as indigenous territories remain only partly autonomous, since the nation-state retains control over subsoil resources, land continues to be an arena of competing political interests. This accentuates the importance of planning education practices to facilitate living inside the whole territory, since inhabiting space asserts the claims of indigenous groups effectively. Also, by dispersing communities, they can more easily access all corners of their territory and tend to any activities that might happen such as encroachment of oil activity. However, the strategy of dispersal as practiced by communities simultaneously depends on the possibilities of organising education locally for the reasons stated above.

Moreover, as I have argued, designing a curriculum respectful of intercultural diversity of knowledges would benefit territorial self-determination and political emancipation. A principle of interculturality, understood by the indigenous movement itself as a radical project of recognising lived heritage of cultural and historical differences in dialogue between various segments of society, could continue to form a backbone of IBE, especially if it is applied in its radical form and not by means of multiculturalism. This would entail incorporating Indigenous knowledges in IBE in a more substantial manner that extends throughout pedagogical practices, school spaces to educational materials.

As I learned through my fieldwork in Sapara communities, their knowledge can be described as holistic and relational and incorporating their knowledge in the education

system should happen without fragmentation, decontextualisation or severing links to the network of relations that constitutes this knowledge. Otherwise, Indigenous knowledge risks losing its significance, if its holistic and relational nature is not respected. Such issues should accompany the planning of IBE, so that Indigenous knowledges would be applied holistically rather than in decontextualised segments. Nevertheless, Indigenous knowledges (or peoples themselves) should not be understood through any form of essentialism or romanticism, which limits possibilities for action and distorts provisioning of helpful solutions. This holds true for planning of IBE as well, since the pursued goal for IBE entails complementary relationship between different knowledge systems rather than constructing any isolated form of authentic Indigenous knowledge. Rather, the issue has been that Indigenous knowledges have been dismissed as inferior to Western scientific rationality, which has also prevailed as a more emphasised form of knowing in IBE, an issue that can be articulated through coloniality of knowledge. Overcoming this challenge remains important, as how to integrate Indigenous knowledges in IBE without subduing them. For this problem, one possible solution is a more integrated form of interculturality and application of Indigenous knowledges holistically.

Integrating Indigenous knowledge inside of IBE supports political emancipation of indigenous peoples, as indigenous forms of governance can also be cultivated through such processes. This responds to action and struggle as central pieces of conceiving interculturality, as action implies things such as inclusion of indigenous representation inside administration, and struggle indicates inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in the manners that the administration works in. Cultivating indigenous forms of governance pursues struggle, as it helps to establish manners of administration that follow Indigenous knowledges. I have treated political emancipation as arising from a process of interculturality as articulated by the indigenous movement of Ecuador and cultivating indigenous forms of political governance. Treating Indigenous knowledges holistically and relationally also entails respecting values, as in equality, and forms of organisation inside indigenous communities, for instance, *mingas*. Educational practices could highlight community-school relations and support local forms of organisation by including them in educational objectives. Similarly, education has to be sensitive of how

it teaches values and interaction supporting indigenous values and forms of discipline. This demands intersectional planning throughout the curriculum.

As for the complementary relationship between different knowledge systems, intercultural treatment of knowledges in education could serve to educate indigenous peoples to respond to future challenges of transforming environment and society. Responding to climate change demands forming new solutions, and education could serve in devising them, as combining Sapara knowledge with Western knowledge could formulate better understanding of such issues. This could cultivate territorial self-determination as Saporas would be better equipped to deal with future challenges in regard of their well-being inside the territory.

While I am writing these concluding words to my thesis, the Amazonian rainforest is suffering from historically massive forest fires that are currently threatening the very existence of the massive ecosystem. For this reason alone, it is more urgent than ever to look into every possibility that might help to sustain the rich environmental biodiversity that the region is known for. As I stated in the introduction, language diversity contributes positively to biodiversity, which indicates how indigenous rights intertwine with environmental conservation. To evaluate this connection from the perspective of my case study on Saporas, I witnessed how they struggled to stop oil exploration inside their territory, posing probably the most influential barrier against exploiting their part of the rainforest in Ecuador. What motivated their fight was the intimate relationship that they had with the environment that had sustained them alive and healthy. What provided a foundation for relating to environment was their extensive knowledge on the subject. Language forms part of this knowledge. Often languages gain a privileged place from where to articulate continuity and distinctiveness of indigenous culture with regard to “mainstream society”, but it should be recognised how histories of oppression and colonialism have shaped indigenous realities, causing language extinction among other things. Loss of language should not be confused with loss of totality of knowledge (Vittori and Ushigua, 2007). Instead, languages could be observed as an expression of a wider framework of Indigenous knowledges and if this line of thinking is pursued, it could be Indigenous knowledges in their totality that benefit biodiversity.

To conclude this thought, I argue that supporting indigenous rights both for their territory and education could be beneficial to biodiversity. The connection between the two is indeed complex, but from the perspective of my study, I observe two possible benefits that partly overlap. First, their environmental knowledge probably has promoted sustainable practices that have generated biocultural landscapes consisting of unique constellations of species. Secondly, their fight against oil extractivism preserves the environment. Supporting their rights supports also their fight against extractivism that poses an important threat to diverse environments that are defended by those who actually know them and depend from these.



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