



THE SHUAR AND LARGE-SCALE MINING IN ZAMORA-CHINCHIPE, ECUADOR:

**A STUDY OF ETHNOPOLITICS AND THE STRUGGLE OVER
NATURAL RESOURCES**

Elena del Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

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The Shuar and large-scale mining in Zamora-Chinchipec, Ecuador:

A study of ethnopoltics and the struggle over natural resources

De Shuar en grootschalige mijnbouw in Zamora-Chinchipec, Ecuador:

een onderzoek naar etnopolitiek en de strijd om natuurlijke hulpbronnen

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To my family, who inspired me to begin this journey and supported me in every sense until the end. Thanks to my parents, José Ignacio and Robert.

To the Shuar people and their leaders



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Acronyms

ARCOM: Agency for Mining Control and Regulation.

ASCOMI: Cónдор Mirador Association.

CASCOMI: Amazonian Community for Social Action Cordillera del Cónдор Mirador.

CEDHU: Ecumenical Commission for Human Rights.

CIDH: Inter-american Commission for Human Rights.

CODENPE: Council for the Development of Nationalities and Pueblos of Ecuador.

CONAIE: Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador.

CONFENAIE: Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of the Ecuadorian Amazon

COOTAD: Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomies and Decentralization.

ECORAE: Institute for the Eco Development of the Amazon Region.

ECUARUNARI: Confederation of Kichwa Peoples of Ecuador.

ENAMI: National Mining Company of Ecuador.

FEI: Ecuadorean Indian Federation

FEINE: Council of Evangelical Peoples and Organizations of Ecuador

FENOC: National Federation of Peasant Organizations.

FEPNASH-CH: Provincial Federation of the Shuar Nationality of Zamora Chinchipe.

FEPP: Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio

FESZCH: Shuar Federation of Zamora Chinchipe.

FICSH: Interprovincial Federation of Shuar Centers.

GADs: De-centralized, Autonomous Governments.

GTZ: German Cooperation Agency.

IERAC: Ecuadorian Institute for Agrarian Reform and Colonization.

INDA: National Institute for Agrarian Development.

INREDH: Regional Foundation for de Advisory on Human Rights.

MAE: Ministry of Environment of Ecuador.

MIDUVI: Ministry of Urban Development and Housing.

POT: Land Planning System.

PRODEMINCA: Mining Development and Environmental Control Project.

SENPLADES: National Secretariat for Planning and Development.



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Abstract

This thesis studies the ways in which the Shuar people confront a large-scale mining project in Zamora Chinchipe, the southernmost province in the Amazon region of Ecuador. The main focus of this work centers on the ways in which the Shuar Federation and its leaders, construct and play out identity discourses and political practices regarding the development of Project Mirador (an open-air copper mine) at different levels of the organization's hierarchy. I also examine if the ethno-politics of the Shuar Federation have been successful in achieving the objectives of their struggles related to mining extraction. This analysis is framed in a wider trans-local political and economic context, understanding that the responses from local communities are in part the result of interactions with a variety of actors, including the state (through different institutions like *Ecuador Estratégico*, a governmental institution which directs local development), the mining company, mestizo populations, and others.

In the thesis, I argue that the practice of ethno-politics is complex and at times contradictory, and that the definition of political strategies based on identity discourses is flexible and, at times, even fragmented. The construction of indigeneity, defined as the process of articulating a group's identity discourse, and the definition of a position vis-à-vis large-scale mining does not necessarily apply to the Shuar as a collectivity, which results in individualized and even isolated efforts. However, rather than applying notions of efficiency and efficacy, this thesis explores a variety of internal and external elements that could play a role in shaping those discourses. After offering a detailed description of the structure, composition, and organization of the Shuar Federation and communities in terms of land and subsistence practices, I analyze various discourses and practices which are interconnected as a part of historical territorial dynamics; I primarily focus on 1.) The re-configuration of the territory and the local communities' changing relationship with it, 2.) The current and evolving composition of the Shuar communities, and 3.) The notions of modernity and ancestrality

Overall, this thesis aims to show that, while from a Western mestizo perspective Shuar ethno-politics might seem inefficient and even lack coherence, forms of des-centralization in discourses and practices can also be used as strategies in a process of re-signification and adaptation to the larger mestizo society and as a part of continuous colonization. In this context, Shuar identities are evidently not the result of a historical continuity but are rather constantly being reshaped in specific political, social, and economic conjunctures.



Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift gaat over de manier waarop de Shuar-bevolking zich opstelt tegenover een grootschalig mijnbouwproject in Zamora-Chinchipec, de zuidelijkste provincie in het Amazonegebied van Ecuador. Daarbij gaat het vooral om op de wijze waarop de Shuar Federatie en haar leiders identiteitsdiscoursen en politieke praktijken met betrekking tot de ontwikkeling van Project Mirador (een kopermijn in de openlucht) opzetten en uitwerken op verschillende niveaus van de organisatiehiërarchie. Verder wordt onderzocht of met de door de Shuar Federatie gevoerde etnopolitiek de doelen van hun strijd rond de mijnbouwactiviteiten worden bereikt. In dit onderzoek wordt rekening gehouden met een bredere trans-lokale politieke en economische context, omdat de reacties van lokale gemeenschappen gedeeltelijk het resultaat zijn van interacties met diverse actoren. Onder die actoren vallen de overheid (via verschillende instellingen zoals *Ecuador Estratégico*, een overheidsinstelling die de lokale ontwikkeling begeleidt), het mijnbouwbedrijf, mestiezenbevolkingsgroepen en anderen.

In dit proefschrift wordt betoogd dat de praktijk van etnopolitiek complex en soms tegenstrijdig is, en dat de definitie van politieke strategieën die zijn gebaseerd op identiteitsdiscoursen flexibel en soms zelfs gefragmenteerd is. Het idee van inheemsheid, gedefinieerd als het proces van het formuleren van het identiteitsdiscours van een groep, en het bepalen van een positie ten opzichte van grootschalige mijnbouw is niet noodzakelijk van toepassing op de Shuar als een collectiviteit, wat resulteert in geïndividualiseerde en zelfs geïsoleerde inspanningen. In plaats van de begrippen efficiëntie en effectiviteit toe te passen wordt in dit proefschrift een verscheidenheid aan interne en externe elementen onderzocht die een rol zouden kunnen spelen in het vormgeven van die discoursen.

Na een gedetailleerde beschrijving van de structuur, samenstelling en organisatie van de Shuar Federatie en Shuar-gemeenschappen in termen van grond en levensonderhoud, volgt een analyse van verschillende discoursen en praktijken die in onderlinge samenhang onderdeel vormen van de

historische territoriale dynamiek. Daarbij ligt de focus primair op: 1) deerschikking van het territorium en de veranderende relatie van de lokale gemeenschappen met dit territorium; 2) de huidige en zich ontwikkelende samenstelling van de Shuar-gemeenschappen en 3) de begrippen moderniteit en afkomst. In het algemeen is het doel van dit proefschrift om te laten zien dat hoewel de etnopolitiek van de Shuar vanuit een Westers mestiezenperspectief inefficiënt lijkt en zelfs coherentie mist, het mogelijk is om vormen van decentralisatie in discoursen en praktijken ook te gebruiken als strategieën bij het opnieuw betekenis geven en aanpassen aan de bredere mestiezensamenleving en als onderdeel van voortdurende kolonisatie. In deze context zijn de Shuar-identiteiten duidelijk niet het resultaat van een historische continuïteit, maar worden ze steeds opnieuw vormgegeven in specifieke politieke, sociale en economische constellaties.

1

Introduction

1.1 Setting the Stage

This thesis focuses on the ways in which Shuar people confront large-scale mining in Zamora Chinchipe, the southernmost province in the Amazon region in Ecuador. It primarily focuses on the ways in which the Shuar Federation and its leaders construct identity discourses and define political practices related to the development of Project Mirador, an open-air copper mine located in the Cordillera del Cóndor. However, this is not an ethnographic study of this organization; rather, this project should be considered a multi-site study of the complex interactions among diverse actors (Hannerz 2003) within a specific territory and around the context of a large-scale mining project. From this perspective, it is understood that the responses of local communities are also connected to trans-local political and economic dynamics. This thesis attempts to illustrate those dynamics by examining the interactions between the Shuar and other specific actors like the state and the mining company.

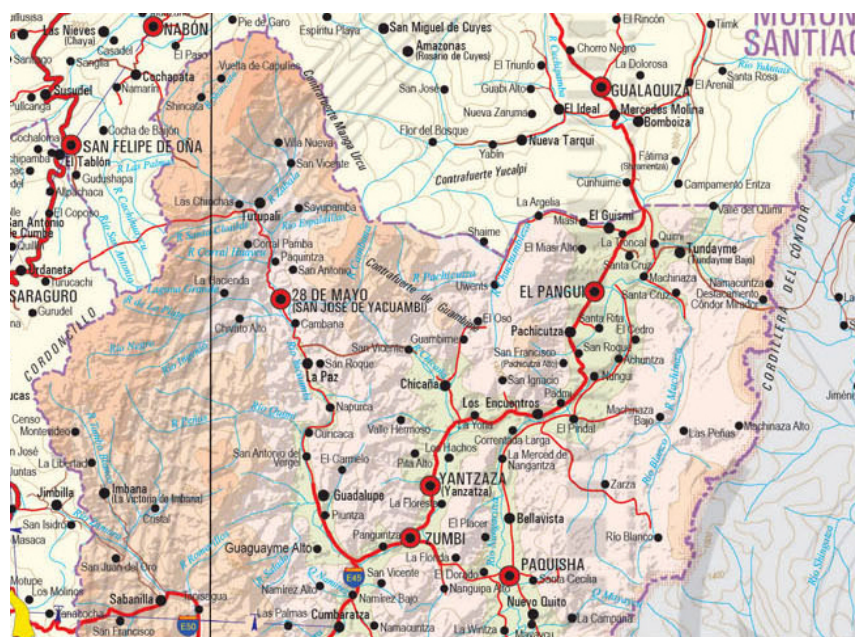
The fieldwork for this thesis was carried out during two years, from October 2013 to January 2015 in four different visits to the field. However, the first time I travelled to the province of Zamora Chinchipe was in April 2013; while proposing my thesis project, I decided that it was important to get to know this area in advance, as it would become my research site for the next two years. A year before, in 2012, the government of Rafael Correa had signed a contract to allow the exploitation of copper in the Cordillera del Cóndor (Project Mirador) with the Chinese consortium Tongling-CRCC Tongguan, which had purchased the company from the previous Canadian owners (Ecuacorriente S.A. or ECSA). Mirador is located on a copper deposit in the Cordillera del Cóndor, a highly biodiverse mountain range in the Alta Amazonía (Ortiz 2011), located along the northern border of the province of Zamora Chinchipe and the border with Peru. At the time of

my first visit, the local population and indigenous organizations were becoming adjusted to this new Chinese administration, which, unlike the previous Canadian administration, was not open to direct negotiations or support for local development projects.

Unlike neoliberal regimes from the eighties and nineties, the Ecuadorian government led by Correa (2007-2017), similar to that of Bolivia, emphasized a national, populist agenda in which the decision to expand and intensify the extractive industry was based on the need to increase the state's capacity to satisfy the populations' needs, especially amongst the poorest sectors of society (Bretón 2013; Davidov 2013; Lu et al. 2017; Pellegrini and Ribera Arismendi 2012). Thus, the extractive industry has become a macroeconomic pillar that should allow these governments to maintain and even increase social expenditure (Arsel et al. 2016; Bebbington and Humphreys 2011: 140). In Ecuador, for example, the Ministry of Non-Renewable Natural Resources (*Ministerio de Recursos Naturales No Renovables*), has assigned different percentages of royalties, profits, and mining taxes that both large-scale and small-scale mining operations must pay to the state (Riofrancos 2017; Sacher and Acosta 2012). Companies that are involved in large-scale mining must pay 12 per cent of their profits and no less than 5 per cent of their sales to the state, in addition to other types of taxes, which should be allocated exclusively to social programs in the areas of health, education, housing, and so forth (information provided at the Agency for Mining Control and Regulation or ARCOM—*Agencia de Regulación y Control Minero*). Project Mirador was part of a new set of policies regarding development and distribution of wealth and it quickly became the first large-scale mining project to use exploitative extraction in Ecuador.

The populated areas directly impacted by Project Mirador (see Map 1.1) include the town of Tundayme, which is the closest head administrative parish¹ to the mining project, and several nearby indigenous and mestizo² communities which belong to Tundayme's jurisdiction.

Map 1.1
Northern Province of Zamora Chinchipe
Canton of El Pangui and Administrative Parishes of El Guismi and Tundayme



Source: Instituto Geográfico Militar www.igm.gob.ec

In addition, there are other mestizo and indigenous communities within the area of indirect impact, which are located closer to the city of El Pangui (23 km from Tundayme) and belong to a different administrative head parish (El Guismi). Tundayme and its surroundings were traditionally inhabited by the indigenous Shuar people; however, since the 1960s these areas have been “colonized” by mestizos coming from the highlands (Salazar 1977; Troncoso 1999). In spite of being the historical settlers of the province of Zamora Chinchipe, the current Shuar population is relatively small. In the last census of 2010, of the 737 inhabitants of the Tundayme parish (which includes rural Shuar and mestizo communities) only 22 per cent considered themselves to be indigenous Shuar, compared to 78 per cent of people who self-identify as mestizo (National Population and Housing Census, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos, INEC 2010). The Shuar in this area do not

engage much in traditional subsistence practices such as hunting and fishing; like the mestizos, they work their farms, take paid jobs (many in the mining company), and may engage in artisanal mining.

Around 2006, a strong anti-mining movement had surged through the regions of El Panguí and Tundayme. However, at the time of my first visit to the province in 2013, the climate appeared to be relatively calm. Although in 2006 there had been violent confrontations between groups resisting the presence of the mining company and the supporters of the project, throughout my fieldwork (between 2013 and 2015) I never saw or experienced any strong demonstrations against large-scale mining (the most outstanding event was the creation of a peasant organization which began to demand that their land be adequately compensated by the mining company). This is not to say that local communities (both indigenous and mestizo) were unanimously supportive of mining, but there was a generalized sense of implicit acceptance of the project: the local population felt there was nothing left to do once the contract between the government and the company had been signed in 2012.

Despite this apparent state of tranquility, I did observe a variety of reactions towards Project Mirador. Some people in the indigenous communities had strong positions either in favor of or against the mining company and actively engaged in negotiations or some type of activism, while others were somewhat indifferent or complained but never took any action. Moore and Velásquez (2012: 115) argue that, beyond resistance and negotiation, the presence of the mining industry in an area also generates internal conflicts and polarizations within the local population. Promises of wealth and direct support for improving living conditions in poor communities have created divisions between those who support mining and its promises of “development” and those who are more concerned about environmental impacts and perhaps more aware of the effects of mining on their traditional subsistence strategies and territory. This is also the case in Project Mirador; in fact, some people who had previously supported the presence of the company later became its strongest detractors, probably because they had negative experiences with it.

Some mestizo people in Tundayme were concerned about the impact of copper extraction, while others were quite content because their businesses were growing. One of the Shuar federations in Zamora, the Shuar Federation of Zamora Chinchipe (FESZCH—*Federación Shuar de*

Zamora Chinchipe)³, had adamantly supported Project Mirador; the leaders even proudly called themselves “*pioneros*” or “pioneers” in their relationship with the mining company. Meanwhile, the indigenous communities’ opinions and positions regarding the project were highly diverse. For example, in Etsa, one of the first communities that I visited, I talked to one of the members who seemed uncomfortable discussing the topic of mining. He was wearing a t-shirt that had the company’s logo on it and he affirmed that he and most of the members of the community worked for ECSA, the mining company. However, this did not indicate that he fully supported large-scale mining; rather, he was concerned about the environmental effects on rivers, changes in the way mining workers were treated by the new owners, and the fact that no significant, permanent local development projects had been developed in his community.

This first experience with the local Shuar communities was repeated throughout my fieldwork and attested to the multiplicity of local perspectives related to the presence of the mining company around Mirador. Additionally, regardless of the official positions of the indigenous organizations, people within the affected communities have conflicting views on extractivism and its benefits. Furthermore, while the company offered jobs and some funds for small projects in the communities, most community leaders had more ambitious expectations of development that have not been fulfilled by the company nor by the state. Amidst these conflicts, a new actor came onto scene: *Ecuador Estratégico*, a state company that was created in 2011 which took charge of channeling royalties from strategic national projects (including mining and oil extraction initiatives) into local development. The integration of this new entity evidenced the increased presence of the state in extraction projects. Through the establishment of *Ecuador Estratégico*, the state began to take back natural resource extraction and began to assume its role as a welfare state, thereby linking the importance of extractivism to the well-being of the people.

The creation of *Ecuador Estratégico* and the definition of new government policies regarding the distribution of resources discouraged extractive companies (in this case, ECSA) from having a direct relationship with the local communities and from creating development projects as a form of compensation. In this new arrangement, the Shuar Federation of Zamora Chinchipe (FESZCH) and the communities in the

area felt that they had been omitted from planning. To begin with, while the mining company had previously signed several agreements and donated funds to the Shuar Federation to carry out projects in the local communities, the new Chinese owners had embraced the rule of no direct negotiation with the communities; as such, they limited their funding and support to their environmental management plan. Furthermore, the company insisted that it had already paid the government advanced royalties for the mining project, which meant they had no intention of funding any additional projects. Second, the Shuar Federation and communities expected that *Ecuador Estratégico* would invest in the Shuar people, but were disappointed by the lack of funds for local projects.

In conclusion, at the time of my second visit to the field and throughout the duration of my fieldwork, there was a general sentiment that the Shuar communities were not receiving the kind of development assistance that they had expected, neither from the company nor from *Ecuador Estratégico*. The mining company had become hermetic; while the department of community relations was still operating, higher officials of the company were not interested in meeting with the federation's authorities. When they finally did meet in Quito in 2014, the federation leaders came back completely disappointed and had not achieved any of their objectives. The most significant complaint of community leaders was that the mining project was not really generating wealth and development, as the company once had promised. Furthermore, while there were many signs of *Ecuador Estratégico* doing work in Tundayme and El Panguí (such the construction of health centers, schools, roadwork, and information centers) the perception among the Shuar was that their communities had been left out. While some of this infrastructure was also available to the people in the communities, they still lacked basic services such as clean water, sewage systems, and electricity. They questioned whether *Ecuador Estratégico* would ever come to their communities.

1.2 Research Objectives and Main Questions

As part of the nationalist agenda of President Correa's government, the extractive industry is used as a reat launching pad for the distribution of wealth and the implementation of social programs. Project Mirador has become emblematic of this strategy; it is set to become the first

government-sanctioned, large-scale mining project to begin extraction (now scheduled to begin in 2018) and, as such, has generated many expectations, as well as local reactions and conflicts (Teijlingen et al. 2017). Anti-mining organizations and local groups opposed to mining are mostly concerned about environmental and social impacts; however, this sentiment coexists with expectations of local development and wealth generation among indigenous and mestizo communities who support the presence of mining in the area (Avci and Fernández-Salvador 2016). Thus, Project Mirador is part of a transformative political, economic, and social conjuncture that should be studied and addressed.

Local struggles related to a massive extractive project like Project Mirador occur in a context of inequality and uneven development, manifested in profound gaps of well-being, security, and dignity. These inequalities generally correspond to categories of race and ethnicity, gender, geography or place (rural/urban), and others; noncoincidentally, such inequities are part of those patterns of exclusion brought about by colonization and which are extremely difficult to change, especially in areas with a high concentration of indigenous populations (Radcliffe 2017: 78-84). From a postcolonial perspective, the high levels of inequality in Ecuadorean society of today are essentially the legacy of hundreds of years in which there was no interest in confronting “unbalanced societies” (Hoffman & Centeno 2003; Radcliffe 2017).

The Shuar communities involved in this research are an interesting case study for addressing issues of marginality. As will be discussed throughout this thesis, the history of contact and colonization carried out by missionaries, the state, and mestizo society (which began in the late 1800s) has inevitably positioned them in situations of vulnerability and limited their access to power. The Shuar’s racial distinctiveness and culture (as is the case of any other indigenous group in Ecuador) was enough justification for discriminatory actions from the larger mestizo society; these actions resulted in the reduction and loss of their territory and then escalated to altering their subsistence practices, losing their language and so forth. Furthermore, other identity categories, such as geography or place also play an important role in establishing patterns of exploitation; in this case, the experience of living in rural areas has also served to exacerbate situations of exclusion and marginality (Radcliffe 2017).

Data from the last census carried out in 2010 clearly illustrate the gaps discussed by Radcliffe in terms of well-being and the irregular and geographically unequal levels of development (which prevent populations in rural areas from having access to basic services and education) (INEC 2010). For example, Tundayme parish has low percentages of access to sewage services (21.15 per cent), potable water (44.23 per cent), and electrification (52.05 per cent). The percentages of access is even lower for the Shuar population in the same parish: only 3 per cent of Shuar households have access to sewage systems, 14.29 per cent have access to potable water, and 43.56 per cent to electricity.⁴ As a whole, the canton of El Panguí (which includes the parish of Tundayme) has a very low level of education access: only 7.36 per cent of the adult population has finished high school and 0.79 per cent has had post-highschool education; in the case of the Shuar population, only 5.56 per cent have finished highschool and 0 per cent have had any type of post-high school education. As a part of El Panguí's development plan, a diagnosis of all urban and rural parishes of El Panguí canton was completed; the included poverty indicators (calculated based on unsatisfied basic services) were as high as 87.8 per cent for the parish of Tundayme (INEC 2010; GAD de El Panguí-Plan de Desarrollo y Ordenamiento Territorial 2012-2022). This data evidences the important roles that ethnic/racial and geographic categories play in exacerbating and reinforcing patterns of exclusion related to access to basic services, education, work opportunities, and other fundamental rights. This system of exclusion is coupled with a lack of political representation: the Shuar people from the communities around Tundayme and El Panguí have never had official political leaders, which has prevented them from having direct representatives to advocate for their communities.

In the literature on ethno-politics, several authors (Bolaños 2011; Gros 1999; Warren and Jackson 2005) have already pointed out that the notions of a marginal existence are part of the ethnic reaffirmation of a group: this means that the struggles that marginalized peoples experience are not only related to protecting what is considered vital in terms of group identity (such as their history, traditions, language and culture), but it is mostly related to sharing situations of exclusion and racism from a mostly mestizo society (Selverston-Scher 2001: 21). Thus, in the context of both material precariousness (insecurity) and limited access to participation in decision-making processes in extractive programs such as

Project Mirador, it is important to understand how the Shuar leadership at the different levels navigate through a system that historically and presently excludes them. For some Shuar people from the communities around the project, Project Mirador represents an opportunity to improve their everyday subsistence; however, for others, it represents another attack on the community's rights, particularly their right to maintain and protect their ancestral territory. Thus, in this work, the struggle of the Shuar people and, more specifically, of the Shuar political organization, is understood in terms not only of direct resistance to large-scale mining, but also in terms of those efforts intended to negotiate material benefits and to gain some control over the decision-making processes. For example, while the FESZCH has supported large-scale mining since the first companies arrived to the area, it constantly struggles to have some control over the resources or access to mining royalties and to encourage the implementation of development projects in the communities.

In this research, I sought to achieve a more general understanding of the changing and diverse mobilizations of indigenous communities in response to extractive projects; I concentrated on responses to Project Mirador by the local indigenous communities, specifically on the FESZCH Shuar federation, and several communities associated with it (Bebbington et al. 2008). The FESZCH is the strongest federation in the province of Zamora Chinchipe, with over 50 affiliated communities; furthermore, all communities in this study belong to this federation and are located within Project Mirador's area of influence. I decided to focus on the Shuar people living in the area around Project Mirador for several reasons. First, the Shuar have a strong political organization which—as is the case of most indigenous organizations in Ecuador—is based on ethnic recognition and demands. Created in the province of Morona Santiago, the original Shuar Federation⁵, the Interprovincial Federation of Shuar Centers (FICSH—*Federación Interprovincial de Centros Shuar*), was actually the first federation to be officially recognized by the state in the 1960s (Salazar 1977, 1981; Rubenstein 2005). The establishment of this organization demonstrated the Shuar's great ability to adapt to new ways of conducting politics as they also became more active within the national mestizo society. Thus, as the only indigenous group in the Project Mirador area which claimed its presence in the territory to be ancestral, it was important to understand the Shuar's stance on mining,

their decisions related to the project, and the motivations underlying those decisions. My first visit in 2013 proved to be fruitful in this regard because I could already observe the complex context in which Project Mirador was situated: of the two Shuar federations in the province, only one had been a strong supporter of the two most important mining projects. Furthermore, the Shuar communities in the project area were internally divided in their stance related to the mining, and there was already some conflict among family members because of the presence of the mining company.

Second, in some of the literature regarding the extraction of natural resources (Conklin and Graham 1995; Rudel et al. 2002; Troncoso 1999) and according to general public opinion of this process, indigenous people are usually portrayed as the ones who protect the territory and take a stand against extractivism. While this is true in many cases, and, in fact, the national indigenous organization, the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (*CONAIE-Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador*) has built part of its political agenda to resist neo-liberalism, capitalism, and extractive practices, the decisions made by local indigenous people might be quite different than this rhetoric. Therefore, it was important to understand the complex scenario which the Shuar navigate and in which they negotiate with all the actors that have settled in their territory and to debunk the romantic notion that Amazonian peoples are the perennial guardians of the forest.

Third, while the large national and regional indigenous organizations in Ecuador have worked for decades on similar political agendas to consolidate a national indigenous movement (Becker 2010; Sawyer 2004; Yashar 2005; Zamosc 2004), it is necessary to acknowledge and to study the areas of divergence and heterogeneity regarding indigenous political activity (Martínez 2009). It is important to study the composition of local indigenous organizations, their political ideologies, and the connections they establish with the people in the communities in order to achieve common objectives. Furthermore, local and community leadership has not necessarily been the focus of attention in much of the literature on ethno-politics, thereby leaving a gap in the understanding of ethno-politics beyond the work of regional and local organizations. Based on the findings of this research, I have concluded that community leadership is more effective in understanding, advocating for, and achieving the local populations' goals given that they are better

positioned to understand and value their needs and objectives than federation leaders, who may spend more time lobbying with government authorities and external organizations.

The main objective of this research is to understand the diversity of fluid and changing identity discourses and political practices that are constructed at all levels of the Shuar Federation in its dealings with Project Mirador. My characterization of the nature of these discourses and practices stand in opposition to homogenizing and monolithic constructions of indigenous groups like the Shuar by the mestizo society and even the academic literature about them. This study is unique in that it recognizes the complexity of the Shuar leadership and examines the factors that can help explain the diverse discourses, positions, and political practices of this organization.

The second objective of this research is to understand if the practice of ethno-politics has been a useful strategy in terms of the achieving the federation's objectives in their struggles related to Project Mirador. In other words, has the leadership at the federation level and the community level been able to meet their goals, both in material and symbolic aspects? Have their efforts to either resist or negotiate produced results that are considered positive by the Shuar federation itself and by the people in their communities?

As my research evolved and I began to investigate organizational and community life, issues like community division and transformation as well as the relationship between these communities and their ancestral territory became important in the discussion on identity discourses and helped me answer the previously mentioned questions. While in official discourses (mostly in the federation's discourses), Shuar identity was linked to the notion of an ancestral territory, this was not as important to many community leaders. Territory had been an important part of the lives of the Shuar's ancestors; for example, their vast lands allowed them to carry out their traditional subsistence practices. However, the Shuar's modern, everyday lives in the communities around Tundayme are quite different now. Their concerns and vision of what they want for themselves in many cases have less to do with claiming back territory than with making sure their communities become modern and their members have good living conditions. Even concerns of large-scale mining damaging the environment and their territory were not as strong (some leaders did not even mention them) as other concerns that were

related to the development of their communities as a result of having the mining project present.

The issue of land and territory is also linked to how the community has been transformed in the last decades; as may be expected, communities are not tight-knit entities, not only because members might migrate to the cities and other provinces, but also because their boundaries are quite flexible. People may travel back and forth between the community and urban centers even in the same day, but actually live in places like Tundayme. This high level of mobility is also tied to ideas of progress and modernity: most parents want their children to go to school in Tundayme and El Pangui, and for that reason they may make huge sacrifices to achieve that goal. For example, many mothers rent or purchase homes so that their children can go to school in specific areas and access services like electricity, a basic necessity for completing academic activities. In this case, they see education as a way to improve, a sign of progress, and a way for their children to insert themselves into the wider mestizo society.

Furthermore, while reflecting upon questions related to Shuar identity, I also investigated other important actors involved in the mining project including the mining company, state institutions, environmental organizations, and, in particular, the mestizo population that had greatly outnumbered the Shuar since they started colonizing the area. The *colonos*, as they are called, are mestizos who came from the highlands around the 1950s and 1960s and started settling in what used to be the territory inhabited by the Shuar (Bjureby 2006; Esvertit Cobes 2015; Salazar 1977). Towns like El Pangui and Tundayme were created after the *colonos*' arrival and they have become the strongest local population, both in terms of numbers and representation in positions of authority and power. Their relationship with the state and mestizo society, specifically the *colonos* and the missionaries at some point, has had a great impact on the Shuar's lifestyle and has profoundly altered the ways in which they conceptualize and manage their territory, subsistence practices, and, more generally, their culture. The construction of a Shuar identity and its use as a political strategy, thus, is inextricably linked to a process of constant negotiation and even improvisation with these actors and, more broadly, with the mestizo and Western world. This theme is one that appears repeatedly throughout the thesis and which has been present throughout the recent history of the Shuar, beginning with the

early history of contact between the Shuar and missionaries and continuing today with their daily interactions with *colonos*, state institutions⁶, and the mining company. These interactions have been permeated by notions of development, progress, and modernity, to which most of the Shuar communities and leaders in this study aspire.

At this point, it is important to clarify that, while the main interest of this thesis was to study the identity discourses and strategies of the Shuar federation towards large-scale mining, its context is much wider. When looking at the interactions between local populations and an extractive project, the research necessarily becomes trans-local and becomes part of a wider discussion related to the political economy of the country and the region. In a country such as Ecuador, in which oil extraction has been one of the most important sources of income for decades, it is important to understand the role of large-scale mining in a new era of extractivism under a government that has defined itself as contrary to neo-liberal practices. As Hogenboom (2012) explains, minerals in Ecuador and other countries in Latin America have acquired a political status in the new context of nationalist, progressive governments because they are considered key to the re-distribution of wealth and the investment in social programs. Mining projects such as Project Mirador thus play a political role because they are part of a new way of conceiving extractivism (Arsel and Avila 2011; Bebbington and Humphreys 2011; Davidov 2013); from this perspective, the ultimate goal of these initiatives is to facilitate the well-being of the most impoverished people in Ecuador and especially of the local populations who have been historically marginalized. Mineral extraction is not only an economic strategy but it also has political implications. This is evident in the work of some government institutions in charge of local development, which also interact with the Shuar people and organizations, such as *Ecuador Estratégico*. This state company is precisely one of those institutions created with the specific purpose of channeling royalties from extractivism into local development and, as such, it became an important part of this research. Therefore, the focus of one chapter of this thesis is on the politics of *Ecuador Estratégico*, as the institution responsible for the development of local communities. It forms the link between local dynamics and wider issues in the political economy of Ecuador. Furthermore, the discourses and rhetoric utilized by the company are permeated by certain notions of development and *buen vivir*⁷, which are

also very much present in the discourses of the Shuar people and leaders. The expectations of development and progress are also part of a theme that is repeated throughout the research, as part of the discourses of and the interactions with external actors.

One of my primary goals was to explore, in depth, the interactions between the Shuar communities and federations with the mining company. However, as I have already mentioned, this proved to be quite difficult because the company was not open to offer any kind of official information. While the Canadian owners had encouraged regular meetings with local community members and had even posted video materials on the Internet, the current Chinese administration is not interested in developing any ties with local communities. Although the director of the community relations department (who had been present during the transition from the Canadian to the Chinese owners) was quite willing to offer information during an interview with me in the first months of my fieldwork in January 2014, several months later, my experience with the new director of the department and vice-president of the company was different. No official information could be given out to the public without having approval from the general manager. I then decided to focus more on *Ecuador Estratégico* as its role was becoming more important to the development of strategic projects in local communities.

I also did not explore further other issues such as land loss and land claims because they were beyond the scope of the main interest of this thesis. While I do incorporate the notion of territory in the chapter that analyses Shuar discourses and practices, the issues around land should be further studied. In the area around Mirador and throughout Zamora and Morona Santiago, there is a history of land loss due to colonization by mestizos (Bjureby 2006; Rubenstein 2005; Salazar 1977) which began in the 1960s and continues today, albeit in different ways. This problem is related to other interesting issues, such as the relationship between the descendants of *colonos* and the Shuar population; while the interactions between the two groups are generally cordial and friendly, these exchanges also marked by racism, unequal power relations, strong emotions, and the resentment the Shuar feel towards mestizo people in general.

From both an academic and political perspective, the Shuar population in Zamora Chinchipe has overall received less attention than

the Shuar living in Morona Santiago (Harner 1978; Rubenstein 2005; Salazar 1977; Troncoso 1999). On one hand, most ethnographic studies have been carried out in the northern province probably because that Shuar population is larger; however, there are important differences between the Shuar in the two provinces with respect political organization, distribution of land, and even access to positions of power and authority. Thus, it is important, to continue to research issues related to the political organization of the Shuar in Zamora; I document my study of these topics in this thesis.

1.3 Main Arguments and Findings

1.3.1 The Construction of Identity in Postcolonial Contexts

The environmental justice perspective (Ali 2003; Banks 2002; Ballard and Banks 2003; Gedicks 1993; Martínez-Allier 2002) provides us with a diversity of ways to conceptualize how local populations cope with struggles related to resources and other issues that go beyond environmental and ecological considerations. Within this framework, authors from different disciplines have analyzed the ways in which indigenous people and organizations make decisions regarding the use and control of resources, often while negotiating with powerful state institutions or extractive companies (Bolaños 2011; Castillo and Cairo 2002; Conklin and Graham 1995; Gros 1999; Perreault 2003a, 2003b; Sawyer 2004; Valdivia 2005; Warnars 2010, 2012). These struggles are diverse and include efforts to gain control over their land (as ancestral territory for cultural reproduction) in order to prevent intensive resource extraction and thus environmental destruction, to make demands from oil companies to make reparations for damages, to negotiate benefits, and even to demand recognition as “nationalities” within a nation-state. All such struggles are intimately tied to the material needs which these local populations need to fulfill in order to secure their livelihoods and to fulfill symbolic objectives, which include performing and being recognized as political agents and citizens from their own particular ethnicity in a wider cultural and political context.

The use of ethnic identity by indigenous people is defined by some authors as strategic and performative because it achieves desired results for indigenous groups and has been instrumental in opening spaces for them in national and even international contexts (Castillo and Cairo

2002; Gros 1999). Furthermore, from a political science perspective, Selverston-Scher argues that the best way to measure the success of any political movement is to evaluate the material gains that the movement provides to its supporters. Just the fact that people belonging to an ethnic group identify with it in order to have access to those material benefits is precisely evidence of its level of success (Selverston-Scher 2001: 23).

Nevertheless, other authors like Perreault (2003b) and Sawyer (2004), who also discuss the strategic use of ethnicity, warn against an analysis of identity politics that reduces and simplifies the processes of “ethnic recovery” and identity construction of indigenous people in a wider political context. Sawyer avoids discussing ethnic identity in terms of specific strategies to achieve certain goals and rather considers the ways in which identity is constructed in the process of negotiation in which subaltern groups try to create spaces for themselves (Sawyer 2004). Thus, as much as material gains demonstrate that a certain political movement is fulfilling its members’ needs, the symbolic aspects of identity construction are equally important. As Perreault argues, processes of cultural revalorization and identity recovery should be considered from a broader perspective that examines the response of historically marginalized indigenous peoples to “political and cultural openings made possible by strengthening indigenous movements, increased presence of international NGOs, constitutional reform, and a degree of state openness to indigenous political organizing” (Perreault 2003b: 81). In other words, the political use of ethnic identity should be understood in terms of identity recovery, self-determination, political participation, and as a means through which previously marginalized groups (whose subaltern position was closely related to their ethnicity) create spaces for themselves in the larger society.

Using the general framework of environmental justice and ethno-politics, this thesis joins in the theoretical discussion of identity politics and indigeneity, which is relevant postcolonial contexts (Valdivia 2005, 2007). To better understand how ethnic identity is constructed and utilized as part of a group’s political discourse and practices, I use Hall’s conceptualization on identity as a base, and then incorporate the concept of indigeneity to understand and analyze specific political practices and discourses among the Shuar.

Before addressing Hall's discussion, it is important to understand that the notion of indigenous identities itself necessarily situates us within a postcolonial discussion on the construction of social categories. From this perspective, ethnic-racial categories are a product of a colonial structure that came to be considered as a natural and objective phenomenon, instead of and not as a product of a history of power (Quijano 1998). Aníbal Quijano argues that the pattern of control and domination between colonizers and the other was organized through the framework of "race", which in biological terms is fictional, but has been used to reshape the idea of humanity and reorganize social relations (Lugones 2008; Quijano 2011). Using this framework, new categories of social identity, such as white, indians, and mestizos were created; the diverse native populations in the Americas became "Indians" through a process in which their original identities were repressed and, in some cases, even completely erased, as they were all reduced to the same negative identity category (Quijano 1998: 230). From this perspective, coloniality underpins the creation of and permeates the experience of new social and geo-cultural identities, a categorization that is "the most profound and long-lasting expression of colonial domination"⁸ (Quijano 2002: 1).

This categorization was also part of a systematic form of repression of ideas, beliefs and knowledge systems over which Western patterns of thought and cultural models were imposed. In short, "the European culture became the universal cultural model. The imaginary of non-European cultures could hardly exist and, overall, reproduce, today outside those relations"⁹ (Quijano 1992: 13). The entire experience of indigenous peoples has been permeated by colonization in such a way that colonial categories and structures are even now a part of their existence and way of understanding the world. However, it is also clear that the indigenous groups that had been dominated also learned to attribute new meanings to foreign symbols, images, and patterns to then transform and appropriate them (Quijano 1998: 233).

For Quijano, the ultimate form of appropriation is imitation-subversion, as demonstrated by the creation of the category of *cholo*¹⁰ in Peru. The *cholo* is the result of a process of re-originalization in which new cultural elements, together with other previously acquired ones, were transformed in a way that was not simply acculturation or even mestizaje or hybridation. "It was, above all, an alternative of

decolonization of imaginaries, of practices, values and institutions of the cultural relations among the people of the country”¹¹ (1998: 236). According to a similar line of thought, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui argues that in Bolivia the *ch'ixi* or mestizo illustrates a reality in which multiple cultural differences coexist in parallel without actually blending in, but at time antagonize or complement each other. The *ch'ixi* is an alternative to the notions of the Indian as a rigid form of identity and to the “fictitious discourses of hybridation”, which in the end subsumes what is indigenous (2010).

Thus, while it is understood that coloniality has permeated every aspect of the experience of indigenous people, it is crucial to acknowledge those spaces in which they have given new meanings and re-signified categories as part of a process of appropriation, which challenges the notion that indigenous identities are fixed and rigid and indigenous people are passive subjects. The Shuar political organization may very well illustrate this process. By imposing religious orders, the Spanish tried to control the Shuar during colonial times, but were unsuccessful; however, the Spanish colonization of Ecuador opened the door for a posterior form of “colonization” which was first carried out by missionaries and later by mestizo people. These processes were both part of a “civilizing” process intended to incorporate the Shuar into the nation-state. Social and racial categories established during colonization were already part of the sociocultural fabric of Ecuador and, as such, the Shuar and other Amazonian groups were automatically incorporated into them.

As part of the process of conversion and civilization, the Shuar slowly stopped speaking their language and adopted a more Western lifestyle. These processes were reinforced by constant contact with state institutions and mestizos, who had been moving into their territory. However, while the Shuar political organizations created in the 1960s to protect their territory were already an accommodation to a Western-national political structure, they were also a way for the Shuar to gain some leverage in their benefit. As Rubenstein writes: “What from the perspective of the Ecuadorean citizenship, (the federation) is an extension of the state into a new social and geographical space, from the Shuar’s perspective it means the inclusion into a bigger entity” (Rubenstein 2005: 299).

Returning to Hall's discussion, there are two important points in his theoretical approach to postcolonial identities that are most relevant for my work (Hall 1990; Hall and Du Gay 2003), and these are related to the articulation of collective identities. However, it should be clear that, unlike other postcolonial/poststructuralist authors, Hall's writings have been heavily influenced by the work of Gramsci and thus have a strong Marxist approach. He has argued, for example, that the discussion about race and ethnicity can benefit from Gramsci's non-reductionist vision of the intersection between class and race, which avoids classical tendencies to privilege the importance of the first. This non-reductionist approach to the problem of race/class is also reinforced by Gramsci's attention to the culturally specific quality of class formation in a specific society (Hall 2010: 281). In Hall's view, while identities are created as tools of representation they also function as discourses that give meaning to concrete experiences and material things and have political and material consequences. As has been previously mentioned, material dynamics are also highly relevant to the discussion of ethno-politics; I will address this topic throughout the thesis as it relates to identity discourses and practices within the Shuar political organization.¹² Thus, in this thesis, the emphasis on the material implications of identity discourses challenges poststructuralist positions that tend to dismiss issues of poverty and material needs which, from my perspective, may warp and limit our understanding of the decisions of indigenous people in their dealings with large-scale mining and other practices.

The first point from Hall's work which is relevant to this thesis is that identities are part of an ever-changing process in which there is no essence, fixed history, or defined sense of cultural belonging. Since identities are constructed in specific historical contexts, they are contingent on those specificities and thus fragmented and subject to voids and ruptures; the notion that identities are tied to a seamless or monolithic historical continuity is not possible (Hall and Du Gay 2003). The second point is the idea that identities are processes in which individuals position themselves according to a particular context (Hall 1990). Discourses and practices can thus be seen as part of the way individuals or groups have chosen to position themselves or articulate their sense of identity. In this context, articulation is defined as the process of rendering a collective identity that is based on common interests and positions in specific political and mobilization moments;

thus, identities are understood, to some extent, to be provisional. To be clear, in terms of the conceptual discussion of identity politics, I use the concept of articulation in Hall's terms; however, I also use it to describe how the different levels of the Shuar Federation and their leaders (federations, associations, and communities) converge, join, or come together (or not) in terms of their discourses and political practices, as well as in their regular, daily interactions and work in favor of the Shuar people.

When looking at the Shuar's identity and their discourses, it is possible to understand Hall's argument on identity fragmentation. As Hall argues, it is quite difficult to speak of historical continuity or a sense of cultural belonging based on specific cultural traits, if some of such characteristics are already in a process of serious change, thereby causing some identity fragmentation and dispersion. Quijano further argues that specific, heterogeneous, and even discontinuous experiences can be brought together in a collective subject as the result of a shared history of conflicts; this articulation "only becomes a unit when those elements come together around a specific axis, under concrete conditions, in relation to specific needs and in a transitory way"¹³ (Quijano 2011: 24). In her book on an indigenous Amazonian group and their relationship to oil extraction, Sawyer also argues that identity is a process and not permanent essence. She explains that ethnicities are not about what essential and inherent characteristics a group possesses, but rather about how and why they came to be (Sawyer 2004). Who the Shuar are now, how they think, and how they position themselves within the larger society is very different from who they were fifty years ago, as their identity is the response to different sets of circumstances and conjunctures.

1.3.2 Indigeneity as a Political Strategy

Based on the findings of this research, I develop several arguments throughout the thesis. The central point regarding the Shuar ethno-politics vis-à-vis large-scale mining is that identity discourses and political strategies are flexible, changing, and individualized at all levels of the federation; additionally, from the perspective of Western politics, the federation itself may be interpreted as scattered and fragmented, thus indicating that it does not exemplify western understandings of collective action. This reveals that the process of articulation of collective identities

is complex and incorporates a variety of internal and external elements. These elements include the group's own knowledge and understanding of their world, their own constructions of identity, and their exchanges with the mestizo society which, in this case, involve the change and transformation of local communities and the territory as well as interactions with diverse notions of development and modernization (Cepek 2008). Valdivia (2005) argues that indigeneity, which refers to the articulation of a group's identity discourse, is partly imposed and adapted but also reshaped and reinvented according to external views of indigenous people and the indigenous group's own view of themselves. Indigeneity is the way in which indigenous groups position themselves in relation to different types of political, economic, environmental, or socio-cultural processes. As such, it can be understood as a political strategy: a way to negotiate and achieve goals.

Marisol de la Cadena (2010) also discusses the ways in which indigenous people have engaged with Western society and particularly how they construct their indigeneity vis-à-vis the larger society and even national politics. She argues that Andean indigeneity, as a historical formation, did not disappear into Christianity or national citizenship, but was also not impervious to either of them. She affirms, "Neither indigenous nor mestizo, it is an indigenous-mestizo aggregate that we are talking about: less than two, not the sum of its parts (therefore not the 'third' result of a mixture) and indeed not one—let alone a pure one." (De la Cadena 2010: 348). In other words, indigeneity in the Andes has been constructed alongside a strong mestizo presence such that it has not necessarily created a completely new identity, but there is also not an identity that has remained untouched or unaffected. Through the concept of partial connections (De la Cadena 2010: 347; Strathern 2004), she analyses the presence of indigeneity in regional and national political spaces in which discourses historically shaped in relation to class and ethnicity are "exceeded" by the use and inclusion of "earth-beings"¹⁴. She calls this appearance of "earth-beings" in social protests an emergent indigeneity, which is not a new way of being indigenous but rather "an insurgence of indigenous forces and practices with the capacity to significantly disrupt prevalent political formations." (De la Cadena 2010: 336). This insurgence refers to the capacity of disavowing the separation between "Nature" and "Humanity," that is part of the Western political theory (2010: 342).

The emergence of this new form of indigeneity calls to the forefront the discussion of how indigenous leaders have had to learn to speak in modern terms, translating categories and leaving others behind (such as the use of ‘earth-beings’) to accommodate what the state and modern politics consider appropriate, as in the notion behind the *Indio Permitido* (Hale 2004). For indigenous people to have access to resources, their demands must be articulated in terms that make sense in Western mestizo politics. As such, they must change and adapt the ways in which they voice their struggles related to territory, gender and ethnic rights, and so forth¹⁵ (De la Cadena 2010: 349), which is a main point of interest in ethno-politics and in this thesis. On the other hand, Lu et al. (2017), argue that indigenous groups in the Ecuadorian Amazon who have become part of the national political process are in a “continuous re-signification of indigenous identity vis-à-vis the state and social movements seeking political transformation” (Lu et al. 2017: 60), thereby creating contradictory notions of citizenship. In the case of the Shuar Federation, those contradictions are evident in the ways in which identity discourses and political strategies are shaped and how their positions related to large-scale mining are defined. In this process of re-signification, indigeneity seems to occur at micro levels and appears to be scattered, fragmented, and constantly changing.

In order to understand the ways in which Shuar leaders construct their indigeneity, I have turned to certain elements (some external) that might play a role in shaping or re-signifying those notions of identity, which, in turn, create diverse discourses, objectives, and political strategies. I concentrate on views and discourses related to progress, development, ancestrality, the changing relationship between the Shuar and the territory itself, and the transformation experienced by the communities.¹⁶ The aim is to show that, while from a Western mestizo perspective, Shuar ethno-politics might seem inefficient and lack coherence, these forms of dispersion and decentralization can also act as strategies to cope with situations of change as part of the process of re-signification and re-appropriation (Lu et al (2017; Quijano 2011). Thus, it is understood that federation and community leaders define their political identities and strategies in a very flexible and changing way, negotiating and at times improvising according to specific political, social, and economic contexts and conjunctures.

Furthermore, to better understand the fluidity of identity discourses

and to avoid an analysis that would suppose a binary relationship between the Shuar and the mestizo world, it proved to be important to consider other categories of social difference. Feminists and critical race theorists have used the concept of intersectionality to understand the relationship between and interdependence of social categories that influence hierarchies among and between groups. Kimberle Crenshaw's work was pioneering in that it attempted to understand the interactions between race, gender, class, and ethnicity to elucidate the "multiple dimensions of Black women's employment experiences." (1991: 144). If before these categories were seen as disparate and exclusive, from this perspective, they are considered to be interlocking and part of a complex web of hierarchical relations. Thus, rather than understanding social categories as fixed or stable, they can be considered to be "situated accomplishments" (Mollet and Faria 2013: 123; West and Fenstermaker 1995) through which people actively negotiate and contest power hierarchies. As Radcliffe argues, intersectionality is not just a sum of all forms of discrimination, but rather "when they are interrelated the disadvantages are mutually reinforced and exacerbated"¹⁷ (2017: 75). From a postcolonial perspective, interlocking categories are part of a system of power hierarchies in which colonial inequalities are defined by 'superior' categories; thus, race is not separable or secondary to gender oppression because they are co-constitutive (Lugones 2008: 134).

Evidently, social categorization among Shuar leaders and members of communities is flexible and is intersected by multiple identities. While defining themselves as Shuar in racial/ethnic terms, they also see themselves as (artisanal) miners, pro-mining and anti large-scale mining, and even as mining workers. Being a leader is also not a homogeneous category: federation and community leaders may have important differences in terms of status and positions of authority, as well as gender¹⁸, but they may also have different personal aspirations and political strategies that are influenced by their age group. Thus, categories of class, ethnicity, and even age come together as part of their identity discourses and rhetoric about large-scale mining. However, while some of these interlocking categories might reinforce disadvantages and discrimination (for example, community leaders who do not have any ties to the mining company), others might increase social status and certain privileges, as in the case of federation leaders who had been able to negotiate with the company. Other forms of intersectionality can

explain different notions related to modernity and development that result in certain political strategies and forms of negotiation with the state and mining company.

Finally, it is also important to consider another influential element in the articulation of collective identities among the Shuar: the presence and role of missionaries in the colonizing process have also influenced the structuring of different Shuar federations. While the first Shuar federation was created in the northern province of Morona Santiago under the auspices of Salesian missionaries, Shuar communities in Zamora did not have the same support from the Franciscans and developed their own organization decades after the establishment of the federation in Morona. In this context, some forms of political organization became stronger or more successful than others in defining certain positions and exercising their leadership, as seems to be the case in Morona¹⁹; others, like the organization in Zamora, have had more trouble agglutinating forces around certain positions and decisions.

1.3.3 Development and Modernity

Finally, as part of the colonizing process, the Shuar and other indigenous groups in the Amazon region have engaged with two important concepts that permeate much of their decision-making, especially with regards to processes like large-scale mining. Modernization and development have become part of the identity discourses and goals of many Shuar leaders and people from the communities. As mentioned earlier, these two concepts are also part of a theme present throughout my dissertation because they are 1.) intimately connected with the Shuar strategies and political practices related to Project Mirador and 2.) key in the interactions with *Ecuador Estratégico* and its development logic.

The concept of development has been at the center of an ongoing debate among academics of a variety of disciplines. Theories on development that understand it as a result of economic growth (such as modernization theory and neoclassical economics) have been widely criticized by different approaches that question the validity of a Western model that has clearly not benefitted most of the world's population (Bretón and Palenzuela 2016; Peet and Hartwick 2009). From the perspective of post-structural theory, what in the past was considered to be automatically good and beneficial—such as the notions of improvement and progress—in this theory are considered to be

mechanisms through which power and control are exercised (Peet and Hartwick 2009: 218). Poststructuralists question the very idea of progress and the benefits that development supposedly brings to people: who determines what is beneficial and for whom and what is considered to be progress in life? Furthermore, instead of conceptualizing development as something that occurred naturally in the modern world, post-structuralism sees development as an invention, social construction, and discourse that seeks to exercise control through the use of dominant Western ideas and representations (Escobar 1995; Ferguson 1990; Peet and Hartwick 2009: 222; Rist 2002). Notions of developed and underdeveloped countries, first and third world countries, etc., have become so naturalized that they have hardly been contested or had their parameters questioned (Escobar 1995). Thus, more than just a model of economic growth, development is considered to be a Western method of control and set of parameters to judge other societies (Walsh 2010a: 15-16).

As discussed above, this Western model of development is intertwined with the concepts of modernity and progress. Following Marx, Berman (1982), describes modern experience or modernity as radically contradictory because scientific, industrial, and technological progress has been accompanied by the transformation of the human environment in ways that are not always positive.

In the last century, the “maelstrom of modernity,” as he calls it, or science, industry and technology, have created new human environments and destroyed old ones:

...the industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology, creates new human environments and destroys old ones, speeds up the tempo of time, generates new forms of corporate power and class struggle; immense demographic upheavals, severing millions of people from their ancestral habitats, hurtling them halfway across the world into new lives; rapid and often cataclysmic urban growth; systems of mass communication, dynamic in their development, enveloping and binding together the most diverse people and societies; increasingly powerful national states, bureaucratically structured and operated...finally, bearing and driving all these people and institutions along, an ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist world market. (Berman 1982: 16)

According to Berman, while modernity has been developing over the course of five hundred years, creating its own history and traditions, it has been in the XX century that this process has expanded to affect the whole world, according to what scholars like Escobar define as a homogenizing model. Escobar defines modernity as the “kinds of coherence and crystallization of forms (discourses, practices, structures, institutions) that have arisen over the last few hundred years out of certain cultural and ontological commitments of European societies” (2010: 9). As such, he argues that modernity has homogenized and universalized certain fundamental notions: the belief in the existence of an objective truth, the idea that the only way to produce knowledge is through science and reason, the dichotomy between and separation of nature and culture or nature and society, the separation of societies through the colonial divide, and other recent assumptions about the separation of the economy from social practices and the role of the market as a self-regulating entity (Escobar 2010: 9). Thus, the notion of progress is very much tied to Cartesian dualism; by the end of the seventeenth century, progress was “marked by the increasing domination of humankind over nature; the more man masters nature the farther humanity moves along the line of progress” (Blazer 2010: 4). According to this framework, there is also a clear conceptualization of nature as a source of resources that should be exploited for people’s welfare (Gudynas 2003: 17).

Furthermore, the notion of progress was gradually crystallized in the concept of development; in the newly-created nations in Latin America, which were strongly guided by European thinking of the time, a massive extraction of natural resources and products started to take place alongside industrialization and the organization or “civilization” of much of the territory. “The European heritage of development highlighted economic growth as the main source of social and political progress”²⁰ (Gudynas 2003: 29). Around the end of World War II, development was becoming a universal model based on the assumption that progress and well-being in a society can be achieved through economic growth. Economic growth was seen (and still is) as the only way to alleviate poverty and solve redistribution issues, as well as to help consolidate industrialization and the production of technology (Gudynas 2012). Notions of progress have also been applied to indigenous populations, who should be modernized, meaning they had to adopt certain values

held by a “white minority or a mestizo majority and, in general, those embodied in the ideal of the cultivated European” (Escobar 1995: 43). In the end, from Escobar’s perspective, development has been a top-down, ethnocentric, and technocratic approach that has treated people and culture as abstracts, concepts, and statistical figures. (Escobar 1995: 44).

Esteva explains how the notion of development automatically invalidates those people who are not or have not followed its path:

The word always implies a favorable change, a step from simple to complex, from inferior to superior, from worse to better. The word shows that you are doing the correct thing because you are advancing towards a desired goal, in terms of a universal, necessary, inescapable law. (...) But, for two thirds of the world’s population, this positive meaning of the word “development”—deeply ingrained after two centuries of social construction- is a remainder *of what they are not*. It is a reminder of an undesirable and worthless condition. To escape from it, they need that the experiences and dreams of others enslave them. (Esteva 2000: 75)²¹

Post-structuralism has contributed to a critique of development and its consequences, the ethnocentric approach to understanding the lives of non-Western people, and the notions of what is or should be normal, civilized, and desirable. However, post-structuralism has also been the center of criticism for dismissing the notion of development, based on false deductions (for example, assuming that the problems of poor countries are always the result of capitalism and development), aprioristic assumptions, romanticizing the life of the poor, and vilifying modernity (Corbridge 1998:138-139). It has also been strongly criticized for failing or being unwilling to define a “constructive agenda for development” (Arsel and Dasgupta 2015: 646).

Critical modernism is a set of theories that disapprove of the conventional view of development based on economic growth and those theories that remain uncritical towards Western modernism. However, critical modernism positions itself as an alternative to the overly critical tendency of post-structuralism. According to this perspective, it is clear that, while development cannot be understood solely as aggregate economic growth, material transformation to improve people’s lives is an ethical issue and a necessity. Critical modernists compare themselves to postmodernists in these terms: “Critical modernism criticizes material

power relations in order to change them, while postmodernism criticizes discourses and ideas to undermine their modern certainty; critical modernism wants to transform development, while postmodernism wants to abandon it.” Development is thus understood as “the social use of economic progress” (Peet and Hartwick 2009: 275).

Unlike poststructuralists, critical modernists propose rethinking development and seek to actively engage with modernity by criticizing and changing it, rather than dismissing it as a discursive formation (Peet and Hartwick 2009: 282). This school of thought seeks to use valid modern principles such as democracy, emancipation, progress, and development as well as technology and science to improve the lives of people. However, critical modernists are clear that these principles have been “corrupted by the social form taken by modernity-capitalism as a patriarchal class system, a type of society operated in the interests of a male elite, based on the profit motive to the exclusion of virtually everything else” (2009: 280). In essence, scholars from this line of thought envision development as a way to improve peoples’ lives, especially those of the poor, by building economic capacity, which is interpreted as all activities that employ labor organized through social relations. Means of production should be collectively owned by partnerships, cooperatives, and so forth, and economic growth should be understood as the growth of the productive capacity of those who need more (Peet and Hartwick 2009). In this context, “development means channeling resources directly to poor people to enhance their productivity”, and not to the already rich hoping that the leftovers eventually trickle down to the poor (2009: 291).

In this discussion, I have concentrated mainly on criticisms posed by poststructuralists regarding classical notions of development, who have even proposed different conceptions of development and alternatives to the homogenizing Western values and ideas underpinning development projects. A key part of this argument centers on the concept of modernity, which is understood as the homogenizing, though at times contradictory, aspect of Western society which views well-being and progress as a result of economic growth, industrialization, and the civilization of nature. In this context, while it is important to be aware that development is part of a capitalist power structure with all the implications already discussed in this section, people’s material needs and poverty cannot and should not be ignored, as proposed by critical

modernists. Furthermore, as will be shown in several chapters of this thesis, for indigenous peoples who have had a prolonged contact with the mestizo society, the experience of modernity has implied the growing desire for all the amenities, comfort, technology, and infrastructure that mestizo people enjoy as part of their urban lifestyle. Specifically in regards to *Ecuador Estratégico* and local development, I show that while there is a clear agenda of state control in the work of this institution, there is also a strong response from indigenous communities who embrace development as it has been proposed. As will be discussed throughout the dissertation, the majority of Shuar people who are part of this study appreciate some elements of their lifestyle (or what it used to be in the past), but they also have expectations to improve the material life of their communities and to improve themselves, as part of a modern national mestizo society.

A final issue that remains to be discussed is if development, especially in the context in which the issue of large-scale mining is situated, is only about the reduction of poverty and the satisfaction of basic material needs. In their book on oil extraction and citizenship in Amazonian Ecuador, Lu et al. (2017) question the ways in which the government of the Citizens' Revolution²² has approached development. While an important part of its political and economic agenda to alleviate poverty and meet basic needs depends upon increased economic growth achieved primarily through extractive practices, the authors argue that Correa's administration has not addressed a variety of forms of inequality "that reproduce vulnerability alongside economic inequality-along the lines of gender, race, life expectancy, environment and territoriality" (Lu et al. 2017: 116). They see an inherent contradiction in the fact that development is promoted through those industries that have perpetuated poverty and exclusion. From this perspective, development should be understood as holistic well-being which is not merely related to material conditions, but also to issues of social justice and access to equal rights, in this case, as indigenous people and Ecuadorian citizens.

1.4 Thesis Structure

As discussed in this introduction, the context in which Project Mirador is situated is quite complex. I have offered a brief and simple description of how local people, especially the Shuar, have dealt with Project Mirador, the changes in the mining company that directs this project, as well as

with the state's institutionality related to the extraction of resources. This thesis focuses on the ways in which the Shuar Federation, at all levels, confronts and positions itself in relation to large-scale mining. However, it also attempts to illustrate the trans-local political and economic dynamics around it. Thus, this thesis is organized in a way that first highlights the importance of examining the macro and global aspects of extractivism and large-scale mining, and then goes on to discuss local interactions through the lenses of ethno-politics.

The second chapter of the dissertation presents the main theoretical discussion on ethno-politics and the struggles of indigenous people related to the use and control of natural resources. It considers that politics, culture, and identity are important factors to consider when discussing the decisions and choices people make in regard to extractive practices (Perreault and Valdivia 2010). This chapter first addresses a discussion on identity from a non-essentialist perspective, which allows one to understand it in terms of a process rather than a fixed entity. A key concept I use in the discussion of identity politics and strategies is indigeneity, which helps us to understand the ways in which identity discourses are constructed in the interactions between indigenous groups and a variety of actors, and how these discourses allow such groups to strategically position themselves in their struggles with external forces. Finally, the discussion of identity politics and indigeneity is contextualized within the framework of territory and territorial dynamics, which helps us to understand the relationship of the Shuar with other actors in a given geographic space and over time.

The second part of Chapter 2 presents the methodological aspects of the thesis; I provide a description of how and when the research was carried out. I also describe the main actors involved in the project, the main qualitative methods used in the field, and some comments on the positive experience of doing long-term fieldwork. The methodological section focuses on the significance of doing multi-site research because of the possibility of exploring different locations, actors, and the interconnections between them (Hannerz 2003). This approach meant that my visits to the field usually required staying different periods of time at different locations, not only in the area of Zamora but also in Quito and the city of El Puyo, in the Amazonian province of Pastaza. Another interesting point that I highlight in this section deals with positionality and ethics in the fieldwork. I discuss the omnipresent issues of class and

gender in the field and also focus on the biggest obstacle in my relationship to the people and the leaders of the Shuar communities, which was a certain sense of distrust towards me. The expectations of development and progress that large-scale mining generated in the population were soon replaced by a sense of disappointment towards the state and the mining company, which was also transferred to me. In conclusion, this chapter provides some thoughts on the reality of life in Shuar communities as a critique to classic notions on community structure and homogeneity and on my personal stance regarding mining. My decision to stay “neutral” during my research allowed me to better understand the ways in which Shuar people make different decisions related to extractive practices based on what they believe to be best for their livelihoods, their unique experiences and understandings of their world, and their different relationships with the mestizo society.

How and why did large-scale mining become so relevant in the political and economic agenda of the progressive, New Left government of Rafael Correa? While in the neo-liberal period in Ecuador extractivism was part of a set of policies that reduced social expenditures and deregulated the economy in order to attract foreign investment, it has now become re-politicized. Extractivism and particularly large-scale mining have become key elements of a redistributive apparatus that, unlike previous governments, favors social investment and ultimately seeks to reduce poverty. A discussion of these issues is offered in the first section of Chapter 3 as a way of providing context from a political economic perspective for the development of large-scale mining in Ecuador; at the same time, this discussion briefly touches on certain problematic areas associated with extractive practices that are now shared by the governments of Bolivia and Ecuador: issues of local participation, sovereignty, and the criminalization of protest.

The second section more specifically tackles the development of large-scale mining in Ecuador, but it uses an environmental justice perspective to concentrate on the technical aspects, certain environmental effects, and possible sources of socio-environmental conflicts related to Project Mirador. To provide context for the following chapters, Chapter 3 concludes with an analysis of the interactions between the Shuar Federation and the mining company, underscoring the possible sources of tension and conflict.

Chapter 4 is mostly descriptive and attempts to provide context to explain the ways in which the Shuar Federation is constituted at different levels and how it interacts with other actors like the mining company, state institutions, and other indigenous organizations. This chapter includes an historical description of the Shuar as the first settlers of the region and of their early contact with missionaries and *colonos*, which provides a general context of the colonization process. This further addresses the ways in which the Shuar have managed their interactions with Western/mestizo society. As was mentioned earlier, a theme that frequently re-emerges throughout the thesis is the constant process of negotiation with different external actors, which is key in the construction of the Shuar's identity and which prompted the creation of their political organizations. In fact, an important point in this chapter is that the Shuar organized themselves based on a Western political model as part of their insertion in the national society and in a process that allowed them to be interlocutors of the state.

A second objective of this chapter is to convey the complexity of the Shuar Federation, which is evident in the discussion of its composition and the difficulties they encounter in working as an articulated structure for the well-being of the Shuar people. The chapter also considers the links with other regional and national indigenous organizations to understand the kind of ideologies that guide the work of the federation, their political agenda, and the strategies that have been defined as part of their ethno-politics.

The third objective is to present a description of the Shuar communities which are, in reality, the heart of the Shuar Federation and the reason for its existence. Before going into the discussion of discourses and political practices at this level in the following chapter, it is necessary to first understand how the communities have been constituted in terms of its members and land as well as in terms of their subsistence practices, which have been greatly altered since the migration of the mestizos from the highlands to their ancestral territories. This sets the context for the discussion of issues like the notions of the territory and of the community as a changing scenario that are important when discussing identity discourses.

Chapter 5 focuses on the identity discourses and political strategies of Shuar leaders at the level of the federation and the associations, and especially within the communities. Based on a discussion of indigeneity

(Valdivia 2005), the purpose of the chapter is to attempt to explain how and why discourses and practices are shaped in such diverse and flexible ways. For this, I provide a rich description of discourses among the leaders and tie them to the ways in which they articulate this identity and position the federation and the communities in relation to large-scale mining. I show that discourses on being Shuar generally inform the decisions they make either to resist the presence of the mining project or to welcome and initiate negotiations with the company. However, I also point out the complexity and the changing nature of these discourses as they might work at the official level (especially at the federation level) and how they are utilized as rhetoric, which contrasts with discourses that are more closely tied to everyday subsistence issues.

Indigeneity discourses are interpreted as they relate to different elements that are part of the territorial dynamics (Valdivia 2005) within which the Shuar people have interacted with a variety of external actors for decades: these elements include notions of modernity and development as well as ancestrality, the changing relationship to the territory and the transformation of the communities. Together, these factors may help explain why people and leaders from certain communities might articulate their identity in particular ways that allow them to look at the mining project with a more positive perspective than others. However, the complexity of the context in which Project Mirador is situated still leaves room to further investigate the presence of the mining company in order to understand the series and waves of interactions among local and extra-territorial actors (Little 2001).

Chapter 6 focuses on a new state actor in the extractive scenario and its interactions with the local population, particularly with the FESZCH (Shuar Federation of Zamora Chincipe) and the communities. In many areas, *Ecuador Estratégico*, the state company in charge of channeling royalties from strategic projects into local development, has assumed the role formerly occupied by extractive companies as providers of certain benefits to local communities. The objective of this chapter is twofold. First, it seeks to analyze the political role of the state company as part of a nationalist resource agenda in which the ultimate goal of the extraction of natural resources is to invest in social development and to facilitate the distribution of wealth. Second, it analyzes the interactions and discourses of the Shuar population vis-à-vis *Ecuador Estratégico*, discusses

their position and expectations related to the notions of development and modernity, and describes their struggle to achieve these goals.

This chapter addresses important contradictions between the concept of *buen vivir* and extractivism and development, and also discusses the role of *Ecuador Estratégico* as key in legitimizing the extraction of natural resources despite these contradictions. However, it also shows that the Shuar endorse the logic of development utilized by the company and in fact struggle constantly to be a part of the development apparatus.

Chapter 7 offers an analysis of the main findings and contributions of the thesis, as well as a discussion of some of its limitations and suggestions for future research.

Notes

¹ Ecuador is divided into 24 provinces which are then divided into cantons and then into rural and urban head parishes. The mayor and the municipal council are the elected governing bodies in the cantons, while the parishes have the parish council as its main governing entity. In this research, the parish council of Tundayme plays an important role.

² People of mixed European and Indigenous descent

³ In the province of Zamora Chinchipe, there are two Shuar federations, the Provincial Federation of the Shuar Nationality of Zamora Chinchipe (FEPNASH-CH) and the Shuar Federation of Zamora Chinchipe (FESZCH), both of which will be discussed in later chapters. However, research for this thesis focused on the second for several reasons that will be explained in Chapter 4.

⁴ The issue of basic services is interesting and shows a paradox that only reinforces the marginalization suffered by indigenous people. If many of the Shuar households were given access to all services, this would force them to pay for services that most cannot afford.

⁵ Morona Santiago is the province to the north of Zamora Chinchipe, also located in the Amazon region (see Map 1.1).

⁶ Such as the IERAC (Ecuadorean Institute for Agrarian Reform and Colonization) and INDA (National Institute for Agrarian Development) which were in charge of land titling and were key in the process of colonization. More recently and related to large-scale mining, institutions like *Ecuador Estratégico* are key because they are in charge of channeling the royalties from mining projects into local development.

⁷ The concept of *buen vivir* (*Sumak Kawsay*) was taken from the Andean Kichwa (or Quechua) peoples and refers to the notion of living in harmony within the community and with nature. This concept was incorporated into the Constitution of 2008 and has already caused much debate amongst academics and indigenous organizations (see Arsel 2012; Radcliffe 2012; Walsh 2010).

⁸ Original text in Spanish: "...la expresión más profunda y duradera de la dominación colonial" (Quijano 2002: 1).

⁹ Original text in Spanish: "La cultura europea pasó a ser un modelo cultural universal. El imaginario en las culturas no-europeas, hoy difícilmente podría existir y, sobre todo, reproducirse, fuera de estas relaciones." (Quijano 1992: 13).

¹⁰ A loosely defined term in Spanish that refers to mixed-blood descendants, generally used in derogatory ways.

¹¹ Original text in Spanish: "Era, ante todo, una alternativa de la descolonización del imaginario, de las prácticas, valores e instituciones de las relaciones culturales entre los pobladores del país." (Quijano 1998: 236).

¹² In relation to this, I should point out that, besides providing basic information on poverty rates as well as access to basic services and description of subsistence practices, the objective of this thesis was not to use of data that would prove Shuar communities to be poor and in great material need, rather, that most Shuar leaders perceive their reality to be that way, and thus the emphasis on their discourses and political strategies around issues like poverty, marginalization and exclusion.

¹³ Original text in Spanish: "...llegar a ser una unidad sólo cuando esos elementos se articulan en torno de un eje específico, bajo condiciones concretas, respecto de necesidades concretas y de modo transitorio." (Quijano 2011: 24)

¹⁴ Marisol de la Cadena refers to "earth beings" as those entities or presences that are no human (such as the Pachamama or the mountains) that can be considered as political actors in the indigenous cosmovision and politics.

¹⁵ In an effort to bring decolonial practices into academia and particularly into ethnographic methodologies and approaches, Viveiros de Castro (2004) discusses the concept of equivocation that precisely addresses the reference to different meanings behind concepts. In other words, even though indigenous people may be using the same categories or concepts we use, the meanings behind them may not be the same.

¹⁶ The discussion on the use and translation of certain categories (such as community and territory) by indigenous leaders as a way to accommodate to modern state politics will be addressed in Chapter 5.

¹⁷ Original text in Spanish: “Cuando se encuentran interrelacionadas las desventajas se refuerzan y exacerbaban entre sí.” (Radcliffe 2017: 75)

¹⁸ While I include the category of gender in this discussion, it is important to point out that all federation and community leaders in this study, except for two, are males. This is already interesting information, but I chose not to concentrate on gender issues because it would have required a different line of analysis.

¹⁹ The Shuar federation in Morona Santiago has a very strong presence and participation in local politics and has a strong position of resistance to extractivism and large-scale mining.

²⁰ Original text in Spanish: “La herencia europea del desarrollo ponía el acento en el crecimiento económico como generador del progreso social y político.” (Gudynas 2003: 29)

²¹ Original text in Spanish:

La palabra siempre implica un cambio favorable, un paso de lo simple a lo complejo, de lo inferior a lo superior, de lo peor a lo mejor. La palabra indica que uno lo está haciendo bien porque está avanzando hacia una meta deseada en el sentido de una ley universal necesaria, ineluctable. (...) Pero, para dos tercios de la población terrestre, este significado positivo de la palabra ‘desarrollo’ –profundamente arraigado tras dos centurias de construcción social– es un recordatorio de *lo que no son*. Es un recordatorio de una condición indeseable e indigna. Para escapar de ella, necesitan que las experiencias y sueños de otros los esclavicen (Esteva, 2000: 75).

²² Citizens Revolution is the way in which Rafael Correa and his political party, Alianza País, named the period in which they governed the country (2007-2017). This period was characterized for implementing radical changes in terms of the Constitution of the country and the ideology of the “XXI century Socialism”.

2

Theory and Methods

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the main research questions and arguments of this dissertation were discussed; the main interest of this thesis is to examine the identity discourses and strategies of the Shuar political organization in its negotiations with large-scale mining, specifically in relation to Project Mirador in Zamora Chinchipe. However, the scope of this study is large given that it considers the interactions between local populations and those actors involved in the extractive project and touches on issues related to the political economy of Ecuador and the region.

The objectives of this chapter are twofold; I will first address a theoretical discussion on identity politics, indigeneity, and territory to establish the ways in which indigenous people deal with issues related to the control and extraction of natural resources based on the politics of their ethnic-identity. Second, I will describe the methods I used to carry out this research and then go on to discuss aspects of positionality and ethics in the field.

2.2 Indigenous Politics: Ethnic Identity in the Struggle over Natural Resources

Struggles over natural resources and for control over them have been addressed by academics from a wide variety of disciplines. Mining extraction has specifically attracted much analysis and debate because of the great damage mining companies have caused to the environment as well as because of the socio-economic and even cultural implications for local populations. As has been documented in many cases around the world and in the United States, a high percentage of mining and other extractive projects take place in indigenous territories (Ballard and Banks 2003: 287-288; Gedicks 1993). In Ecuador, this has also historically been

the case for oil extraction. Thus, many spaces for indigenous organization and politics (including total resistance and also negotiation) have actually taken place in a framework of resource exploitation, especially in the Amazonian region. Ecuador's recent and future development of industrial mining in the Amazonian province of Zamora Chinchipe has begun to and will continue to directly affect different populations, including the indigenous Shuar, indigenous Salasacas, and mestizo migrants.

While Ballard and Banks (2003) argued that there is still much anthropological research to be done around the mining industry, they acknowledge that there has been growing interest in the area, especially related to the increased recognition of indigenous peoples' rights and the need to defend them from the extractive industry (Ballard and Banks 2003: 288). In Peru, for example, even though most peasant populations are indigenous, most studies about mining in this area do not point out to this fact for various reasons; this is due, at least in part, to the fact that the population is not necessarily organized around an ethnic agenda (Paredes 2006).

In Ecuador, since the 1960s and 1970s, indigenous groups in the Amazon have had to fight many different kinds of invasions and threats to their territories and resources: catholic and protestant missionaries, *colonos'* migration from the highlands to take possession of what they considered to be their lands, and, finally, the oil extraction industry alongside its powerful political machinery and implicit support from the state. In countries like Ecuador, the extractive industry has become a new form of colonization: as Gedicks argues, it is a powerful system that has forced indigenous people to respond in different ways by adapting, resisting, or even negotiating with it through a diversity of strategies (Gedicks 1993).

In her study on citizenship in Latin America and the formation of contemporary indigenous organizations, Yashar (2005) asks several key questions that may also be relevant in a context of struggle over livelihoods and natural resources. For example, she asks why some identities become more important at certain times and not at others and in certain places and not in others. She also questions when and why politicized identities translate into political action. Through a comparative study of the emergence of indigenous organizations (or lack thereof) in several Latin American countries, Yashar argues that for

mobilization to occur, three conditions need to be met: changes in citizenship regimes, political associational spaces, and the creation of transcommunity networks (Yashar 2005: 8). She argues that in Ecuador, the effects of changes in citizenship regimes from corporatist regimes to neoliberal regimes affected both highland and Amazonian groups in different ways, but ultimately exacted the same effect on organization and mobilization. Accompanied by clear attempts to establish links between organizations and aided by external actors such as NGOs and the Catholic Church, changes in citizenship regimes paved the way for mobilization and political action. Generally speaking, the history of indigenous organization at the local, regional, and national level in Ecuador is an example of indigenous groups and communities slowly evolving into a sophisticated network of leadership and organization; for example, the highland organization has grown out of class-based demands and goals, while the Amazonian organization has developed to address issues more apparently related to ethnic consciousness such as ancestral land ownership and use (Yashar 2005).

Warren and Jackson also discuss a variety of cases that illustrate the heterogeneity of indigenous movements in Latin America. For example, they highlight the differences between long-standing and temporary movements as well as the differences between community and regionally-based movements. Additionally, they consider the diverse terms of inclusion or exclusion into such communities and organizations which are based on practices of self-determination. At the same time, they also documented “the interplay of local leaders and their communities with pan-community activists who operate primarily in national affairs” (Warren and Jackson 2002: 10-12). Of course, this phenomenon is very common in indigenous organizations in Ecuador because the national organization in and of itself is made up of the different local and regional organizations, as Yashar pointed out (2005).

Indigenous organizations and communities, as well as the external links and networks they have (which can range from other types of indigenous organizations, NGOs, international organizations, conservation organizations, state agents, etc.) are extremely diverse. Thus, it is logical that people’s goals, and their choices related to their struggles and desires over issues like their right to land, control over resources, development, etc., are also heterogeneous. As Warren and Jackson write,

In these circumstances, the anthropology of indigenous organizing becomes the study of the choices that people in different settings make in the ongoing process of their own identity formation...these [choices] are not unencumbered choices; rather they are contingent on wider political and economic pressures as well as on local history. (Warren and Jackson 2002: 12)

It should be interesting, then, to examine the interactions between community, local level, and other multi-scalar level organizations, not only in terms of cooperation and open support for local livelihoods, but also in terms of the tensions that might arise from having different objectives (Perreault 2003b; Valdivia 2007); each group's unique objectives are a result of different needs and perceptions of the use of resources, development, etc. Yashar's analysis of mobilization and indigenous organization is a comparative study that seeks to clearly establish a general framework to understand different dynamics in ethnic politics and the ways in which they have emerged since the second half of the twentieth century. However, ethnic or identity politics are always at play and they are constantly adapted to changes in the conditions affecting the indigenous population's rights, livelihoods, and control over their own territory and natural resources. The study of the community leadership and its struggles related to the extraction of resources is therefore important; it is the local community that will suffer the consequences of having extractivism in its backyard, as has been the case in the Amazon region for the past four decades. Extractivism has also provoked indigenous mobilization throughout the region in different ways.

The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on the premise that conflicts related to natural resources and control over them are not only a practical matter related only to their scarcity or availability, but that these struggles are very much related to politics, culture, and identity (Perreault and Valdivia 2010). This chapter begins with a discussion of identity and the ways in which it shapes and can be shaped by specific political and historical contexts, and the ways in which people articulate identity in ways that can be strategic for them as a collective entity. I then go on to discuss issues of cultural and identity politics, as well as the importance of considering cultural meanings and practices as part of the way people get involved in politics. However, the concept of indigeneity as an identity discourse that results from the articulation of local and

external actors frames most of the discussion in this thesis. Finally, the discussion of identity politics and indigeneity is contextualized within the framework of territory and territorial dynamics, which helps us to understand the relationship of the Shuar with other actors in a given geographic space and over time.

Besides the theoretical discussion, this chapter also includes a review of the literature that specifically analyzes the ways in which indigenous groups have practiced cultural politics and articulated their indigeneity to secure not only material but also symbolic benefits in Ecuador and the Americas. I also include information about everyday politics and resistance to help to orient the discussion about local community practices and the interaction with local and regional organizations. Then, I continue with a review of Hall's ideas on identity and positioning, which are fundamental to understanding the process of construction and re-configuration of identity.

2.2.1 Discursive Approach on Identity: Positioning and Articulation

With the discussion of Barth (1976) and other authors about ethnic groups and ethnicity in the 1960s, the essentialist approach to the conceptualization of identity changed dramatically (Bazurco Osorio 2006). Essentialist or primordial theories emphasized an integral, original, and unified group identity as being inherent and essential to the group. This emphasis focused on shared cultural traits within a group, which led us to conceptualize a world with separate cultural groups instead of focusing on the realities of contact, frontiers, and borders (Barth 1976: 10-12).

New approaches resulted in more dynamic views of identity and a need to regard identity in terms of contact spaces and ethnic boundaries. According to Barth, ethnic differences persist even when there is contact between groups; they are the foundations upon which social systems are built. Thus, we should focus not only on those shared characteristics within a group but especially on the boundaries between them (Barth 1976: 10). In other words, ethnic identity becomes relevant in the context of interaction between groups.

Since Barth, much has been written about ethnicity from a more constructivist point of view. The constructivist approach understands

identity as socially-constructed and bound to change and transformation according to a specific context; furthermore, it is defined in a context of power relations (Conklin 1997; Conklin and Graham 95; Escobar 2001). While essentialism understood ethnicity as part of a pre-existing set of essential characteristics (Jackson and Warren 2002: 2005) or presupposed the existence of a previous context or social structure, constructivism defines ethnicity as simultaneously being part of the construction of social reality and as a result of that same social construction (Bazurco Osorio 2006: 55).

On the other hand, Hall considers the concept of identity from a discursive perspective in which identity is seen as a process in construction, part of the discursive practices that provides meaning and context to concrete experiences and material things. Hall takes the conceptualization of identity into the sphere of representation; to him, identity is built within a discourse and it is through this representation and discourse that it produces meaning, thereby establishing relationships between material things, experiences, and concepts. In other words, even though identities are created in the sphere of the symbolic and the imaginary, they have real effects at the discursive, political, and material level (Hall 2003: 17-18). Identity is not only about the specific material relations in a given context, but also about how people conceptualize them. The process of “identification” is always in construction and, since it acts through difference, it needs certain symbolic markers and material resources to reaffirm those differences. Once again, Hall does not accept a concept of a unified or stable identity but thinks of it as strategic and positional (Hall 2003: 16). He views identities as fragmented and fractured because they are constructed through different discourses and practices which are sometimes antagonistic. For him, the concept of identity accepts:

...that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting, and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions. (Hall 1996: 4)

Another key element in understanding Hall’s perspective is that identities are constructed within specific historical and institutional contexts through specific enunciations and articulations. In Hall’s view, identities are not defined through an essence, a fixed history, or a defined

sense of cultural belonging, but rather they are in a constant process of construction; thus, identities are often fragmented, multiple, and constantly being shaped by different types of discourses and practices (Hall 2003: 17-18). In the process of identity construction, there is not always historical continuity but rather rupture, voids, and fragmentation (especially when there are processes of migration, colonization, etc.).

To understand the dynamics of identities, it is vital to understand the concepts of positioning and articulation/enunciation, which are also discussed by some of the authors reviewed in this thesis. According to Hall, we all take a position in some place and time of our lives, and what we say and do (as individuals and as part of a collective group) from that particular context is defined by our identity and the way we have positioned ourselves; the particular meaning given by our own positionality is what he calls enunciation or articulation (Hall 1990).

Thus, the notion of identity should be understood as an unfinished process. Since identities are contingent, meaning that they are produced in a specific context, they are part of an imperfect process that will be never complete; thus, the idea of either “losing,” “abandoning,” or “keeping” them are inadequate because they are constantly changing due to specific positionings and articulations (Hall 2003: 15). To view identity as an unfinished process problematizes the notions of authority and authenticity to which the concept of identity has been attributed. What was considered to be “real” and “authentic” for a certain group at a certain period of time might not even be relevant to the same group in a different historical, political, and economic moment. Similarly, it might not be in the group’s best interest to position itself in the same context when certain elements have changed in the wider political and social landscape. Hall offers an interesting example of Jamaicans who, in a particular context of civil rights struggles and social movements, embraced a black and African identity that was not previously considered relevant (Hall 1990). The positioning of self-identity within many indigenous groups has proven to be useful as a strategic way to create spaces of representation and to achieve goals. The discussion that follows focuses precisely on collective identity as a strategy and as a means for indigenous groups to position themselves within different political, economic, and historical contexts.

2.2.2 Ethnicity as Strategy

Conceptualizing identity as a strategy to obtain material and symbolic resources is an approach that has been used by different authors (Bolaños 2011; Gros 1999; Perreault 2003a, 2003b; Valdivia 2007) who have analyzed the ways in which indigenous groups frame their identity in relation to important issues such as access to power and spaces of representation. Gros, for example, argues that due to a new world dynamic in which there is a marked interest in biodiversity, cultural diversity, protection of the environment, and sustainable development, the indigenous population in Latin America has come to occupy a “growing strategic and symbolic place”: “This is their ‘strategic symbolic capital’ and allows them to suddenly have access to new resources—discursive, economic, organizational, political, etc.” (Gros 1999: 6). This strategic use of identity is “performative” in the sense that it actually benefits a group (in this case, the indigenous population) in particular ways. The same argument is also used by Castillo and Cairo Carou to analyze the situation of indigenous populations in Colombia and Ecuador as multicultural countries. According to them, the instrumental use of difference based on ethnic identity has shown the great strategic and “performative” capacity of such groups (Castillo and Cairo Carou 2002: 58), with the most obvious result being a change in what was previously seen as a homogenous state. According to the authors, this change is evidenced by the Ecuadorian constitution of 1998: in order to recognize cultural diversity and to respond to demands made by indigenous organizations after national uprisings in 1990 and 1992, Ecuador was declared a multicultural nation.

Both authors emphasize the performative and strategic use of an indigenous identity that has allowed the indigenous population to access new spaces and different types of resources; the concept of performativity means that, in this context, indigenous groups have shown an ability to achieve desired results for their benefit and have been able to strategically use their identity as symbolic capital in such processes, as in Spivak’s definition of strategic essentialism. In her view, subaltern groups, in this case indigenous people, tend to simplify their differences and essentialize their characteristics so as to create a sense of collectivity (Spivak 1990). In fact, many authors have discussed the ways in which indigenous groups (especially those in the Amazon region) have constructed an identity discourse that essentializes their relationship to

nature and reinforces the idea that they are ecologically concious caretakers of the forest, (Brysk 1996; Conklin 1997; Conklin and Graham 1995; Valdivia 2005); all of this forms part of a strategy that allows them to be part of a national and international network that supports their projects and helps them to gain funding.

However, other authors like Perreault warn against the type of analysis that tends to simplify and view the process of identity construction as “entirely instrumental or strategic”¹ (2003b: 81). In his analysis of an indigenous Amazonian organization and the way it has shaped its identity discourse, he discusses the process of reorganization that a local community and its political organization have initiated to achieve what he calls an “ethnic recovery” of the group, based not so much on shared experiences or shared memories, but rather on the contributions of indigenous leaders and even academics. One of the objectives of this new definition of being a Quichua in the Amazon (with an historical background tied to an earlier group, the Quijos), was to be able to attract more attention from certain international organizations, like the World Bank and some of its local projects aligned with the national indigenous organization in Ecuador (CONAIE), and to open up spaces for negotiation at different levels and within different kinds of organizations. Thus, as part of an identity discourse, notions of identity, nationalities, and territories are more elaborate and self-conscious than regular everyday life in practice. As part of the indigenous organizations, community leaders have learned, to some extent, to facilitate exchanges between the community and other political actors, the media, the tourism industry, conservation, and environmental and human rights organizations (Conklin and Graham 1995; Hutchins 2007; Valdivia 2007). Thus, they have had to recreate their own conceptualization of “being indigenous” to be able to reach out in ways that can be understood, verbalized and categorized by the wider mestizo society.

Instead of reading this process as instrumental, Perreault argues that cultural revalorization in the community of Mondayacu is part of a larger process of identity reconstruction within the indigenous population at a national level; to him, these processes “...may be seen as responses to political and cultural openings made possible by strengthening indigenous movements, increased presence of international NGOs, constitutional reform, and a degree of state openness to indigenous political organizing” (Perreault 2003b: 81). Furthermore, he thinks it is

more important to understand that the dynamics of ethnic politics in Ecuador are the result of the constant shifting and overlapping of different multi-scalar networks of indigenous organizations, different kinds of institutions, and entities (NGOs, state agencies, national intellectuals, foreign researchers, etc.) (Perreault 2003b: 81).

2.2.3 Identity Politics, Articulation, and the Struggle for Resources

When issues of identity are contextualized around the material aspects of human life, the discussion takes on a more political dimension and the analysis can become more complex, thus avoiding those simplifications about which Perreault warns us. Politics can simply be defined in terms of “the control, allocation, production, and use of resources and the values and ideas and values underlying those activities” (Kerkvliet 2009: 227). The struggle and control over resources is dependent upon situations of resistance and negotiation between different actors, including situations which pit a local community against the state or powerful transnational companies, as is usually the case in the extractive industry. In this context of struggle, collective identities can be understood as a form of cultural politics in the sense that they produce and carry meanings and values in their discourse and their practices related to issues like resources and their use, the environment, concepts of development, notions of what it is to be indigenous, etc. (Vadjunec et al. 2011: 11).

For Alvarez et al. (1998), a crucial element in the discourse and analysis of the “new social movements” in Latin America is precisely that of identity, which is considered to be relevant to political action and allows those social movements to become engaged in a “different way of doing politics” (Alvarez et al. 1998: 6; Coate and Thiel (eds) 2010: 4). Thus, cultural politics refers to the process in which different sets of actors, who have been shaped by different “cultural meanings and practices come into conflict with each other;” this may imply that those differences in meanings are structured hierarchically such that the marginal, alternative, and oppositional groups have to struggle against a “dominant cultural order” (Alvarez et al. 1998: 7). Embedded within this definition of cultural politics are the notions of hierarchy, inequality, the struggle of certain groups to change and transform that dominant order,

and the cultural values and meanings that inform the different actors in the structure.

From this perspective, cultural politics is a wider scenario that describes political process and action in a variety of social movements and collective identities. All social movements, from modern ecological, ethnical, indigenous, women, gay, and human rights movements (all of these are considered to more adequately fit the description of new social movements) to the more traditional peasant and labor movements, engage with and mobilize against current power structures by utilizing their “cultural identity” as the axes of their daily lives and political practices (Escobar 1992). As is the case within many indigenous organizations in Latin America, in Ecuador the issue of identity is tied to notions of ethnicity and cultural distinctiveness and has been marked by a history of exclusion (Grey Postero and Zamosc 2004; Selverston-Scher 2001). Nevertheless, the same cultural and ethnic differences that have excluded indigenous peoples from the project of nation building (informed mainly by ideas of *mestizaje* and cultural homogenization)² until recently, have now become strategies in political action, network building, and the fight for symbolic and material benefits (Radcliffe 2010).³

In this context of struggle for material and symbolic benefits, it is important to go beyond the instrumental role of ethnicity in order to understand the bigger picture. Part of this more complex analysis also takes into account the issues of citizenship, rights, and demands of the indigenous population in a context of historical exclusion. Grey Postero and Zamosc propose a framework of contestation about what they call the *Indian Question* in Latin America, in which indigenous citizenship is a central topic. In this sense, the *Indian Question* refers to the kinds of rights that indigenous people in Latin America should be granted as citizens in a process of democratization that should replace every aspect of marginalization with “full and robust citizenship” (Grey Postero and Zamosc 2004: 5). However, the *Indian Question* should be understood in specific contexts, considering that indigenous organizations and populations have different claims for rights and demands. While some indigenous people may struggle for social and economic rights to be able to get out of poverty, other groups may be more interested in their cultural rights to protect their traditions, languages, or territory. Whatever their specific demands, these authors argue that, “what is at

stake in the Indian Question is ultimately the right of indigenous people to have a say in the political, economic and cultural processes that determine their lives as citizens” (Grey Postero and Zamoc 2004: 7). In this sense, material and symbolic struggles are very much embedded in the fight for rights not only because these grant control and power over material things such as territory and resources, but also because they imply issues of self-determination, the exercise of citizenship, and national belonging. These issues are extremely relevant to indigenous peoples who demand their right to be able to actively participate in decisions related to extractive activities in their territories and the ways in which the extraction of resources will affect their livelihoods in positive or negative ways.

Although in practical terms it would be impossible to universalize a set of demands for the indigenous population of Latin America, according to Grey Postero and Zamoc, there are certain common elements and issues important across the different groups. Obviously, the most important of these issues is that of cultural recognition and protection. Other important issues are related to political autonomy, territorial control, and political participation (Grey Postero and Zamoc 2004: 15). In Ecuador, León has grouped the demands of the indigenous organization into three categories: ethnic, class, and political policy (in Selverston-Scher 2001: 83). The first category refers to that of cultural recognition and protection through strategies of cultural reproduction such as bilingual intercultural education programs. The third category refers to the demands that CONAIE has made, demanding that Ecuador recognize itself not only as a pluri-cultural nation but rather as a plurinational country (this demand was granted in the Constitution of 2008). The second category addresses an important issue for the purposes of this thesis; it refers to economic demands related to funding for the resolution of land conflicts and issues of control and access to profits from the oil industry intended to contribute to the development of indigenous communities in the Amazon (Selverston-Scher 2001: 83).

Despite the intention to categorize indigenous organizational demands, it is clear that material struggles cannot be divorced from symbolic struggles or the cultural aspects implicated in the fight for livelihood and well-being. Issues of ethnic and cultural protection cannot be resolved apart from their practical and material implications. Cultural reproduction is tied to territory control and the protection of everyday

practices that can include the use of language as well as basic subsistence strategies. Furthermore, the sense of being indigenous, culturally distinct, and of being excluded precisely because of a particular cultural heritage contribute to a more flexible understanding of an interplay between issues of class and ethnicity. While Grey Postero and Zamosc argue that new indigenous organizations are not solely based on an identity politics but rather on a more “fluid mixture of livelihood and culture” (2004: 14), I argue that ethnic or identity politics were always about securing peoples’ livelihoods and survival on their own cultural and identity terms. Concerns about culture and livelihood go hand in hand.

Many authors have analyzed the different ways that indigenous peoples and organizations that place strong emphasis on indigenous/ethnic identity, engage with cultural politics. These groups see themselves as struggling for different material and symbolic reasons and have sought to overcome these struggles, at least in part, through the articulation and positioning of an indigenous identity or through discourses of indigeneity⁴; these struggles are related to access and rights to land, control over the use of natural resources, or control over the distribution of profits from extractive activities. They have organized themselves to obtain aid for development projects and even to openly resist development projects (Bolaños 2011; Murray Li 2000; Perreault 2003a, 2003b; Sawyer 2004; Vadjunec et al. 2011; Valdivia 2007; Valdivia and Perreault 2010).⁵ A brief discussion of some of these cases follows.

While Perreault avoids simplistic interpretations of organization and self-identification, he does acknowledge the workings of symbolic strategies within discourses and rhetoric. Tracing the history of a local indigenous Amazonian organization in Ecuador, the FOIN, Perreault analyses the way in which this organization has reworked global discourses of development through its own identity discourse. To do so, he also uses Hall’s notion of articulation (1990) in which certain identities, ideologies, and interests are rendered explicit as they are simultaneously tied to “specific political subjects.” When he looks at the way the organization’s discourse has changed over time (from a modern, non-ethnic nationalistic organization to an organization whose discourse centers on the notion of nationalities), he argues that these changes, rather than being contradictory, should be read as a reflection of the changing nature of identity (Perreault 2003a: 598). Referring to Hall, he views identities as constantly changing, not timeless essences: “FOIN’s

discursive representations of identity...are not stable, unchanging, and timeless essences, but may be seen as positionings, reflecting historically constituted cultural understandings and relations of power” (Perreault 2003a: 598). Like Murray Li (2000), he sees identities not as merely created, invented, or imposed, but rather as positioned in often “contradictory” subjectivities and emerging out of historical contexts and particular patterns of “engagement and struggle” (Murray Li 2000: 151; Perreault 2003a: 584).

Ultimately, the organizations discussed above have managed to create an identity discourse in which sustainable development does not exclude or reject development and modernity. At the same time, since the discourses also aim to improve the livelihoods of the people and promote development for the local communities, they are as much about identity as they are political; they ultimately seek to obtain political rights and material claims. The identity discourses in the context of development make it possible for indigenous groups to articulate symbolic and material struggles (Perreault 2003a: 603).

A similar analysis is used by Murray Li’s study (2000) on the articulation of a collective indigenous identity in a context of opposition and resistance to a dam project in Lake Lindu, Indonesia.⁶ Basing her argument on Hall’s framing of articulation as the “rendering of a collective identity” in terms of positions and interests (rather than a long-shared history and fixed cultural essentials), Murray Li discusses the process of self-identification of the Lindu people. To avoid threats associated with a large hydroelectric project that often implies relocation of people, the Lindu managed to articulate their identity in terms of a shared history and distinct cultural characteristics. They also staked claim to a territory that is essential to the group’s cultural reproduction; these actions were all vital elements of what national and international advocates and activists expected to define an indigenous people. Because the dam was threatening their livelihoods, the Lindu articulated their identity as rightful dwellers of the territory, a fact that prevented them from being relocated anywhere else. As does Perreault, Murray Li recognizes the tactical and strategic element of positioning identities within specific contexts; this positioning becomes more explicit at times like this, when politicization and mobilization are produced around struggles for control over their own lives. However, she insists that “the flow of meaning from which an articulation is derived and the fields of

power with which it is engaged transcend that temporary fixity” (2000: 153). In other words, contingency and temporality do not mean that articulations are not meaningful to those who produce them as a collectivity; therefore, they have the potential to “define broad constellations of shared or compatible interests, and mobilize social forces across a broad spectrum” (Murray Li 2000: 153).

2.2.4 Indigeneity and Multi-Scalar Networks

Valdivia inserts the concept of indigeneity into the discussion of indigenous self-identification in the context of resource extraction. She defines indigeneity as “an articulated identity imposed and inhabited, contested and negotiated by different groups of people” (Valdivia 2005: 285).⁷ Valdivia does not conceptualize indigeneity as holding the “truth” over indigenous identity and their authentic practices or beliefs, a notion then taken up and reproduced by organizations. (Valdivia 2007: 44-45). Rather, she coincides with Hall in that indigenities are produced and articulated in specific contexts through “networks of social interaction.” Thus, in the same way that Hall interprets identities as being constantly shaped and as “becoming” rather than having essential components (Hall 1990), indigenities are the result of the articulation of indigenous identities by different groups of people, including the indigenous communities themselves, indigenous organizations, and even external agents (Valdivia 2007: 17).

For example, the image that positions indigenous groups (especially in the Amazonian territory) as being culturally distinct, isolated, and in close contact with nature as the guardians of the environment, has been configured by transnational discourses that place expectations on and create understandings of indigenous groups according to their own agendas. This “authentic” indigeneity has allowed indigenous groups to develop alliances and links locally as well as internationally in order to make land and environmental claims (see Conklin and Graham 1995, for a discussion on authenticity among the Kayapó and other Amazonian indigenous people). Nevertheless, Valdivia (2005) argues that this positioning of indigeneity is only one of many performances of discourses and practices of indigenous identity, considering the variety of political and economic processes and movements that act at a local level and the different ways in which people respond to these. Valdivia recognizes that indigeneity is an identity discourse that is partly imposed

by others, but which is simultaneously adapted or even reinvented by the indigenous people in ways that allow them to negotiate with and work on different cultural, environmental, and socio-economic agendas. Thus, indigeneity is about building political discourses and practices that configure an indigenous identity at local, national, and international levels. Furthermore, the articulation of indigeneity is related to environmental and cultural claims and to multi-scalar notions of development, human rights, and citizenship (Valdivia 2005: 286).

Her work analyzes the ways in which three different indigenous organizations (representing three types of indigenous Amazonian people in Ecuador) articulate their notions of indigeneity in relation to natural resources and oil extraction, as a way to understand how issues of livelihoods (and the ways in which local actors interact with their environment) relate to notions of identity and modernity. An example of this relationship between identities, livelihoods, development, and modernity is the way in which one of the local organizations articulated their indigeneity as being global citizens with a “political voice,” which allowed them to negotiate with oil companies instead of resisting oil extraction and becoming “environmental stewards,” as other communities had done (Valdivia 2007: 59). In their discussion of indigeneity and identity politics, both Valdivia (2007) and Perreault (2003b) discuss multi-scalar networks, which they view as being crucial to understanding the dynamics involved in political agency at local, regional, and national levels. Both authors have studied the history and dynamics of local indigenous organizations and the multi-scalar networks of which they are a part; Perreault argues that much attention has been placed on national movements but not on the role of local, community, and household experiences as a “politics of place.” As he argues, it is the community that many times has to face powerful actors (like the state or transnational companies) and, to do so, it must rely on different external actors and multi-scalar networks. By using the Actor Network Theory, Valdivia embraces the critique of notions that consider global actors to be more powerful than local ones by emphasizing that political action comes from network and alliances that can prove powerful: “Political agency comes from the idea of network association and interpreting the world as nested global, national and local scales” (Valdivia 2007: 43). For Valdivia, organizations like the ones she studied in the Ecuadorean Amazon are considered local agents, but they are importantly positioned

as the connection between local livelihoods and wider processes. “The goal of organizations such as FEINCE, OISE, and FOISE is to achieve control over local living spaces by establishing connections between local desires for life improvement and the moral, financial, or political interests of actors beyond ‘the local’” (2007: 44). According to the discussion above, it is necessary to consider local and community spaces as key to the political work of indigenous organizations. A discussion on the importance of the place and territory in the construction of identity politics follows.

2.2.5 Identity Politics, Place, and Territory

A key element in the dynamics of identity politics is the relationship that people build with the place they inhabit. Authors from different fields (Bolaños 2011; Escobar 2001; Ingold 1993; Rocheleau et al. 2001) have discussed the relevance of place and the environment in the discussion of identity and culture. From their perspective, it is important to recognize that place is not merely an inert entity and a container of biophysical attributes, but rather is the result of different social, political, and biophysical processes as well as cultural meanings and values; in a way, these diverse processes, values, and meanings define what place is (Cheng et al. 2003: 90).

Places are socially constructed through the interactions between the forces of nature and the meanings we give them, thereby producing experiences and assigning meaning to nature and the environment. When such a subjective relationship to the environment and a place is created, the notion of landscape arises. According to archaeologist Tim Ingold, landscape “is constituted as an endured record of and testimony to the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it” (Ingold 1993: 152). Thus, the landscape becomes part of people’s daily experiences and struggles, and places and identities thus become mutually constitutive (Escobar 2001: 146); those meaningful relationships created with the place inhabited are intimately related to the development of the self and to peoples’ identities. According to Bolaños, this dynamic is key to understanding the relationship between identity and land, an important issue in political activism of indigenous groups in Latin America (Bolaños 2011: 45-46). In the Amazon region as well as in the Andes, the active engagement between the people and the place or landscape has been the object of much interest among social scientists.

For example, Bolaños and other authors explore the importance of land and territory in political claims over cultural reproduction and sovereignty in different countries in the Amazon region (Bolaños 2011; Perreault 2001; Sawyer 2004). Escobar, on the other hand, points out that many anthropologists have paid attention to the importance of people's engagement with the landscape in the Andes:

Cultural anthropologists have begun to draw on these theories to show the extent to which local people's engagement with the landscape, in some Andean communities for instance, reveals that the landscape is endowed with agency and personhood. The enduring connectedness of people with the land results from an active engagement with it. (Escobar 2001: 146)

Escobar also points out that the study of place is still relevant to understanding culture, knowledge, nature, and economy even though its importance within social science analysis has diminished due to the notions of deterritorialization and mobility brought about by globalization (Escobar 2001: 141). In this new scenario, the community and locality are no longer obviously-defined spaces; as such, they have become the setting in which complex relations between culture and power that go beyond local boundaries are played out (Escobar 2001: 146). There are still locally-based practices and modes of consciousness, but these have been changed and, in some cases, hybridized by trans local relationships and forms of power. This discussion is highly relevant to addressing issues of extractivism and the struggle over resources in which local and/or indigenous groups are challenged by national and global forces while fighting to protect their territories and places, however hybridized these may have become.

In this context of extractivism, some authors have looked at the way territorial dynamics have influenced mining conflicts and how the presence of mining projects provokes specific local territorial and social transformations (Bebbington et al. 2008a; Warnars 2013a,b). For example, Warnars utilizes the notion of territory to analyze conflicts around Project Mirador and concludes that they are the result of previous and on-going processes of territorialisation⁸ by the mining company, the local mestizo population, and the indigenous populations. Warnars also concludes that they are also simultaneously responsible for reshaping the territory in terms of identity and meaning (Warnars 2013b: 159).

While the concepts of territory and territorial dynamics are not part of the main theoretical backbone of this thesis, I incorporate them as a framework to facilitate the discussion of the construction of the political discourses of indigeneity. In other words, the Shuar identity discourses and political practices related to Project Mirador can be understood as part of the territorial dynamics of which they are a part, and not only as an isolated response to the project. I have taken this approach from Little, who argues that to analyze a territory, it is important to understand it as a historical product of social and political processes (Little 2002). Little's discussion of territory focuses on the Amazon region, which he considers to be a frontier zone and a scenario in which different "human territories" have been established over time, each of which has appropriated the geographic spaces in their own way. In order to understand the particular ways in which each group relates to a specific space or territory, he utilizes the concept of cosmography, which he defines as "the environmental knowledge, ideologies and identities – collectively created and historically situated- that a social group utilizes to establish and maintain its territory" (Little 2002: 4). This concept is similar to territorialisation, which has been utilized by other authors. In all these discussions, territory is clearly understood as a biophysical space that is inhabited by a group of people who give meaning to it. Sack agrees with Little that territory should be understood in terms of the efforts that a group makes to occupy, use, and establish control over a geographic area (Sack 1986: 19; Little 2002). From this perspective, territories are considered processes and unfinished products, and the interactions that occur in them are not only related to the space itself, but also to the social groups occupying them. According to the same line of thought, Brighenti argues that territory is "a social process in itself," which means that it should be understood in terms of the social and power relations that occur within it as part of the attempts of different groups to control it (Brighenti 2010: 55).

The concept of territorial dynamics, understood as the efforts that a group of people make to create symbolic and material attachments to a given geographical space and the relationship they establish with other groups of people in it (Little 2001; Warnars 2013), incorporates several points that will facilitate the discussion of Project Mirador. The first concept important to understanding Project Mirador is the notion that the appropriation of a territory is an unfinished process and for that

reason is part of a historical process. The second important concept is that a given territory may have been territorialized by different waves of groups and external actors throughout history (Little 2002). Finally, the last important point is that the interactions between local or native and external actors (who, overtime, might also become part of the local population) are permeated by power struggles (Birghenti 2010).

Following this discussion of place and territory, in the final section of this theoretical discussion I address the importance of political struggles and practices at the local level. As will be emphasized in the later chapters, while regional and national indigenous organizations are important in some aspects of the political life, local leaders are the ones who fight for their communities on a daily basis and, of course, are in touch with the needs of the people.

2.2.6 Everyday Life Struggles and Politics

In his study on everyday resistance and politics, Kerkvliet (2009) argues that there is a problem with conventional politics and academia because, in general, there is a tendency to look at politics in terms of Western traditional structures, organizations, and actors (for example, the state, government officials, political parties, and activists). Using this framework, it is easy to overlook a great portion of the population which might be involved in politics in one way or another, but which may never really have access to those traditional structures (Kerkvliet 2009: 228).

Kerkvliet's research focused on the impact of the agrarian reform and the "green" revolution on the village of San Ricardo in the river delta region of Vietnam; through this research, he found that peasants engaged in different kinds of political behaviors and practices: debates and discussions around education, jobs, workers, the government, access to land, wages and credit, and other topics which influenced everyday life. One example of the success of political engagement in the village was the way in which everyday resistance strategies created by the villagers put so much pressure on government authorities and agents that the villagers were actually successful in having the government revert a policy regarding communal farming and changing it back to household or family farming, as it had been before. (Kerkvliet 2009: 229-231) These everyday practices and others were interpreted as political because they were related to access to and control of resources. Kerkvliet categorizes

this and other types of political behavior in terms of resisting, adapting to, and even complying with the status quo:

Everyday politics involves people embracing, complying with, adjusting, and contesting norms and rules regarding authority over, production of, or allocation of resources and doing so in quiet, mundane, and subtle expressions and acts that are rarely organized or direct. Key to everyday politics' differences from official and advocacy politics is it involves little or no organization, is usually low profile and private behavior, and is done by people who probably do not regard their actions as political. (Kerkvliet 2009: 232)

On the other hand, according to other authors discussed by Kerkvliet like Seabrooke and Hobson, not only individuals in communities but also sizable organizations can engage in everyday politics. Korovkin (2000) draws interesting conclusions from her study of peasant methods of resistance in the highlands of Ecuador, establishing a link between everyday political struggles between peasants and the powerful landholders. Some documented examples of methods of hidden resistance used by these groups include trespassing, using unauthorized land for their benefit, and forming a national indigenous organization, the CONAIE. She argues that the greater success of this kind of ethnic-based organization compared to other organizations that were more class-oriented (like the Ecuadorean Indian Federation, the FEI—*Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios*), was precisely because CONAIE had been built upon the foundation of local cultural practices, covert struggles, and long-standing, traditional practices. Thus, the relationship between local rural leadership and urban political leadership worked to emphasize the ethnic aspects of political action and mobilization more strongly than the class/peasantry element.

As in Kerkvliet's argument related to the poor attention that everyday struggles and political practices have received, the analysis of social movements and indigenous organizations in Ecuador have often left daily life and struggles invisible in academic discussions. For example, Perreault argues that much attention has been paid to the identity politics played out by national and regional indigenous movements and uprisings, but the community and household level of political discussions have often been ignored; in reality, these levels of consideration are important spaces for the enactment of politics of place and are the spaces in which the cultural and material bases of indigenous politics are

located (Perreault 2003b: 63).¹⁰ Escobar also calls attention to the invisibility of daily life in the study of social movements in Latin America and the importance of articulating all levels of social movements, from the daily practices and struggles through which discourses and identity are constructed to the institutional level. Based on a discussion of women's movements by Jelin, he argues that by merely living "differently" and asserting one's difference through daily practices, one is already engaging in some sort of political practice and cultural innovation (Escobar 1992: 70). He points out: "Culture is not something that exists in the abstract; it is embedded in practices in the everyday life of people. Culture is (made of) peoples' practices" (Escobar 1992: 70).

Following this discussion on identity and its role in the way people engage in politics at local levels, it is important to now consider local life and the ways in which households and communities look at issues that are relevant to their basic survival and that might threaten or create possibilities to strengthen their livelihoods. As has been previously discussed, political practices have to do with access to resources and control over them in order to ensure that the needs, desires, and objectives of a group of people can be adequately fulfilled. Furthermore, when engaging in politics involves asserting cultural differences and reaffirming identities or strategically using those differences for the group's benefit, the whole picture becomes more complex.

On the other hand, looking only at the local level might be too simplistic and prevent us from connecting local and community politics to higher levels or to organizations that are also important in the interactions with other political actors (like the state and the companies in the case of extractive projects). As Perreault argued in the article mentioned earlier (2003b), local dynamics are never wholly local, rather they also are influenced by external actors and incorporate and reflect what is happening at higher, national levels. It is only by examining both the local community and higher-level organizations that we are able to understand areas of conflict and tension that have not been analyzed in other literature about ethnic politics.

The context of mining in Ecuador poses interesting questions regarding the ways in which local communities include themselves in the dynamics and/or conflicts related to the extractive industry and the ways in which they confront the different actors involved, especially the state and the company. As we saw earlier, the ways that local people confront

their daily struggles—in this case, facing dramatic changes to their landscape—could be considered a way of engaging in politics. The ways in which people react to and make choices (to resist, negotiate, etc.) related to struggles are very much informed by their cultural practices and meanings. In the case of the Shuar population, with its history of organization, defense of the group around ethnic markers, and claims to an ancestral territory, the dynamics of cultural and identity politics become even more relevant. The interactions, positions of resistance, and negotiations that community leaders choose to carry out will probably also be informed by their sense of cultural distinctiveness, claims to a particular way of life, and their right to improve their livelihoods. As Warnaars suggested in her article on mining in El Pangui, the political claim of “being Shuar” can be used as a strategy to justify either a stronger resistance to the presence of the company and the mining activities or to embrace development through the control of resources allocated to them by the government (Warnaars 2010); alternatively, this political claim can also be used to position themselves in such that they can resist some issues and negotiate others, thereby adapting to the circumstances and responding to their needs. As Perreault and Valdivia argue, issues related to resources involve much more than just the resources themselves or their availability or scarcity; to these authors, these issues are also tied to citizenship, rights, and identity, which are central to the discussion of cultural politics and political economy “as contests over the distribution of rents and the objectives of national economic policy are infused with struggles over the meanings of development, citizenship and the nation itself” (Perreault and Valdivia 2010: 697).

As a result of Correa’s government’s new approach to mining and oil extraction to distance itself from earlier neo-liberal governments, local political action has become limited and reduced. Mining extraction is one of the primary ways the government plans to finance social programs and to meet the needs of the most impoverished people in the country. These national projects aim to benefit a large part of the country’s population and to bring development to local communities, but, at the same time, they have either coopted or gained control over the population that has decided to resist extractivism. It is in this context that questions about the ways in which local indigenous communities

and organizations react to these new dynamics and the way their sense of cultural identity permeates those dynamics, become relevant.

Finally, I would like to conclude this review by discussing an article by Warnaaars on future mining activities in El Panguí, in the province of Zamora Chinchipe, Ecuador (Warnaaars 2010). She is interested in mining in this area particularly with respect to how it may change its pre-existing, historically conflictual territorial dynamics (for example, the Shuar previously defended their territory from mestizo *colonos*, who are now considered to be their rightful neighbors, and the area was also involved in land conflicts between Peru and Ecuador). In her discussion of the formation of new coalitions and the rupturing of new alliances, Warnaaars discusses the topic of identity, especially Shuar identity. She argues that, in the context of coalitions between different groups of people (including between the Shuar and mestizos), the Shuar identity can be used to legitimize different positions *vis-à-vis* the mining company and the issue of territory, negotiation with the territory, etc. She suggests, for example, that the Shuar identity might be utilized either to legitimize arguments to defend their ancestral land and thus prevent them from negotiating with the company or, in other cases, it might push for new ways or forms of development. In the latter case, this means that by negotiating with the company, the Shuar also negotiate benefits for the community and access to infrastructure that has not been provided by the state; such lack of access is an unfortunately common problem in most impoverished communities affected by mining. In this case, the issue of people choosing to welcome mining in their territory and to negotiate benefits for themselves should be read, as Ali suggests, as a way of exercising a self-conscious attempt of self-determination in absence of other ways of doing so, and not as a desperate attempt to survive or to manipulate identity to have access to natural resources and their benefits (Ali 2003). The choices local and community leaders make in relation to Project Mirador are the focus of this dissertation. Like Perreault (2003b), I propose to study the workings of identity and identity politics at the federation and community level; I am particularly interested in how indigenous organizations and communities shape the discourses and practices of their identity politics *vis-à-vis* other actors in the mining context.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Research Design and Methodology

The methodological implications of this investigation are tied to the notion that ethnicity and ethnic identity shape a wide web of interactions at different levels and among different actors. Ethnicity is a social construction that does not occur in isolation, but, rather, is an important element of the political practices of a group. The context of an extractive industry in which there is a struggle over the control of the resources being exploited or the richness it creates can be an interesting scenario for the making of identity politics.

The methodology of this project included ethnographic and qualitative methods applied in a variety of contexts and at different levels within the Shuar federation. I conceived this research as a multi-sited ethnography, the purpose of which (in agreement with Hannerz) was to study not only different locations or actors, but also the relationships that connect them (2003). The objective, then, was to look at different spaces and scenarios of interaction and to examine the interplay between local issues, communities, and national interests represented by government institutions, the mining company itself, and, to some extent, even by national indigenous organizations.

Traditionally, one of the most important objectives of ethnography has been to account for cultural phenomena and to “produce cultural interpretations” (Clifford 1988: 22-23) based on close, personal experiences when doing research. The most important characteristic of ethnography has been precisely the close contact and long-term engagement of the ethnographer with the people who are being studied, in order to come to understand their everyday lives and behaviors (Hammersley 2002: 66).

Classic ethnography was conceived and practiced in a way that allowed the researcher to spend long periods of time isolated from others like them in order to understand a reality that was different from their own; according to Malinowski, getting immersed in the “village’s” life was the only way to collect all information needed (from rules and structures in the economic and political organization to the “imponderabilia” of life, the details of everyday life of the Trobriand islanders)(Malinowski 1984: 2-13). Classic ethnography was also about studying and making generalizations about the totality of a culture

(Hannerz 2003: 202) based on a single location or site (a village, for example); it disregarded issues of power relations between the ethnographer and the natives and it conceptualized culture as a coherent, cohesive system of patterns that should always accommodate itself in order to function adequately.

With changes in global relations and shifts in social thinking brought about in the 1960s, the notions of culture and the way it should be studied started changing in anthropology. Rosaldo (1993) argues that, even though the classic vision of culture, which concentrates on shared patterns and configurations as in a unique, self-contained kaleidoscope could be useful, it also has many limitations: "It emphasizes shared patterns at the expense of processes of change and internal inconsistencies, conflicts and contradictions" (Rosaldo 1993: 28). According to Rosaldo, the vision of shared, coherent cultural patterns makes it difficult to view those cultural borderlands that are increasingly common in a changing and globalized world.

The classic view of culture is very much linked to the idea of doing single site ethnography, just as most classic and even contemporary ethnography has been produced. Hannerz argues that the concept of engaging in one single site had become a model of work among anthropologists for many generations, although many of them have already discretely been involved in a "greater variety of spatial and temporal practices as they have gone about in their research" (Hannerz 2003: 202). The idea of anthropologists like Evans-Pritchard and Malinowski of studying the entire social and cultural life (Hannerz 2003; Malinowski 1984: 2-13) of a people is a response to a functionalist view of culture that emphasized coherence, interrelations between cultural elements and institutions, and shared patterns, even at the expense of understanding historical processes and contacts with other societies. Thus, single site ethnography made sense according to a more static and delimited view of culture.

On the other hand, cultural borderlands (Rosaldo 1993) and multi-sited ethnography call for a different and more contemporary understanding of culture. Hannerz argues that it is not so much about choosing a site (such as a village or community) to study it as whole, but, rather, pinpointing a problem or a research design that focuses on certain problems. For him, multi-site research is not just about having several or a collection of different locations, but rather it is about the

relationships that connect those sites or localities: “one must establish the trans local linkages, and the interconnections between those and whatever local bundles of relationships which are also part of the study” (Hannerz 2003: 206). Thus, as I understand it, doing multi-site ethnography focuses on a problem that ties together different locations and actors in a framework that allows for cultural borderlands to become important spaces of analysis.

The focus of my research, called for a multi-site ethnographic approach because it sought to problematize the issue of identity politics in a mining project that has local, national, and even global dimensions. The research studied spaces and connections between different actors from different localities (communities that might be scattered and not necessarily homogeneous) and organizations and institutions that are not necessarily monolithic, but rather changing and dynamic (government institutions, indigenous organizations, etc.).

Although I focused more on the Shuar population and organization, a multi-sited approach in my study allowed me to pay more attention to diverse local populations and their relationship to actors from the state, mining company, and even NGOs. Thus, the idea of having a variety of “sites” refers not only to physical places but also to different objectives and interests, access to power, cultural backgrounds, and needs and objectives that inform each actor’s performance. The notion of a multi-site ethnography refers to all those inconsistencies, conflicts and contradictions that are part of the the cultural borderlands between all the localities and actors. The mining industry brings together this variety of actors in one single locality (Project Mirador and its surroundings), but the effects of this single site project are multiple, occur at different levels, and affect different types of people at different times (even before the mining operation starts).

As part of the multi-site ethnographic approach, I utilized different methods and paid attention to different kinds of material and information; my research was heavily based on in-depth formal interviews and participant observation at the local level, but I complemented these methods with information from diverse sources such as informal meetings and conversations, marches, meetings, web pages, official documents, newspapers articles, and so forth.

2.3.2 Doing Long-Term, Multi-Site Ethnography

In practical terms, this methodology implied that I was not to stay in a single town or community, but rather that I was constantly moving around in order to reach all those actors involved in the mining project. My trips to the field always started in the airport of Loja and, from there, I continued to the city of Zamora (about an hour from Loja), which was the place from which I contacted the federation leaders and representatives of government institutions. From Zamora, I travelled directly to Tundayme where I visited all the Shuar communities that are part of this research, but also spoke with and interviewed mestizo and indigenous people in the town itself. After my stay in Tundayme, I would return to El Panguí from where I had easier access to the Shuar communities located closer to the town, the municipality, and other Shuar leaders. Many interviews were also conducted with government representatives, indigenous leaders from national organizations, and NGOs representatives in Quito. Besides the usual trips from Quito to Zamora, the furthest I had to travel was to Puyo (in the northern Amazonian province of Pastaza). Here, I interviewed the manager of the *Regional Amazónica*, an institution within *Ecuador Estratégico*, which is in charge of developing projects for indigenous groups in the Amazon region.

An interesting consideration regarding this fieldwork is the time frame in which it was carried out. Initially, the plan was to do intensive research during four consecutive months in Zamora (October 2013-January 2014) and to return for periodic visits in the period between February 2014 and June 2014. However, this schedule changed because of personal and professional commitments. Having obligations at the university where I work and being a part-time PhD researcher actually changed the way I had planned to do fieldwork. Thus, my first visits to Zamora took place in February 2013, and then in October and November 2013 with a short follow-up in January 2014; after the semester ended in May, I went back to Zamora until August. The visit that was planned for December 2014 was cancelled because of the murder of one of the Shuar leaders who was one of my informants, and the situation around Tundayme seemed somewhat unsafe. My final visit to Zamora was then in January 2015.

This extended form of research proved to be much more interesting and useful in terms of gaining a perspective on how things evolved

around the mining context. As authors like Kirsch (2012) suggest, it is important to look at the way that the relationship between the local population, the mining company, and other actors evolves over time, sometimes over many years, from the period of exploration to exploitation. In the case of my research, while I started fieldwork after the transition from the Canadian to the Chinese owners of the mining company in 2012, it was easy to perceive the Chinese company becoming very hermetic in terms of sharing information and participating in interviews. For instance, while in November 2013 I had actually interviewed the director of the Department of Community Relations, a year later, the new director and also the company's vice-president politely excused themselves from giving any official interviews¹¹; one of the reasons for this change was probably related to an event (around April-May 2014) in which several mine workers—including indigenous people from different communities—declared a strike and took over the mining campsite for several days; this event caused much turmoil in the area. Another interesting development of events over the last few years was the creation of Cónдор Mirador Association (ASCOMI—*Asociación Cónдор Mirador*) in December 2013, which later became Amazonian Community for Social Action Cordillera del Cónдор Mirador (CASCOMI—*Comunidad Amazónica de Acción Social Cordillera del Cónдор Mirador*). This is probably the only active organization currently against the mining company in the area. Even as other organizations in Zamora have gone silent, CASCOMI has become stronger during the last year, especially in their activism in defending the town of San Marcos, which the company had bought and taken over to turn into a tailings area for the mine.

Aside from these specific events which I cite to better illustrate my perspective, the experience of going to the field at different moments gave me the opportunity to understand how permanent or transitory certain discourses in favor or against mining were, and if radical discourses among the Shuar and the federation would become real at any time. It also allowed me to observe and evaluate the evolution of the relationship between certain government institutions like *Ecuador Estratégico* and the local communities, as well as any changes in the communities' perceptions towards this state company. Finally, as in any long-term ethnographic work, I had the opportunity to develop trusting relationships with the people in the field and to build rapport with them.

While my presence among the Shuar people in the federation and in most of the communities, was probably tolerated and accepted but not necessarily welcomed at the beginning, the last trips proved to me that I had become more respected and appreciated. I will elaborate more on the issue of ethics and positionality later.

2.3.3 Description of the Qualitative Methods used in the Field

As I explained in my proposal, the most important qualitative methods used in my fieldwork were in-depth interviews and participant observation. I carried out what Dewalt and Dewalt call a “moderate participation” (Dewalt and Dewalt 1998: 262-263), which refers to a kind of participation in which there is not always an active and constant interaction because the context itself will not allow it or due to the need to be in many sites. As described above, because of the complexity of the research situation and the variety of actors involved, I did not stay for long periods of time within one single community, but rather moved around different communities and commuted to and from other locations that were also important to the scope of the study. For example, since the Shuar Federation and the government institutions have their main offices in Zamora, I had to spend some time in the city conducting interviews. El Pangui and Tundayme were also important because they are home to the municipality and parish council, both key institutions to negotiate projects and receive benefits directly from mining revenues. Quito was also an important location for conducting interviews with government authorities and indigenous leaders.

I interviewed all federation leaders (actually, in the first period of my research, I interviewed leaders from two Shuar federations), community leaders, and members in the first round of interviews. In the first interviews, I used a format that focused first on different parts of the federation/community structure, the level of authorities and political practices, and the articulation within the Shuar Federation; a second section included questions about the position of the leaders towards mining and their relationship to the mining company and finally their relationship with government institutions and local institutions. After the first round of interviews in which the information obtained was more general and contextual, I conducted up to three rounds of interviews with most community and federation leaders in relation to the structure of the community, the history of the change of the territory and the

community, and the changing relationships with the company and the state. The rest of interviews I had with representatives of government institutions, local institutions, company representatives, and NGOs representatives were usually carried out only once, except when I needed more specific information or there had been a change in authorities.

Besides formal interviews, I had many informal conversations with most people and leaders in the communities and mestizo people living in Tundayme. For example, the owner of the small hostel in Tundayme where I stayed during my visits was always quick to tell me the latest news in Tundayme, related to the authorities of the parish council, the mining company, or the situation at the mining campsite. She was also very helpful by connecting me with Shuar women who attended the same evangelical church she did and who lived in Tundayme or the communities.

I complemented such conversations and interviews with participant or moderate type of observation (Hammersley 2002), not only related to daily routine and visits, but also during specific events and in certain spaces. These included observation of meetings in communities, in associations, or with some government institutions. They also included some events that included people struggling against the company, community and federation celebrations, and political rallies. All activities in the field—which included visiting communities, talking to people, interviewing, and going to events—were organized by date in my field diary; this diary contains not only detailed descriptions of the events, but also my personal perceptions, questions, and doubts as well as annotations of what to ask or what issues to explore in future interviews.

As indicated above, my fieldwork for the thesis officially started in October 2013, although I had previously visited Zamora and several Shuar communities in February 2013. The intention for this first visit was to get a general sense of the situation, approach the Shuar federation, and to evaluate the accessibility of the communities located around Tundayme and El Pangui. During this visit, I had the opportunity to speak with the president of the Shuar Federation of Zamora Chinchipe (FESZCH), several representatives of government institutions, and with the then manager of the company's office of community relations of the mining company. This first round of interviews gave me insight into the general context of large scale mining in Zamora which, in turn, helped me to identify the most important

actors involved in it; it also helped me to understand certain perceptions of the Shuar political organization among state actors and the official position of the FESZCH towards the presence of the mining companies in the area (since Project Mirador is not the only mining project in the province).

In my second visit from October-December 2013, I sought to first understand the dynamics of the federations in Zamora as well as their most basic ideologies and political strategies. I spent much time in the city of Zamora visiting the offices of the FESZCH, observing their daily routine, and interviewing all the leaders. Although I was not always allowed to be part of certain meetings with other leaders or with government institutions, I did have access to important events such as a meeting that was organized in Tundayme with leaders from local communities and *Ecuador Estratégico*. During this time, I also established contacts and interviewed representatives of certain government institutions.

While my intention at this point was to establish strong relationships with the leaders from both federations, it proved harder to meet with authorities from the Provincial Federation of the Shuar Nationality of Zamora Chinchipe (FEPNASH-CH-Federación Provincial de la Nacionalidad Shuar de Zamora Chinchipe), since they did not have permanent offices in Zamora as the FESZCH does. Eventually, I decided to concentrate only on one federation given the complexity of the everyday politics and organization of the Shuar. Thus, the second part of this trip was dedicated to approaching and building rapport with the leaders of the Shuar communities around Tundayme and El Panguí, as well as to better understanding the Shuar political structure and the dynamics of the leadership of associations and communities. During this period, I also visited and had interviews in the offices of the parish council and the Department of Community Relations of ECSA in Tundayme and even visited the mining campsite. During this visit, I established several important contacts with leaders from the communities and attempted to define their position towards mining. This was probably the hardest moment in the fieldwork since my presence in the communities was sometimes viewed with distrust and I had to earn my right to visit and talk to community members. In January 2014, I came back for an additional trip to establish additional contacts

with communities around El Pangui and to interview the leaders from Asociación Shuar El Pangui.

During the second period of fieldwork between May and August 2014, I deepened and strengthened the relationships that I had previously established with leaders of certain communities. I also reached out to other members of the communities. After my usual stop in Zamora to visit the federation and the offices of *Ecuador Estratégico*, I headed up to El Pangui and Tundayme. In this visit, I conducted several interviews with Shuar people who live in Tundayme in order to understand the reasons for them moving out of their communities (important for the dynamics within the communities). I also established contact with other communities that I did not include in the first round of visits. These included the community of Mirador near Tundayme and several communities around El Pangui such as San Andrés, Certero, Santiago Paty, and Paquintza. I also visited, talked to, and formally interviewed the presidents of the Asociación Shuar El Pangui (Shuar Association of El Pangui) and of the the Asociación Shuar Kakaram (Shuar Association of Kakaram). During this visit, I also completed important interviews in the offices of *Ecuador Estratégico*.

This was probably the most productive part of my fieldwork since I had already established good relationships with many leaders and some members of certain communities. As such, I made multiple visits on several occasions not merely to have a second or even third round of interviews, but also just to talk to people and see how they were. Key connections during this visit were the president of Asociación Shuar Kakaram and the president of Yanúa, both activists against the mining company. Through them, I had the chance to participate in meetings and events associated with the recently-created CASCOMI, which gave me a better insight into the Shuar participation in the process of resistance.

Interestingly, while my relationships with the Shuar people had been improving, the leaders of CASCOMI and the newly elected president of the parish council of Tundayme had become suspicious of my presence in the area. Even though I had approached them on several occasions and explained my reasons for being there, in certain meetings the president of the parish council was very resistant to being interviewed, given that I was rumored to be a spy working for the company. Even though I tried to make my position very clear by presenting official documents from my university in Quito, the interview was not

unproductive, and the president seemed uncomfortable the whole time I was there.

Finally, January 2015 was the opportunity to gather additional information and to finalize some pending interviews. During this visit, for example, I had the opportunity to finally visit the community of San Carlos, to which its president had previously denied my entrance, but fortunately changed his mind when we talked during a meeting at the FESZCH. I also finally conducted an interview with the president of CASCOMI, after much assurance that my interest in visiting Tundayme was strictly academic and not connected with the company.

In addition to all the ethnographic information I collected, during the time of my research I also collected documents from government and local institutions, the FESZCH, and the Asociación El Panguí and visited official web pages to monitor information published by the government, NGOs, and even the company. In the periods in which I was living in Quito, I also carried out interviews with leaders of indigenous organizations, government institutions, and NGOs.

2.3.4 Positionality and Ethics in the Fieldwork

Doing ethnographic work necessarily brings us to the discussion of positionality, which is the place or position from which one, as a researcher, interacts with the people in the context of research (Ng 2001). The presence of a researcher is never a neutral matter since there is much cultural and social baggage carried to the field that influences the way information is collected and the level of access granted by local people to certain spaces. In my proposal, I posed a question regarding the ways in which my research might be affected by my own positionality, especially in relation to the Shuar leaders and local communities; I wondered how people would react to my presence, being an “urban academic mestiza”¹² asking questions on such a hot topic as large-scale mining. The experience was a little different from what I had expected: while during my preliminary visit in April 2013 and in the first period of my research I could sense some degree of distrust and indifference from people towards my queries, this seemed to be more of a response to the general state of affairs in the area and not necessarily to me as a mestizo woman.

Especially from my first interviews, I sensed that people were tired of being asked about their needs (usually by government agents) without actually receiving the benefits they were expecting. Furthermore, since many questions revolved around the mining company, I was also bringing up a topic that had been disappointing for most. Both the state and the company had failed the people's expectations of local development, and that seemed to condition their attitude towards the presence and curiosity of outsiders, at least at the beginning. This is precisely what happened during my first visit to the community of Churuwia, where I had expected to spend a few days. Upon my arrival, together with the president of Asociación Shuar Kakaram, the president of the community became very angry at a surprise visit that he considered to be an imposition. Even though I had asked for permission to visit the communities from the federation, I did not have the opportunity to previously contact him directly. He spoke in Shuar to the president of the Asociación so I could not understand what he was saying, but his wife eventually calmed him down and he then agreed to allow me to stay one night. He left for a walk and when he came back we started talking about the mining company and other issues, and he immediately started complaining about how the company and different state institutions never keep their promises. This was something I would hear from almost everyone in the communities and, in a way, this feeling of frustration and disappointment made people distrustful of others, especially of outsiders who were looking for information.

Contrary to my expectations, then, the gender issue did not seem to be much of a problem in my initial contacts with the Shuar. While I had expected male leaders to be dismissive of my presence in their communities, mostly for being a woman in what I perceived to be a chauvinistic context, I think two elements came into play to actually facilitate interactions. One of them was the fact that I presented myself as a researcher from a university in Quito (Universidad San Francisco de Quito, where I have worked and taught for years) doing PhD studies abroad; I also presented my credentials and official documents to confirm this relationship (one of these documents was an official form of informed consent that interviewees had to sign). A second consideration was that being older than most student/researchers, the people in the communities seemed to automatically grant me a higher status, which I assumed came from a perceived sense of experience; this

usually meant that people would never accept calling me by my name but insisted on using the terms “*doctora*” (doctor) or “*ingeniera*” (engineer), both terms that are very respected not only in Zamora but in general in Ecuadorean society. In a way, it would seem that working in a university (many times perceived automatically as having direct contact even with government institutions), being older, and perceived as more mature neutralized the gender factor, something that I also noticed in the leaders’ relationship to female government agents in charge of the development of projects.

Besides reflecting on my own position and identity in my relation to the people involved in the research, another important and ethical issue is the level of commitment that a researcher has to people in the communities. Even though the academic purposes of my research were always made clear to the people I interviewed, there was always the hope among the leaders that I could do something more than write up a document to later be distributed among them. Thus, I constantly struggled over the question as to what to do beyond assuring people that I was not there to make any promises that I could not keep (especially regarding issues related to improving the community welfare), and that the most I could do was to share the results of my work with them. As a matter of fact, I had previously planned to have workshops with the federation and the communities to share the information I had collected so that they can use it as feedback or input for the benefit of their political organization. However, I always felt that this offer was almost more of a way to keep my conscience clean and not a real contribution to the people in the communities of the federation, or at least not a contribution on their own terms. Fortunately, during research and after hearing about all the broken promises made by the government, I realized I could use my role as a professor at the Universidad San Francisco de Quito to be able to approach people more easily and offer to them something that I knew could be delivered: scholarships offered to indigenous people through the Program of Ethnic Diversity. Since I had already been working for and supporting this program at the university, I decided to act as intermediary and to distribute information on it in the federation and during each visit I made to the communities. Although people were immediately interested in the scholarship program, I cannot say that my good intentions were very fruitful, but I at least organized a visit of two groups of potential students to the

university (this was done through the FESZCH and the Asociación Shuar El Panguí). From a total of 23 students who were interested in applying, only a few actually took the exam; from that group, only one was admitted and is currently an undergraduate student with a full scholarship.

As a final note on commitment to local people, long-term research gave positive results and I was able to establish closer relationships with some leaders, as explained earlier. While the president of the community of San Carlos initially denied my access to it, during the last part of fieldwork I managed to have an interesting interview with him. After a few months, through the university, I invited him to be part of an “Indigenous Planning Workshop” and we are now working together with an international organization to develop productive projects in certain Shuar communities.

2.3.5 Final Thoughts on Doing Research in the Communities

In my original description of the methodology I planned to employ in fieldwork, I had expected to spend at least two or three weeks immersed in one Shuar community and to be able to understand its dynamics. As it turned out, the possibility and the relevance of doing this made me rethink my initial intentions. The open reluctance of the president of Churuwía to my stay in the community made me consider the importance of building rapport and confidence with people rather than imposing my presence upon them. After this incident, I decided to visit the communities and talk to the leaders as much as I could to slowly start building trusting relationships with them. However, during all the visits I made to different types of communities (described in my chapter about results), I realized that my notion of the “community” and “community life” was not necessarily realistic. From a classic ethnographic perspective, the community is “everything;” it is the appropriate place to conduct fieldwork because it contains the whole experience of a group of people. This was not necessarily the case in the Shuar communities that are part of my research, and that resulted not only a change in the methodology, but it also opened up an area for discussion that I had not previously considered in my research proposal. Life in the communities was shaped by many different elements. For example, in some communities, both men and women worked in the mine in two-week shifts, which meant that they were out all day

(including weekends) and they could only be found when they were off shift and they could dedicate time to their farms. In other cases, men worked elsewhere and sometimes even had to rent plots of land to farm because they did not have enough land in the communities. Many younger men and women were living in Tundayme or El Panguí and had left their communities and only returned on the weekends. Some simply migrated further away. Thus, I decided that it would be more productive to visit leaders and people on their own time and to deal with such a mobile group in different ways according to their own terms.

In general terms, it is important to acknowledge that being a researcher with an anthropological background does not guarantee that one will not carry stereotypes and biases to the field and even when analyzing the data one has gathered. One such stereotype is the one I previously described about the life in the community and that could be applied to the whole Shuar political organization. Since the beginning of my research, the conflicts and divisions within the FESZCH called my attention; I mistakenly tried to find cultural answers for these, while it would have been more productive to interpret them as part of the political nature of the organization and the subsequent struggles for power.

To conclude, while I personally stand against large-scale mining, I decided before going to the field that I would present myself as neutral as possible to the people with whom I interacted. This was not a strategy to mingle with all kinds of people and to be able to obtain information, but rather a decision to respect each person and each group's position regarding Project Mirador. It was also a decision I made during my first visit to the field and when I realized that the context in which mining is situated is much more complex than I had imagined, and it was hard to identify specific groups within the indigenous and mestizo population as either pro or anti mining. This decision proved to be positive since it also allowed me to better understand the changing discourses and positions among the Shuar people from the communities and even the federation. It has also allowed me to understand that people make choices regarding their livelihoods based on a variety of elements: their previous experiences with government institutions or the mining company itself, their understandings of what development is, and their desire to be part of a modern mestizo society. All these elements

permeated a great part of this research and are also be part of the discussion throughout the thesis.

Finally, it is important to mention that, prior to starting fieldwork, I was somewhat apprehensive regarding the safety of doing research in a large-scale mining context. However, while at times I might have felt somewhat uncomfortable, especially when I could sense that certain community leaders or mestizo authorities were somewhat distrustful of my presence, I never felt unsafe doing research in the communities and travelling around the area.¹³ This probably has to do with the fact that I was in the field in the initial stages of the operation of the mining company, and Tundayme and its surroundings were relatively calm. However, I know the scenario has now changed: now there is greater migration from other parts of the country and increased commercial activity in Tundayme, including restaurants, hostels, and even brothels. During the past two years, these changes have probably altered the conditions for doing research.

On a final note, while it is hard to maintain most of the Shuar leaders anonymous since it is common knowledge who is or has been president of communities and organizations, I have decided that it would be important to not mention their names in this thesis. For this reason, I only identify them by their position and the community or organization they represented throughout the dissertation.

2.4 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have discussed the main theoretical aspects of my dissertation as well the methodology I used and important considerations regarding doing research in the context of mining. The main theoretical discussion in this thesis addresses the way indigeneity and the political discourses on identity are constructed in specific contexts and how they are used to deal with and make decisions regarding the extraction of resources. In this context, political identities are understood as being positioned in different ways according to particular political, social, and economic contexts, and not necessarily as a result of historical continuity. Thus, ethnic identities are contemplated from a non-essentialist perspective and as part of the way in which different groups negotiate and elaborate strategies to achieve certain objectives for their group as they simultaneously deal with external situations and actors.

In the second part of this chapter, I have discussed the methods utilized in this research and described how research was carried out. This included the multi-site approach, which was very important when trying to make sense of the role of different actors in the complex scenario around large-scale mining. The section on methods also included a description of the evolution of the research in terms of level of rapport I developed, especially with the Shuar leaders. I also discussed some issues of ethics and positionality related to these interactions. In this sense, one of my conclusions is that doing field research always brings up issues and perspectives that one was not expecting; thus, it becomes a both a professional and personal learning experience. The next chapter discusses large-scale mining in the specific context of resource nationalism, which was a key strategy in the government of Rafael Correa. It describes the political processes through which mining came to have an important role in the government's economic and political agenda as well as in social programs and local development. In a second section, this chapter describes Project Mirador and concludes with a discussion on social mobilization and conflicts. The objective of this chapter is to describe the wider discussion about large-scale mining while simultaneously considering how the local population has responded to Project Mirador; this chapter sets the groundwork for a discussion about the Shuar's discourses and practices in the following chapters.

Notes

¹ Melina Selverston-Scher (2001: 21) argues that critics of the approach that places emphasis on the strategic aspect of ethnic identity in social movements and not on its emotive nature overlook that the success of political movements, including ethnic movements, is actually measured in terms of the material benefits they can provide for its members.

² In this case, *mestizaje* refers to an ideology that looks to homogenize society in terms of a European, mestizo/white cultural background.

³ See Radcliffe (2010) for an interesting discussion on neoliberalism and the rise of multiculturalism ideologies and projects amongst the indigenous population.

⁴ For analysis that focus more on the discourse of the organizations itself see Varese, (1996) and Conklin and Graham (1995); for a critical view of the real power of political participation of indigenous groups see Hale (2004); for identity politics and human rights and self-determination see Niezen (2003).

⁵ See Grueso et al. (1998) for an interesting analysis of a process of organization within Afro populations on the Pacific Coast based on similar identity claims as indigenous groups in Ecuador: cultural differences and the right to territory. The authors use Hall's concept of positionality, arguing that there is a double articulation of identity, one in terms of tradition and another in terms of present political organization.

⁶ See Bolaños (2011: 45-72) for a similar discussion on the construction of indigenous identities in the Brazilian Amazonia; the focus of her study is on the use of historical and socio-political discourses to gain legitimacy as an indigenous group and to make claims to their territory in order to avoid relocation. She also studies the use of discourses to question that same legitimacy.

⁷ Other authors like De la Cadena have argued for different definitions of indigeneity; as discussed in the introduction she sees indigeneity not as an adapted and negotiated political discourse, but rather as the capacity of the indigenous population to disrupt political formations and structures (2010: 336).

⁸ Warnars (2013a,b) and other authors (Brighenti 2010; Sack 1986) use this concept as the "act of territory", the process through which a social group establishes and maintains a human territory.

⁹ Original text in Portuguese. "...os saberes ambientais, ideologias e identidades – coletivamente criados e historicamente situados – que um grupo social utiliza para estabelecer e manter seu território". (Little 2002: 4)

¹⁰ Examples of studies focusing on the indigenous national organization are Andolina 2003; Becker 2011; Jameson 2011; Korovkin 2002; Sawyer 1997; Varese 1996; Pick 2010; Selverston-Scher 2001; Zamosc 2004.

¹¹ The vice-president assured me that the only way he could give an official interview would be if he got a specific authorization from the president of ECSA. I wrote a letter to the president and delivered it personally to the offices of ECSA in Quito but never got an answer.

¹² Even though indigenous people are friendly to mestizos and vice-versa, there are always mixed and ambivalent feelings in these interactions. The Shuar people from the communities and even the federations have some resentment towards mestizo society in general: the people from the communities resent mestizos because their land was taken away by them. Similarly, the leaders in the federations resent mestizos because they feel the Shuar people have been historically neglected by the mestizo state.

¹³ As I mentioned before, one of my informants was murdered during the time of my research so I decided to postpone the next trip to the field. However, when I arrived to Tundayme a month later, the atmosphere in the town was calm and

most people did not seem to connect his death to the mining industry. More on this on Chapter 5.

3

The Political, Economic and Social Implications of Large-Scale Mining in Ecuador

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I laid out the theoretical and methodological framework of this thesis. I discussed the relevance of using the approach of ethno-politics in analyzing the ways in which indigenous groups deal with issues of cultural rights, territory, livelihoods, and the control of natural resources (specifically in regard to their extraction). This chapter's intention is to offer a more complex view of Project Mirador as part of the development of the government's political and economic program that reinforces the role of mineral extraction as a means to alleviate poverty and re-distribute resources. Part of this complex scenario also involves the local conflicts and mobilization that usually take place in large-scale mining contexts and the response of the government to resistance from the local population and activists.

In this chapter, I will show how resource extraction, especially mining, has acquired political significance in a government that has strongly distanced itself from previous neo-liberal practices. I start out with a discussion about the shift from neo-liberal to progressive governments. The so-called "New Left" emphasizes a stronger presence of the state in extractive operations as well as in the investment in social programs. This shift has facilitated the intensification of large-scale mining through the approval of a new law regulating large-scale mining practices and has been associated with the government's growing intolerance of social protest and resistance. In the second part of this chapter, I describe the development of Project Mirador and I then discuss the sources of conflict and the mobilizations related to the project.

3.2 The Extractive Industry in Ecuador: The Transition from Neo-Liberal to Post-Neoliberal Regimes

The economic and political history of Ecuador has been tied up in the extraction and exportation of natural resources since its colonial era. Once an independent country, it has gone from producing or extracting one product or resource to another, from rubber to bananas, flowers, and, of course, to oil (Acosta 2009). While much faith has been placed on all of these products to save the country's economy, oil has definitely been the most treasured resource because it indeed opened up a door to modernization and progress in the 1970s. Unfortunately, those expectations of development and well-being only lasted until oil prices in the world market dropped, and the revenues from oil exportation were redirected to repaying Ecuador's oil debt (Acosta 2009; Davidov 2013: 490). The decline of the oil boom coincided with Ecuador's slow transition into a neo-liberal regime in the 1980s, which started with a currency devaluation pressured by the International Monetary Fund (Arsel 2012: 153-154; Sawyer 2004: 12-13) and eventually led to the privatization of state-owned companies, budget cuts, and the creation of mechanisms to attract foreign investment to develop the oil industry in the Amazonian region.

In her book on the oil industry and indigenous organizations in the Ecuadorean Amazon, Sawyer defines neo-liberalism as "a cluster of government policies that aim to privatize, liberalize and deregulate the national economy so as to encourage foreign investment and intensify export production;" in other words, it is a political ideology that allows the market to take over society (Sawyer 2004: 7). This means that governments in Latin America reduced their capacity to control and regulate the economy while they simultaneously encouraged the privatization of the public sector and reduced their role in providing mechanisms of social welfare (Acosta 2009: 45-49; Arsel 2012: 152; Gudynas 2012: 31). These policies came from the belief that "markets are the most efficient and effective means to allocate resources and guide economic transactions, and that they self-regulate" (Arsel 2012: 152). Furthermore, in the context of neo-liberal policies, the discussion about development lost relevance since it was assumed that the market would

eventually generate development itself, thus leaving the government out of the discussion on development (Gudynas 2012: 31).

Specifically in Ecuador, the end of last century and the beginning of this century were marked by political turmoil and social unrest due to one of the worst economic crises the country has ever experienced. After years of budget cuts, extremely low social spending, the privatization of oil companies, and the accrument of a huge national debt, the country finally went through a process of dollarization. As Arsel argues, “neoliberalization delivered largely negative results, especially for Ecuador’s poor and indigenous people” (Arsel 2012: 154). These political and economic situations served as the foundation for Rafael Correa’s progressive, leftist, post-neoliberal government when he was elected president in 2007.

Several authors have analyzed, from different perspectives, the shift from neo-liberal to post-neoliberal regimes in the region of Latin America (with emphasis on certain countries) and the implications of these changes for extractive practices and the protection of natural resources (Arsel 2012; Bebbington and Humphreys 2011; Davidov 2013; Escobar 2010; Gudynas 2012; Hogenboom 2012). In general, all of these authors appreciate the efforts of some governments (Ecuador, Venezuela, and Bolivia) to turn away from a neoliberal ideology, giving the state a more central role in controlling the economy. Nevertheless, it has become quite clear that the decision to expand the extractive industry in these countries contradicts other policies and even the newly approved constitutions (in the case of Bolivia and Ecuador), which tend to more progressive in terms of intercultural participation, respect for nature, and even new conceptions of development and of well-being.

In their discussion of certain specific issues, these authors agree that there are some characteristics common to post-neoliberal regimes (especially those of Ecuador and Bolivia). As was previously mentioned, the most obvious common characteristics is that of an increase in the state control over the economy and the extractive industry itself, which is intended to use mineral extraction as the chief pillar of a macroeconomic strategy that would allow the government to increase and maintain social expenditure (Bebbington and Humphreys 2011: 140). In Ecuador, for example, a very important shift in the new constitution was the increased state control over the mining sector that had been abandoned and left unregulated for years (Davidov 2013; Hogenboom 2012). What initially

appeared to be an effort to exert general control over the extractive industry, though, eventually resulted in the creation of a law to regulate illegal mining operations. This change also opened the door to large-scale mining. “The period since late 2008 has seen both new legislation that is much more favorable to the large-scale mining sector and a progressive hardening of Correa’s positions on the rights of citizens to protest against extractive industry” (Bebbington and Humphreys 2011: 136).

Ecuador and Bolivia are two interesting examples of post-neoliberal or leftist governments that have actively attacked earlier neo-liberal projects and even re-written the constitutions of their countries to include new notions of development and well-being that incorporate some elements of the value systems of indigenous population as well as a different vision of nature and natural resources (Bretón 2013; Escobar 2010; Pellegrini and Ribera Arismendi 2012; Walsh 2010a). Clear examples of the innovations in Ecuador’s constitution include the notion of *sumak kawsay* or *buen vivir*, an indigenous view of well-being that is based on a harmonious relationship with nature, and the incorporation of an article that grants rights to nature itself.

However, this early concern and appreciation for cultural diversity and respect for nature has been overshadowed by an active interest in developing the extractive industry (Acosta 2012; Gudynas 2012). As Arsel and Avila Angel discuss in their paper on the Yasuní-ITT initiative (2011), there is a growing tension and contradiction between the “means and aims of development policy in Ecuador” (Arsel and Avila Angel 2011: 9), which is strongly based on an extractivist model. To accomplish the first main goal of making sure that all groups in society “enjoy their rights,” the second goal, respect for nature, would have to be sacrificed or at least minimized for the time being. At the same time, since the extractive development model is conceived of in terms of a macroeconomic strategy (Bebbington and Humphreys 2011), it is most likely that local communities suffering direct impact from the extractive industry will not necessarily consider themselves to be “enjoying their rights,” but rather quite the opposite.

Contrary to a constitution that appeared to include an alternative to the classic model of development, the insistence on extractivism fits within that same classic view of development of the 1960s. This model views the well-being of society in terms of material richness and economic growth. According to Arsel (2012), for this reason, there is an

important emphasis on providing basic social services to the people and also on the development of infrastructure that are symbols of progress and modern development: construction of roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, etc. This is also the reason why extractive industries have been developed, such that they may increase revenues from exports that in turn can be used to facilitate much-needed economic growth. According to Gudynas, this is a progressive neo-extractive process that distances itself from the strategies of earlier, more conservative governments but that still “repeats that massive appropriation of Nature, the enclave economies and a subordinate global insertion”¹ (Gudynas 2012: 35-36). As Arsel (2012) and other authors (Bebbington and Humphreys 2011; Davidov 2013; Hogenboom 2012; Lu et al. 2017) have also stated, this type of extractive strategy under progressive governments justifies mineral or oil exploitation by defining them as necessary to sustaining different social programs and plans that are directed at helping the most impoverished social groups (Gudynas 2012: 36). Unfortunately, the issue of social justice is still not resolved precisely because those strategies for redistribution do not change the economic structures in society and remain as a form of charity (Gudynas 2012: 37).

The emphasis on classic notions of development as described above and the need to improve material conditions and address issues of poverty is part of what Arsel et al. (2016) have called the “extractive imperative.” This concept is marked by “an ideological commitment to further extraction as a necessary and unavoidable step towards higher levels of development...” as part of a “stages of growth” model of development (Arsel et al. 2016: 884). In this model, earnings coming from extraction should be invested in infrastructure as well as in “physical, social and human capital” to help the productive sector grow. Furthermore, this emphasis on development and economic growth is directly tied to the idea that poverty reduction should be achieved in a short time period by a government that plays a central role in regulating the national economy. Thus, this line of thought concludes that, in order to significantly reduce poverty, extraction of resources is key; the government has framed the extraction of natural resources as an imperative to develop the country and satisfy the material needs of a great portion of the population.

3.2.1 The Politics of Minerals

In line with the logic of the extractive imperative, extraction of resources and the development of a large-scale mining industry are key objectives in the government agenda and they have even acquired a symbolic and political importance. Hogenboom (2012) does an interesting analysis on the political use of minerals in neo-liberal and post-neoliberal regimes. Looking back to earlier governments in Latin America, minerals were a symbol of national identity, sovereignty, and independent political development and were, unsurprisingly, highly politicized. Minerals were indeed key in the development of many countries (Hogenboom 2012: 136-137) and, as in Ecuador's case with oil exploitation, they were perceived to be the door to modernization and progress. On the other hand, under neo-liberal type governments, resource extraction was considered to be part of the process of privatization and lost its "strategic" status, becoming just another sector in many countries' economies. Governments in this period gave up the control and regulation of the extractive industry, favoring instead its privatization and liberalization (2012: 136). Thus, minerals lost their political meaning in the context of market regulation and with the absence of the government in the extractive industry.

As has been the case in other countries in Latin America, Ecuador and Bolivia have revived policies of re-taxation, re-regulation, and even re-nationalization of resources that are intended to increase national budgets in order to expand social programs (Hogenboom 2012: 144). In this case, nationalization does not necessarily mean a "complete takeover of private enterprises by the state" (Arsel and Avila 2011: 9), but rather refers to a process in which the state increases its role in the operation and negotiation of contracts in order to increase revenues from the extractive industry that should be destined for social and redistribution programs. According to Hogenboom, it is through these processes that minerals have become re-politicized, because they are part of a new agenda of social welfare and redistribution (Arsel and Avila 2011; Hogenboom 2012). As in earlier decades, Correa, Morales, and other Latin American leaders have sought to expand state control and are capitalizing on issues of sovereignty to assert control over resources and to develop the state's capacity to assure the country's welfare.

Moreover, beyond practical issues of redistribution, governments use these discourses to shape their agendas and political objectives in the perception of the people. Davidov's understandings of eco-politics in Ecuador points out a dichotomy between oil and mineral extraction that, in reality, is merely part of a discourse. Just as Correa's regime (2007-2017) positioned itself since the beginning as the "opposite face" of neo-liberalism, it has also positioned certain practices, like mineral extraction—which could easily fit within a neo-liberal agenda—as part of a more "newly progressive" populist state (Davidov 2013: 491). To a certain extent, oil had become a symbol of old neo-liberal practices and seemed to entail a total disregard for environmental protection as well as "selling out" the country to oil multinationals. Mineral extraction, on the other hand, became part of a nationalist discourse and a state-building project that is more concerned about the peoples' welfare. Thus, mineral extraction became the symbol of a new form of extractivism in which the ends (redistribution of wealth) justify the means (exploitation of natural resources) (Arsel and Avila 2011; Davidov 2013). The transition of Bolivia's national identity from a mining country ("*páis minero*") to a petro-state provides another poignant example of the use of discourse and symbols in economic transitions. Under a nationalist, state-led model of development, Morales has aligned the country's political and economic "aspirations" with its potential to produce and export hydrocarbons, especially gas. In this case, the political discourse about gas extraction revolves around nationalist visions of sovereignty which reference the "Héroes del Chaco" and the long-standing struggles against white elites and neoliberal policies (Perreault and Valdivia 2010).

3.2.2 Large-Scale Mining: Issues of Sovereignty and Local Participation

Mining has historically posed a number of threats to the environment, the landscape, and the communities living around mining projects' areas of influence. The analysis of the impact of mining on landscapes focuses on modifications caused by mining activities (such as open pits, waste piles, built structure, and geomorphological features) (Bridge 2004a: 209), while the pollution analysis focuses mainly on the mineral processing flow and "seeks to quantify releases to the environment from each of the controlled chemical interactions that occur during mineral processing" (Bridge 2004a: 210). In this analysis, an important

characteristic of metal mining is that it is a segregative process in which a very small amount of a desired type of mineral is isolated from a larger mass of material that is not as valuable through a series of steps in which a separate waste stream is produced. For example, in the case of copper, over 90% of the material mined for its production is actually rejected as waste (Bridge 2004a: 210-211). Waste disposal thus poses a serious problem to the mining industry; tailing ponds, for example, are considered to be a main source of contamination from this industry. Additionally, chemical pollution can occur through the release of chemicals utilized in the process of extracting the ore from the environment and from the “oxidation of naturally occurring minerals in the ore as a result of exposure to the air” (Bridge 2004a: 213).

Increasingly, communities around the world have been affected by large and small-scale mining projects that result in landscape changes, chemical pollution, and other socio-environmental impacts that have to do with land rights, access to resources, and other issues. For these reasons, large-scale industrial mining has become the target of resistance and criticism from local communities as well as environmental and conservation organizations, especially over the last several decades. As a response to this resistance, mining companies have developed different Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies in order to be able to continue with their operations under more rigorous environmental control and to contribute to the development of social programs for local communities (Jenkins 2004; Kapelus 2002).

Despite growing environmental concern around the world, resistance from local communities, and a growing awareness of indigenous rights, there has been a pattern of mining expansion throughout the global south, particularly concentrated in a few countries that had not previously been investment targets in the past (Bridge 2004b: 411). In his study on mining investment around the world, Gavin Bridge concludes that, even though traditional targets for mining investment such as North America and Australasia have maintained their absolute investment flows, in relative terms, they experienced a decline during the 1990s. Furthermore, “South America increased its share of worldwide investment from 18 per cent to 39 per cent between 1990 and 2001,” while Africa increased its share from 12 per cent to 28 per cent (Bridge 2004b: 411). More specifically, between 1990 and 2001 in South America, there were 12 mining investments located in just three

countries: two in Peru, nine in Chile, and one in Argentina (Urkidi 2010: 384). On average, Chile only received 30 per cent of the world's investment between 1990-2001 (Bridge 2004: 414).

Bridge argues that this pattern of worldwide investment is primarily related to geological conditions and is determined by the location of ore reserves; however, these elements alone are not the only important factors for investment projects in new places. He argues that even though geographies of mining investment are structured by geology, they are also socially mediated (Bridge 2004b). Favorable political and economic policies and conditions can be very much responsible for this industry's expansion and investment, while political turmoil and economic instability can actually prevent investment in mining in certain areas. In fact, much of the growth of mining investments during the 1990s might actually be a response to national economic liberalization policies. For example, during this decade, certain South American countries like Peru and Chile positioned themselves as more attractive countries for investments "by improving their risk/reward ratio relative to other jurisdictions" (Bridge 2004b: 416).

As part of the nationalist agenda discussed earlier, Correa announced the creation of a *Mandato Minero* in 2008 (Mining Mandate), intended to put an end to illegal and badly-managed mining operations in Ecuador, thereby asserting the state's sovereignty over the mining sector (Moore and Velásquez 2012: 115). At the same time, he assured that he would seek out a responsible way to facilitate mining in every sense of the word (economically, environmentally, and socially). In that same year, he also called for a dialogue about mining extraction with different communities, local craft-industry miners, and representatives from the industrial mining companies in order to develop a new mining law (*Diálogo Minero*). Contrary to initial expectations, however, the results of this dialogue were somewhat negative for local communities and for social and environmental organizations: it actually eliminated any possibilities for debate and made it clear that the government was determined to support industrial mining (Cisneros 2016: 164-165; Moore and Velásquez 2012: 122). In the end, the dialogue process was really just an excuse for the government to identify and neutralize certain "radical" organizations and movements who were "opposed to a national project" (Cisneros 2009: 18). Furthermore, in the second part of this dialogue, the government asserted its position of exploiting mineral resources as a means of

investing in education, health programs, road construction, and so forth; a new regulatory mining legislation was approved in 2009. Just as Bridge argues in his article (Bridge 2004b), beyond the availability of minerals in Ecuador's territory, it was the political decision of the government in conjunction with the design and implementation of certain policies (in this case, not necessarily neo-liberal policies) that laid the groundwork for possible increases in mining investment in the country.

Several authors point out the exclusion of local communities and organizations in decision-making processes (Bebbington and Humphreys 2011; Cisneros 2009; Hogenboom 2012), as happened in the discussion around the New Mining Law in Ecuador. While mining extraction has been justified in terms of its social objectives, not all social sectors agree with this economic strategy. In fact, local resistance to mineral extraction has grown; nevertheless, the same progressive leftist regimes, concerned about the welfare of the people, have actually reacted in various intolerant ways to that resistance. Contrary to what would be expected of progressive governments, local and community participation has not been considered before making decisions or passing laws. Correa and Morales have found ways to control, co-opt, or weaken organized civil society (Bebbington and Humphreys 2011; Hogenboom 2012).

In Bolivia, indigenous organizations complained that they had not been previously consulted before mineral extraction began in their territory (Bebbington 2012: 11) and that they could not demand or suggest substantial changes because the project's design (in this case, for gas extraction) was already finished when the consultation process was just beginning (Flemmer and Schilling Vacaflor 2016: 182). As Pellegrini and Ribera Arismendi argue, instead of responding to legitimate concerns of local populations, consultation and compensation policies are actually "biased in favour of a project that a priori cannot be questioned and has resulted in the weakening of local indigenous institution" (Pellegrini and Ribera Arismendi 2012: 115). In the case of Ecuador, Correa not only excluded an important environmental organization like *Acción Ecológica* (local environmental organization) from the discussion about the mining law, but he even went so far as to order it to be shut down (Bebbington 2012). Thus, after the New Mining Law was passed, several indigenous organizations showed their opposition by arguing that discussions prior to its writing failed to include the views of the local indigenous population. On January 20, 2009, a national anti-

mining strike organized by two indigenous organizations, CONAIE and the Confederation of Kichwa Peoples of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI—*Confederación de Pueblos de la Nacionalidad Kichwa del Ecuador*), took place in eight Andean provinces. A small protest march was also organized in Quito by CONAIE and some ecological organizations. Additionally, in several southern provinces including Zamora and Azuay, local indigenous organizations built roadblocks (Ortiz 2011: 11).

With regards to this context of tension between the government and civil society, Hogenboom (2012) argues that, even though the issue of sovereignty over resources gives the government the capacity to assure the country's welfare, local resistance has emerged as a reaction to their own view of sovereignty. To begin, the civil society and organizations felt that their expectations related to participating in issues related to extractive projects that have a direct impact on their territory were not met. Furthermore, there are contrasting views of sovereignty between the government and local communities. Moore and Velásquez (2012) argue that the activists' sense of sovereignty is more focused on local communities and peoples and who should have the right to make decisions of how water, land, and forests are utilized, especially those found within their boundaries and territory. On the other hand, the government's position on sovereignty rests on the notion of a national government's domain over natural resources that are strategic in terms of financing national social projects, thereby justifying the government's control over them and their right to determine the use of those resources (Moore and Velásquez 2012: 114).

In Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru, protests and clashes between government and local communities and organizations have been violent to different degrees. According to Bebbington, though, the difference between Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, is that, after times of crisis, the Peruvian government allowed negotiation to take place between the company and the local population. However, governments in Ecuador and Bolivia have a more direct participation in and control of the extractive process and companies; as such, these governments usually assume the responsibility of mediating conflicts and organizing consultation processes (Bebbington 2012). In Ecuador, for example, after the government signed the contract for Project Mirador in Zamora Chinchipe to secure a percentage of utilities and taxes from the company, the relationship between the latter and the local communities

changed. One important government institution, *Ecuador Estratégico*, is now in charge of channeling revenues coming from mining extraction and other strategic projects to local communities and municipalities. Thus, according to this new scheme of resource extraction, the state has increased its presence and control not only over the company's utilities and profits, which are to be directed to the areas directly influenced by mining activities.

I began this section by discussing the politics of extractivism in Latin America, as well as the implications of this industry on issues of sovereignty and local participation and resistance. I will now explain the economic and political background of the development of large-scale mining in Ecuador as well as the characteristics of the first project to reach the phase of exploitation, Project Mirador.

3.3 The Development of Large-Scale Mining in Ecuador

Starting in the 1990s, governments throughout Latin America encouraged foreign investment in the mining sector through a series of reforms that included the reduction of taxes and a new system in which royalties were paid to the state (Cisneros 2009). For example, in Ecuador in 1991, the government passed Mining Law 126 and later a series of reforms that opened the mining sector to foreign investment. Furthermore, between 1995-2000, the World Bank supported the creation of the Mining Development and Environmental Control Project (PRODEMINCA—*Proyecto de Desarrollo Minero y Control Ambiental*), which sought to modernize the mining industry, improve environmental management, and further investigate natural resources in Ecuador (Sacher and Acosta 2012: 14; Warnaaars 2013: 165). However, until the latter years of the early 2000s under the government of Rafael Correa, the mining sector in Ecuador had not really been developed in a way that it would have an important impact on the economic growth of the country (Cisneros 2009).

In spite of the clear intentions to strengthen the industry during the last twenty years, the real contribution of mineral extraction to the country's GDP had been quite marginal. A report from the *Ministerio de Energía y Minas* (Ministry of Energy and Mine) (Ministerio de Energía y Minas 2007) shows that mining products represented 0.35 per cent of the GDP of 2002, while in 2007 it was estimated to be as low as 0.25 per

cent of the GDP. Regardless of this historical trend, Cisneros (2009) argues that metal mining in Ecuador is interesting because of its potential. According to data obtained from mining concessionaires, mining potential equals approximately 70 per cent of the current oil reserves, which amount to 1,436 million dollars (at the prices in 2007). Most of this potential profit lies in possible copper extraction (Ministerio de Energía y Minas 2007) that could be completed in the provinces of Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe.

As of 2007, there was still no large-scale mining exploitation. Thanks to the new mining laws and reforms that had been passed in the 1990s, in 2000, the number of mining concessions approved by the state increased dramatically. According to the *Ministerio de Energía y Minas*, by 2007 a total of 4,112 concessions had been granted by the state; however, only 17 per cent of the companies involved in these concessions had declared their intent to initiate any mining activities (Cisneros 2009: 6; Ministerio de Energía y Minas 2007), given that they were not obligated by the state to present any plans for exploration or exploitation (Acosta 2009). Additionally, most mining concessions were controlled by only a few companies, which made it possible for them to make huge gains. Furthermore, even though most companies had not reached the phase of exploration, the studies of social and environmental impacts presented by these companies were very poor in terms of the quality of assessment they had carried out and showed that they had already created situations of conflict within local communities, disregarding proper consultation processes and creating division among community members (Acosta 2009: 90-97).

Rafael Correa's government's mining mandate (*Mandato Minero*) was passed in 2008 precisely to deal with all the issues related to illegality and the indiscriminate number of mining concessions; it revoked those concessions that had not made any investments or were located in protected areas (Riofrancos 2017) and created a national mining company that would regulate the mining activity in the country, the National Mining Company of Ecuador (ENAMI—*Empresa Nacional Minera del Ecuador*) (Riofrancos 2017; Sacher and Acosta 2012: 18). Following the *Mandato Minero* in 2008, the New Mining Law was approved only a year later with a clear intention to facilitate large-scale mining in Ecuador. The law strengthens the role of the state as a regulating entity in the mining sector, not only through the national

mining company, but also in terms of the financial obligations of the investment companies. The law contemplates the following sources for state income: tax on windfall profits (70 per cent); royalties (at least 5 per cent); value-added tax (12 per cent); tax on capital gains (25 per cent), and 12 per cent of profits (Art. 67: 93). In addition to this, a percentage of the revenues have to be channeled to the local communities in the area directly impacted by mining projects (12 per cent of profits and 60 per cent of royalties, Art. 93) (Reglamento General de la Ley de Minería 2009; Riofrancos 2017: 59).

By 2012, the government had identified five “strategic” large-scale mining projects: Project Mirador and Fruta del Norte in Zamora Chinchipe, Panantza-San Carlos in Morona Santiago and Río Blanco, and Quimsacocha in Azuay (Sacher and Acosta 2012: 67). Of all these, only Project Mirador has moved on to the phases of exploitation after signing the contract with the government in 2012. Large-scale mining is defined as the extraction of large quantities of minerals, which requires sophisticated technology as well as significant financial investments (Ministerio de Energía y Minas 2007: 56). Compared to the 300 tons that a small-scale mining operation can produce daily, large-scale mining can produce thousands of tons per day. For example, the copper production in Project Mirador was expected to produce around 27,000 tons per day (Garbay 2011: 48), but, according to a new environmental impact study, the actual production may be twice as much as that initial projection (Cardno 2014). Although mining production in Ecuador up to now has constituted as little as 0.3 per cent of the country’s GDP, the National Plan for Mineral Development projects that large-scale mining will contribute to around 4 per cent to 5 per cent of Ecuador’s GDP and create 10,000 permanent local jobs over the next twenty years (Sacher and Acosta 2012).

3.3.1 Project Mirador: A Threat to Life in Cónдор-Mirador

As previously discussed, the Ecuadorean government had clear intentions of developing large-scale mining in the country since the beginning of the 1990s, and the laws and reforms passed in that decade attracted foreign investment to different regions of Ecuador. In the area of Project Mirador, two companies, Gencor and Billington, were already completing exploration and prospecting activities in the 1990s (Eguiguren and Jiménez 2011). In 1999, the Canadian company

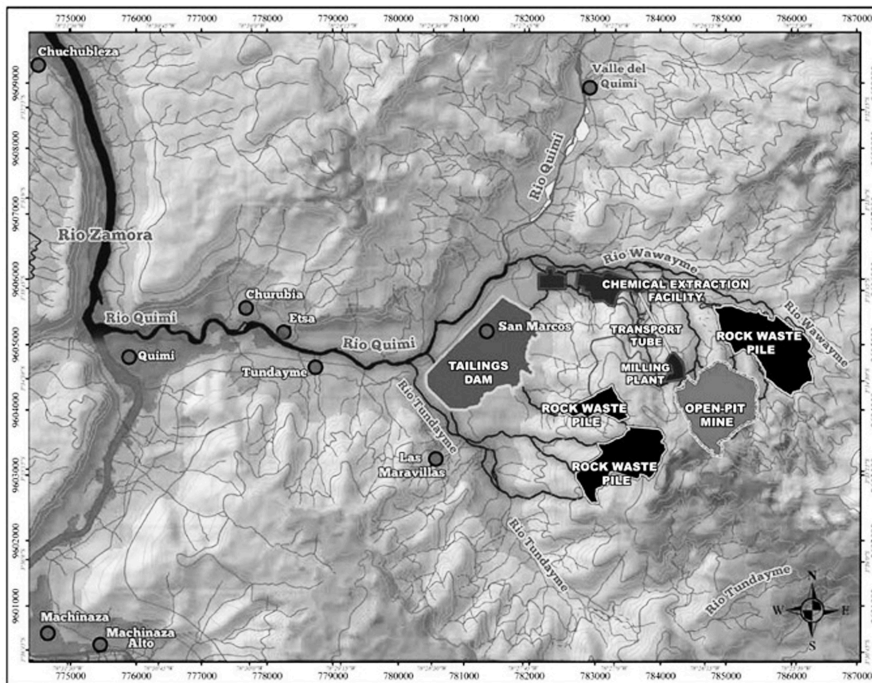
Corriente Resources created a subsidiary in Ecuador under the name of Ecuacorriente S.A. (ECSA) in order to carry out exploratory activities (Chicaiza 2014: 65). Until 2010, ECSA was the owner of Project Mirador, but, as a young company, it did not have the technical or financial capability to actually exploit the mine. Thus, in August 2010, a consortium of two huge public Chinese companies, China Tongling Nonferrous Metals Group Holdings Co., Ltd., and China Railway Construction Corporation Limited, CRCC-Tongguan Investment Co., Ltd., bought Corriente Resources and subsequently became the owner of Project Mirador (Chicaiza 2014).

Project Mirador was designed to be an open-pit copper mine located in an area that covers about 350,000 hectares of a highly diverse ecosystem within the Alta Amazonía (Ortiz 2011). According to a report presented by the Regional Foundation for the Advisory on Human Rights (INREDH—*Fundación Regional de Asesoría en Derechos Humanos*), the removal of land material so that minerals can be accessed within deeper layers will result in a crater that is 250 meters deep and with a diameter of 1.2 kilometers (2013). This crater will be located in a mountain south of the Wawayme River and it will cover 223 hectares, including some protected areas (Cardno 2014). Since not all rock contains high amounts of copper, most of the mined material would have to be disposed of (INREDH 2013, no page). Thus, especially in the exploitation phase, large swaths of land are needed to create landfills or slagheaps to deposit material with no important mineral content and waste material (tailings).

Project Mirador sits on a copper deposit in the Cordillera del Cóndor in the province of Zamora Chinchipe, an area of six concessions covering 9,928 hectares (Chicaiza 2014: 81); this includes two concessions located in El Pangui that cover 2,985 hectares, plus additional areas for protection and related activities (as specified in the contract) that cover 6,310 hectares. According to Riofrancos, the size of additional areas of protection exceeds the legal limit of 5,000 hectares established by the law (Riofrancos 2017). Although the Ministry of the Environment of Ecuador (MAE—*Ministerio del Ambiente del Ecuador*) had already approved all the environmental licenses necessary to initiate the phases of exploitation to process 25,000 tpd of rock material (following the completion of the environmental impact study by the company Walsh in 2006), ECSA decided to increase the amount of processing to

60,000 tpd; this meant that the company had to present an update of the environmental impact study, which was completed by the consultant company Entrix Inc. in 2014 (Cardno 2014: 2-1).

Map 3.1
Project Mirador and the area of direct impact



Source: Ecuacorriente, Environmental Impact Study 2010

As in the case of other open-pit mines, the project includes the crater, the mining campgrounds, landfills and tailing pools, water treatment facility, tunnels, internal roads, and its own network of electricity and communications (Leifsen and Benham 2017). The processing facility will have the capacity to process up to 20 million tons of material per year (Cardno 2014: 4-2; Leifsen and Benham 2017: 222-223). Of this material, 98% will be discarded as mud and toxic material in two different landfills; the first (Relavera Quimi), located in what used to be the town of San Marcos, covers an area of 170 hectares and will only be enough to

hold material for the first four years of exploitation (Cardno 2014: 4-4,4-11; Leifsen and Benham 2017: 222). After that period, the waste material will be deposited in the Relavera Tundayme which should have a greater capacity (573,000 tons of material) and should occupy an area of 7.3 km². According to the World Bank, this type of rock material disposal represents one of the greatest threats of environmental contamination because it results in an environmentally-damaging process known as acid rock drainage, in which a great deal of the solid and liquid minerals and water material slowly filtrate into the subsoil and water sources below (Sacher 2011). Additionally, according to William Sacher, other processes of contamination that should have been considered in the first environmental impact study are:

...the discharge of black, grey and industrial waters; alterations due to the pull of fine solids by the current; mix of superficial and subterranean water pumped from the mine [...]; oil spills; fall of crushed material, spill of chemical material utilized in the processes; filtration of recycled water to the treatment plant, [...] soil shifting or because of fracture occurred during extractive work [...], or dust generated by machinery transit. (Sacher 2011: 21)²

Furthermore, the project requires large amounts of water to process the rock material: around 166,540 m³ of water per day; in practical terms, this means that around 1,900 liters of water per second will have to be taken from rivers and subterranean sources. Additionally, even in the construction stages before the exploitation phase, the rivers also suffer from contamination. As Leifsen indicates, “the massive land-clearing combined with heavy rainfall in the phase of construction have produced highly visible turbidity levels on the Quimi, Wawayme and Tundayme rivers”³ (Leifsen and Benham 2017: 214). This, of course, has already been noticed by the people around the area being mined, who feel that they can no longer access the water or the fish because of the contamination.

While the ecological damage in this kind of open-pit mining is quite extensive, a full description and analysis of the environmental consequences are beyond the scope of this research. Thus, I now turn to a discussion on the effects of mining on the population around the project and the possible socio-environmental conflicts that might arise as a consequence of such projects. Map 3.1 identifies those local communities and locations that will be most affected by the mining

activity, which have been identified by ECSA as being located within the area of direct impact. This discussion will serve as an introduction to the complex, diverse reactions, positions, and expectations of local communities towards the mining project.

3.3.2 Beyond Environmental Impacts: The Environmental Justice Perspective in Project Mirador

Besides the environmental impacts associated with this type of mining, the people in the area of Tundayme and El Pangui have already begun to suffer because of the presence of the mining company and the mine itself. Large-scale mining and other extractive activities create conflicts among the local population that may be related to issues other than harm to the natural environment. The presence of large-scale mining and mining companies creates complex conflicts related to access and rights to land as well as to the royalties generated by extractive activities; it can cause new divisions within the local community. In this section, I will first address the environmental justice perspective on socio-environmental situations and conflicts. Then, I will briefly discuss the mobilization of groups in the context of Mirador that will offer a sense of the complexity of the reactions and positions towards the project. Following this discussion, I will more specifically address the relationship between the mining company, the state (through certain institutions and policies), and the Shuar population, considering the changes in this relationship and certain tensions that might have arisen over time. This will provide a context for the next chapters of the thesis that discuss the ways in which the Shuar Federation and the communities deal with the project and investigate their discourses and positions on large-scale mining.

The conditions of the working environments of mines have historically been a source of political struggles; in 19th and 20th century Europe and the United States, worker safety and occupational health were important concerns until the Second World War broke out. On the other hand, the boom of small-scale gold mining in Latin America and Africa in the 1980s awakened interest not only related to the working conditions, but also in the contamination and health effects of mining that workers and communities experienced, especially related to their exposure to heavy metals (Bridge 2004a). Bridge argues that throughout this period, the main focus on the mining industry and its effects was

related to the physical impact on workers and communities, “whether it be the physical hazards of explosions and rockfalls, the risk of contracting black lung disease, or exposure to mercury poisoning” (Bridge 2004a: 217). More recently, though, the communities themselves and some workers organizations have actually started to pay attention to other issues that are relevant not only in terms of direct physical exposure, but in terms of other forms of impact: concerns over environmental justice and cultural integrity, participation in decision making, rights and access over land and water, and other issues. Mining is increasingly understood not merely as a technical process, but rather as a political process in which negotiation and contestation occur between local communities and different actors (Ballard and Banks 2003; Bridge 2004a: 217-218; Gedicks 1993).

Struggles over natural resources have drawn attention from a diversity of scholars. Anthropologists, geographers, and political scientists have concentrated on the impacts of resource extraction on human populations as well as the struggles and conflicts over those natural resources (Bebbington 2012; Bebbington et al. 2008a, 2008b; Ballard and Banks 2003; Banks 2002; Gedicks 1993). Political ecology is precisely the discipline through which scholars have studied conflicts related to resources and resource extraction from somewhat different perspectives. Within this discipline, the perspective of environmental justice is predominant, as evidenced by its omnipresence in most literature on mining.

The environmental justice movement was born in the 1980s in the United States as a form of political activism concerned with “the burdens of pollution and risk associated with waste and industrial sites and how these sites were distributed, particularly in relation to race...” (Walker 2009: 616). However, in recent years, there has been a recognition of other issues that are not only related to equal distribution, but which include “matters of fairness in process and regulation, inclusion in decision-making and access to environmental information” (Walker 2009: 617). As such, in both academia and activism, the environmental justice approach has been applied to a variety of often excluded and marginalized human groups that face conflicts related to environmental contamination and to the use and appropriation of natural resources (Martínez-Alier 2001: 167). Thus, the environmental justice perspective looks beyond ecological and environmental issues to

consider the conflicts over resources in terms of the struggle of communities for their livelihoods. Furthermore, in extractive contexts, it is assumed that governments and corporations hold more power than people in the communities in their struggle over resources (Ali 2003; Gedicks 1993; Sawyer 2004). Some authors even argue that extractive industries (especially the mining industry) constitute a new form of resource colonialism, establishing dynamics in which international corporations and even governments work together for their own particular objectives and against the interests of local indigenous people (Gedicks 1993: 41-43).

Environmental justice or the environmentalism of the poor analyzes conflicts that arise when people are threatened by the loss of natural resources that affect their livelihoods. From this perspective, the well-being of a group does not include only basic subsistence issues, but also includes other “idioms” within ecological distribution conflicts; this perspective diverges from the dominant “economic discourse” and instead focuses on indigenous territorial rights, the defense of cultural identity, the protection of old languages and ancestral traditions, the ecological and aesthetic value of the landscape and the environment, and issues of civil and human rights (Martínez-Allier 2001: 163; Martínez-Allier 2002: 150). In other words, this kind of ecological approach tends to value nature and its conservation not because of nature’s value per se, but as a means of protecting especially poor and vulnerable humans from extractive practices that are harmful to nature and thus to human populations. The interest in vulnerable groups is a consequence of the growing demands and expansions of frontiers for extensive mining, oil exploitation, growing of palm oil, etc.; such expansions generally affect poor and indigenous groups living in areas that big industry wants to use for profit (Martínez-Allier 2002).

In the post-material views typical of developed countries, issues of environment protection are related to the value of non-material things and needs (which are already satisfied) like quality of life and the environment; in opposition to this view, the environment and the resources are considered to be vital and the basis for everyday life (Walter 2008: 17). Issues of control over resources and land ownership as well as actual differences in what ownership and landscape mean are key to the ways in which communities react and deal with mining or other extractive activities. Thus, some authors argue that people from

the generally affected communities often do not make a real distinction between their social, political, and economic lives and the environment. Environmental effects are undeniable, but the responses from the communities have much to do with their access to resources (material or political) and their livelihoods in general (which are also tied to the environment) (Banks 2002: 40-42; Gil 2009; Urkidi 2010; Walter 2008). Thus, it is better to incorporate the environment into a framework of human livelihood.

An important area of study of structural political ecology and environmental justice specifically focuses on the struggles of indigenous people regarding extractive activities, specially mining. This has become an important area of focus because an important number of mining projects are developed in rural areas and, in many countries, such areas make up territory that is close to or part of indigenous communities. Issues of environmental impact such as water pollution and tailings disposal as well as human-centered conflicts related to land rights and revenue distribution are important elements of this agenda (Bridge 2004a: 237-238).

Much of the literature I reviewed on mining in Latin America is particularly concerned with development and subsistence issues (including access to and control of resources and benefits). In Peru, several authors have analyzed conflicts related to large-scale mining in their relation to subsistence issues and the use of resources and land for everyday survival. They argue that ecological conflicts are also economic in nature and, as such, they are also related to power relations (Banks 2002; De Echave et al. 2009; Gil 2009). For example, Arellano Yanguas (2011) identified several types of conflicts in the regions of Tambogrande, Cajamarca, and Antamina. In the first two areas, he affirms that conflict arises from communities that are completely opposed to mining or hydrocarbon development and which intend to block any kind of mining activity; however, while these demands might seem environmental in nature, in reality most of them have to do with control over their resources and their territory. Similarly, in Esquel, Argentina, mobilization was mostly based on the fact that the mining company was not open about information on the mining project and its effects; tensions also arose because the community was excluded from making decisions with adequate information. However, most of the complaints about the possibility of water contamination were really

related to an unequal distribution of costs and benefits and a sense that the local community could not trust the authorities and political actors involved in the project (Walter 2008).

Antamina's case was slightly different; conflict emerged because local communities wanted to increase their negotiation power in order to obtain benefits from the mining companies such as employment. However, as other authors point out, the situations of conflict in this case were triggered because the population felt that their expectations of development and progress were not fulfilled by the company (Gil 2009; Salas 2008). Thus, in order to appease the population, the company adopted paternalistic behavior, concentrating on short-term benefits and infrastructure instead of significantly contributing to local development (Arellano Yanguas 2011; Salas 2008). As Bebbington et al. (2008a) argue, while mining might be considered a contentious activity because of its social, economic, and environmental impacts, it is also an ambiguous process because people expect mining to contribute much more to their livelihoods in terms of development and other benefits, even in spite of those adverse effects. When such expectations of development are not met, the result is conflict. Thus, what constitutes development and how the mining company should contribute to the improvement of life in the local communities are important elements in the analysis of conflict. Local communities expect the companies to fulfill their promises of progress and modernization in different ways. For example, companies may support the local communities through job creation and by using services and products from the community, or they may make more direct contributions through the creation of public infrastructure. However, many conflicts arise when these promises are not met adequately or in the ways they were expected (Gil 2009; Salas 2008).

The case of Pascua Lama brings a different perspective to the issue of development. Urkidi argues that an interesting outcome of the mobilization of the local community against the mining company was the construction of new and alternative imaginaries around development; these new conceptualizations involved in recovering the local indigenous culture, traditional agricultural practices, and a more community-oriented life style, which, in reality, was a very different kind of development than the one offered by the mining industry. This alternative form of development seemed to even motivate the company itself to develop strategies for environmental security, protection, and water conservation.

(Urkidi 2010). Clearly, these cases demonstrate that the notion of development itself is quite complex and differs between communities. For example, some communities may wish to receive direct profits and material benefits. However, different understandings of well-being that go beyond economic growth and incorporate issues like citizen rights, identity, territory, control over their livelihoods through resource control, etc. may be highly pertinent for other communities (Bebbington et al. 2008a: 901).

Mirador illustrates several of the conflicts and issues above-mentioned which will be addressed throughout this dissertation. Given the complexity of the history and the population of the affected area, there has not been one, unified reaction or consistent position towards mining from the whole local community. This means that different groups have resisted or negotiated with the company at different times, but also that conflict may even arise within indigenous or mestizo communities because of the different views towards the project. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the local community should not be considered one single and consistent actor in this scenario (Ballard and Banks 2003). As was described in the introduction, the population in Tundayme and El Pangui (the closest administrative parish and municipality to the project) is composed of mestizos and the Shuar, which is already a significant, although not the only source of conflict. Among the Shuar and among mestizo people, there are also different perceptions of the mining project that may be related to how close the given individual lives to the project, if they had any experiences working in the company, their views on the environment, their attachment and notion of the territory, and so forth. Furthermore, the ways in which some of the Shuar communities in the area of Tundayme and El Pangui perceive large-scale mining is also different from the indigenous organization to which they belong.

In Mirador's case, opposition and resistance to the project itself have changed over time. Even though ECSA has been present in the area for more than a decade, opposition movements to mining have not been consistent or long-lasting; the most vocal organization created, not in Tundayme but in the town of El Pangui, was not particularly active during the time of this research (from 2013 to the end of 2014). The Committee for the Defense of Nature, Health and Life of El Pangui (*Comité en Defensa de la Naturaleza Salud y Vida de El Pangui*) was created in

2006 after violent confrontations occurred between communities and organizations that supported the mining company, like the FESZCH, and those against it (Avcı and Fernández-Salvador 2016). Mestizos and Shuar people who adamantly resisted mining during this period did so for various reasons. According to Warnaaars (2013), some resented the government for failing to carry out any process of consultation before granting concessions in their territory, others were really concerned about the environmental impacts, and many others were disappointed by unfulfilled promises of economic growth and employment (Warnaaars 2013: 171-172). As Arellano Yanguas argued (2011), in these cases, resistance groups were not only concerned about the environmental risks or impact, but also about other issues that emerged around them. Concerns about the loss of land or the issue of relocation were also important enough for people to get involved in strong anti-mining groups. As Warnaaars describes in the case of Mirador, “Deeper grievances surface over the growing sense of uncertainty in relation to land ownership. The possibility of relocation or loss of land forces many families to live in a constant state of uncertainty” (2013: 172). In fact, while groups like the above-mentioned committee became less active over time, at the time of my research, another organization called CASCOMI was created in Tundayme in December 2013. This organization was made up mostly by *colonos* whose land was bought by the mining company and who wanted to demand fair treatment and compensation (Avcı and Fernández-Salvador 2016). For this rural agrarian organization, the issue of land was crucial to their everyday survival (see De Echave et al.’s discussion (2009) on the land and the symbolic meanings attached to it). However, for the Shuar, the notion of territory was more important than the land itself because of its meaning in their ancestral heritage. I will discuss the issue of the Shuar territory at length in chapter 5.

Besides direct confrontation or conflicts related to large-scale mining, other issues mentioned by Arellano Yanguas (2011) and De Echave et al. (2009) included struggles over benefits and the distribution of economic resources generate by the mining projects. In Mirador’s case, the FESZCH was one of the most important local organizations to negotiate with the mining company. In fact, to justify their demands, the federation has utilized a discourse based on their rights over the ancestral territory where the mine is located and also as a form of compensation

for being historically marginalized by Ecuadorean society. However, as will be discussed in the next section, while the Canadian administration agreed to fund development projects for the Shuar communities, the situation changed dramatically with the new company administration and the implementation of new government policies. This shift in the relationship with the companies created some tension and left the Federation and some communities with the expectation that ECSA would eventually negotiate with and support them again. Most community and federation members are disappointed that the company did not fulfill its promises of development (for a discussion on the unequal distribution of costs and benefits for the local population and the relationship with authorities in Esquel, Argentina, see Walter 2008).

3.3.3 Alliances, Negotiations, and Tensions Related to Project Mirador

The confrontation described in the previous section between groups resisting and supporting large-scale mining resulted in the mining project being paralyzed for a year, after which the company resumed its work and opened the Department of Community Relations in Tundayme and El Pangui. At the time of my early fieldwork, the manager of this office acknowledged that one of the weak points of the company was its poor relationship with the people from local communities, which created an atmosphere of resentment in the area. Thus, even though it seemed risky at the time to open offices precisely because of the conflict, it proved to be important in order to advise people on what he calls the “*bondades*” (benefits) of the mining project.⁴ As a result of the Mining Mandate (*Mandato Minero*) and the approval of the New Mining Law (2009) (both attempts to regulate the mining activity), there was a series of delays in the exploration phase soon after these conflicts occurred. Several large mining companies including ECSA even participated in the making of this new legislation (Interview Department of Community Relations). While the mining activities were delayed, ECSA continued operating with fewer employees and still maintained their relationship with the communities and even the Shuar Federation.

In his September 2009 visit to Tundayme, Correa announced a change in the relationship between the company and the local communities, which was also officially confirmed by the Secretariat of Peoples, Social Movements and Citizen Participation (*Secretaría de Pueblos,*

Movimientos Sociales y Participación Ciudadana). This decision was part of the new state policies, including the New Mining Law, which gave the state more authority over extractive activities and even afforded them a larger percentage of the contracts (51 per cent) and a more important role in the redistribution of the earnings. Although the initial decision was to eliminate the relationship between the communities and the company, it was eventually agreed that they would preserve the social programs and projects related to the environmental management plan.

This change in policies, along with the change in ownership of the company in 2012 marked the beginning of a new period for large-scale mining in Mirador. According to the director of the Department of Community Relations these changes drastically changed the way the project was operated; the company previously presented itself as a charity organization creating expectations (“let’s face it, we are not the Ministry of Welfare”) that it would accept the responsibilities supposed to be assumed by the state in abandoned rural communities and accommodate the petty requests of communities (t-shirts for soccer teams, for example). After these changes occurred, however, the issue of community relations had become more clear and regulated: “the role, the responsibility of the company towards the communities is based on the environmental management plan approved by the state and we have to go by it.”⁵ In short, the main purpose of the company’s program for sustainable management and community relations is to develop projects directly with local communities within the area of impact to manage resources and develop health, education, and waste management programs (Program of Community Relations/Plan of Environmental Management) (Cardno 2014). The purpose of this program is to help local and indigenous communities work on small projects for the community and to generate income through initiatives such as fish farming, small animal raising, and cacao production. However, the implementation of some of these projects can be conflictive, especially because local people question their real impact in the development of the communities.

Overall, the Shuar communities and the federation perceive the change in the relationship between the company and the local communities as the result of a lack of interest and desire to help and adequately compensate the indigenous people. They see the transition from the Canadian to the Chinese owners as drastic. Before, the high-

level Canadian executives met with the Shuar leaders and would often hold open meetings with the people from Tundayme; they spoke Spanish and agreed to many of the local demands. However, the Chinese executives are not open to meeting with the local leaders and they do not speak Spanish or even English. Furthermore, from 2007 to 2011, even after the change in government policies, ECSA had made several direct agreements with the FESZCH, which amounted to a total of around \$1 million dollars (internal document ECSA). One of the conditions to sign these agreements was that the federation would implement development projects in the communities located in the areas influenced by Project Mirador. However, the federation did not comply with this part of the agreement and, thus, the company decided not to sign further agreements. In July 2014, during an interview with the president of the federation and the leader in charge of education, they gave an account of a meeting they had just held in Quito with some of the Ecuadorian executives from ECSA (under Chinese administration) and several Shuar leaders from Zamora; they returned to Zamora empty-handed after a two-hour meeting in which they were essentially told that ECSA had already given the state a percentage of the royalties in advance and, as such, the company recommended the leaders make their demands directly to the state.⁶

Several interesting dimensions of the relationship between the mining companies (especially ECSA) and the Shuar political organization should be considered in this analysis. To begin with, the most obvious consideration is the total change of position regarding community relations between different company owners, which has ultimately resulted in resentment and negative attitudes within the local population towards the company. It also shows that the FESZCH has greatly relied upon the mining companies to consolidate the organization itself and to resolve the difficulties involved in transferring funds offered by the mining company to the communities. However, it is important to note that, while the Canadian administration was more open to dialogue with the people, their relationship with the communities was essentially paternalistic in nature and ultimately reflected the patterns of other extractive companies in that their efforts were intended to keep the population happy to prevent complaints about their presence. This relationship was characterized by promises of development and well-being as well as the implementation of short-term benefits and

infrastructure instead of significant contributions to local development (Arellano Yanguas 2011; Salas 2008). As Arellano Yanguas and Salas point out in the case of Antamina, Peru, in these situations, conflicts arise precisely because the population feels that its expectations of development and progress were not fulfilled by the company. This is exactly what happened in the Shuar communities around Mirador: they not only felt cheated by ECSA in their expectations, but also by the federation's leaders at the time.

Additionally, after the company's transition to the Chinese ownership and administration, community leaders and members as well as the federation have not only felt that the promises made by the Canadians would not be fulfilled, but also believe that the Chinese were intentionally limiting negotiations and the direct relationship they have with the people; for example, in the highly-anticipated meeting between Ecuadorean executives and Shuar leaders that I just described, there were no clear outcomes. The Chinese are perceived as distant and completely closed off to any negotiation. This has also been emphasized by many community leaders in the area of indirect impact of the project, who wish the company were open to dialogue and efforts to support their communities (even if they are not located within the area of direct impact). Others complain about the poor treatment the Shuar workers receive in the company, accusing the Chinese of being racist.⁷

A third interesting consideration is that, while the company's environmental management plan has regulated in a better way the kind of support that ECSA should be delivering to the local communities, it has not been quite successful in delivering that support to all communities. As explained by the manager of the department of community relations, ECSA's objective is to work with state institutions in order to complement their long-term actions in different areas such as health and education. It has also developed certain productive projects whose objectives are to help families generate income and consume healthy food. Examples of these projects include the production of chickens, fish, and guinea pigs. Nevertheless, the perception of community members and federation leaders is that those projects are too small to generate any kind of development. In the words of the leader of education at the federation, "ECSA limits itself to projects that fit within the environmental management plan, but people need other kinds of projects, people don't need projects to raise guinea pigs and chicken, we

need more important, emblematic projects that have to do with our Life Plans (Federation strategic plans for the communities), with water and environment sanitation and education.” Supported by the discourse that the company is taking away the riches from their land, they demand something more significant in return: “they take away tons and millions of gold and riches and they trick us with chickens, we want emblematic projects to live with dignity in the long-term.”⁸

A fourth point of consideration is that, in addition to the conflicts related to failed expectations of development and well-being, the presence of the mining company has reinvigorated issues around land and territory between the mestizo and the Shuar population. Although the company does not have any operations directly on Shuar community lands around Tundayme (although it did buy land from the community of Paquintza), some leaders and the federation itself have claimed that the territory in the area of Cónдор-Mirador belongs to the Shuar’s ancestral territory and thus should be returned. While the FESZCH has adopted a more conservative position, asking that the territory should be given back to the Shuar after the project is over, Asociación Shuar Kakaram (a lower level organization which is part of the FESZCH) demands that the company leave immediately so that the ancestral territories can be recuperated and used by the community. The community of Ijisam, which was located close to the mining campsite, is at the center of this struggle; although the federation does not get directly involved in the claims that Asociación Shuar Kakaram and Ijisam are making, they do support them because:

ECSA hasn’t really harmed the federation but it has done a lot of harm to eight Shuar communities in the area of influence; there is a community with the name of Ijisam in the area of direct influence which has been displaced through lies. ECSA took the land from them and now we are trying to recuperate the land, but it is actually Association Kakaram who is taking the lead on this, we are not as active but we do support them.⁹

Although there are several versions of how the land from Ijisam¹⁰ was sold or transferred to ECSA, the discourse utilized is that of displacement. Ultimately, the Shuar political organization is concerned that ECSA is occupying the land of what was legally constituted as a community; thus, they believe the land should be returned to the community. For Asociación Shuar Kakaram and some leaders, Ijisam became symbolic of the struggles over the ancestral territory in

Cordillera del Cóndor, which the Shuar also defended from Peru in the war of 1995. As the president of Kakaram says:

What we want is to defend our territory, the ancestral territory of our grandparents, but the Shuar don't have land anymore...the territory in the Cordillera del Cóndor belongs to the Shuar and they even died defending it, but now everything belongs to the Chinese, even the mestizo people are being displaced. The government has to respect our culture and let the Shuar people have their territory.¹¹

This claim to the ancestral territory in Cóndor-Mirador motivated the Asociación Shuar Kakaram (which has dwindled so significantly that it is currently only actively made up of the organization's president and vice-president) to join CASCOMI. However, while in the discourse of the federation and some Shuar leaders the recovery of ancestral territory is key in their demands to the company and the state, this is not necessarily an important issue for all the Shuar communities in the area. I will discuss the notion of territory as part of the identity discourse in Chapter 5.

3.4 Conclusions

This chapter's main goal was to offer a contextualization of the development of large-scale mining in Ecuador and to situate Project Mirador within this context. On one hand, my intention was to emphasize the political role of resource extraction (especially mining) in sustaining the government's development plans and social expenditure. I also sought to describe the ways in which the mining sector has evolved over the last decades (even before Correa's administration), especially after new policies and laws were approved precisely to exploit the potential of large-scale mining in Ecuador.

Besides the emphasis on extractivism, an important trait of this and other post-neoliberal governments in Latin America is the strong presence of the state as a regulating and distributing entity. In practical terms, the state has taken on this role in Mirador and other projects through legislative changes that allow it to receive higher percentages of profits and royalties from extractive projects, the creation of policies and the institutions to channel profits into social programs, and through various strategies intended to undermine the role of extractive

companies as entities of regulation and social welfare in the affected areas.

Furthermore, the state has asserted its control over extractive practices in terms of regulating and stopping resistance and mobilization. I would argue that, while it is difficult to affirm that the lack of consistency and permanency of social mobilization around Project Mirador is a direct result of the government's policy of intolerance, there are a few elements that should be taken into account. First, before the approval of the New Mining Law in 2009 and the celebration of Mirador's 2012 contract for exploitation, there was hope that local resistance groups might eventually halt the progress of the project, as had occurred following the conflicts in 2006 and with the *Mandato Minero*. However, the growing presence of the Chinese company, its managers, and its large number of workers as well as its increasing hermeticism seemed to have greatly limited any possible resistance to the project (except for the efforts of CASCAMI who are supported by the environmentalist Non-Governmental Organization, *Acción Ecológica*). In 2015, during one of the last times I was in Tundayme, I visited one of the communities whose leaders had a strong anti-mining discourse; this time, however, the community really seemed to have given up any hope that the mining company would leave the area. They preferred to negotiate and sell their land to the company so that they would be able move elsewhere. They thought that it would be better to move away than to live with the effects of mining exploitation.

Additionally, according to the government's nationalist agenda, resources from mining should be invested in local development through institutions like *Ecuador Estratégico*. While it can be argued that the communities closest to Project Mirador were not necessarily the chief benefactors of the company's profits, investment in infrastructure can be seen all over the province. As will be argued in Chapter 6, this emphasis on local development works in two ways: to justify the existence and continuity of projects like Mirador and to control the population by providing well-being so as to quell any potential resistance.

In this chapter, I have described the context for the development of Project Mirador as part of Ecuador's large and ambitious extractive agenda and briefly described the process of mobilization around it. In the next chapter, I will concentrate specifically on the Shuar Federation to understand its role in the politics related to the project.

Notes

¹ Original text in Spanish: “repite esa apropiación masiva de la Naturaleza, las economías de enclave y una inserción global subordinada.” (Gudynas 2012: 35-36)

² Original text in Spanish: “...las descargas de aguas negras, grises e industriales; alteraciones debido a arrastre de sólidos finos por las corrientes; mezcla entre aguas superficiales y subterráneas bombeada desde la mina [...]; derrame de combustibles; caída de material triturado; derrame de químicos utilizados en los procesos; fuga de las aguas de recirculación a la planta de tratamiento, [...] el movimiento de suelo o por la fractura durante los trabajos de extracción [...], o el polvo generado por el tránsito de la maquinaria” (Sacher 2011: 21)

³ Original text in Spanish: “El desbroce masivo junto a las lluvias fuertes en la fase de construcción han producido niveles altos de turbidez visibles en los ríos Quimi, Wawayme y Tundayme.” (Leifsen and Benham 2017: 214)

⁴ Interview director of the Department of Community Relations of ECSA, November 2013

⁵ Interview director of the Department of Community Relations of ECSA, November 2013

⁶ Interview president and Leader of Education of the FESZCH, July 2014

⁷ Interview with president of Certero, January 2014; Interview president of Santiago Paty and Paquintza, January 2015

⁸ Interview Leader of Education, FESZCH, July 2015

⁹ Interview president of FESZCH, July 2014

¹⁰ The most common version on the origins of Ijisam is that a Shuar family had been living in the area of the mine but had sold their farm a long time ago (there is no specific information on when exactly) to a *colono*. This person had later sold the land to the mining company and now the Asociación is claiming right to the territory, arguing that the sale was illegal in the first place.

¹¹ Interview president of the Asociación Kakaram, November 2013

4

History and Ethno-politics of the Shuar Federation of Zamora Chinchipe

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the role that extractivism and especially large-scale mining have played as part of a redistributive apparatus of the new nationalistic government that favors social investment and ultimately seeks to reduce poverty. The intention of that chapter was to frame the political and economic context in which large-scale mining projects (specifically Project Mirador) have been developed in Ecuador. It also discussed the dynamics of the socio-environmental conflicts related to the project with a particular emphasis on the interactions between the Shuar population and the mining company. That chapter serves as the background for the discussion around the ethno-politics of the Shuar political organization in the context of the first large-scale mining project in Ecuador.

The Shuar people have historically lived in the territory that now belongs to the Amazonian provinces of Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe, in the south of Ecuador. During the last century, they have started a slow process of contact with the Western and mestizo world and, as such, they have been compelled to share their space with a variety of external actors such as missionaries, mestizos migrating from the highlands, state institutions, and, more recently, mining companies. During the last two decades, the presence of mining companies in the area around Project Mirador in the province of Zamora Chinchipe has altered the dynamics of this region quite significantly, and has thus provoked different reactions from the indigenous population and from the mestizos who have permanently lived in the area at least since the 1960s. Strong mobilization against large-scale mining has been periodically organized in the area, but these efforts have not necessarily been consistent over time and have not always had strong support from

the Shuar communities located closest to the project; in fact, while the general public may consider indigenous people to be the guardians of the territory, there have not always been strong positions of resistance against extractivism in the Shuar communities or even in Shuar political organizations.

As such, one of the main objectives of this thesis is to document and analyze the positions, discourses, and strategies of the various levels of the Shuar Federation regarding large-scale mining in the area. However, before discussing the specific dimensions of their discourses and practices (which are discussed in Chapter 5), it is important to first understand the history and organization of the Shuar organization as a whole. This will give us insight into the way the Shuar population was introduced into the national society and how it adapted to a new way of engaging in politics. Additionally, by looking at the levels of cohesiveness, conflicts, and divisions within the organization, I lay some of the groundwork necessary for understanding the diversity and changing dynamics of discourses and positions of Shuar people towards the mining company and other issues related to land and resources. Thus, this chapter will answer several important questions regarding the Shuar Federation: How integrated is the FESZCH's work with other levels of the organization such as the associations and communities? How does the Shuar political scenario in the north of Zamora Chinchipe affect the possibility of resisting or negotiating with the mining company? What does this mean for their struggle to control the mineral resources in their ancestral territory? This discussion is especially relevant in the context of the government of Rafael Correa, in which social protest against extractivism had been criminalized or at least neutralized. Furthermore, this chapter contributes to the discussion regarding the choices indigenous organizations make regarding issues related to resource use, territory, development, and so forth (Warren and Jackson 2005).

As mentioned in the introduction, it is important to emphasize that Shuar politics are quite complex. For the purposes of this dissertation and to facilitate the research process, I have concentrated on only one federation and the communities that belong to it, which are located in Project Mirador's area of direct impact. While I will discuss the origins of the first federation in the province of Morona Santiago (FICSH) as part of the process of creation and evolution of the Shuar political

organization, my study will concentrate mainly on the FESZCH. This latter organization was born from the first federation as a way of demanding autonomy for the Shuar people in Zamora Chinchipe, as I will further explain later.

In the first part of this chapter, I will briefly describe the historical context of the Shuar presence in the southern provinces of the Amazon region and their initial contact with the mestizo society through missionaries, *colonos*, and state institutions. I will then go on to discuss the process of creation of the different Shuar federations in the area as a way of interacting with and adapting to the national society and to the state itself. Thirdly, I will discuss the key levels within the Shuar federations in Zamora Chinchipe, starting with the communities and associations. Finally, I will then address the way the FESZCH operates, its main objectives, and some possible conflicts related to large-scale mining. The goal of this chapter is to present a general picture of how the organization is articulated and to make visible a complex scenario that includes a variety of strategies, conflicts, and possible fragmentation at different levels.¹ This scenario is understood as part of the complex web of experiences and interactions between the Shuar and different actors in the area that has been going on for decades and is not limited to the presence of the mining company.

4.2 Historical Context: The Creation and Evolution of the Shuar Federations in Zamora-Chinchipe

4.2.1 Early Shuar History and First Contacts with Missionaries

The Shuar have historically occupied the territory in the Upano and Zamora River Valleys and the Cordillera del Cutucú (the Unturi Shuar), as well as the region west of the Panguí River crossing the border into Peru (the Achuara Shuar) (Salazar 1977: 10) and spreading into the southernmost Amazonian provinces of Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe in Ecuador. The Shuar have also been known as *Jívaros*, a term that has been mostly discarded due to its derogatory use (Bjureby 2006: 102; Hendricks 1996). However, some authors believe that the term *jívaro* is the result of adapting the word from the native language (Shiviar or Shivar) to Spanish. Since in Spanish there is no letter for the “sh” sound, this was written with an x, which was later transformed into a J; eventually, *shivar* turned into *jivar*, which then evolved into *jívaro*

(Bottasso 2011: 9; Troncoso 1999: 105). More specifically, *Jívaro* refers to the linguistic group that includes the Unturi, Achuar Shuar (Achuales, lower Pastaza Rivers), the Aguaruna (Awajún in Peru), Huambisa (Wampis, along the rivers Morona and Santiago), and the Mayna people (Bottasso 2011; Harner 1978).

The history of the Shuar prior to the Spanish conquest is largely unknown and there is not much archaeological information from the time period when they started settling the area, although there is evidence of a pottery-making horticultural group occupying the Shuar territory from around 2000 years ago (Salazar 1977: 12-13). There is also evidence of hostile encounters with the Cañari people from the highlands prior to the arrival of the Incas, but the Shuar eventually allied with them to be able to fight the attempts of the Incas to subjugate the native groups in the Amazon region.

Despite several attempts to establish the authority of the Crown over Shuar territory during the Spanish conquest, the Spaniards never managed to conquer the Shuar in any permanent way; after a couple of unsuccessful expeditions, in 1549 Fernando de Benavente was finally able to explore the region including the land along the Upano River. He was awarded by the Crown what would become known as the province of Macas, but he could not establish any ties with the Shuar and was forced to retreat to the highlands (Salazar 1977: 14). Around the same time, Alonso de Mercadillo and Benavente founded the town of Zamora, to the south of the province of Macas. On another expedition in 1557, Juan de Salinas Loyola took possession of the territory that belonged to the province of Macas since it had never been occupied by the former governor. He declared this territory to be part of the new province of Yaguarzongo; several towns were founded at this time, such as Logroño de los Caballeros (later destroyed by the Shuar), Nuestra Señora del Rosario, Sevilla del Oro (what later became Macas), and Mendoza (Salazar 1977). Eventually, all of these towns were destroyed or abandoned after Shuar attacks, except the town of Macas, which remained as the only “white” presence in the area from 1599 to 1870. As such, Macas became one of the first spaces to facilitate trade between whites (who were connected to the city of Riobamba by a trail) and the Shuar. By the nineteenth century, the Shuar and the Macabeos were active in trade and had a permanent participation in the exchange of

pigs, salt, chickens, and shrunken heads for shotguns, textiles, and axes (Harner 1978: 26; Salazar 1977: 17).

No military or missionary expeditions (neither Franciscan nor Jesuit) were successful in establishing peaceful relations or conquering the Shuar in the following centuries. The expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish colonies in the 18th century and the wars of independence in the first half of the 19th century left the lowlands free of any military or religious presence (Salazar 1977). Nevertheless, by the end of the century, several religious orders again made attempts to settle in the area and establish missions. In 1887, the Dominicans founded a mission in Macas but abandoned it in 1898. For the first time in the area, in 1893 the Salesians were granted the Vicariat of Méndez and Gualaquiza and the Franciscans were granted the Vicariat of Zamora, which they left after a few years (Bottasso 2011; Salazar 1977).

While the Salesians seemed to be relatively successful in establishing their missions, the Franciscans had more difficulties. In 1892, Franciscan missionaries settled in the city of Zamora and started building infrastructure for the mission; at the same time, they explored Shuar territory, traveling north towards Yacuambi and eventually reaching Gualaquiza (which was the limit of the Salesian vicariat) (Moradillo 1966: 9-19). While they had established some contact with several Shuar families and hoped to start the process of conversion, the missionaries abandoned the vicariat five years later. The head of the mission argued that the liberal government had left them unprotected and without economic support, which they actually perceived as open persecution; they also felt threatened by a Shuar family from the area of Yacuambi that was supposedly plotting to attack the town of Zamora and the mission and to kill everyone living there (Celi Jaramillo 1998: 112-113; Testimony of Torra in Moradillo 1966: 10-12). Besides this threat of violence, however, it seems that the lack of support from the authorities was coupled with a feeling of disappointment expressed by the director of the mission at not finding enough “savages” in the area (Torra in Moradillo 1966: 18). According to this missionary, while they were expecting to find around five or ten thousand “*jíbaros*” to convert; in reality, they could not find more than 400 or 500 people in all of the territory they visited. Twenty years later, around 1912, the vicariat was reactivated and, by beginning of the 1940s, they had begun pushing for more sustained contact and missionary work with the Shuar living close

to the Pachicutza River in what is now the canton of El Pangui. In the 1960s, the presence of the Franciscans became stronger and they established themselves in a convent located by the Zamora River, very close to what is now the heart of El Pangui (Jumbo Pineda 2005: 211-212).

It is clear that this history of missions in the Amazon region is intimately linked with the political past and present of Ecuador as well as with to the needs of the state. While the missionaries had become the state's agents in a "civilizing" process that aimed to organize the local population and bring them into the national society, both religious orders had suffered from changes in political ideologies that disfavored religious institutions, especially after the Liberal Revolution of 1895 (Bottasso 2011: 25). Furthermore, the Franciscan's isolation and poor knowledge of the territory probably prevented them from permanently settling in Zamora.² This, however, was not the case with the Salesians, whose missions were created in an area in which there had already been some contact between mestizos and the Shuar for centuries (Harner 1987; Salazar 1977).

4.2.2 Change and Transformation among the Shuar

Although not always consistently, the late 1800s marked a period of great culture contact and change brought about by the presence of Salesian or Franciscan missionaries and, later, by migrants from the highland provinces. The Salesians who settled in the northern province of Morona Santiago became agents of a slow colonization process that started in the 1920s and 30s. This implied that, aside from their evangelizing duties, they were also in charge of building roads, hospitals, and schools and promoting agricultural activities (Esvertit Cobes 2014: 504). According to Salazar, the Salesians used two strategies to expand and consolidate their order: they uprooted young children from their families to be raised in boarding schools where they could be "civilized" and evangelized, and they resettled and concentrated the Shuar (who traditionally lived in scattered households across large territories) in villages around the mission center (Salazar 1977: 19). These strategies, which were common in most missionary work in the Amazon region, were also implemented by the Franciscans around 1951. Salazar reports that by the end of the 50s, the Franciscans had already established four mission centers and five boarding schools in which 175 Shuar children resided

(Roldán in Salazar 1977: 20). Although schools and other infrastructure were financed by the state, they were built and supervised by the Salesian and the Franciscan missions. This was one of the strategies implemented by the state to incorporate and civilize indigenous groups in the Amazon region by proxy through the action of the missionaries (Esvertit Cobes 2015: 504). Furthermore, around 1940, the state decided to hand over the “legal representation” of the Shuar people to the Salesian order (Troncoso 1999: 119). Thus, besides taking charge of their education and evangelization, the Salesians also became the official voice of the indigenous group.

The boarding school educational system fundamentally changed the Shuar lifestyle (Rubenstein 2005) as did the migration of mestizos from the highlands, which was encouraged by the national government in the 1960s. Both of these strategies forced the Shuar to give up their traditional ways of life, which involved traditional subsistence practices including hunting, fishing, and other traditional uses of their extensive forest territories. They also imposed further cultural changes, including changes in language use in the schools and in marriage practices (prohibition of polygamy), in order to civilize the Shuar’s “savage” practices.

Nevertheless, the most definitive transformation for the Shuar came with the agrarian reforms that took place in the highlands and that also had important implications for the indigenous people in the Amazon region (Salazar 1977: 21-23; Esvertit Cobes 2015: 504-507). The Agrarian Reform Law of 1964 (*Ley de Desarrollo Agrario*) was implemented to end the system of serfdom and to expropriate large land holdings in the highlands to redistribute them to the indigenous and peasant population (Bjureby 2006: 92). Besides this distributive dimension, the law also had a colonizing component that was crucial to alleviate the demand for land; thus, in 1964 and in 1973, the Law of Fallow Lands (*Ley de Tierras Baldías*) was passed in order to encourage migration to and colonization of the Amazon region.

Besides providing land for *colonos* from the highlands, the agrarian reforms helped to accomplish the government’s objective of expanding the agricultural frontier and developing the tropical forest (Troncoso 1999: 125). While the Shuar had been living in the provinces of Morona Santiago and Zamora Chinchipe without legal land titles and occupying large areas of land according to their traditional subsistence practices (as

most indigenous groups in the Amazon region did at that time), the *Ley de Tierras Baldías* and the arrival of the *colonos* changed the configuration and use of the territory. Through the application of this law, the state could declare most of the territory occupied by the Shuar as uncultivated and uninhabited land available for colonization by peasants from the highlands (Bjureby 2006: 92). This clearly meant a sudden loss of land as well as a reconfiguration of cultural notions of territory for the indigenous people who (Harner 1978: 198-199), in order to be able to keep their land from the *colonos*, had to clear it for agriculture or cattle-raising in order to claim ownership over it (Rudel et al. 2002; Troncoso 1999: 125-127).

4.2.3 The Beginnings of the Shuar Political Organization

Although Salesian missionaries had already reorganized many Shuar practices and had imposed a Western/Catholic system of education upon them, they actually supported Shuar efforts in getting organized against what they perceived to be an invasion to their homeland, even before the first *Ley de Desarrollo Agrario* was passed. Thus, in 1962, the first Shuar politically organized centers or communities (based on the first mission centers) were created; and later on, in 1964 the first federation (the FICSH), was founded, both under the auspices of the Salesians. Furthermore, the federation was the first political indigenous organization to be created in Ecuador³ (Rubenstein 2005; Salazar 1981; Stavenhagen 1996; Troncoso 1999). Salazar argues that one of the reasons the Salesian missionaries not only supported but actually planned the organization of the Shuar federations was mostly to maintain the Shuar people as labor on their farms (Salazar 1977: 24). Nevertheless, Salazar and other authors (Esvertit Cobes 2015: 506; Troncoso 1999: 120-121) also attribute this support to a new wave of Salesian missionaries who were critical of the traditional ethnocentric strategies of evangelization and called for actions to protect and safeguard indigenous cultures (Salazar 1977: 25; Salazar 1989: 66-67). This new ideology implied siding with the Shuar in the protection of their territory; as a result, the relationship between the missionaries and *colonos* became strained. In fact, the *colonos* “accused the Salesian Fathers of ‘obstructing the progress of the country’ by preventing them from penetrating Shuar reservations” (Salazar 1977: 24).

The situation was quite different in Zamora Chinchipe. While both the Franciscans and the Salesians owned haciendas in which they utilized Shuar labor, there are reports that the Shuar living under the control of the Franciscan order were far more precarious than those living under the control of the Salesians; this situation generated deep resentments towards the order (Galarza Zavala in Salazar 1977: 20). Even nowadays, the general perception among some of the leaders from the communities in Zamora is that the experience the Shuar from Morona Santiago had with the missionaries was quite different from their own experience with the Franciscans. For example, the president of Asociación Shuar Kakaram in Zamora Chinchipe (affiliated with the FESZCH) clearly stated that the Shuar had lost much of their culture because of the influence of the missionaries who “came to kill their culture” and their religious practices, while in Morona Santiago things were different: “So, here, it is the missionaries who were at fault...in Morona Santiago, the salesians have supported the Shuar culture...that is why people in Morona are more educated and better equipped. Looking back, the only important personage for the Shuar people is Father Chumapi.”⁴ Furthermore, some leaders recognize that while Salesians wanted the Shuar to maintain and value their language as part of their education in the Salesian schools, Franciscans missionaries were intolerant towards Shuar cultural practices and strongly pushed for acculturation. In one interesting case, the leader of the community of Etsa experienced both Franciscan and Salesian education; he affirms that in the school run by Franciscans in Zamora, they were not supposed to speak Shuar or carry Shuar names, while in the Salesian school in Bomboiza (Morona Santiago), the teachers and missionaries encouraged the Shuar people to preserve their cultural traditions and language.⁵

This dichotomy in treatment accounts for important differences in the way the Shuar were educated, their vision of their own culture, and the evolution of their political organizations, which specifically started in the northern-province. Indeed, the creation of the centers and the federation supported by the Salesians was, to an extent, a sign of how much the missionaries valued the Shuar, their territory, and their culture⁶; this was quite unlike the experience of the Shuar in Zamora. As stated in the introduction, the Shuar political organization began in Morona Santiago, where the support of the Salesians and their mediation with the state might have enabled them to develop a strong organization and

important political presence in the province. While the FESZCH is also recognized as a strong political actor in Zamora, the context in which it was created was permeated by extensive conflict and power struggles; even nowadays there are many indications of a lack of integrated work which complicates the definition of unified positions in relation to important issues such as large-scale mining. This will be discussed in this and the next chapter.

Thus, the beginnings of the Shuar political structure took place only in the northern-province. It first began with a few Shuar families living around the town of Sucúa who intended to establish formal administrative units, the *centros* (which, to some extent, had already been previously established as mission centers) (Rubenstein 2005). These isolated *centros* were later brought together into a larger administrative unit known as the *Asociación* (the first being the Asociación de Sucúa, which was formed in 1962) and eventually into an even higher-level administrative unit, the federation FICSH (which was created to incorporate all the new *centros* and associations across all Shuar territory). It is important to emphasize that the *centros* were very much tied to the work done by the Salesian missionaries and, in fact, the missionaries became advisors to the associations and later on to the federation (Federación de Centros Shuar 1976: 115). The FICSH was officially established in January 1964 as an organization for the integral development of its members. Its main objectives revolved around “the social, economic and moral improvement of its members” (projects to improve the well-being of the communities), and the implementation of colonization and household projects⁷ in coordination with government institutions (Federación de Centros Shuar 1976: 121). As Rubenstein states, the *centro* was therefore a key institution through which the federation promoted the political inclusion of the Shuar within the state and the national society and at the same time it provided “a legal base for the incorporation of the Shuar within the national economy” (Rubenstein 2005: 43). While it seems contradictory that the federation would work with state institutions to facilitate colonization projects, it was actually the only way for the Shuar to keep their land and obtain legal status for it, a concept mostly unknown to them in the past but that was crucial in their new relationship to the state. Thus, the federation was born out of the need for the Shuar to defend their identity; the only way for them to achieve this goal was to act according to the unwritten

cultural rules of mestizo society and to comply with the demands of the state. In order to survive, the federation was thus compelled to capitulate to those initial colonizing strategies and must continue to do so in their dealings with a variety of external, non-Shuar actors, such as the mining company and the state institutions.

At this point, it is important to acknowledge that the Shuar's decision to politically organize themselves took place in a very specific conjuncture. On one hand, the Shuar needed to protect their territory from the *colonos* and the state institutions and, on the other, they had the support and auspice of the Salesian missionaries. Along with the first waves of *colonos*, the missionaries represented their first encounters with the Western world and became the most important force in their cultural transformation (Rubenstein 2005: 30; Salazar 1981; Troncoso 1999), especially through their education system and the reconfiguration of their territories and households around the mission centers. However, once the state had taken an interest in developing the Amazon region, the Salesians actually became the most adamant protectors of the Shuar culture and territory, encouraging the Shuar to politically organize themselves. It is in this context that the Shuar started to actively engage with the wider national society, using the tools made available to them by the missionaries. As Rubenstein argues (2005), far from just being docile subjects of evangelization and education, the Shuar had already begun to take advantage of their contact with the Salesians by having their children learn to speak Spanish and engage with the mestizo society at different levels. Furthermore, their new political organization used the *centros* (the early mission centers) as their foundation and recruited students who had been taught Spanish in the Salesian schools as leaders. Thus, from this perspective, the Shuar were actively and strategically collaborating with the Salesians to become national citizens and, in the process, they expanded their sphere of influence beyond their households and local missions to the associations and then on to the federation (Rubenstein 2005). In this sense, Salesian missionaries played a key role in the history of contact between the Shuar and the Western mestizo society, not only as acculturating agents but also as mediators between different social worlds. In this cultural borderland (Rosaldo 1993), the Shuar have struggled to make sense of changing scenarios, constantly negotiating between their world and the mestizo world and

trying to delineate a sense of what it means to be Shuar as they simultaneously become part of the national Ecuadorean society.

4.2.4 The Emergence of an Autonomous Shuar Federation in Zamora Chinchipe

The history of the Shuar political organization in Zamora Chinchipe reveals conflicts for autonomy as well as power struggles related to different agendas or even personal interests from community leaders, which remain important dynamics of the organization even today. It was within this conflictive scenario that leaders from the province separated themselves from the original federation in Morona Santiago and created an independent organization, the FESZCH.⁸ The history of the organization also reveals the complex relationship between the Shuar, the state, and other actors such as the mining companies over the past sixty years. After the FICSH had grown and become more consolidated in Morona Santiago, in 1971 several *centros* were then created in Mankusas, Guadalupe (Federación de Centros Shuar 1976: 119), and in the valley of the Yacuambi and Nangaritza Rivers in Zamora; thus, the FICSH supported the growing *centros* in both provinces for almost two decades. Nevertheless, while the federation continued growing as an organization, including more communities that wanted to be a part of it, several problems emerged that prevented it from effectively serving the Shuar people in both provinces. The first and most obvious reason was that there were too many communities that demanded attention in different regions. Additionally, there was a perception that the federation had centralized all decision-making in Morona and was thus working to benefit the northern communities more than those in the south. The second prominent reason was that the federation had acquired considerable debt from different institutions to finance cattle and agriculture projects for the communities that it could not pay back, a situation that weakened its power. Lastly, leaders in Zamora wanted to have access to positions of power and authority and to work directly for the benefit of their own communities.⁹

In this context, several leaders from Zamora began to push for positions of leadership within the FICSH so that they could have more control over the communities of their province. In 1985, this factor, combined with the need to expedite the paperwork and bureaucratic work to continue legalizing land and communities in Zamora (which was

more complicated through the offices of the FICSH in Morona Santiago because of the large distances between these offices and the communities in Zamora), motivated leaders to eventually establish a new independent federation for the province of Zamora Chinchipe, the FESZCH. Although the conflict related to securing autonomy for the communities in Zamora peaked almost thirty years ago, some community and federation leaders still remember this period and the main instigators with some resentment. These feelings persist today because some families were divided and some people were actually murdered due to organizational and land conflicts in the communities around the provincial border (especially the community of Paquintza, which is part of this study). Some community members wanted to continue being part of the FICSH because of their proximity to Morona while others wanted to separate from the organization in order to have more control over their own territory.¹⁰ After this first separation, a second federation was created in Zamora a few decades later. Even though the FESZCH had been created with the support of several communities, some other *centros* still remained loyal to the FICSH (the organization based in Morona Santiago). It was only in 2007 that these communities petitioned the FICSH in Morona to facilitate the creation of their own independent organization in the province of Zamora. In 2007, the Provincial Federation of the Shuar Nationality of Zamora Chinchipe (FEPNASH-CH—*Federación Provincial de la Nacionalidad Shuar de Zamora Chinchipe*) was created to gain greater local autonomy and to avoid the bureaucratic hassle of the paperwork required to create communities and legalize land. This is an autonomous organization that is aligned with the FICSH in Morona Santiago.

Ultimately, many leaders are convinced that many of the organizational conflicts and divisions are the result of individuals or groups looking out for their personal interests and seeking power and control.¹¹ For example, power struggles over positions of leadership are now a common occurrence associated with the presence of the mining companies; I will discuss this further later in this chapter.

Despite this type of complexity in indigenous organizations, for many years academics have favored a positive and non-critical analysis of the indigenous organizations in Ecuador (Martínez Novo 2009). Academics have generally emphasized these organizations' unified and consistent strategies although, in reality, there is great diversity regarding the

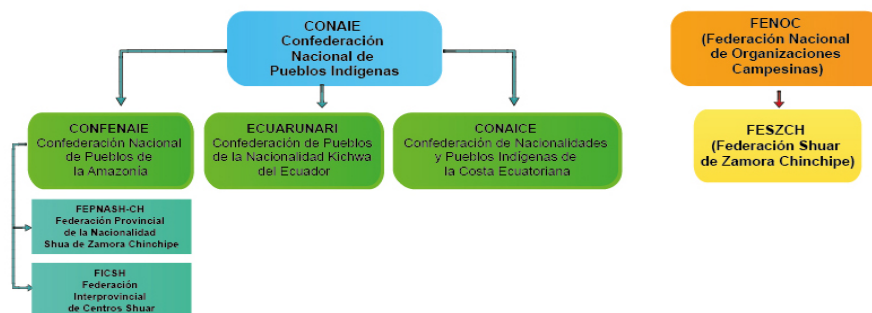
objectives, strategies, and conflicts in their ideologies, discourses, and practices. For example, many authors (Andolina 2003; Becker 2008, 2010; Jameson 2011; Selverston-Scher 2001; Varese 1996; Yashar 2005; Zamosc 2004) have analyzed the history of the indigenous movement at a macro level (some even within Latin America), emphasizing the movement's political accomplishments and the strategies that allowed it to become a strong national movement. Other studies have concentrated on regional and local organizations and emphasized their links with different actors but have not necessarily concentrated on their relationships with the communities they represent, thus leaving the participation of community leadership outside of the ethno-political analysis (Sawyer 1992: 2004; Valdivia 2005: 2007). However, as Perreault and Warren and Jackson argue, there is profound heterogeneity within and between indigenous organizations not only at the national and regional level, but also among indigenous people themselves and the organizations that represent them (Perreault 2001: 4; Warren and Jackson 2005). This is the case of the FESZCH and FEPNASH-CH. Although there were no clear ideological discrepancies at the time the FESZCH was created as an independent federation, today the FESZCH and FEPNASH-CH have different affiliations with higher level political organizations and hold different views on how to accomplish their shared objective of improving the lives of the Shuar people. Similarly, there is not always a clear and straightforward relationship between communities and the federations.

The FESZCH is a long-time supporter of governmental projects and large-scale mining; it conceives of the mining industry as a way to alleviate poverty within the indigenous population. On the other hand, the FEPNASH-CH rejects large-scale mining and is very adamant about the lack of participation of indigenous communities and organizations in the process of decision-making regarding extractivism. These differing positions also reflect the ties that each federation has with national organizations, their own particular ideologies, and their unique political discourses. While the FEPNASH-CH is affiliated with the FICSH and both organizations are affiliated with the CONAIE, the national indigenous organization which has adamantly resisted extractivism and has been considered a strong actor in Ecuador's political scene, the FESZCH purposely distanced itself from CONAIE and chose to affiliate itself with the National Federation of Peasant Organizations

(FENOC—*Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas*). This is a peasant-based organization that also includes a diversity of members such as indigenous groups, wholesale retailers, and others, and does not hold a strong position regarding extractivism (See Figure 4.1, which details the relationship between national, regional, and local organizations). The FENOC's primary objective is to promote socio-economic development and work in areas such as land legalization, housing projects, and implementation of productive projects. Unlike the FESZCH, this is not an ethnicity-based organization and its agenda is directed mostly at alleviating the poverty of its members. As its leader expressed in an interview, cultural identity is constantly reinforced through the work of the federation, but the organization's primary objective is alleviating poverty: "one cannot think of anything else if the people don't have anything to eat."¹² However, the FESZCH did not benefit much from its affiliation with the FENOC in terms of development projects, but rather in terms of having legal and judicial support from a national organization. It was clear to me that the FESZCH chose to belong to an organization that ideologically would not limit their lines of action and decisions regarding the welfare of the Shuar people, but would give them the necessary formal and legal endorsement when negotiating with state institutions and other actors for specific projects.¹³ Thus, the participation of FENOC in FESZCH's affairs was very limited and this was made obvious to me: after the first interviews conducted at the federation in which I specifically asked about their affiliation with the FENOC, I never again heard any leader from the federation mention the organization or any projects in which they might be working together.

This desire for autonomy was precisely one of the reasons for the FESZCH to separate from CONAIE, and it also worked as a strategy that allowed the federation to negotiate with different actors such as mining companies. Another reason was the notion that the national organization is extremely centralized on the highlands and has paid little attention to the Amazon region. According to the leaders of the FESZCH, "the federation is an autonomous and private institution, with its own ideology...it can make its own decisions together with its people," and, besides, "we are Shuar, we are not indigenous people,"¹⁴ referring to their specific characteristics and needs as Shuar people and their preference for independence and autonomy.

Figure 4.1
Organizational Chart: National and Regional Organizations



Source: Fieldwork Information. Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

However, each federation's structure is not completely homogeneous and its members do not unanimously belong to a single ideology or line of thought. For example, although an important difference between the FESZCH and the FEPNASH-CH is their position regarding large-scale mining, this does not mean that all communities within the FESZCH will support the presence of the mining company. In fact, as will be shown, there is a variety of positions among community leaders and members. Some of these leaders may participate in local resistance movements with mestizo people while others might work with or advocate working closely with the mining company. This diversity of strategies will be discussed at length in the chapter on Shuar political discourses and practices. These different positions are respected by authorities in the FESZCH, who are conscious of the complex and

delicate situation of the communities in the area of direct impact. However, the FESZCH's ideology and support for large-scale mining will probably remain the same given its consistency over the last decade.

Regardless of their position towards mining, specific political affiliations, or differing objectives, there are certain common elements which both organizations must contend with in terms of mining, the relationship to the state, and different social and economic conflicts related to land, work, and acculturation within the indigenous communities. In fact, while the federations had worked separately since the FEPNASH-CH was created, during the last months of my fieldwork the leaders of FESZCH were talking about joining together with FEPNASH-CH in their efforts to address some of the major problems of the Shuar people. However, at least during the time of my fieldwork, it was not clear how those collaborative efforts would be channeled and if they would agree on major issues such as large-scale mining.

4.3 The Shuar Federation of Zamora Chinchipe: A Snapshot of its Internal Structure

The FESZCH and the FEPNASH-CH are structured similarly to the original federation in Morona Santiago; this structure mimicked the political organization of the state and adapted past forms of leadership connected to the notion of being warriors to create a sense of hierarchy that did not exist in the past (Rubenstein 2007: 377-380). The base of the structure is made up of the communities or *centros* and their leaders; associations, which are second-level organizations formed by several communities of the area with their own elected-leaders, make up the next level. Finally, the highest level of the hierarchy is the federation, whose leaders are elected in general assembly by all of its members. The current board of directors of the FESZCH has designed a basic strategic plan to state the main objectives and lines of action of the federation during the next years. According to the last Strategic Plan of the FESZCH¹⁵, the federation is made up of six associations and 52 communities (*centros* or *barrios*, neighborhoods)¹⁶ (Plan Estratégico de la Federación Shuar de Zamora Chinchipe 2016), while the FEPNASH-CH is made up of only 32 communities (Interview President of FEPNASH-CH, February 2013). It is clear that the FESZCH has great influence in the Shuar communities in Zamora and has an even stronger presence in the province; its relationship with the mining companies in the area

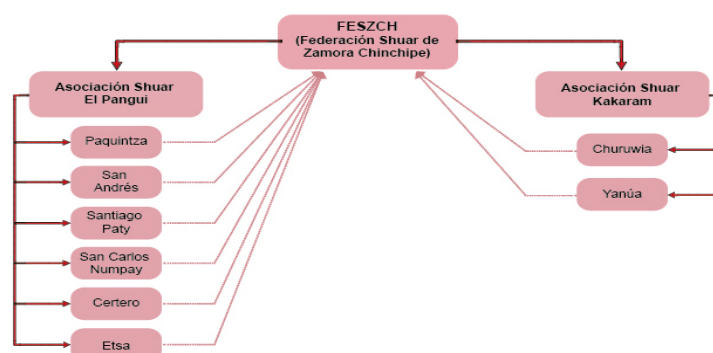
during the last decade or more made it possible for the federation to acquire a certain status and economic stability which allowed it, at least for some time, to have modern offices and even hire personnel to work in it alongside the elected leaders.

The president of the FESZCH explained the way the Shuar political structure is organized: it is clearly built up from the communities and also reflects the way the political process started in Morona Santiago. To him, the federation is a network that works together in harmony:

We are an organic structure. Because we are constituted from the bottom up, from the communities and *centros*. Communities group together into associations and they, in turn, group together into the Shuar Federation of Zamora Chinchipe. We are a network, we work together, that is why there is harmony. That is why we fight together, so that no one can tear us apart, for the rights and principles of our organization...and because we have our own structure for work, we have technical staff, educated and trained leaders.¹⁷

For this research, I have concentrated on those communities and associations located in the area of direct and indirect impact of Project Mirador that are also part of the federation. I include two associations that are members of the FESZCH, although their positions towards large-scale mining are quite different. The communities and associations that participated in this research include: the Asociación Shuar El Panguí, which supports the mining company and includes all the communities that belong to the parish of Guismi (Paqintza, Certero, San Andrés, and Santiago Paty) as well as two others that belong to the parish of Tundayme (San Carlos Numpai and Etsa) and Asociación Shuar Kakaram, which is a very strong opponent of the mining company and only includes the communities of Churuwia and Yanúa, which belong to the parish of Tundayme. In figure 4.2, I illustrate the structure of the federation with respect to the associations and communities included in this study:

Figure 4.2
Structure of the FESZCH and Associations and Communities in this Study



Source: Fieldwork Information. Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

4.3.1 The Heart of the Shuar Political Organization: The Communities

The *centros* or communities are the most basic form of organization among the Shuar and they constitute the *raison d'être* of the federation. Clearly, the communities are the places where everyday life happens and, thus, the work of the federation is directed towards the well-being of the people living in them. While a century ago the notion of communities did not have any meaning to the Shuar because they lived in scattered households (Harner 1978; Rubenstein 2005; Salazar 1977), they are now important spaces for the everyday reproduction of culture and for the construction of a Shuar identity, however changing it may be.

Scholars have given much attention to the importance of communities as physical and symbolic spaces for the construction of identity and the discourses related to it (Bolaños 2011; Cheng et al. 2003). They have also discussed the relevance of communities in the

definition of collective identities as a form of cultural politics. They are part of those discourses and actions that are fundamental to the control of the environment and the resources in it, notions of development, access and rights to land, and so forth (Murray Li 2000; Perreault 2003; Vadjunec et al. 2011). Murray Li, for example, describes the process of articulation of an indigenous identity among local communities in their resistance to building a dam project in Lake Lindu, Indonesia (2000). Shuar communities have definitely played an important political role since their creation and, thus, they make an excellent case study in the field of cultural politics. However, it is also important to acknowledge that, as Escobar argues, the community is no longer an obviously defined and culture-bound place; rather, it has become a scenario for complex relations of power and a hybridization of cultural practices as a result of trans-local relationships. Shuar communities are also an example of these changing scenarios and complexity (Escobar 2001: 146). These are precisely some of the issues that I will address more fully in the chapter on identity discourses and practices and the discussion on community change, transformation, and the relationship to the territory. For now, I will focus on a description of the construction of and aspects of everyday living in a Shuar community in the area around Project Mirador; this will provide as an insight into the complexity of issues addressed above. The loss of land and the constant contact with *colonos* for the past six decades have had a profound impact on the life in the communities and this is shown, for example, in the changes in subsistence practices and the high levels of mobility among the population. These issues have also shaped the way the Shuar perceive themselves and how they construct discourses and political strategies related to mining.

Communities are the foundation of the whole Shuar political organization; they legitimize the federation's authorities and also have their own leadership structures. Although the federation is at the highest level of the organizational hierarchy, communities and associations have complete autonomy to make decisions and even have ties and work with external actors, such as government institutions and NGOs. The level of authority of the community leaders was made very clear to me when I started fieldwork in the area of Tundayme; although I had talked to the president of the FESZCH several times and had his permission to visit and do fieldwork among the communities, this did not imply that I was

welcomed by the local leader. In the first visit I made to the largest community, Churuwia, the president was not pleased by my presence and made it very obvious that he did not trust my intentions, despite the fact that I was accompanied by the president of Asociación Shuar Kakaram (member of the FESZCH), as advised by the president of the federation.

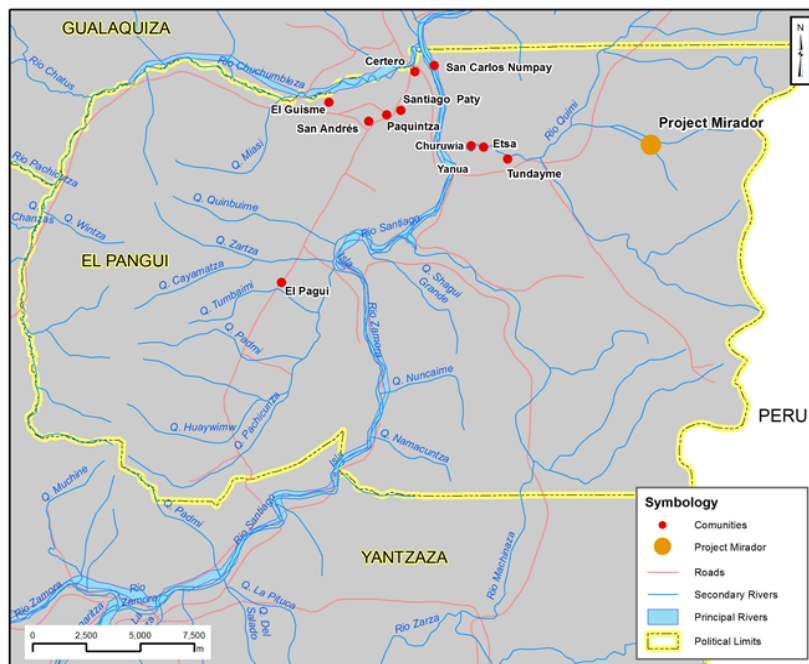
Furthermore, while it makes sense that the federation should be in charge of creating projects for the communities (such as electricity, housing, etc.), due to its ability to negotiate and lobby with higher level government institutions and different types of organizations, in reality it is the community leader who usually accomplishes this in conjunction with local institutions to actually obtain specific, concrete benefits for the communities. As discussed above, while the federation is considered to be an important actor within the high-level political scene, the community leaders are the ones in charge of the everyday work which, in the end, is more fruitful for the people in the *centros*. Those who have inserted themselves into the system and are persistent enough will tend to achieve benefits for their communities.

4.3.2 Life in a Shuar Community in the Area of Project Mirador

The reality of living in a Shuar community is very complex and defies stereotypical notions of tight and cohesive spaces. However, as I explained above, communities are still important to the construction of notions of identity and maintaining family ties, as part of a changing way of “being Shuar” in a mestizo society. Therefore, in this section, I present a basic picture of the life of the people of the communities. I describe the composition of the the communities, their subsistence practices, and their relationship to the land. Hopefully, this will offer a view of the diversity that exists among Shuar communities and provide a background for the different dynamics that are at play in the area around Mirador, in terms of political identities and practices.

When I started to visit Shuar communities, I realized that each one was highly unique in terms of history, territory, views of large-scale mining, and experiences and perspectives on other issues like development, modernity, and so forth.

Map 4.1
Project Mirador and Shuar Communities in the Study



Source: Instituto de Geografía USFQ

I also confirmed what I had heard at the beginning from certain leaders: while the company had given money both to the federation and the state to supposedly promote local development, it was obvious that the communities had been left out. Most of them still lack sewage systems, drinking water, and adequate electricity, just as the strategic plan of the FESZCH reports.

While some communities are located right along the main highway that connects Zamora to the other Amazonian provinces, others have very difficult access because they are located across the rivers (San Carlos is located across the Zamora River, while Churuwia and Etsa are located

across the Kimi River). Since there are no roads connecting these communities, they must be accessed by boat or waiting for the tide to go down and wading through the water, then finally walking along a foot-path for 20 minutes or more (see map 4.1).



Community of Certero: several houses are located across the centre of the community, and on the edge of the highway

Photograph: Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

Communities like Churuwia and Paqintza have large areas of land, allowing the families to live in a somewhat scattered way, each occupying their own farm. However, San Andrés, Certero and Santiago Paty have a town-like distribution with much smaller plots of land (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3 for land extensions). Furthermore, in some of the communities, like Etsa and Churuwia, some members do not actually live in the community but rather in towns like Tundayme or El Pangui and visit their farms regularly when they are not working in the mine. On the contrary, in San Andrés and Santiago Paty, people have migrated from

communities in Morona Santiago and only occasionally return to their original homes to work and visit their families. These are just a few examples of the diversity in the constitution of the communities in the area of Mirador which I will discuss in this section. The overall goal of providing this description is to describe the complexity of the area and thus be able to contextualize some of the conflicts surrounding the communities, their relationship to the mining company, and their position towards large-scale mining itself.



Walking bridge to access the communities of Churuwia and Etsa

Photograph: Erika Rosado

As discussed in the historical section of this chapter, the Shuar traditionally engaged in certain practices like hunting, fishing, and some horticulture in order to survive. In the process of colonization, the Shuar lost much of their territory to the mestizos who came from the highlands (for different reasons and in a variety of ways, some legal, some not) and this, combined with state policies regarding the use of land, forced them to make dramatic changes in their livelihoods, as was mentioned above. Furthermore, the notions of modernity, progress, and development

introduced by the state and more generally by mestizo society have also altered ideas about livelihood and well-being. All the changes brought about by the incorporation of the Shuar to national life have forced them to look elsewhere in order to ensure their well-being. As a community leader said when talking about his work in the mining company, “they, the mestizos, imposed a new way of life on us and now we are forced to compete with them for resources and money.”¹⁸ Thus, their livelihoods no longer depend on their use of resources in their territory as they used to know it; rather, they depend on having the means to participate in a market economy for basic needs like buying food they cannot produce in their land, paying for transportation, sending their children to school, and so forth.

During fieldwork, references to hunting, fishing, and gathering fruits from the forest usually came up when discussing the elders’ survival strategies and practices. Eventually, some people mentioned that if they wanted to go hunting they would have to do it in forests that are located outside the communities, for example in the area of the Cordillera del Cóndor (in the case of the communities around Tundayme). The most common option for people to secure their basic needs is to practice small-scale agriculture that, in some cases, is used for subsistence and in others is commercialized (See Table 4.1). The most important products that are traditionally part of the Shuar diet are the plantain (*plátano verde*), manioc, corn, and garden vegetables, all of which are consumed on a daily basis. For example, manioc can also be used to make the traditional chicha beverage (although from my experience in the communities, not all families still practice this tradition), while cocoa and coffee are usually grown for commercialization. Most families also grow chickens and pigs, and several communities have gotten involved in projects (either with the company or the provincial government) to raise fish (in aquaculture tanks) and guinea pigs. Although in some areas the Shuar began utilizing their land as pasture for livestock, this was not the case in most communities in the area of study, probably because of the limited size of the land.

Besides these basic subsistence practices, how do people from the communities complement their family economy and obtain money to be able to pay for other services? At the artisanal or small-scale level and at the industrial level, mining is an important source of income for Shuar families. In four of the communities in which I completed this research,

people reported carrying out some kind of artisanal mining, either directly mining the rock in the mountains or dredging the rivers. For example, in one of the communities of the study, the president confirmed that most people participate in some kind of mining: “in this community, we are all miners, because we need to educate our children...we sell around 5 grams to 10 grams of gold in a month, at \$30 each gram.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, it is hard to obtain more accurate information about exactly how many people are involved in mining activities since they do not want to identify themselves as artisanal miners.²⁰ Large-scale mining, on the other hand, has provided a new source of income for many families in most communities. Even if the official position of some of the leaders is anti-mining, that does not prohibit the community members from working for the company. As shown in Table 4.1, at least four or five people were working in ECSA in almost every community at the time of the research, except in San Andrés and San Carlos. Etsa and Churuwia are the communities with the greatest number of community members working in the company. This is because Etsa has shown strong support for large-scale mining in Mirador, and the numerous mine workers in Churuwia belong to one of the families living in Tundayme which is in a position of conflict with the current president (who strongly resists the company). Still, these numbers are not stable and many people are quite flexible regarding their work. Some might grow tired of the working conditions in the company and shift to other jobs and even become strong opponents to Project Mirador, as in Yanúa’s case.

According to the Strategic Plan of Asociación Shuar El Pangui, 5 per cent of the total population of the 13 member communities obtain some income from cattle raising, 2 per cent from other small animal raising (guinea pigs, chickens, etc.), 48 per cent from subsistence agriculture and some commercialization, and 45 per cent from paid jobs, although there is no specific mention of work in the mining companies (Asociación Shuar El Pangui, Plan Estratégico 2011-2015: 65). As shown in tables 4.2 and 4.3, most communities do not have large areas of land, except for Churuwia, considering the amount of people living there. Thus, in order make a living and have access to cash most people have to combine agricultural work on their farms with mining work or other paid activities like carpentry, masonry, or other kinds of labor outside their communities.

Table 4.1
Economic Activities

<i>Community</i>	<i>Economic Activities</i>	<i>People Working in ECSA</i>
Churuwia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subsistence agriculture: manioc, plantain, corn, yampeen, or taro - Artisanal mining (in the mountains in the community): gold commercialization - Some cattle raising and sale - Small productive projects to raise chickens and guinea pigs provided by ECSA 	Approx. 10-12 people. Most of those who work or had worked for ECSA were members of one family living in Tundayme
Etsa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subsistence agriculture: Manioc, plantain, corn, yampeen, and beans - Sporadic hunting - Tilapia farms, chickens, and guinea pigs - Some cattle raising and sale 	Approx. 13 people including the leader, his brother, and their children
Yanúa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subsistence agriculture: manioc, plantain, and fruit trees - Some cocoa and coffee for commercialization - Small tilapia farms - Some hunting, fishing, and gathering in the forest - Paid work outside the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -3 brothers of the same family worked there until 2010 -5 members currently work in ECSA
San Carlos Numpay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subsistence agriculture: manioc, plantain, and corn - Animal raising: chickens and tilapia farms - Artisanal mining (using dredges in rivers) 	No members work in the mining company
Paquintza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subsistence agriculture: fruit trees, plantain, corn, and manioc - Cocoa (for commercialization) - Sporadic hunting 	5 people including the leaders
Santiago Paty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subsistence agriculture: only small gardens with some manioc, corn, and vegetables (yampeen, tomatoes, lettuce)/small animal raising - Sporadic hunting - Sporadic work in the municipality or offices of the parish council - Artisanal mining (using dredges in rivers) 	6 people
San Andrés	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subsistence agriculture: Plantain, manioc, banana, beans, and sweet potato. Some people have to rent out some plots of land outside the community to farm. - Some fishing and hunting - A variety of paid jobs, carpentry, masonry, 	No members working in the mining company
Certero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subsistence agriculture: Manioc, sweet potato, plantain, cocoa and other vegetables - Animal raising: pigs and chickens - Artisanal mining (using dredges in rivers) 	4 people

Source: Fieldwork Interviews. Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

I often had to return to the communities many times to finally locate community leaders in order to be able to speak with them. While at the beginning I had expected to find them working on their farms, I quickly learned that they were usually out, either working in the mining company or completing odd jobs to supplement their income.

Table 4.2
Basic Description of the Communities in the Parish of Tundayme

<i>Community</i>	<i>Land Size (Hectares)</i>	<i>No. of Members</i>	<i>Legal Status</i>
Churuwia: “communal or global title deed” which includes Mirador and Etsa. In this case, there are no individual title deeds.	3,800 Hectares	Approx. 100 members, descendants of the original owner of the land and his first wife.	Created in the 1960s but obtained legal status in 2008.
Etsa split from Churuwia and became a legally recognized “barrio”, while sharing Churuwia’s title deed.	Total of 75 hectares divided among 3 siblings. Only 4 hectares are dedicated to communal use.	25 members (descendants of two siblings), including children who live in Tundayme/El Panguí	Legally recognized as a “barrio” (neighborhood) in 2008.
Yanúa was established on the family’s inherited land but does not have legal status.	18 hectares	Approx. 90 people, descendants of 12 siblings.	Does not have legal status as a community
San Carlos Numpay was established on the territory owned by an extended family.	680 hectares of which approx. 70 are occupied by mestizos	Approx. 70 members	Holds legal status since 2006 but it does not have a “global title deed”.

Source: Fieldwork Interviews. Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

Table 4.3
Basic Description of the Communities in the Parish of El Guismi

Community	Land Size (Hectares)	No. of Members	Legal Status
San Francisco de Paqintza, was founded in 1965 by the siblings living in the land.	Originally the community had approx. 1120 ha. In the 1980s it was divided and now it only has 352 ha.	103 people (belonging to the family who originally owned the land (Strategic Plan ASEP).	The larger community was divided in the eighties and the community has legal status since 2008
Santiago Paty is a small community created after Paqintza was divided.	11/2 (one and a half) ha. as "global title deed" for the whole community, plus 300 has that belong to the original owners of Paqintza (who donated the land to Santiago Paty).	88 people (Strategic Plan ASEP) Most of the members in SP have migrated from communities in Morona Santiago, and some have even bought their land in SP.	The community obtained legal status when the land was donated for its creation in 2001.
San Andrés, is a small community (barrio) created after Paqintza was divided.	1 ha. as "global title deed" plus 27 hectares that belong to the person who donated land to create the community.	85 people (Strategic Plan ASEP) Members from San Andrés bought their plots of land. They have migrated mostly from Morona Santiago.	The community acquired legal status in 2006 when the owner of a farm that belonged to Paqintza donated a small portion for its creation.
Certero, is the fourth community created after the division of Paqintza.	18 ha.	55 people (Strategic Plan ASEP). They are part of the leader's family. The leader was directly related to the family in Paqintza.	2007

Source: Fieldwork Interviews. Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

In regard to subsistence strategies, the situation is more critical in communities like San Andrés, Santiago Paty and Yanúa where the land is scarcer. With most members in the first two communities having very limited space to plant orchards or to raise small animals (plots are usually 15 by 30 m), they are usually forced to either rent land for agricultural activities or work other paid jobs, usually in El Panguí. The situation in

Yanúa is also complicated because the community's 18 hectares are divided between 10 families (which, in reality, leaves only a little more than 1 hectare per family) and some of these plots are flooded every time the river rises, which makes it impossible to utilize them for growing crops.

This brief description on how the Shuar make a living in the communities around Mirador points to important issues that will be discussed throughout this thesis, such as the relationship to the land, the changing composition of the communities, and the changes and conflicts that the communities have suffered throughout the years. It also shows that both Shuar people and leaders have intersectional identities. As described above, some identify themselves as artisanal miners while others have strong ties to ECSA because they work in it and are involved in community projects sponsored by the company. Other community members are not as attached to the life in the communities because they work or go to school elsewhere. These and other interlocking categories, such as age and status (especially in the case of federation leaders), will be further discussed in this chapter when addressing the positions of status of federation leaders. I will also touch on these themes in Chapter 5 when analyzing the diversity of discourses and positions of the Shuar in relation to mining.

I conclude this section by highlighting some important differences shown in the chart. After reviewing the land distribution among the Shuar communities in this area, the discrepancies in size between communities is quite obvious. However, this is not necessarily the only difference between these communities. For example, some communities like Churuwía were formed in the 1960s and, although the community had a title deed for the land, it was only recently legalized as an indigenous community by the Council for the Development of Nationalities and Pueblos of Ecuador (CODENPE—*Consejo de Desarrollo de las Nacionalidades y Pueblos del Ecuador*).²¹ Others, like Yanúa, may not even comply with the pre-requisites to be officially considered a community because they do not have enough land or members to become one. Finally, smaller communities like Santiago Paty and San Andrés are the result of the division of one larger community, Paquintza, which arose out of several organizational conflicts. In the chapter on identity discourses and practices, I will follow up on a discussion of how the communities that were established a few decades ago have suffered

important transformations in terms of community structure, subsistence practices, mobility, and territory. In the next section, I discuss the role of the associations and their engagement with the federation and the communities as part of the Shuar political organization.

4.3.3 The Role of the Associations

The associations are second-level organizations within the Shuar political structure that directly agglutinate communities from a specific political-administrative unit. In the case of Asociación Shuar el Panguí (founded in 2009), by 2011 it came to include 15 communities that belong to three different parishes within the canton of El Panguí: El Guismi, Tundayme, and El Panguí (Strategic Plan, Asociación Shuar El Panguí, 2011). Of these communities, only those that are considered to be in the area of direct or indirect impact of Project Mirador are part of this study: Paquintza, Santiago Paty, San Andrés, and Certero (which belong to the parish of El Guismi) and San Carlos Numpai and Etsa (which belong to the parish of Tundayme). The associations have a hierarchical structure similar to the federation (although we will see that Asociación Shuar Kakaram is not as structured as others) and they have complete autonomy, which means that they can independently promote and develop projects in favor of the communities without depending on funding or approval from the federation. Associations are formed by the general assembly (Asamblea General, in which all members from the communities participate and make decisions) and the board of directors, which includes a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and other board members (in the case of Asociación Shuar El Panguí, there are eight other executive members in charge of different areas). All board members are all elected by the general assembly; as in the case of the federation, the leaders who work for the associations do not receive a salary, which sometimes means that they might not be fully committed in their work for the association.

The work of the associations is specifically intended to benefit the welfare of the communities. In many cases, this involves first legalizing each community and its authorities. The Asociación Shuar El Panguí has concentrated much of its efforts to promote and fund community development projects. As mentioned by a former president of the association, the two most important institutions providing financial aid in the past have been the Ecuadorian Fund for the Populorum

Progressio (FEPP—*Fondo Ecuatoriano Populorum Progressio*, a private foundation) and ECSA. In earlier agreements with the Canadian company in charge of exploration, the federation negotiated that the company should hire Shuar people from the communities to work in the company (according to a former president of Asociación Shuar El Panguí, they agreed that 30 per cent of the employees should be hired from Shuar communities). The agreement also included company investments in technical training, education, and productive projects (such as cacao plantations and aquaculture). However, the relationship and agreements established with ECSA regarding funding for these projects came to an end after the Chinese company CRCC-Tonguan bought the shares from ECSA in 2012 and the FESZCH elected new leadership, thus forcing the association to seek other ways to generate funds. As such, the association's leadership in has concentrated its efforts on developing Shuar communities in material terms and has developed strong ties to the mining company. In words of the vice-president (former president):

Well, as representative of the community where I live, according to the Life Plan²² that we have made, the basic services would have to be implemented by the municipality and parish councils, while the provincial council would have to be in charge of large infrastructure, roads, sports fields, and all that, work for the development of the Shuar people so that we can overcome extreme poverty. To create businesses within the communities, for example we can talk about big projects like producing cacao, making chocolate, or for example do pisciculture. Where people from the communities can produce things and be part of big projects, that is why we have supported Ecuacorriente.²³

Although the structure of Asociación Shuar El Panguí appears to be solid, part of the diagnosis carried out to inform the association's strategic plan points out several weaknesses: low levels of participation both at the association and community level, lack of management abilities of the leadership which resulted in limited capacity to negotiate funding and implement projects, and some disintegration and lack of coordination among the leaders. I witnessed some examples of the lack of coordination and interest to participate in several of the association's meetings that I attended. One was held at the end of February 2013 and

was directed by the president of the FESZCH. While there are over 200 members who belong to the association, I was surprised to notice that only approximately 30 attended, making it impossible for them to reach quorum and vote for their new authorities, which was the main objective of the meeting (even some presidents of the communities that belong to the association were absent). The second meeting was held in January 2014 and was organized by the president to go over planning matters and issues relevant to the communities. Again, many community presidents were absent and, more importantly, aside from the president, no members of the board of directors were present. This lack of interest (even on the part of the leadership itself) was actually addressed by the president of the association who complained harshly to the people attending the meeting. The reasons for this lack of participation might have been related to general disenchantment with the association: many feel that the association is not fulfilling its duties to work for the benefit of the communities. In several conversations with leaders from different communities, it was clear that they were disappointed in the association's leadership. They thought that the association should be stronger organizationally (some leaders even questioned why the association did not even have an office of its own) and help communities meet their most basic needs. Ultimately, this is precisely the reason why the association was created.

Despite a certain lack of collaborative work with the communities, the Asociación Shuar El Panguí does have a formal structure, a space for offices and meetings (rented out or "borrowed" from a Shuar family in El Panguí), and it had developed a "Life Plan" (with an extensive assessment of the communities) to be implemented. Unfortunately, there were always complaints from the communities regarding the lack of attention and even accusations of corruption directed at the former leaders of the association.

It is worth noting that Asociación Shuar Kakaram is very different from Asociación Shuar el Panguí; it took me several months to understand the dynamics of this association and the way it operated. To begin with, while it was obvious that Asociación Shuar El Panguí had its base in El Panguí, integrating communities from this canton, Asociación Shuar Kakaram is not formally based in Tundayme (the parish to which its communities belong) or any other location. While this association has a board of directors, its president is not a resident of Tundayme or any

of surrounding communities (he lives in the city of El Panguí). Additionally, the association is made up of only two communities which belong to the parish of Tundayme: Churuwia (which had been divided into two sub-communities) and Yanúa, which was still struggling to be legally recognized as a community.

The lack of consistency in the structure of Asociación Shuar Kakaram is probably related to the fact that it was created in response to specific contextual events and for a particular purpose. Its president describes the creation of Asociación Shuar Kakaram as necessary to fight for and claim the territory around Project Mirador. During a violent confrontation between the supporters and detractors of the project in 2006, the future president of Kakaram realized that the only way to recuperate the territory was through an official legal position which could be established through the creation of an association that would unify communities opposed to the mining project. In 2007, the Asociación Shuar Kakaram was legally created. At the time of its founding, it was made up of only one community in the area, Churuwia, which itself was legally recognized in 2008.²⁴ Yanúa (which was still not legally recognized as a community at the conclusion of my research) became part of the association later on, although in the 2006 confrontation the family living there had fought in favor of the company.

Asociación Shuar Kakaram's most important objective is quite different from that of Asociación Shuar El Panguí: it seeks to reclaim some territory for the Shuar. Its president is very clear about the importance of recuperating territory in relation to the kind of well-being (or *buen vivir*, as he called it) they seek:

The association's plan is the following: we are looking for *buen vivir*, to defend our territory; we are not looking for the development that mestizos want, with all respect, but our development is not that, we want *buen vivir*, and that is to have good territory, to raise manioc, plantain, corn, chickens, all that we can produce, that is *buen vivir*...and the farm, to be able to educate our children...that is our development. We don't want big highways, we just want to be able to get our products out to sell them, that is why we claim our territory back, our ancestral territory from our grandparents.²⁵

These differences in objectives have determined the way the associations work as well as the ties that they have established to accomplish their objectives. While Asociación Shuar El Panguí has worked with the mining company to establish agreements and negotiate benefits for the communities, Asociación Shuar Kakaram has established relationships with other actors like Acción Ecológica that have been part of an active but unsuccessful resistance against the presence of the company. Shuar leaders from Morona Santiago and mestizo representatives of regional and local organizations defending the environment from extractive practices are also important actors in this resistance. While Asociación Shuar El Panguí seems to be more consolidated in terms of its structure and its members, Asociación Shuar Kakaram appears to be more fragile in terms of its support, which is based on only two communities. In fact, the president's discourse of resistance was echoed only by a leader from Yanúa. This apparently weak demonstration of support from the communities that make up the association demonstrates the diverse and changing reactions and positions that I have observed at every level of the Shuar Federation, and which will be discussed at length in chapter 5 on discourses and political practices.

After examining the ways in which the communities and associations are structured, as well as some of the ways that they have positioned themselves regarding large-scale mining, I will now discuss the federation itself. In the last part of this chapter, I will discuss the ethno-politics of the federation, including their political objectives, possible political strategies, and the main areas of conflict within the federation and with external actors in the context of large-scale mining.

4.4 The Ethno-Politics of the Shuar Federation

As described earlier, the FESZCH is an organization whose leaders take pride in not belonging to any other organizations that might limit their decision-making abilities or their capability to negotiate with other actors. As such, the leaders in the federation consider themselves to be pragmatic and not necessarily tied to a particular political ideology. The president of the FESZCH stated, "We work differently from CONAIE which says, 'No, we don't want that project, we don't agree ...' We at the FESZCH are more pragmatic, open to having a dialogue."²⁶ Thus, they are free to associate themselves with any kind of institution or company,

as long as the ultimate objective of such relationships is to contribute to local development. As is the case with many leaders in the communities and in the associations, the leaders of the FESZCH are interested in encouraging some form of entrepreneurship by taking advantage of the resources available in their territory (in this case mining) and of new technology.

According to the Strategic Plan, the federation's chief objective is to plan, design, and manage projects that are oriented towards community development of the Shuar people in Zamora Chinchipe (2016). In accordance with this plan, over the past twenty years the FESZCH has worked to legalize the Shuar territory, protect Shuar culture, consolidate the federation itself, and to improve the communities' health, education, and infrastructure. However, in the federation's discourse, the most immediate concern is the level of poverty in the Shuar communities: according to the Strategic Plan, 98 per cent of Shuar families live in extreme poverty. The federation considers this extreme situation to be a consequence of discrimination and exclusion from the state. As such, the federation's efforts are primarily directed towards satisfying the community's most basic needs including access to water and electricity.

Beyond the details of the FESZCH's projects and goals, the Strategic Plan includes two additional main points of the Shuar federation's ethnopolitics and official discourse that should be included in this analysis. One point revolves around the importance of defending the collective rights of the Shuar people, which includes the right to protect their ancestral culture and territory.²⁷ In fact, in the current 2016 Strategic Plan, some of the policies to be implemented are related to the legalization of territory as well as the initiation of new education programs (Strategic Plan 2016). Additionally, the most immediate concerns for the FESZCH and its leaders mostly revolve around securing material benefits and facilitating community development.²⁸ In the same plan, two policies make explicit reference to jobs for Shuar people; these policies specifically refer to creating jobs in the mining project of Fruta del Norte (south of Project Mirador) and developing small businesses to become service suppliers for the mining companies.

While the notion of protecting the ancestral territory was a recurrent element of the federation's discourse and the issue of recovering territory lost in the colonization process was certainly mentioned by the leaders in many interviews, the possibility of negotiating further agreements with

the mining companies was the most important concern for many leaders (at the community, association, and federation levels) because this would mean immediately securing subsistence and possibilities for development.²⁹ Furthermore, the federation had no ties with environmental organizations and had only a few ties with other types of organizations to carry out community income generating projects, such as the FEPP and the German organization GTZ (German Cooperation Agency—*Agencia Alemana de Cooperación*), for the most part, funding and projects had been negotiated with the mining companies at different moments in the past. This was the case of ECSA in Project Mirador and Kinross-Aurelian in Project Fruta del Norte.

In reference to the discussion of ethno-politics, several authors (Bolaños 2011; Gros 1999; Warren and Jackson 2005) have pointed out that indigenous peoples like the Shuar utilize their ethnic identities in their political struggles as a strategy to deal with subsistence and inclusion issues and are interested in achieving “goals more explicitly development oriented” (Warren and Jackson 2005: 554). The protection of traditions, language, and even ancestral territory may be, in some cases, secondary to or at least not as urgent as issues of basic everyday subsistence. In such cases, the notions of a marginal existence are part of the ethnic reaffirmation of a group: it is not only about sharing history, traditions, language, and culture, rather it is mostly about sharing experiences of racism and exclusion from a mostly mestizo society (Selverston-Scher 2001: 21).

Other academics studying the indigenous movement in Ecuador have pointed out that, while many indigenous movements have resisted neo-liberal practices because they consider them damaging to indigenous people, others have negotiated with state institutions and international organizations which were, to different degrees, related to these same “neo-liberal junctures and ideologies” (Martínez Novo 2009: 11). Thus, instead of seeking structural and social changes, many indigenous leaders have integrated themselves into a system that has encouraged the development of a docile subject, what Hale refers to as the “permitted Indian” (DeHart 2008; Hale 2004). Rather than looking for real, long-term social change, indigenous leaders may only seek out short-term development projects and funds (Bretón 2013; Santana 2004).

While this analysis is interesting and highly applicable to some of the work and objectives developed by the FESZCH, it is also true that both

discourses and strategies are part of a complex scenario in which basic issues of well-being and subsistence are at stake. In the chapter on identity discourses, for example, it will become clear that together with notions of ancestry and the territory, the history of marginality suffered by the Shuar has prompted them to define strategies to demand those material benefits long-denied by the state, just as Selverston-Scher has argued (2001). Furthermore, this complex scenario is also riddled with notions of modernity and development with which the Shuar constantly negotiate as part of their interactions with the mestizo world. The fact that the FESZCH has maintained interest in developing and maintaining their relationship with the mining companies shows both a need and desire to secure certain benefits (usually associated with jobs and productive projects) for the community, but also to achieve the level of development promised by these companies and the state. This, however, does not mean that they will necessarily settle for short-term solutions (although some needs are very urgent); several community and federation leaders insist that they should focus on long-term projects that could actually help them transform their living conditions and their children's futures, rather than on solutions that temporarily pacify them:

That is why we have told the companies that we don't want to sign a regular agreement with them but an agreement of impact-benefit for the Shuar people. What does that mean? It is a Life Plan that the Shuar Federation has...all the needs that the communities have are in that plan...so we want to sign a long-term and macro-agreement throughout the duration of the mining project, not an agreement each year, and with that I think we can solve the main problems and needs that the Shuar people have.³⁰

Similarly, the Churuwia community president was very critical of the small productive projects offered by ECSA; he argued that the kind of projects that the company has designed will not help them solve important development issues. Instead of having productive projects, he would rather see the construction of a bridge that would allow people in the community to have access to the main road to facilitate the transportation of their products. In his words, "I am interested in projects like building a bridge to connect the community to the road, a project that is worth millions of dollars...I am not interested in projects to raise chickens, which really don't solve anything, we already raise chickens and that doesn't solve our problems."³¹

The scenario is complex: on one hand, the federation has built its ethno-political discourse and strategies based on a Shuar identity that places great importance on the ancestral culture and territory; on the other hand, the Shuar people and the federation itself want to be part of the modern national society and their demands are mostly based on notions of development imported by the mestizo society. Thus, issues of territory, culture, and language are less urgent when the population lacks access roads, electricity, and drinking water, especially with the presence of large-scale mining in the area. Furthermore, once the leaders have access to funds from the extractive projects, questions related to the use of those funds for community well-being, potential conflicts, and consistency between the organization's discourses and actual practices become pertinent. According to Martínez-Novo in her review on the research of indigenous organizations in Ecuador (2009), these issues should be explored more in depth; I explore this research gap in the next section and chapters.

4.4.1 Negotiating with the Mining Company: Changing Circumstances and Conflicts in the Shuar Federation

Everyone in the city of Zamora knows where the offices of the FESZCH are located, so I had no trouble finding them the first time I visited. It is clear that the federation is an important actor in the political scene of the city and province; this was made evident to me throughout my research. However, there was a noticeable change in the work dynamics and organization of the federation between the beginning of my fieldwork in late 2013 to the last visits I made in 2015. My general impression during the first period was that the federation leaders were extremely active and their offices were bustling. There were usually at least one or two leaders working at their desks on the first floor, especially focused on issues of education or territory; the president was constantly meeting with diverse individuals: members and leaders from the communities and associations, government officials, and the federation's own technical staff or its leaders. I often had to wait for him to return from a meeting or a community in order to interview him.



Leaders of the FESZCH working at their office

Photograph: Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

In one of the first interviews with the president of the FESZCH, I learned that the federation's offices had been built with money given by ECSA as part of an agreement with the federation. These offices were located in a modern, fully-equipped, three-story building. On the first floor, there were six desks, each with a computer that belonged to the leaders in charge of specific objective areas such as land and territory, health, education, and so forth. The office of the president of the federation, a reception area, and a small staff office were located on the second floor. The third floor housed offices for the technical staff, which were also used as classrooms for training sessions.

However, the first impression of a busy and active organization soon started fading away as the funds from the mining companies (especially ECSA and Kinross Aurelian) began to run out. The personnel who were in charge of accounting or the technical department were let go and there was no budget to pay for basic services, including electricity (I learned later that these services were financed by Kinross Aurelian). By

the middle of my fieldwork, I began visiting the president in the old offices of the federation, which were located in a small, deteriorated house in Zamora. One of the last times I visited the new building I did not see any of the computers or equipment nor the leaders or previous staff members.

This description of the changes that the federation had suffered during the last three years poignantly illustrates the shift in their relationship with the mining companies. The stability and strength of the FESZCH depended heavily upon the companies' economic support; thus, it is very important to understand the way it has been functioning in the context of a large-scale mining project: the changes in the relationship with the mining companies and the conflicts among the members of the federation generated by the presence of the mining project. Again, the FESZCH had supported and encouraged the presence of large-scale mining in Zamora Chinchipe and had negotiated various agreements with the mining companies. From 2007-2010, ECSA made financial contributions to the federation (Internal Document-ECSA) and Kinross Aurelian was contributing to certain projects and even paying for the federation to operate its offices in Zamora³² until 2015; however, in that year, the federation began to experience an economic crisis. While poor administration might have been responsible for some of this crisis, the federation lost much of the funding from the mining companies and is now struggling to find resources even for small projects or to maintain basic infrastructure for the federation itself.

The changes in the way mining companies and the federation negotiate is the result of new state and company policies. To begin with, new laws gave the state more power over the regulation of extractive practices in the country, afforded the state a larger percentage of the contracts (51 per cent), and gave it a more important role in the redistribution of earnings. Thus, the government took on more responsibility in addressing local peoples' needs, thereby simultaneously limiting the companies' social programs and projects intended to meet the goals originally laid out in their environmental management plan.³³ Secondly, the new owners of the company (the Chinese company Tonguan CRCC, which bought the shares for ECSA in 2012) stopped any form of direct negotiation with the federation and the associations, arguing that the company had already paid a percentage of the royalties to the government in advance.³⁴ This meant that the only benefits that

the affected Shuar communities would receive would be directly administered by the company's department of community relations and would only include benefits that were detailed in the environmental management plan. Around June 2014, after months of silence from ECSA, several leaders from the federation traveled to Quito to meet with representatives of the company; unfortunately, they returned empty-handed. The company had insisted that they had already given funds to the government and that they could not sign any agreements with the federation. The leaders were extremely disappointed: "We were in a meeting for almost three hours and at the end they just said, thank you for coming but no, we can't do anything for you."³⁵

After a long period of dependence upon the mining companies' funding, the FESZCH was suddenly forced to develop new relationships with different kinds of organizations in order to survive. Thus, they began to seek the aid of international organizations to help them with funding or specific projects. They also attempted to negotiate with government institutions like *Ecuador Estratégico* to help provide for their communities or to try to gain access to certain positions of power in order to be able to redirect resources to the Shuar communities.³⁶

Beyond their changing relationship with ECSA, the presence of large-scale mining projects in the area of Zamora and the associated fluctuating funding opportunities have created and exacerbated conflicts and have made obvious issues of disjuncture or decentralization within the organization. In his article on the circulation of *tsantsas*³⁷ and power amongst the Shuar, Rubenstein describes the relationship between the Shuar people and the federation as asymmetrical and ambivalent (Rubenstein 2007). He argues that it is through the relationship of the federation to state institutions that the leaders have come to occupy positions of political and economic privilege, thus distancing themselves from the rest of the Shuar people. As such, federation leaders need to legitimize their access to positions of power because their "access to external funding makes them vulnerable to accusations of political ambition and corruption" (Rubenstein 2007: 381). Rubenstein refers to the federation (in this case the Shuar Federation in Morona, FICSH) mostly as a means to access status and power because of its relationship with state institutions. However, the FESZCH could be more accurately described as a means to establish relationships and negotiate with the mining companies. Decisions related to the management and distribution

of funds from the mining companies caused possible situations of corruption, power struggles, and conflicts. The Asociación Shuar El Panguí and the Federation itself both experienced a crisis period: between 2007 and 2012, two different presidents were appointed to the FESZCH because of informal accusations and rumors of corruption from people within the communities. Most of the community and federation leaders that I interviewed about this event were very unhappy about the way the FESZCH and the association had administered funds received from the companies because they believed that they had inappropriately used these funds to develop the organizations instead of the communities.³⁸ The FESZCH's new, three-story building in Zamora evidences the overspending on the organization itself and the neglect of the communities, especially those located in the area of impact. Furthermore, there are also direct accusations of corruption, which imply that the money was not only inappropriately spent, but was actually stolen by the leaders who were in power at the time.

This type of conflict and division has prevented some communities and associations from having a direct working relationship with the FESZCH. For example, at the time of my research, the president of the Asociación El Panguí (who was related to a former president of the FESZCH who was accused of corruption and who is also an important actor in the negotiation with ECSA) was not always invited to the meetings at the FESZCH to discuss important issues, thus leaving this association without the possibility of participating in decision-making processes. Some leaders from communities that belonged to this association complained of a lack of attention from the FESZCH itself. The president of the Etsa community (part of Asociación El Panguí) claimed that the federation did not seem interested in supporting his community, probably because he had supported the former president of FESZCH, who had been accused of corruption.

Furthermore, although the Strategic Plan's agenda is clear about the federation's work and the leaders' discourse is well-intentioned, most of the community leaders in this study agree that the actual consequences of the federation's work still remain to be seen. While the president of the FESZCH praised the integrated work of the organization and the importance of the communities in its political structure, community members and leaders see no interest from the federation in their well-being. This feeling, coupled with the information and rumors that the

contributions made by the mining companies were only invested in the federation, have complicated the federation's relationship with the communities. Churuwia's president expressed frustration that the community has been forced to work independently, without the leadership or support from the federation:

Most of the work we do is directly from the communities, not from the federation. I can say that the federation has never helped us with funds or projects. Hopefully the federation helps the community to improve. The Federation of Bomboiza (referring to the FISCH in Morona Santiago) used to help us but the Shuar Federation from Zamora hasn't done anything for us.³⁹

Others, like the president of Etsa, complain that their relationship with the federation leaders is distant and that they have never actually visited the communities to understand their needs.⁴⁰ However, the federation is not the only organization to disappoint the community leaders; for example, in the community of Certero, which is affiliated with the Asociación Shuar El Panguí, the leader thinks that the association's leadership is not strong or coordinated enough. He argued that there is no budget to pay for salaries or offices, and that it would seem that the leaders are slowly quitting because there is not enough interest from the rest of the members. Furthermore, several leaders from different communities and from the Asociación El Panguí seriously question the legitimacy of the Asociación Kakaram, arguing that it has not been officially recognized by CODENPE and that it does not have the capacity to work for the communities.⁴¹

To conclude this section, two important points should be emphasized. To begin with, it is important to recognize that the communities believe that the federation neglects them in terms of social programs and infrastructure projects. This neglect appears to primarily stem from the federation's lack of resources and its inability to raise funds from other organizations independent of the mining company. The second point revolves around the presence of the mining company through Project Mirador and how it has greatly altered the dynamics of the Shuar Federation. The mining company's presence has generally stoked people's expectations of development. It has also contributed to an increase of power struggles and conflicts among leaders that ultimately create distance between the federation leaders and the communities and even divide whole communities.

As I hoped to illustrate throughout this brief ethnographic account of the Shuar Federation, there is great complexity in the internal dynamics of the federation and in its relationship with external actors. I follow this section with a conclusion of the main points discussed in this chapter.

4.5 Conclusions

In the summer of 2014, I attended a festivity organized by the FESZCH to celebrate Shuar culture and traditions; the event took place in the ethno-cultural center recently built in Timbara, 40 minutes outside of the city of Zamora. This center had been built with funding from a mining company operating close to Yantzaza, Kinross-Aurelian. While traveling to the center, I imagined a huge festivity with hundreds of people from the communities bringing typical food and *chicha*, handicrafts, and so forth. To my surprise, when we arrived at the center, we only saw about 60 people, including all the leaders from the federation and some political figures, such as the highest provincial authority (the *prefecto*). The immense Shuar traditional house built for these kinds of events was not even half full. Some typical food (including *ayampaco*, a traditional dish made of fish or chicken wrapped in green banana leaves) was distributed by a couple of people to the guests. A group of children performed traditional dances wearing traditional dress and an Amazonian music group that combined an indigenous rhythm (probably Kichwa) with techno-cumbia performed. Meanwhile, I pondered the absence of all the community members and leaders that I had gotten to know from the area around Tundayme. How can there be a Shuar cultural festival without the Shuar people? Later on, I asked the people and leaders from the communities about this event; some did not even know it had taken place, while others knew about it but decided not to go because the federation expected them to pay for their own transportation, which was too expensive for them. I was told that the previous year's celebration had been different because the federation had organized the event better. As I was leaving the center in Timbara, I wondered if the festivity was really designed to bring Shuar people together or if it was conceived as a political showcase; the presence of all the higher-level leaders from the federation, important provincial authorities, and the representative of Kinross-Aurelian (the mining company that had funded the ethno-cultural center) seemed to indicate that it was a political stunt. The federation was working to strengthen its political ties and looking out for

the interest of its leaders, but not necessarily the base and foundation of the organization: the communities.

This is an interesting episode that I think demonstrates the inability of the FESZCH to address the people in the communities, form part of a unified community, and work to build a group ethnic identity. While there is a strong discourse of engagement between the federation, the associations, and communities, this discourse slowly loses plausability when one analyzes its scattered, conflictive relationships and the weak ties that may exist between federations and communities. This was illustrated at an event that was supposed to be a celebration of the Shuar culture.



Festivity at the traditional Shuar House. Ethno-Cultural Center in Timbara

Photograph: Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the ways in which the Shuar Federation is structured and how it came to be as part of a gradual process of incorporation into the national mestizo society. A main focus of this chapter was to investigate if the organization has effectively engaged with the different levels of people that constitute it. I also wanted to investigate if the Shuar people of northern Zamora Chinchipe have been able to consistently participate in decisions related to Project Mirador through the federation. In conclusion, it is clear that besides the rhetoric and discourse of the FESZCH, there are also situations of conflict, disjuncture, and power struggles at all levels. However, these conflicts need to be understood as a not necessarily negative or ineffective part of a process of accommodation and constant negotiation between national mestizo society and the Shuar as an organized entity.

This constant struggle has been apparent throughout the history of the Shuar organization. At first, the organization capitulated to the colonization process in attempts to protect the Shuar identity and territory; later on, the organization began to concentrate its efforts on alleviating poverty and bringing development to the people by negotiating with the state and the mining companies. In both cases, decisions related to the best ways to benefit the Shuar people were not always consistent and the perspectives of the leaders from certain communities and associations have sometimes differed from those of the federation leaders. Furthermore, the political scenario within the organization has been complicated by access to certain positions of power and privileges that come from working closely with and negotiating with the companies.

Another important point related to conflicts between the federation and its communities has to do with access to resources and the opportunity to develop and implement projects. While the FESZCH had successfully managed to negotiate with ECSA for some time, it has now been left struggling for funds to just keep the federation running. This ultimately showcases some of the hardships that the organizations endure in order to lobby and develop contacts with different institutions. The difficulties that these organization face are primarily related to a lack of resources to travel, the fact that leaders usually do not get paid salaries, and leaders' perception that they lack the necessary tools to communicate their plans and strategies. Furthermore, these hardships illustrate the level of marginality of local indigenous organizations within

Ecuadorean society, which itself reflects the level of marginality of indigenous people in general.

To offer further insight about the conflicts and power struggles within the federation, it is important to highlight particular events. During the last months of my research (January-April 2015), a new president of the federation was elected, who seemed to be politically aligned with the previous leader. However, after several months, the people and leaders from the communities began to seriously question his authority. In this situation of turmoil, an ex president of the Federation, who had been previously accused of corruption and criticized for his relationship with the mining companies had returned to the political scene and was appointed again for the presidency by February 2016. Since his legitimacy was still in doubt a general assembly was called so that people could vote again and he was elected by the people from the communities in July 2016. He then criticized the previous president for having dismantled the federation and for selling all their newly-acquired infrastructure and equipment to pay debts. At the time of the conclusion of my research, their mission was to consolidate the federation and to regain the influence it had several years prior. It appears that the mining companies might again play a crucial role in achieving these goals.

In the next chapter, I concentrate on the construction of identity discourses and political practices of the Shuar communities. These are tied to the changing notions of territory and the transformation of the communities. They should also be understood as part of the way Shuar people interact with and insert themselves into the mestizo society.

Notes

¹ The discussion should also contribute to a more critical analysis of the indigenous movement in Ecuador in general, after a long period in which academia had tended to attribute mistakes within the indigenous organization to their weak position vis-à-vis the state (Martínez-Novo 2009; Warren & Jackson 2005).

² In the accounts of Father Vidal, who first travelled to Zamora in 1892 in order to start the new vicariat, there is a description of only one mestizo settlement with the name of El Carmen, a small village of eight houses, in what is now the city of Zamora (Izaguirre 1978, 74-75).

³ Even though the Federation was created with the support of the Salesians, by 1969, it had become completely independent of their influence and the organization had assumed complete responsibility for the defense and development of the group (Federation de Centros Shuar 1976, 118).

⁴ Interview president of Asociación Shuar Kakaram, November 2013

⁵ Interview president of Etsa, May 2014

⁶ In spite of this general respect for the Shuar culture, as Catholic missionaries, they actively worked to change some practices that were not considered civilized or moral, such as polygamous marriages.

⁷ The objective of the colonization process was to grant legal title deeds to land that was being used in productive ways (cattle raising or agriculture) and it was applied to the land of both *colonos* and the Shuar.

⁸ Interview Father Jorge Chumapi, President of the FESZCH at the time of my fieldwork, 2015.

⁹ Interview president of FESZCH, February 2013, January 2015; Interview president of FEPNASH-CH, February 2013

¹⁰ Interview president FESZCH, January 2015; Interview president of Certero, May 2014

¹¹ Interview Rubén Nanchap-former and current president of FESZCH, April 2016; Interview Father Chumapi, January 2015

¹² Interview president of FENOC, February 2014

¹³ Interviews president and vice-president of FESZCH, October 2013

¹⁴ Interview president and vice-president FESZCH, October-November 2013

¹⁵ In this case, I am referring to the last Strategic Plan that was created in 2016 by the latest authorities of the FESZCH, which is very simple and contains the main objectives and lines of action. However, during the time of my research, the president of the federation at that time would not give me access to the plan they had drawn, arguing that it contained private information. This document was actually called a Life Plan and it was designed as part of the work indigenous organizations in the Amazon region were implementing with ECORAE to bring development to the Shuar communities.

¹⁶ The *barrios* are formed when the communal territory of a *centro* is divided or split; even though the land still belongs legally to the whole community, the divisions might allow families to become more autonomous.

¹⁷ Interview president of FESZCH, November 2013

¹⁸ Interview president of Etsa, November 2013

¹⁹ Interview president of Churuwia, October 2013

²⁰ With the passing of the New Mining Law in 2009, much small-scale mining has been regulated and most informal miners end up doing what are considered to be illegal activities.

²¹ The CODENPE was the institution in charge of carrying out this process that allows the communities and their leaders to be recognized by the state.

²² Like the Federation, the Asociación Shuar el Pangui also elaborated a Strategic Plan for the years 2001-2015, which includes a diagnostic of the communities that belong to the Association and a plan of action for that period.

²³ Interview former president of Asociación Shuar El Pangui, January 2014

²⁴ Interview president of Asociación Shuar Kakaram, November 2013

²⁵ Interview president of Asociación Kakaram, November 2013

²⁶ Interview president of FESZCH, November 2013

²⁷ Interview president of the FESZCH, February 2013; Interview former president of the FESZCH, April 2016

²⁸ Interviews various leaders in FESZCH: president, vice-president and secretary, February 2013, October 2013, January 2015

²⁹ Interview president of FESZCH February 2013; October 2014; July 2014. Interview vice-president of FESZCH, October 2013. Interview former president of Asociación Shuar El Pangui, January 2014, Interview presidents of Santiago Paty and Paquintza, January 2015

³⁰ Interview vice-president of the FESZCH, November 2013

³¹ Interview president of Churuwia, June 2014

³² Interview president of the FESZCH, October 2013/January 2015

³³ Interview manager of the Department of Community Relations at ECSA, October 2013

³⁴ Interview president of the FESZCH, October 2013; Interview president and Leader of Education, July 2014

³⁵ Interview federation, July 2014

³⁶ Leaders from the FESZCH had been lobbying for the president of the Federation to later occupy the position of governor of Zamora, but did not succeed. However, he later went on to occupy an important position in the offices of the Ministry of Environment (Ministerio de Medio Ambiente) in Zamora.

³⁷ *Tsantsas* are shrunken human heads that the Shuar used to create after decapitating enemies during raids and then performing a ritual on their heads. The ears, mouth and nose were completely closed off by sewing them together in

order to prevent any evil spirit from leaving the dead person. This ritual is no longer practiced.

³⁸ Interview president of the FESZCH, January 2015; Interview President of San Andrés, January 2015; Interview President of Certero, January 2014

³⁹ Interview president of Churuwia, Nov 2013

⁴⁰ Interview president of Etsa, October 2013

⁴¹ Interview president of Asociación Shuar El Panguí, January 2014; Interview president of San Andrés, January 2015.

5

Changing Discourses and Fragmented Practices. The construction of indigeneity around Project Mirador¹

5.1 Introduction

In previous chapters, I introduced the discussion of large-scale mining in Ecuador from a political-economic perspective and went on to address some conflicts and mobilizations that had taken place in relation to Project Mirador. In Chapter 4, I focused on the complex dynamics of the Shuar political organization in order to understand its role in historical issues such as the protection of the Shuar identity and territory as well as in present conflicts related to large-scale mining in the northern part of the province of Zamora Chinchipe. In this chapter, I specifically discuss those identity discourses, strategies, and practices used mostly by the Shuar Federation and community leaders in order to understand the ways in which they deal with extractivism and position themselves in this context. The fact that I have focused on the discourses of the Shuar leadership might be considered a limitation in this work because they might not offer a deeper understanding of the daily experiences of the people in their communities. However, I specifically chose to concentrate on the leaders in order to contribute to the discussion on indigenous organizations in Ecuador, which has privileged studies on regional and national ethno-politics, leaving a gap in the relationship between organizations and communities and making leaders' community work less visible (Andolina 2003; Becker 2010; Sawyer 1997, 2004; Valdivia 2007; Yashar 2005; Zamosc 2004). Furthermore, while kinship and family ties are very important within the communities, positions of authority are actually legitimized through the formal Shuar organization, which has been adapted to a Western mestizo model. Thus, it makes sense to concentrate on the different levels of the Shuar political organization.

Large-scale mining is relatively new in Ecuador's history of resource extraction. While oil exploitation began in the 1960s and 1970s, not one single mining project has ever reached the phase of exploitation in

Ecuador's history. This, however, does not mean that there has not been interest from the state and foreign companies in developing projects, although the conditions to do so have not always been the best. For example, in the area of Intag, Imbabura, exploration started in the early 1980s but local resistance that began in the 1990s has made it impossible for companies to begin the exploitation phase (Avcı and Fernández-Salvador 2016). However, beginning in 2009, Correa's government passed the New Mining Law as part of an effort to actively promote and intensify extractivism in the mining sector (Cisneros 2009; Moore and Velásquez 2012). As described in Chapter 3, only Project Mirador has advanced to the phase of exploitation. If it continues to progress, in 2018 it would become the first open-pit large-scale mining project to start its operations in Ecuador.

Just as was the case in Intag, since the 1990s, the presence of mining companies in Project Mirador has generated resistance, conflict, and even negotiation processes among the local mestizo and Shuar population. Although indigenous people are often perceived to be the defenders of the territory and resources from extractivism, this has not been necessarily the case in Tundayme.² Mestizo organizations like the *Comité en Defensa de la Naturaleza, Salud y Vida de El Pangui* (Committee in Defense of Nature, Health and Life), created in 2006, have led the resistance against the mining company, especially from the city of El Pangui. They have received both support and opposition from the Shuar people in the area, leading to conflict and even violent confrontation. Thus, Mirador is an interesting case because, although there has been strong mobilization in the past, unlike the resistance in Intag (Buchanan 2013), these movements have been inconsistent and fragmented in many ways.

In the study of conflicts around mining, Bebbington and others argue that mining development usually generates a diversity of responses that go beyond simple resistance. These responses can range from open resistance and defense of the territory and resources to negotiating with the companies for benefits from the use of those resources, or even to a fair participation in decision-making processes (Bebbington et al. 2013; Bury 2002; Horowitz 2011; Velásquez 2012; Warnaars 2013). Furthermore, Bebbington et al. argue that not only is there a diversity of local responses to extractivism, but also in the emergence of social movements across different regions creating an "uneven geography of

social movements” (Bebbington et al. 2008c: 2881). The uneven geographical distribution of social mobilization is interesting in that it does not only reflect the distribution of mining itself, but also the local territorial dynamics that lead some movements to become stronger than others. Thus, as Bebbington et al. explain, it is important to map out social movements to understand the dynamics related to extractivism. Mirador is an excellent example of how diverse and changing social mobilization can be.

One of the key points of this chapter is that there are no unified political strategies of the Shuar Federation in Zamora Chinchipe. Rather, there is a range of diverse and changing discourses, positions, and actions which might appear to be inefficient in achieving their objectives, but which are actually quite logical when considered within the context of the everyday interactions between the leaders and a variety of external actors. In order to explain this individualization at the level of communities, associations, and even the federation, I will discuss some several aspects that are part of the territorial dynamics around Tundayme and Mirador and analyze them in a historical context: the historical conflictivity of the Shuar Federation (FESZCH) (discussed in Chapter 4) and the symbolic and material use of the territory as well as the conformation of the communities. The last two are tied to notions of modernity, development, and/or ancestry (Bebbington et al. 2008c). Furthermore, I will use the concept of intersectionality to explain that ethnicity is not an exclusive category. Being Shuar or indigenous does not imply a homogeneous condition in opposition to being mestizo. As any other social category, ethnicity is interlocked with gender, age, class, and other forms of identification, which might also be relevant to Shuar leaders as they define their positions and discourses.

The purpose of this chapter is to understand how the above-mentioned elements have contributed to shaping the discourses and political practices of the Shuar in relation to large-scale mining as part of a wider process in the construction of relations in the territory. This approach allows us to understand the reactions and diversity of positions of the Shuar leadership in the area not only as a direct result of the presence of the mining company in Mirador, but also as part of the complex construction of Shuar indigeneity in relation to the territory and its dynamics. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that the split discourses and constructions of identity are part of the ways in which the

Shuar respond to the outside world by improvising and negotiating with it; it is through these discourses and identities that the Shuar are able to make sense of reality and engage with it in the best possible way.

In the next section, I will engage in a theoretical discussion about ethno-politics, indigeneity, and positionality and how these concepts can be understood as part of the territory and its dynamics. In the third part, I continue with a discussion on identity discourses and strategies related to large-scale mining. In the final part, I discuss the composition and changes in the Shuar communities and the configuration of the territory.

5.2 Indigeneity, Positionality, and Territorial Dynamics

Most indigenous organizations in Ecuador have articulated themselves around their ethnic identity. The notion of a shared cultural heritage, a sense of exclusion from the mestizo society, and a national agenda is generally what has motivated indigenous people to defend their rights and to strategically organize themselves based on their cultural specificity (Selverston-Scher 2001). Political agendas vary and may include goals related to the struggle over territory, control over resource extraction (including claims over benefits and royalties from their extraction), demands for participation in decision-making processes, and even demands to be part of a plurinational state (Bolaños 2011; Castillo and Cairo 2002; Conklin and Graham 1995; Gros 1999; Sawyer 2004; Perreault 2003a, 2003b; Valdivia 2005; Warnars 2010, 2012). As discussed in Chapter 4, for many years, academics have analyzed the work and political agenda of the indigenous organization from a positive and mostly a-critical perspective (Martínez Novo 2009), preferring to focus on indigenous organizations' unified and cohesive strategies (Andolina 2003; Becker 2010; Jameson 2011; Sawyer 1997; Varese 1996; Yashar 2005; Zamosc 2004), while the reality is that there is great heterogeneity in their strategies in terms of objectives, discourses, and strategies. This is why it is important to investigate the local dynamics, the work of organizations at the community level, and the organizations' use of discourses and strategies. In the introduction, I explained that I use Hall's discussion on identities, understanding them as part of a changing process in which there is not an essence, fixed and continuous history, or a well-defined sense of cultural belonging.

In this chapter, I further elaborate on the concept of indigeneity as approached by Gabriela Valdivia. She suggests that the discourses and

practices that indigenous organizations utilize to represent themselves vis-à-vis the wider society are the result of different visions of what it means to be indigenous, including notions created by external actors but also by indigenous people themselves. Thus, this discourse on identity is adapted, imposed, and reformulated by the people and their organizations; it is also used as a political strategy (Valdivia 2007). She also utilizes the concept of articulation to show how indigeneity discourses and practices are positioned, as they “are actively interpenetrated in place by specific economic, political and cultural interests, in relation to subjects at multiple scales, as well as the conditions of possibility for their enunciation” (Valdivia 2005: 286). In other words, there is not a single or correct way to construct indigeneity as a response to changing material and social conditions. Furthermore, the ways in which indigeneity is constructed is a result of the interaction of several elements ranging from local experiences to the influence of market liberalism, environmental conservation, human rights, and so forth. In her analysis of the ways in which the Cofán and Secoya people have articulated their indigeneity and negotiated with companies in their territories, she discusses articulation as historically-situated, related to environmental and cultural claims, and including “a range of positions engaging multiscale discourses on ‘development’, ‘human rights’, and ‘citizenship’” (Valdivia 2005: 286). These discourses are not simply imposed by external actors; rather, indigenous groups themselves engage with and transform these discourses locally, allowing people to position themselves within different articulations of indigeneity and even shuffling between them.

Furthermore, in his research on the Cofán, Cepek criticizes views that tend to simplify indigenous positions and discourses as essentialized and instrumental to their objectives³ because it is assumed that they have been adopted from transnational images of what is expected from them⁴, as in the case of the notion of the “ecologically noble savage” (Cepek 2008: 197). He argues,

And it is not enough to analyze indigenous environmental rhetoric as a product of transnational identity politics. Neither simply false nor blatantly ideological, these approaches are limited in that they fetishize one aspect of a larger process. In the Cofán case, the emergence of conservationist attitudes and institutions involved the combined dynamic of material

practice, cultural logic, ecological change, and global politics. (Cepek 2008: 197)

As does Valdivia, Cepek understands the production of discourses and the construction of identities as part of a process that incorporates a variety of elements including the group's own knowledge and understanding of their world the consequences of the presence of oil companies, the subsequent awareness of the fragility of their environment, and global politics.

Following Cepek and Valdivia, I understand Shuar's indigeneity as a complex process that is situated in a specific context. In this case, their indigeneity revolves around Project Mirador and incorporates internal and external views and discourses on being Shuar. Unlike Valdivia, though, I will concentrate on views and discourses of modernity, development, and ancestrality, include the Shuar's changing relationship with the territory itself, and consider the transformation undergone by the communities. In this analysis, it is important to consider the contribution of decolonial anthropology to shed light on the way these concepts may be used by Shuar leaders as a political strategy. Several authors have already discussed the fact that, in order to be recognized and legitimized as political adversaries, indigenous leaders have had to learn and adapt to an acceptable political speech, thus leaving "the unacceptable" behind, although they do not necessarily discard it (Cruikshank 2005; Graham 2002). The notion of indigeneity as a political strategy itself may well be conditioned to what is considered appropriate and legitimate by a Western mestizo political and even academic scenario; for example, the way indigenous leaders use certain categories such as class, ethnicity, territory, race, and culture to gain access to resources and rights, as mentioned in the introduction (De la Cadena 2010; Hale 2004).

Viveiros de Castro (2004) further emphasizes that while indigenous people utilize categories and concepts that may be considered familiar or appropriate in a Western setting, it is necessary to acknowledge that there might be different meanings ascribed to such concepts. In the context of what he calls perspectivism (a set of ideas and practices about cosmology found throughout indigenous America that imagines a variety of subjective human and non-human agencies) (2004: 6), he argues that a real translation should not be to merely find synonyms between two languages, but rather to "avoid losing sight of the difference concealed

within equivocal ‘homonyms’ between our language and that of other species,” since we never really speak about the same things (2004: 7). These spaces of equivocation, as Viveiros de Castro calls them, are those in which there is not only a failure to understand but “a failure to understand that understandings are necessarily not the same, and that they are not related to imaginary ways of ‘seeing the world’ but to the real worlds that are being seen” (Viveiros de Castro 2004: 11). Ultimately, to achieve a good translation (which is one of the main tasks of anthropology), any alien concepts should be allowed “to deform and subvert the translator’s conceptual toolbox so that the *intention* of the original language can be expressed in the original language” (2004:4). Concepts such as territory and community as well as the ways in which they are used as part of leadership discourses might be particularly prone to having these differences and ambiguity in meanings because they have been shaped or conditioned in a context of colonialism; this, in turn, has allowed certain meanings or new constructions to surface while others are pushed down. Such considerations regarding the construction of indigeneity within the Shuar Federation can offer interesting insights and will also be explored in this chapter.

Finally, I will analyze the Shuar’s indigeneity as part of the territorial dynamics that have been transformed over time and as a result of the arrival of different actors in a given space. As discussed in Chapter 2, this concept refers to the forms of symbolic and material attachments that different groups build in relation to a given geographical space, as well as the interactions and relations of power with different actors in it (in this case, missionaries, *colonos*, the state⁵, the mining company, and NGOs) (Little 2001; Warnars 2013). By considering the articulation of indigeneity as part of territorial dynamics, I hope to avoid a simplistic understanding of the presence of the mining company and its effects on these dynamics over the last decade. In other words, the discourses created will be understood as a response not only to the effects of the mining company per se, but they also as a response to a series of previous interactions with other actors in the territory at different points throughout history.

5.3 The Shuar Federation: Discourses and Political Strategies

As Hall argues, identities are produced within the sphere of representation and discourse, but they also interact with material and concrete experiences. Therefore, there are several dimensions of identity that connect the symbolic realm to the discursive, political, and material levels (Hall and DuGay 2003). In this sense, identity discourses are part of or inform the ethno-political practices of a group and, as such, they become interesting objects of analysis. In the context of ethno-politics, discourses and strategies are related to the ways in which people see themselves and how they position themselves in relation to the larger society, especially within a highly-structured organization like the Shuar have. Thus, this section will concentrate on the ways in which the federation, the associations, and the communities articulate a discourse of being Shuar as a part of their political practices, especially in relation to the context of large-scale mining.

Furthermore, and as mentioned in an earlier chapter, there is not necessarily one unified and homogeneous position regarding large-scale mining at the level of the federation, association, or even community level. This diversity of positions and practices also evidences a variety of identity discourses in which important issues of ancestry, territory, and subsistence strategies play different roles in each discourse. Thus, the notion of positionality does not apply to the Shuar people as a whole or even to the federation itself; rather, it heavily depends upon the specific experiences and histories of the communities and the leaders. At the same time, discourses from both the federation and the communities inform positions regarding large-scale mining as well as specific practices of resistance and negotiation.

5.3.1 The Federation's Rhetoric and Political Strategies

The discourse of the FESZCH (Shuar Federation of Zamora Chinchipe) as an indigenous political organization touches on different issues important to the construction of a "universal" Shuar identity and to the definition of certain political strategies that are key to their demands of the state and in their struggle to have control over the mineral resources in their province. In their discourse, I see at least three different relevant points that complement one another: the first one revolves around the territory and the sense of being native to the land, a condition that makes

the Shuar its “rightful owners.” This discourse appeals to an ideal or past identity and it reinforces the notion of the Shuar as ancestral people who are, to a certain extent, the caretakers of the biodiversity in the forest; their use of language, cultural practices (like making and drinking *chicha*), and especially subsistence practices essential to the Shuar lifestyle like hunting, fishing, and gardening are posited as evidence of the Shuar’s “harmonious” relationship with nature and the environment. Most of the individuals that I interviewed recognized that most of these practices are not as common today as they were in the past, and there is some interest (mostly at the federation level) in revitalizing them.⁶

This universal dimension of the FESZCH’s discourse is very much shared by Shuar communities and their leaders and it allows people to express their membership in a large ethnically-based, “imagined community”⁷ (despite all the conflicts in the different levels of organization, between associations, and among communities). Nevertheless, I would argue that this dimension of the FESZCH’s discourse works more as a rhetorical tool that helps the organization in its political strategies than as part of a constant and everyday notion of being Shuar. In fact, most “ideas” related to being Shuar refer to the way the Shuar were in the past but which no longer hold true for most of the people from the communities. On the other hand, claiming ancestry to the territory is a strategy to make demands to the state and the mining companies in the area. Several of the FESZCH’s leaders argue that, given that there is so much natural richness in Shuar territory, they should be allowed to share in part of it. For the president of the federation, since the “mining companies are built on the Shuar’s aboriginal territory,”⁸ the company should negotiate with the federation to compensate for the impact of mineral exploitation by giving money directly to the organization (which did happen at some point in their relationship with two mining companies). In their view, although the Shuar have lost a great deal of territory in the last fifty years and the area around Project Mirador does not necessarily belong to Shuar communities anymore, the notion of having minerals beneath “ancestral land” should entitle them to direct financial benefits. In the words of the secretary of the federation,

The Shuar Federation is supporting the exploitation but in a rational manner, with high technology. In the XXI century, we cannot go on being

so poor, dying of hunger, all the while having all that gold, copper, and bronze beneath our land.⁹

Another important dimension of the FESZCH's discourse is expressed in terms of the Shuar's marginalization from Ecuadorean society and the state. The discourse on ancestry and territory, thus, becomes more of a racial, class-based identity discourse; the federation feels that Shuar communities in Zamora Chinchipe are extremely poor (according to them, more than 90 per cent of the population lives in extreme poverty) and have been historically marginalized precisely because they are Shuar.¹⁰ They see the poverty in which most Shuar communities are immersed as the result of a society and a state that excluded and displaced them from their original territories. Although today the Shuar might be friendly with mestizo people and even intermarry with them, there is also a generalized feeling of inequality and injustice that permeates their relationship with mestizos. This can be expressed at different levels, from community members complaining that the mestizos stole their land to federation leaders complaining that there is not a single Shuar in a position of authority in public offices in the province (which, for the most part, is accurate). This inequality is perceived as having its roots in racism, which is still present among the *colonos*; according to these racist ideas, the Shuar were and sometimes still are categorized as ignorant savages who are easy to manipulate and cheat and who do not deserve governmental support. The president of the FESZCH clearly illustrates the frustration of having been manipulated and relegated by the mestizo society when the *colonos* started settling the Amazonian territory, while the vice-president places great responsibility on a state that clearly abandoned the Shuar people:

The Shuar were the original owners of the Amazon region and Zamora... they were the aboriginal, original, and millenary owners. But we have now been displaced and relegated and our territory has been taken away...people were cheated into trading the land for things like shotguns, dogs for hunting, mirrors, lamps.¹¹

Then came the government authorities in their time, but they were not capable of attending to the most fundamental needs and demands of the Shuar people; they just never did. They denied us, abandoned us, they left us behind. They denied us our rights. Now we are in marginal and

relegated conditions, abandoned. You know, pardon me, that the Shuar have been living for a long time in conditions of misery, exploitation, hunger, all bad things have happened to us.¹²

This discourse recounts the social injustices that the Shuar have suffered and calls for adequate compensation, especially from the state. Thus, the Shuar seek to support the mining industry in Zamora because they see it as an opportunity to finally force the state to acknowledge that they have the right to benefits derived from mineral exploitation in their lands; they see this as compensation for operating in what used to be their territory and as compensation for the state's historical neglect.

The third dimension of the discourse utilized by the FESZCH revolves around their desire for development and modernity. This desire is tied to the fact that the Shuar live in poverty and have been excluded by the state and mestizo society; as such, the Shuar generally believe that development has not reached their communities (either through the action of the mining companies, or the state through *Ecuador Estratégico*, as will be discussed in Chapter 6). Although there is interest in revitalizing some forgotten cultural practices, the federation and communities feel that it is more important to be part of the development and modernity that has already reached the rest of the society. Having access to adequate housing, basic services, and good education in the communities are probably the most important indicators of development and progress to the Shuar, although they are not the only ones. According to the secretary of the federation, "The Shuar cannot go on the way they are, without housing, education, without clothes. What people want is to live well, have a good cell phone and a good car, why not?"¹³ These desires not only revolve around meeting basic needs, but are also related to being part of a mestizo society and its images of consumption and modernity. As several leaders expressed in the interviews, they believe that the mining industry can help insert the Shuar people into the national society and that the mining companies are responsible for helping the Shuar communities to develop (Various interviews-leaders, 2013). As such, for the FESZCH, mining is tightly linked with well-being and progress; unsurprisingly, this notion has informed the way that the federation has approached mining companies. Nevertheless, the relationship between the Shuar and the most important mining companies in the province (ECSA and Aurelian Kinross) has not

always been simple, as discussed in other chapters. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the relationship between the Federation and *Ecuador Estratégico* is also complex, and both leaders and community members have been disappointed by this governmental entity.

While it is simpler for the FESZCH as an organization to have a unified and official discourse and homogeneous strategies in relation to large-scale mining, the situation at the association and community level is quite different. Leaders at the community level do not always hold the same position towards mining, and they also use a variety of discourses and visions of what being Shuar should be. In the next section, I will discuss these discourses.

5.3.2 Identity Discourses and Political Practices in the Communities

The universal dimension that is part of the rhetorical identity discourse within the federation is also present at the community and association levels. In these contexts, this discourse might involve more detailed notions of the everyday life (as it used to be), especially as it stands in contrast to mestizo identities. This discourse especially revolves around shared practices and ways of living, including hunting and fishing, making and consuming *chicha* (traditional drink usually made with manioc), eating *ayampaco* (traditional fish dish), and, of course, speaking Shuar. These practices have an important symbolic value because they were passed down from generation to generation. Many Shuar spoke about their ancestors being present in the territory for a long time, affirming that they have been there “*desde las primeras épocas*” (from the beginning) or at least 200 years. Different community leaders frequently used the phrase “*Somos vividores*” to describe themselves, referring to the fact that their families had not migrated from other parts of the country, like the *colonos* coming from the highlands have. Of course, this discourse gives them a very strong sense of belonging and of being the “rightful owners of the territory,” unlike the mestizos who had recently migrated.

Another important dimension of this discourse revolves around the Shuar’s traditional subsistence practices, which are considered to be essential to their lifestyle and are understood as evidence of their harmonious relationship with nature and the environment. Traditional Shuar subsistence practices revolving around hunting, fishing, and gardening are considered to be non-harmful activities that do not destroy

the forests, unlike many of the *colonos*'s practices. The indigenous people live off the forest, so they must protect it to ensure their own survival. As one of the leaders from the community of San Andrés said, "Going to the mountain is like going to the market, but no money is needed."¹⁴ However, during my conversations with members and leaders in the communities I understood that these discourses were nostalgic; they seemed to appeal mostly to an ideal or past identity that some of them would like to recover. Generally, the Shuar themselves recognize that such discourses do not reflect reality or are not practical anymore (except in the case of a few communities which oppose any kind of mestizo influence). These discourses are also closely related to the cultural changes the indigenous communities suffered when the *colonos* started settling the Amazonian territory, which is seen as a violent process through which they lost much of their territory.

Nevertheless, the Shuar's concept of their own identity is far more complex and subtle; it is also strongly characterized by the consequences of the relationships that the Shuar have had with different actors over time, including missionaries, *colonos*, government institutions, and, more recently, the mining company. Beyond the rhetorical use of a universal Shuar identity that might help the federation and even community leaders support some of the claims that they have made in defense of the Shuar people or territory, the way people actually enact their Shuarness is quite different.¹⁵ In their daily routines, Shuar people engage with a variety of spaces that force them into the mestizo lifestyle in every sense, from working in the mine to attending school and negotiating with mostly the mestizo local authorities. All of these interactions inundate the Shuar with objects and symbols that are far removed from those nostalgic notions of being Shuar. Leaders also belong to different interlocking identity categories in terms of age, status or subsistence strategies and even geographic location, as will be discussed in the following sections. Thus, the discourses in the communities are more real in the sense that they are related to actual everyday life decisions regarding the community's future and its relationships with certain actors like the mining company. I have decided to describe these varying discourses as positions on a flexible continuum; on one extreme of the continuum, the discourses are extreme with very adamant and strong positions on ancestry and resistance, while on the opposite extreme the discourses have very practical notions of modernity and

development. Generally, communities whose leaders conceptualize Shuariness in terms of the lifestyle of their ancestors and which claim that they still carry on these traditions are located in areas closer to Tundayme and Project Mirador, where the links to the territory are stronger than in communities closer to El Pangui. Such leaders are usually part of the communities located in the area of direct influence of the mining project, which have had more direct contact with the company itself and may have engaged with or have more knowledge of conflicts related to the project. Interestingly, the leader of one of the communities (Etsa, closely located to the other two that are also in the area of direct impact) is ideologically positioned at the other extreme of the continuum: he is more interested in working and negotiating benefits for his community. This fact is precisely what triggered my interest in analyzing not only the varying content of the discourses on identity, but also understanding the process through which these discourses were being shaped and the effect they had on the community leaders' political practices. If we understand that Shuar identity is being constructed and understood differently within the community itself, then it is not surprising that the political claims made by the Shuar leaders and communities are also different. However, there are also cases in which identity discourses are not necessarily expressed through specific strategies or actions.

Ancestrality and Resistance vs. Progress and Modernity

The community of Yanúa is located on one of the extremes of this continuum while Santiago Paty and Etsa are located on the other extreme. As is shown on the map of this area, Etsa and Yanúa belong to the parish of Tundayme and are located within the area of direct impact of Project Mirador; Santiago Paty belongs to the parish of El Guismi and is located further from Mirador. Given their proximity to the project, both Etsa and Yanúa are more likely to be affected by any kind of conflict related to the presence of the mining company. However, their location might also be advantageous because these communities are located closer to the company's community relations office.

Very much like the universal dimension of the discourse on being Shuar, the leader of Yanúa and his brothers have created a concept of identity related to the notion of ancestrality, traditional subsistence practices, and the territory's value. From their perspective, the traditional

Shuar lifestyle offers the people in the communities the well-being they need and, for that reason, they do not seek external aid from the company or government institutions. They are proud of the Shuar identity and their cultural practices, and they insist that they maintain most of their traditional cultural practices: they still hunt, fish, drink *chicha*, speak Shuar all the time, and even practice religious rituals with the use of hallucinogens, a practice that other communities did not mention during my research. Whether or not people are truly involved in these cultural practices is unclear; in fact, the community leader worked outside the community as a “*jornalero*” (day laborer), working for people who have larger plots of land. Additionally, the community itself is too small to hunt regularly. Yet, the preservation of their cultural practices and the elements of nature that are important to them (waterfalls, rivers, forests, and native medicinal plants) is an important part of the discourse they use to resist the presence of the mining industry. For this family in Yanúa, the important practices that they learned from their ancestors are key to their community’s subsistence and well-being. Thus, their discourse is based on the defense of the Shuar territory precisely because it is directly linked to their subsistence practices and to the protection of their rituals, both of which are also related to the notion of permanence of the group. For them, it is important to guard the territory so that the animals do not leave and they can continue to hunt; they want to protect the waterfalls and palm trees in order to continue performing their rituals. According to their leader, “here we are ‘*vividores*’ since God put us here, we are millenary, we live here like a tree trunk. If you wanted to take down the tree you couldn’t, because it is so deeply rooted.”¹⁶

The notion of being *vividores* means that they have occupied the territory “forever,” unlike the case of the recent and “invasive” *colonos*. As this leader recalls, his father owned much of the land around Yanúa (although it is hard to know precisely how much land there was), but it was destroyed by the *Zigzeños* (from the town of Zigzig, in the highlands) when they invaded the land. According to him, in those times the Shuar were actually afraid of the *colonos* and, as such, many fled the area to escape from them. After *colonos* took the land from his father, he could not leave much to his children. “There is no more land for us to expand the community and that is why we want to get back that land...it is also part of the law.”¹⁷ It is clear, then, that the defense of the territory is not necessarily only linked with the presence of the mining company,

but it has its roots in old conflicts that are now being exacerbated by Project Mirador. It would seem that in the context of large scale mining with all of its related environmental and territorial consequences, older conflicts related to the land loss and the impact on the Shuar's subsistence practices are also being brought to light.

Between Discourses and Political Practices

In reality, besides hunting (which is probably done sporadically in the forests closer to the Cordillera del Cóndor) and some fishing in the Kimi River, the community grows plantain, cocoa, coffee, and fruit trees; however, given the limitations related to land size and adequate growing conditions (many farms might get flooded by the river throughout the year), the leaders from Yanúa (three siblings) as well as their brothers-in-law and other members of the family have been forced to look for paid jobs outside the community, including in the mining company. In fact, the three brothers worked in ECSA for several years and were fierce supporters of the company until they were fired (and not adequately compensated) for certain conflicts that began in relation to their rights as workers. When and how is it that the support to the company becomes a strong resistance to its presence in the area, demanding the company to leave so that they could recuperate their ancestral territory (which according to the leaders should include the Cordillera del Cóndor)?

In the early 2000s, the arrival of the Canadian company to the area of Tundayme and Mirador brought great expectations of development and progress to the mestizos and to the Shuar communities. Although some important groups were resistant to large-scale mining, many members of different Shuar communities started working in the company and became recipients of projects implemented by ECSA. The brothers from Yanúa also became part of the company's work force but, after several years, they were fired for fighting against what they saw as unjust treatment and false promises made by ECSA. One of them stated in an interview, "There was this month in which we had to work from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and for the extra hour they would pay us 30 or 50 cents...when we left the company, they paid us \$400 dollars for compensation after ten years of work, so, because of those mistakes that the company made, we have opened our eyes and our mind..."¹⁸

However, the discourse of resistance itself was actually created after leaving the company. The discourse developed in the context of new

relationships established with a variety of external actors who were working in the area in open activism against the mining company. While it is not clear when and how these relationships were established, it is important to understand that Yanúa and its leaders became part of a wider network of resistance which included strong organizations such as *Acción Ecológica*, INREDH and Ecumenical Commission on Human Rights (CEDHU—*Comisión Ecuménica de Derechos Humanos*). This network also includes mestizo activists from Quito and Azuay who were part of other resistance organizations such as the Assembly of the People of the South (*Asamblea de los Pueblos del Sur*) and even Shuar activists from Morona Santiago and the Asociación Shuar Kakaram (whose president declared his opposition to mining since its creation). In fact, Yanúa's main leader supported a lawsuit presented by *Acción Ecológica*, INREDH, and CEDHU in a collective action against Project Mirador because of the company's violation of nature's rights. While the group did not win this lawsuit, it actually became an international claim that was taken to the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (CIDH—*Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos*).¹⁹

The discourse used by the leaders in Yanúa shows open resistance and opposition to the company. Nevertheless, their activism and actions were not echoed in other communities and the resistance has been unable to gather further Shuar support for this discourse. In fact, the main leader in Yanúa insisted that he was alone in his resistance and that he did not really have the support from neighboring communities like Churuwia, another member of Asociación Shuar Kakaram (which itself was actually created to oppose mining). Thus, many communities remained quite ambiguous in their position towards mining and the company, and many Shuar people simply disagreed with and criticized open resistance; this is even the case of family members in Yanúa who currently work in ECSA and were critical of the leader's activism.

While the leaders from Yanúa had been in contact with organizations from outside the area, in one of my last visits to the field, I discovered that they had joined CASCOMI. Even though CASCOMI was created by mestizo *campesinos* (peasants) from the area around Project Mirador to defend their land from the company or at least to force the company to adequately compensate them for the land already sold, several Shuar leaders had also joined this organization to support the effort to defend the land and territory. As part of their strategy, CASCOMI pushed for

some of their members' land to be considered part of a Shuar community (even though none of that land belonged to any of the Shuar communities at the time) to be able to protect it as ancestral territory.

While CASCOMI had the support of Churuwia and Yanúa, in reality the only Shuar leader who actively participated in all of this group's meetings and protests against ECSA was Yanúa's leader. However, on several occasions he expressed his dissatisfaction with the work that was being done. Apart from feeling manipulated at times (especially in the protest in the town of San Marcos where he was left alone with the people from Yanúa), he felt that CASCOMI's objectives were different from theirs: while Asociación Kakaram was demanding that the company leave Mirador so that the Shuar could reclaim their ancestral territory in all of Cordillera del Cóndor, while CASCOMI was interested in defending a specific area that affected the mestizos' land and in securing adequate compensation from ECSA.²⁰ In the end, the presence of Shuar activists in this organization would become even weaker and more disperse after the tragic death of Yanúa's leader in December of 2014. He was murdered at the end of 2014 and his death became a symbol for some activists and leaders participating in resistance against the mining company. While in the media and on social networks there have been accusations made blaming the company and even the state for wanting to silence an anti-mining leader, local versions are varied. What is clear for some community leaders, though, is that groups like CASCOMI and other activists had put this leader in the spotlight, turning him into the voice of these organizations and thus putting him in danger (conversation with presidents of Etsa and San Carlos, January 2015).

Progress and Modernity: The Communities of Etsa, Santiago Paty, and San Francisco de Paqintza

Although there is a generalized conception of the Shuar identity based on "ancestrality," the use of the Shuar language, and certain specific cultural practices, leaders of several communities on one extreme of the continuum have actually developed a discourse based on particular notions of progress, modernization, and development. All three communities discussed in this category belong to the Asociación Shuar El Pangui. They also share a position of support of the mining company and are not really interested in claiming back any indigenous territory;

rather, they concentrate on acquiring well-being and good living conditions for the people in the communities, becoming entrepreneurs, and getting involved in productive projects and even industry. Thus, their discourse about being Shuar does not revolve around maintaining a link to the ancestral way of life, but rather to becoming a modern Shuar person who is capable of building a future for him/herself. In this case, being Shuar is expressed not only in cultural but primarily in material terms: they see their communities as poor and their people as uneducated, and they are forced to compete with the mestizo society. As one member of the community of Etsa stated, the Shuar people may have land and large farms, but that is not enough to have a decent standard of living, “Nature may have a lot of richness, but we don’t have the money to do anything.”²¹ Or as the leader in Santiago Paty stated:

...there is much water in the Amazon region and we grow anything we want, but we also need to live and have the best life, have a normal life, have a life with all the benefits. The Shuar also want to have a good house, a good business, to start their own business, to be entrepreneurs and for businesses to open their doors to us.²²

According to this discourse, it is very important to turn the communities into modern spaces with all basic services (electricity, water, and sewage) and to help the younger generations access education. They recognize they cannot live as their ancestors did anymore, so they instead wish to adapt to a more modern, mestizo society. As such, leaders in this community negotiate with the state institutions and the company in order to try to obtain such benefits for their communities.

The leaders of Santiago Paty and Paquintza are quite young, and this seems to influence their conceptions of being Shuar. As one of them explained, younger people are more interested in building things for the future of their communities; they want Shuar people to become entrepreneurs, have small businesses, and think about progress and development. This implies the need to be part of an institutional structure and to have knowledge of the logistical and political processes at the local level (parishes, municipality, and provincial authorities) in order to be able to obtain real and concrete benefits. For example, the leader from Santiago Paty has a clear view on development. In our interview, he compared his development-related accomplishments in Santiago Paty (creation of a school, a community house, and access to

electricity) to the reality of many communities in the neighboring province of Morona Santiago (where he is originally from); he said: “This is nothing like Morona Santiago; over there, it is sad: no roads, no electricity, no changes at all.”²³

While in Santiago Paty the community’s limited land (1 hectare, as indicated in Chapter 4) can be a serious limitation to any kind of project, in Paquintza limitations are related to the global title deed. After the community land was dismembered, there has been an interest from the FESZCH and certain communities to recuperate the lost territory. However, the president of Paquintza and other young members of the community are not interested in recuperating the community title deed to Paquintza²⁴ for various reasons. To begin with, they foresee great conflict with the mestizo people who bought land when Paquintza was divided. Second, while they agree that the notion of recuperating a global territory is a way to claim what used to be an “ancestral” territory, it might also become an obstacle to people fulfilling their needs in modern times. The fact that individual title deeds allow people to use their land in the way it best meets their needs (for example, mortgaging it or using their land as guarantee for a loan) is proof that individual deeds are more useful than the communal title deed. In his words, the community land belongs to everyone and no one at the same time, making reference to the fact that it cannot be used by any member individually and no one can individually claim it. The value of the “ancestral” community territory then becomes irrelevant in a context of progress and modernization.

In this context, communities like Santiago Paty, Etsa, and Paquintza, have considered the presence of the mining company to be positive, especially in terms of the implementation of important infrastructure projects, the construction of highways, and the creation of schools. Thus, the discourse about development is tightly linked to mining in Mirador. While there might be a certain concern regarding environmental impacts, the leaders are mostly worried that the company might finish mining before it develops productive projects in the communities. Just as the FESZCH, leaders in Santiago Paty and Paquintza state that their communities supported the mining company with the hope that it would bring progress to their members; in this case, people are not rejecting large-scale mining per se, rather they are disappointed in the company’s treatment of the Shuar people. Thus,

their disenchantment is more related to unfulfilled promises than anything else.



Leaders of Santiago Paty and Paquintza during an interview

Photograph: Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

Negotiate to Progress

At this point, it is important to mention that part of the notions of progress and modernization is also the ability of these leaders to successfully negotiate for their communities and actually obtain benefits from the company or the government. Contrary to Yanúa's position, the leaders from these communities are not interested in getting involved in any activism against the presence of the mining company; on the contrary, their administration has concentrated on inserting itself either into the bureaucratic machinery of the state or into negotiation processes with the company. For example, most members of the community of Etsa work for ECSA and are beneficiaries of productive projects implemented with the help of the company's department of community

relations. In the words of Etsa's president, once the decision to develop the mining project was made by the government, they had to take advantage of the company's presence and try to benefit from it, either by working for it or taking advantage of some small projects and donations to the community.²⁵ If before there were no sources of employment in the area, now 90 per cent of the families from Etsa work in the mining company. However, Etsa works closely with the company and is probably the only indigenous community in the area of direct impact of Project Mirador to develop important productive projects on a larger scale. For example, the company helped the community construct eight fish pools. It also helped Etsa install electricity in the community, a process that started more than two years ago until light posts were finally erected in May, ready to be connected to the general circuit.²⁶ According to a staff member of ECSA's department of community relations, it has actually become a "model community" in terms of motivation to collaborate with the company in order to develop community projects.²⁷



One of eight fish pools in Etsa

Photograph: Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

This has not been the case in other communities like Santiago Paty and Paqintza because the mining company does not seem interested in developing any ties with communities located in the area of indirect impact. While in the early years of the project, the Canadian administration implemented some projects in these communities, the Chinese company has not fulfilled those previously made development promises. For this reason, the leaders of these communities have concentrated more on establishing a relationship with state institutions as well as with the municipality. The president of Santiago Paty proudly showcases the results of his ability to negotiate and manage the relationship with the municipality so as to obtain specific benefits for his community: electricity, a school, and a community house. Furthermore, the leaders from both communities are involved in the Land Planning System (POT—*Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial*), a planning process through which urban and rural communities are incorporated into planning infrastructure and development programs.²⁸ Additionally, Paqintza's leader is very interested in selling some of the community's land (where he and his relatives have their farms) to ECSA so that they can use it as landfills; for him, this would be a good way to bring some material benefits to the community, although there is some concern around the issue of relocation and of keeping the community together.

Unlike Yanúa's case, the leaders of Santiago Paty and Paqintza are somewhat disappointed in the company not because of territorial concerns, but because of their lack of support of local development and productive projects in their communities; otherwise, these leaders appreciate and welcome the company, at least in terms of the employment opportunities it provides. This is actually a recurring discourse at all levels, from the communities to the federation: after being in the area for such a long time, the Shuar people generally feel that the company has not fulfilled their development expectations.

Ambivalent Discourses: The Community of Churuwia, San Andrés, and San Carlos Numpai

Compared to the communities located at each extreme of the continuum, there are other cases in which radical resistance and identity discourses are present but simultaneously tempered with ambivalent positions and actions towards the mining company. Although the leaders and members from these communities may have strong feelings about

the territory in which their communities are located, their position regarding the mining company is vague and somewhat indifferent. Furthermore, some of these discourses do not accurately reflect the reality of their communities.

In Churuwia, the community assigns a great deal of importance to the territory, probably because the kinship group has lived there for several generations (with some changes due to contact with *colonos*) and there is a clear feeling of belonging to the territory itself. The oldest brothers and leaders strongly affirm that their family has owned all the land around Tundayme and towards the mining project; they have not “come” from anywhere else because their ancestors have lived in the same territory for generations, even before the community was legally formalized. They explain the reason for living apart from the town of Tundayme in terms of the global title deed of their community, saying, “People from Tundayme are individual²⁹ and mestizos, and we are Shuar, that is why we cannot move or go anywhere else.”³⁰ If in Churuwia the territory is important because of the heritage and the ancestors, in San Andrés it is more about the value of the land itself. For its president, the land is the source of life because it provides not only the food to survive but also enough to sell and make money to address other needs. For the president of San Andrés, there is much value in having a house and a “*finca*” (farm) to grow their food and raise animals. He remarks, “it is the people who don’t have this that are poor.” In both cases, the communities fear that ECSA might take their land: “we are bothered by the Chinese because they want to buy our land and relocate us somewhere else; but we are not going to let them because the Shuar have been the owners forever and we are not going anywhere.”³¹

Like Yanúa’s leader, the president of the community of San Carlos also claims ownership of the land that extends towards Valle del Kimi (close to ECSA’s campground), thus making the Shuar the owners of the territory around Mirador. San Carlos is located closer to the community of Machinaza and the highway that leads to El Panguí, located across the Zamora River; this means that it is also part of the area of direct impact of the mining project. This leader is particularly concerned about the land that, according to him, had belonged to his family for thousands of years. When the *colonos* arrived to the area, they illegally took some of the land that belonged to San Carlos and still occupy it to this day. To him, it is important to defend the land and the territory because they are sacred,

the source of all natural richness, and the means to secure the community's livelihood. In this sense, they need the land and would never accept to give it away or sell it as the *colonos* have done.³²

Despite these strong discourses related to territory and land, the positions and actions of some of these leaders towards mining are quite ambivalent or even indifferent; in some cases, the decision to support large-scale mining seems to be ultimately based on whether the company delivers on its early promises of development, even though the given community's anti-mining discourses might be quite strong. For example, Churuwia's leader openly rejected the presence of the mining company, but he rarely showed up in any event related to the resistance movements, as Yanúa's leader did. He constantly complained that the projects that the company had developed in the community (productive projects with chickens and guinea pigs) were small and irrelevant and were not significant enough to contribute to real development. However, he also stated that he would consider signing an agreement with ECSA if the company offered something that is a priority for them: a bridge over the river and a road to the community. Thus, his rejection of the company seems to be more strongly related to its inability to fulfill the peoples' needs than to other considerations related to the protection of the territory and the environment. For San Carlos' leader (who has not lived in the community for several years), the problem is not so much related to the presence of the company itself, but to the way the royalties and earnings should be distributed; from his perspective, royalties should be given directly to the Shuar people as a form of compensation. This statement, however, was quite different from the radical position he had when I first started doing fieldwork in the area in February 2013. At that time, he was very critical of any kind of external influence that could change ancestral practices and, thus, he saw the presence of the mining company as a negative influence for the Shuar people.

While some of the identity discourses and the way the leaders of these communities have interacted with the mining company might be similar to those already described, my intention is to show that, in the latter cases, there seems to be less consistency. In some cases, leaders and members of communities are not happy about the mining company not necessarily because its presence represents a threat to their territory or their way of life (which has become "*amestizada*"³³," in words of Churuwia's leader), but mostly because the company has not fulfilled its

promises of community development and aid. Thus, their discourse and position towards the company can easily change according to the changes in benefits they receive from it. For this reason, Churuwia's leader is quite inconsistent in spaces or moments of resistance and San Andrés leader has never actually collaborated in any way with other leaders who have assumed a more activist position. Ultimately, it seems that many leaders would gladly work and cooperate with the company if they saw real progress and development for their communities.

Furthermore, in these cases, there does not seem to be a connection between strong feelings about the territory and the land, desire to recuperate lost territory, and a position that demands protecting the land from large-scale mining. While some people are concerned that the land might be taken away and they might be relocated, the communities have not made any significant demands to the company regarding environmental impacts from mining; also, they have not expressed any interest in formally protecting what they consider to be their "ancestral" territory. In San Andrés, for example, as much as its president talks about the value of land, most people living in the community do not have enough space (since the land for the whole community amounts to only 1 hectare) to cultivate or raise animals; as a result, they are forced to rent land outside of the community to farm. The only person who has enough land is the president himself; he had previously purchased the "*fincá*" from a family member when the land of Paquintza was divided and decided to donate one of a total of 29 hectares to create a community. Furthermore, there are strong contradictions between those discourses in the communities related to traditional subsistence practices (such as the notion of the forest being a sort of "supermarket" for them) and the reality of their current lives. In fact, most people in San Andrés migrated from communities in Morona Santiago because they were isolated and too far into the jungle, preventing them from having access to roads, jobs, and schools for their children. If such Shuar people still engage in any kind of traditional subsistence practices, it is probably only when they occasionally return to their communities. The reality of living in San Andrés in Zamora is quite different from their discourses related the land, territory, and their traditional way of living.



Community of Santiago Paty, located on the edge of the highway

Photograph: Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

5.3.3 Final Thoughts on the Discourse Continuum

Before drawing some basic conclusions about the description and analysis of discourses and practices of the Shuar community in the context of large-scale mining, it is important to emphasize that, even though this typology or continuum helps us to understand and categorize the variety of discourses and political practices among the Shuar, it is by no means a clear-cut definition of the whole reality and diversity of positions and forms of identity that the Shuar have and enact in their everyday life in the communities. As Valdivia (2005) and Hall (1990) argue, the articulation of identities, discourses and positions are constantly changing as people adjust to new situations and actors, including the new company's administration, new leadership in the federation, and even new community leaders. Furthermore, although in my research I did incorporate the opinions of other community members, I primarily focused on the leaders' positions and opinions. Even though the leaders' authority is very strong and they ultimately guide the direction of the whole community, this does not mean that

other members may not have divergent points of view; these divergent points of view are precisely one of the sources of conflict within communities, as we have seen through various examples.

The continuum described above shows that there is some correlation between the discourse of identity (which includes notions of development and well-being), the political practices and negotiation of the communities' leaders, and their relationship and experiences with different external actors. However, as stated above, discourses are enacted in multiple ways that are not always related to being Shuar, which shows that the intersection of identities blur rather than reinforce social categorization (Mollet and Faria, 2013: 123).

Younger leaders who were raised in communities close to urban centers and who attended mestizo schools evidently may not feel strong ties to forms of subsistence and lifestyles that are considered "ancestral" and traditionally Shuar and which are very much linked to different conceptions of land and territory. In the same vein, leaders who migrated to the communities in order to be closer to the highway and to the city of El Pangui value such access more than the symbolic meaning of living in their own communities located deep in the forest and with access to large swaths of territory. In the case of Etsa, Santiago Paty, and Paquintza, they support large-scale mining because they consider it to be the solution to many of the problems that are common to Shuar communities, such as the lack of access to basic services, issues of poverty, lack of education, etc. Very much like the Secoya and Kichwa cases analyzed by Valdivia (2005), being Shuar is expressed not only in cultural terms but mostly in terms of being marginalized, poor, uneducated, and in need of development and progress, all notions that are developed in opposition to a mestizo model of society (which to them stands as modern and developed). Thus, these leaders are interested in projecting themselves and their communities into a variety of spaces that go beyond the experience of a traditional Shuar community through entrepreneurship, education, and even sports.³⁴ Furthermore, the possibility of working in the mine or developing projects with the aid of the mining company or state institutions opens the door to different positions and discourses. In this case, being efficient administrators means that they can utilize the resources available to benefit their communities; thus, it would make sense to welcome large-scale mining since it can provide opportunities to

improve their lives in particular ways.

The discourse on poverty and marginality is also utilized by the FESZCH. Although many Shuar claim that they are the rightful owners of the territory, concerns for environmental degradation or cultural impact are not more important than the communities' social and economic needs or their views on modernity. Thus, support or acceptance of mining (as opposed to rejection of mining to protect the land) can be justified in terms of the benefit the communities receive and to which they feel entitled as a form of compensation for the exploitation of the riches in their ancestral territory. That same line of thinking also justifies the conflict between certain communities, the Federation, and the mining company when the communities believe that the company is not fulfilling its promises of projects, funds, long-term agreements, etc. The FESZCH and most of the communities in the research currently find themselves embroiled in such conflictive situations.

On the other hand, leaders who reject large-scale mining and the presence of the mining company have turned to ethnic/territory-based claims to justify their opposition to mining. However, while some of those communities might have strong discourses, they are also ambivalent in their positions and actions, as in Churuwía's case. To structure his demands, Yanúa's leader argues that protecting the environment and defending their ancestral territory are vital to the reproduction of the Shuar culture (Cepek 2008; Sawyer 2004). As such, Asociación Shuar Kakaram has been key in linking the few radical Shuar leaders (such as Yanúa's leader and an activist from Bomboiza, Morona Santiago) to other Shuar and mestizo activists and organizations. The alliance between these groups with CASCOMI, even if weak in terms of Shuar presence and participation, is probably the only currently active opposition movement in the area. The construction of a radical discourse against the mine and in favor of protecting the territory is crafted at the intersection of a variety of experiences and interactions with different actors. Strong positions of resistance seem to be based on a combination of experiences, including losing family land to the *colonos*, experiencing unfair labor treatment by the mining company, and being influenced by *Acción Ecológica* and their discourse on protecting the territory and land.

Notions of development, modernity, and ancestry have been included and reworked in the discourses of indigeneity (Valdivia 2005) used by the Shuar. These concepts are an influential part of the experiences of the Shuar's daily lives in their communities and of their changing relationship with the territory, *colonos*, and with a variety of external actors in specific contexts. In the description of the discourses used by the Shuar, I have emphasized the relationship between these concepts, their influence on leaders' and communities' positions on large-scale mining, and their influence on some of the strategies and practices the Shuar use to achieve certain goals. In the last section, I will explore some issues related to the composition and the experience of the communities as well as the relationship to the territory as part of a territorial dynamics.

5.4 Fragmented Territory and Communities

In an extractivist context, it is unsurprising that the local people vary in terms of the discourses, political practices, and positions that they adopt; however, my argument regarding the Shuar Federation as an integrated political organization is that, beyond the expected diversity of positions, they lack joint and engaged discourses, practices, and strategies of resistance or negotiation that might prevent them from achieving some of their objectives, and this particular situation is not necessarily common to all large-scale mining contexts. For example, unlike the context in Mirador, in Intag there was a diversity of positions. However, there was also a strong and consistent mobilization against mining. As Avci and Fernández-Salvador argue, "In Intag, despite the polarization the mining conflict created among the local population, the opposition groups constructed a territory-based project and identity that has allowed the movement to get stronger throughout the years" (Avci and Fernández-Salvador 2016: 920).

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there are several factors that may explain these diverse and individualized practices and discourses. These factors include (but are not limited to) the level of discord and power struggles within the Shuar political organization, their complex relationships and uses of the territory, and the transformation of the communities over time. In the following section of this chapter, I analyze the last two elements that, from my perspective, have favored

the fragmentation instead of cohesion of political discourses and strategies.

As the Shuar understand it now, the notion of community is very different from what it used to be only a century ago, before the missionaries arrived to the territory and highland mestizos continued the “colonization process” in the early 1960s. The missionaries were actually responsible for the integration of *centros* or communities into Shuar culture; previously, the Shuar had lived in scattered family groups that lived in large houses, sometimes including several wives and their children (Harner 1978: 73); they had no centralized form of authority among the various households (Rubenstein 2005). The community concept was introduced by missionaries in order to consolidate Shuar settlements and to educate the children in missionary schools (Rubenstein 2005). With the creation of the mission centers, the Salesians intended to give the Shuar a certain sense of community that the traditional or previous neighborhoods seemed to be lacking. While they were not really villages, they did provide a sort of a community center that included a school, a church, some houses, and even a health center (Salazar 1977: 27). The idea of the community or *centro* was further reinforced in the period of the *Ley de Reforma Agraria y Colonización* (Law of Agrarian Reform and Colonization) as a practical way to defend the land belonging to the Shuar from the *colonos* and to legalize it before the state. Thus, the notion of the *centro* was originally and arbitrarily established through a series of processes by external actors; today, the Shuar have had to maintain and adapt this imposed community structure in order to keep their land and identity.

In the area in which I completed my research, both the communities of Churuwia (close to Tundayme and located within the area of direct impact of Project Mirador) and Paqintza (close to the city of El Panguí and located within the area of indirect impact of Project Mirador) were legalized in the 1960s. In Paqintza’s case, the Salesian priests helped the siblings (who had inherited the land in the area) to legalize it under the Ecuadorean Institute of Agrarian Reform (IERAC—*Instituto Ecuatoriano de Reforma Agraria*, the government institution in charge of titling of land at that time).³⁵ The creation and legalization of communities (which really refers to the granting of legal land titles usually in the form of communal land) is directly linked to the defense of the Shuar territory,

given that their land was not considered productive by the state (in terms of farming or livestock) and could thus be taken over by the *colonos*.

The community has served different purposes in different historical moments; although this concept of community was imposed by missionaries as part of their quest to educate and “civilize” indigenous people, it eventually became a strategy to defend the territory and maintain some sense of ancestral ownership. In the 1970s, community organizations played an important role in development policies adopted by the government and NGOs; in other words, the notion of “development” was tied to the possibility of indigenous people establishing communities and being able to contribute to development projects with the help of external institutions (Troncoso 1999: 133). These efforts were part of the government indigenist policies that sought to transform indigenous groups that were considered archaic and backwards into “productive contributors to the sought-after national development agenda,”³⁶ as Bretón argues (Bretón 2013: 74). Furthermore, although the land in the communities had been legalized, there were still other additional processes that the communities needed to complete in order to legally be recognized as indigenous communities by government institutions such as the CODENPE. By completing these processes to legitimize the communities and obtain the title deed to the land, the communities were able to become rightful beneficiaries of the state, especially under the current government policies.

The adoption of this particular concept of community is yet another example of how the Shuar have had to find different political strategies to engage with the larger mestizo society. The Shuar’s relationship with mestizo society is affected and shaped by external dynamics in which development plays a definitive role (Bretón 2013; Troncoso 1999). So, however conflictive or divided the communities I visited might be, they are important spaces through which the Shuar insert themselves into the logic of development and into the mestizo society; communities also serve as a means to establish a relationship with government institutions in order to demand benefits for themselves. These dynamics became clear as I spoke to several people in different communities; although they mentioned the cultural importance of living together, they further emphasized the need to be organized according to this particular structure in order to benefit from the state. In Etsa, for example, the brother of the president explained that he considers it important to live

like Shuar (work the land and speak the language) because they were born Shuar; however, he and his brother's main goal is to develop a modern community that provides all the basic services and benefits of more urban settings. For the president of Certero, people who live alone (on individually-held land plots) miss out on the possibility of benefitting from community life, especially in terms of infrastructure: "to have a communal house, electricity, a small soccer field, that is why we work together, to obtain things and benefits for ourselves."³⁷

The Shuar's engagement with the outside world has also been evidenced by the fact that the mestizo way of life has become a model to be followed in the communities, which, in turn, has caused conflicts, power struggles, and divisions in them. Similar to many other indigenous communities throughout the Amazon region and Ecuador, the dynamics of the Shuar communities are complex. Several authors have studied other Amazonian groups in Ecuador who have also suffered the effects of missionary contact, pressure from the *colonos*, and extractivism. Valdiva (2007) discusses an interesting case in which different indigenous groups in northern Amazonia in Ecuador have reacted to and negotiated in different ways with oil companies as part of the demand against Chevron. Similarly, Cepek (2008) analyzed a case in which a group of Cofanes were forced to migrate to a new territory in order to avoid the effects of oil companies' extractive projects in their ancestral lands. Other authors have focused on a diversity of issues affecting indigenous peoples' lives. For example, the political organization and live threatening situations like drug trafficking among the Secoya (Vickers 2003); the Kichwa engagement with ecotourism (see Hutchins 2007); and the process of construction of a Kichwa identity and the relationship to the language use (see Uzendosky 2014). Although the Shuar in Zamora Chinchipe may not have suffered such dramatic interactions with external actors, they have clearly been drawn to a much more urban and mestizo way of life. Many Shuar people migrate to urban areas or live part-time between the community and other towns in order to access education and jobs. This is the case of the community of Etsa, in which most community members (especially mothers and their children) spend much of their time in nearby towns such as Tundayme and El Pangui so that their children can attend school there. In cases like Churuwia, where whole families (the descendants of one son) have lived in Tundayme for decades, the only thing that really ties them to the

community is their farms, since they had never experienced life in a community setting as such. In these cases, one might argue that, in spite of the place of residence, the Shuar still deeply value and try to maintain kinship ties; however, reality demonstrates that members who are not linked to their communities have divergent visions of their futures and those of their families, potentially resulting in conflicts. For example, throughout the time of my research in Churuwia, one of the siblings living in Tundayme constantly challenged the authority of his brother, the elected president of the community. At one point, each sibling asserted himself to be the elected, legal president of the community, each claimed affiliation to a different association, each had a different vision of well-being for their community and, as such, each held a different position towards large-scale mining and Project Mirador.

In cases in which children have left the community to study in nearby towns or cities, it is very unlikely that they will ever return to be part of the community's day-to-day experience. In fact, the decision to leave was precisely because they were already looking (as their parents did) for a way to insert themselves into a mestizo society that values a certain kind of education and training. In most communities, the children did not have the basic amenities required to study (i.e. electricity) and this, of course, was considered an obstacle to their progress.

As described in the cases above, kinship ties are still considered to be the basis for the continuity of the communities. However, in those communities created after Paquintza was divided several decades ago, the situation is quite different. This division resulted in the fragmentation of families and the loss of a common land that belonged to specific kinship groups. Santiago Paty and San Andrés are no longer inhabited by the original extended families that owned the land. Rather, these communities are composed of a hodgepodge of nuclear families, most of whom are immigrants from Morona Santiago or other places, who bought plots of land from the original Shuar families.

The ways in which these communities have been created entails a range of implications. To begin with, it is clear that in San Andrés and Santiago Paty, the community is not equivalent to a kinship group. Second, the notion of a communal territory does not have any meaning. Finally, the land is not considered to be important to the community's well-being because it is so small that most community members are forced to look for work elsewhere in the mining company, as laborers, or

as farmers on rented land. Although most of the members of these communities had originally moved from the north leaving their own communities and access to extensive land plots behind, they are not considered a priority or part of their subsistence. In fact, most people migrated from Morona Santiago because their own communities were located so deep in the forest that they had trouble accessing schools and roads. In this case, the value of the communal land or territory is secondary to the value of being close to urban areas that offer other kinds of services. For the leader in Santiago Paty, the “backwardness” of the jungle is quite clear. He explains, “It is very sad in the communities located deep in the forest; there is no electricity, no roads, or anything. Now that we are in contact with civilization, we have changed some practices, we have started to get dressed.”³⁸ Thus, well-being is not necessarily understood in terms of a sense of belonging to an ancestral territory, but rather in terms of modern development, infrastructure, and access to certain services.

5.4.1 Changing Notions of Territory

As such, it is important to link the discussion about the changing composition of the communities to the notion of territory in order to understand the lack of integration of the Shuar people’s discourses and political strategies. It is important to discuss the complex process of creation and the subsequent division or fragmentation of the communities in terms of territory. With the arrival of the *colonos* to the area, the Shuar lost much of their land either because they left the area in an effort to avoid having contact with the mestizos, or because they fell victim to some type of unfair land exchange or sale as discussed earlier (Rubenstein 2005). At this time, the Shuar’s different concepts of and meanings attached to the land and the territory clashed and the hegemonic view of state ultimately prevailed.

In communities like Churuwia (which was the largest community in my study in terms of size), community members make reference to the original territory that extended from what is now Tundayme to the mine in Mirador; all of this land belonged to their grandfather:

Churuwia is formed by the Sanimbia family and my father, who is the chief—thanks to him, we all have land and he is the only owner of the land on which we live until today. Otherwise, the land would have gone to the hands of our relatives who once left the area and now came back. All

this land belonged to my grandfather. For example, the military detachment was my father's farm and my grandfather Mashendo used to live where the mining concession is now.³⁹

Currently, Churuwia occupies around 3,800 hectares east of Tundayme; this area is across the the Kimi River while the military detachment and ECSA's campground are located to the north of Tundayme. Although the land in Churuwia was divided a few years ago to allow a part of the extended family form the community of Etsa, the community title deed has remained the same and, thus, this community is still the largest in my research. Paquintza's case is different; after it was divided, the global title deed was annulled and some of the land was given to the state and some was sold to mestizos (in fact, it was a mestizo who found a way to claim some of the territory to sell a portion of it to the mining company).⁴⁰ While the original community had around 1,200 hectares, Paquintza now only occupies around 350 hectares. and the new communities range from 18 to 1 hectares each.

Ultimately, all these changes were brought about by the incorporation of the Shuar into Ecuadorean national life and have forced them to look outside their communities in order to ensure their well-being. For several decades, their livelihoods have no longer depended upon the use of resources within their territory; unlike their ancestors, they now need the means to participate in a market economy to satisfy basic needs like buying food they cannot produce in their communities, paying for transportation, and sending their children to school.

The type of loss and fragmentation of territory and communities that the Shuar have experienced is not something new in the Amazon region. The Shuar were not the only people to lose their land because of the colonization of the region that began in the sixties; for example, other indigenous groups have also suffered the effects of land loss and territory encroachment related to oil exploitation in the northern part of the Ecuadorean Amazonia. Precisely because the life and well-being of many indigenous communities has been threatened in so many ways, protecting the territory has been a chief priority on the agenda of many indigenous organizations in the Amazon region. The fight for the territory is key in the defense of indigenous rights as well as a fundamental part of the ethno-political strategy of these groups (Cepek 2008; Little 2001; Sawyer 2004; Vickers 2003).

At this point, it would be interesting to compare the Shuar's case to others in which the territory has played a predominant role in building a strong discourse about indigeneity. In his study of the environmental discourses and the role of conservationism in the everyday lives and political projects of the Cofán people, Cepek argues that the connection between identity and traditional territory has oriented "their participation in a process of self-determination that bases political rights on conservationist commitments" (Cepek 2008: 196). Cepek's study is interesting because he studies the Cofane's environmental discourses both at the level of political strategies and at the level of community life; both of these discourses argue that the protection of the territory is fundamental to achieving what they understand as well-being. As their ancestral community Dureno became surrounded by oil fields, the Cofanes' traditional subsistence practices became limited as game and fish grew scarcer. In order to continue their way of life, they decided to resettle the community 200 kilometers downriver. The new community, Zábalo, "...is clean, quiet, isolated and surrounded by game-filled forest" (Cepek 2008: 207). This decision was based on a notion of identity that values and is constructed upon a way of life that is dependent upon the forest. This way of life and identity discourse separate this indigenous group from people who live in the cities, which are spaces they believe to be filled with hunger, sickness, and conflicts. However, according to Cepek, the community leaders did not immediately respond to oil extraction and the subsequent transformation of the forest with this strong valorization of the forest. He concludes:

As petroleum-based development gradually reshaped the region, Cofán people in the most impacted areas found themselves on shrinking islands of forest. In these confined spaces, they witnessed the consequences of large-scale forest clearing. Simultaneously, they experienced their own power to impact the Amazonian environment by pursuing traditional subsistence activities in a transformed, restricted space. In such small forest islands as Dureno, they realized that their hunting and fishing practices could decrease game populations in new and destructive ways. (Cepek 2008: 207-208)

In the Cofane's case, the notion of conserving the territory is part of the everyday life of the communities as well as part of their macro-level political strategies. The specific dynamics of the territory created by the presence of *colonos* and oil companies activated a particular response from

the leaders of the group of people who decided to move. Additionally, the Cofanes were able to find a space to establish a new community. It would be very difficult for the Shuar to relocate easily because of the scarcity of land and the ways in which it has been distributed and legalized.

While the case of the Cofanes illustrates the articulation of both macro and community-level politics, Perreault's study on the discourses about identity and territory in the Kichwa community of Mondayacu in the Amazon region illustrates a completely different scenario. Unlike the rhetoric utilized by the regional indigenous organizations, people in the communities do not think in terms of a shared and ancestral territory or heritage; rather, their identities depend upon everyday practices related to the *chackra*⁴¹ (Perreault 2001). Perreault and Sawyer argue that the notion of an ancestral territory and the sense of belonging to it are the products of a self-conscious process in which indigenous organizations have identified their territories as a key ideological component in the concept of an indigenous nationality (Perreault 2001; Sawyer 2004).

Comparatively, the situation of the Shuar in Zamora Chinchipe is quite different. While in the official discourse of the FESZCH and its leaders there is an intention to recuperate the ancestral territory, it has been clear that most efforts are actually directed to negotiate with the state and the mining companies to improve the socio-economic conditions of the communities and the federation itself,⁴² unlike the work of the Kichwa organization analyzed by Sawyer, for example.⁴³ Although in their discourses some Shuar leaders place great importance on the legacy of their ancestors and their ties to the territory, in reality, mobilization around a territorially-based identity seems hardly present in the communities I studied. Aside from the Asociación Shuar Kakaram, none of the other associations or communities in the area of research were interested in claiming back the territory around Project Mirador (Avci and Fernández-Salvador 2016: 8). For example, a former president of Asociación El Panguí explained that he did not feel that claiming back the lost and ancestral land was not an option because the Shuar themselves had divided and sold it. For him, it was more important to continue improving and developing the communities by negotiating with the mining companies. As we have seen in this chapter, most community leaders are more interested in looking after the well-being of the people or demanding more benefits from the companies and the state. Leaders

from Etsa, Santiago Paty, Paquintza, Etsa, and even Churuwia exemplify this.

Thus, it is clear that within the Shuar organization in Zamora Chinchipe, the idea that Shuar territory should be defended and recuperated as part of the federation and community's identity discourses and political strategies, is inconsistent. The division and rupture that has occurred within the communities and the general land loss that began in the 1960s, has left the Shuar people with little space to carry on any traditional subsistence practices, and limited the possibility of extended families and their descendants to continue living in their communities in the future. The reality of families migrating to and from other provinces and living on plots of land that are so reduced that it forces them to rent space to farm elsewhere is not in line with the notion of an ancestral Shuar territory. In any case, the sense of belonging to a Shuar "territory" seems to be increasingly more fragile; as such, it is impossible to define objectives based on belonging to a disappearing Shuar territory.

Such issues related to territory loss, federation conflict, and constant power struggles have resulted in conflictive, inconsistent discourses of Shuariness and in different articulations of indigeneity in the wider socio-political context. In this case, Hall's view that collective identities are articulated according to certain positions and interests rather than according to a shared history and cultural essentialisms is still more evident among the Shuar of northern Zamora Chinchipe and the Federation itself. However, as Hall argues, while the diverse constructions of indigeneity and choices people make respond to specific moments and are not part of a historical continuity, they are also not random or arbitrary; they are part of and respond to territorial dynamics in which the model of the mestizo society has permeated life in the communities and in which the presence of continuous waves of different actors (Little 2001) has shaped and altered the configuration of the territory and the relationships around it.

5.5 Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the construction of Shuar indigeneity in the Shuar's relationship to different external actors and, particularly, within the context of large-scale mining by addressing local responses,

positions, and expectations related to the process of extractivism. In this context, it is understood that conflicts related to resources and control over them are not only related to practical and economic matters in terms of their scarcity or availability, but are also very much related to politics, culture, and identity (Perreault and Valdivia 2010).

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the ethno-politics around Project Mirador; when issues of identity are contextualized in terms of the material aspects of life, the discussion becomes political. Thus, discourses related to the meaning of being indigenous—in this case, of being Shuar— also carry meanings and values that are important to issues like the use of resources, the relationship to nature and the territory, notions of development, and so forth (Vadjunec et al. 2011: 11). At the same time, these discourses influence political decisions and practices, especially in relation to the Shuar Federation and, in particular, to the leadership in the communities.

During this analysis, I have emphasized the importance of not simplifying positions of identity and political struggles and have instead concentrated on situations of diversity, transformation, conflict, and even fragmentation. I have argued that it is important to take a broader perspective on such situations, understanding them as part of a larger context and a longer historical process and not just as a result of the presence of large-scale mining in the area in recent decades. It is vital to take the concepts of territorial dynamics and interlocking identity categories into account in order to understand the ways in which actors at all levels of the Shuar Federation shape their discourses and define a diversity of positionalities and strategies of resistance or negotiation. For example, I have shown that notions of territory and the transformation of the communities, which are the result of a process in which the Shuar had interacted with the mestizo society during the past sixty years, have contributed to the definition of rather disperse efforts to deal with large-scale mining and the actors involved in it.

I complete this discussion with two key conclusions. To begin with, it is important to acknowledge that the community itself is, in fact, a product of colonialism; however, like other indigenous groups, the Shuar have not only adapted to this new form of social and territorial organization, but they have also utilized it as a means to engage with the mestizo society and especially with the state. While the original creation of Shuar communities was certainly arbitrary, the community proved to

be strategic in the struggle to reclaim the Shuar territory that was being lost to the *colonos*, to construct an ethnic-spatial-based identity vis-à-vis the *colonos*, and to demand services from the state. While the communities have gone through several transformations (including the integration of mestizos into the communities through marriage), they are still important spaces in symbolic and material terms. However, their members and leaders are constantly re-signifying their experience in relation to the community, as they also share other interests and desires that tie them to different social categories and to a larger mestizo society. Furthermore, most Shuar members and leaders in this study were born and raised in the communities, and thus the meanings they attach to the relations within them are quite different from those meanings that the oldest members of their families and their ancestors attached to them.

Second, the fact that the territory is part of the official discourse of the FESZCH but is not necessarily very important to the communities is an interesting statement on the political organization itself. Territory is not necessarily a priority for the community leaders because people are more interested in achieving well-being based on material wealth, development progress, and social improvement. It would seem that territory remains an abstract notion and, as Perreault (2001) and Sawyer (2004) have argued, it is utilized as part of a political rhetoric that is very common to indigenous organizations. In this case, the notion of territory reflects the need for a political discourse that makes sense in the context of the nation-state. Furthermore, besides contributing to and using discourses related to territory, the federation has also focused most of its efforts on negotiating material benefits for the communities. What does this gap between discourses and strategies tell us about the Shuar Federation as a whole? Is this discrepancy the result of a negotiation between what is expected from them as political actors (De la Cadena 2010) and what they really aspire to in terms of living standards? In other words, is it more effective for indigenous leaders to employ a discourse related to fighting for ancestral territory than it is to focus on their fight for access to potable water, electricity, and even mining royalties?

It seems that there are no simple answers to these questions, but they can provide some basis for an interesting debate around discussions that have been included throughout the thesis. These discussions are related to the constant negotiations between the Shuar and the mestizo society. It is clear that basic concepts that are now used everyday, such as

territory and community, development and modernization are Western impositions on the Shuar people; and the Shuar federation, which is another form of adaptation to colonialism, is constantly juggling with all these concepts, notions and strategies I further elaborate on this discussion in the chapter on conclusions

The next chapter will focus on the political role of *Ecuador Estratégico* as an instrument of the nationalist resource agenda of the government. However, it will also discuss the interactions of the Shuar people and organization with the company around issues of development and modernity, which are main topics of discussion throughout the whole dissertation.

Notes

¹ A shorter version of this article was published as a chapter 'Los Shuar frente al proyecto estratégico de El Mirado: el manejo de identidades y prácticas políticas fragmentadas' (2017) in K. Van Teijlingen, E. Leifsen, C. Fernández-Salvador and L. Sánchez-Vázquez (eds) *La Amazonía Minada. Minería a Gran Escala y conflictos en el sur del Ecuador*.

² In fact, it has not been the case in many Ecuadorian anti-mining movements, which are mostly made up of mestizo people, as in the case of Intag.

³ For an interesting discussion on the way Amazonian indigenous people have managed those essentialized images, see Conklin and Graham 1995.

⁴ In this context, Valdivia also discusses the concepts of authentic and inauthentic indigeneity, referring to the differences between indigenous groups who have chosen to either identify with images of the 'ecologically noble savage' (authentic indigeneity) and thus develop relationships with ecological organizations and adamantly oppose extractivism, while others have chosen to negotiate with oil companies and are more interested in material benefits than in becoming guardians of the forest (inauthentic indigeneity). For Valdivia (2007), though, both forms of identity and strategies are equally legitimate and they are the result of different elements coming into place in specific contexts.

⁵ Dominant and paradigmatic notions of territory are crafted and imposed by states in their effort to assert their hegemony. In extractive contexts, for example, Svampa (2008), argues that the state and the companies create imageries of territories that allow them to exploit resources while disregarding local populations. Thus, official notions of territory tend to exclude other meanings ascribed to them, creating a tension of "territorialities" (Svampa, 2008:7).

⁶ Interview president of the FESZCH, February 2013; several interviews president of Yanúa, Nov 2013-August 2014; president of San Carlos, January 2015.

⁷ Benedict Anderson (1993) discusses the concept of imagined communities to explain the rise of nationalism in Europe. He argues that imagined communities are a form of corporation in which the members, while they do not know each other, hold a strong sense of belonging and solidarity, especially through the use and even manipulation of symbols.

⁸ Interview president of the FESZCH, October 2013

⁹ Interview secretary of the FESZCH, October 2013

¹⁰ While in the introduction I included official information on poverty levels in the parish of Tundayme, the discussion around issues of poverty among Shuar leaders pays more attention to their own discourses and perceptions around material needs and exclusion.

¹¹ Interview president of the FESZCH, October 2013

¹² Interview vice-president FESZCH, October 2013

¹³ Interview secretary of the FESZCH, October 2013

¹⁴ Interview leader of San Andrés, July 2014

¹⁵ Other authors have also described and analyzed the differences in discourses between indigenous organizations and the communities that belong to them. See Perreault's (2001) discussion of the community of Mondayacu and Bjureby's (2006) discussion of the Shuar organization in Morona Santiago.

¹⁶ Interview leader of Yanúa, November 2013

¹⁷ Interviews of Yanúa's leader, May-August 2014

¹⁸ Interview of Yanúa's leaders, January 2015

¹⁹ Interview of Gloria Chicaiza-*Acción Ecológica*, April, 2014

²⁰ However, CASCOMI's position has become much more radical in the last years because of ECSA's constant harrassment of the farmers in the area, especially in what used to be the town of San Marcos.

²¹ Interview of member of Etsa, June 2014

²² Interview of president of Santiago Paty, January 2014

²³ Interview of leader of Santiago Paty, January 2014

²⁴ Paquintza was a single community that held a communal title deed but, due to organizational conflicts in the 1980s, the land was divided and several communities were formed in what used to be the territory of Paquintza (which is still considered to be the main community). Currently, the federation and some of the leaders from the newly formed communities are negotiating with the state

to regain the community title deed, which could create conflict with mestizos who had bought some land in the old Paqintza territory.

²⁵ Interview of leader of Etsa, November 2013

²⁶ According to the new policies regarding mining and local development (issued by the government and announced by the Secretariat of Peoples, Social Movements and Citizenship Participation in 2009), the mining company should only implement specific projects as part of their environmental management plan, such as small productive projects like the ones mentioned above. Larger infrastructure projects are the responsibility of *Ecuador Estratégico* as the company in charge of channeling royalties from mining into the development of local communities.

²⁷ Observation during a meeting with the staff of the Department of Community Relations of ECSA, June 4th 2014)

²⁸ The POT is a land-planning system implemented by the government of Correa and it is described in detail in Chapter 6.

²⁹ Individual means that mestizo have individual title deeds to their lands, not communal title deeds like many Shuar.

³⁰ Interview leader of Churuwia and his family, November 2013

³¹ Interview president of San Andrés, January 2015

³² Interview leader of San Carlos, January 2015

³³ Adopt a mestizo lifestyle

³⁴ The leader of Paqintza, for example, helps train young Shuar girls from the communities around to compete in provincial speed races; he constantly posts news about these races on social networks.

³⁵ Interview president of the community of Certero, June 2014

³⁶ Original text in Spanish: “sectores productivos desde el punto de vista del perseguido desarrollo nacional” (Bretón 2013: 74)

³⁷ Interview community member of Etsa, May 2014; Interview president of Certero, May 2014).

³⁸ Interview president of Santiago Paty, May-August 2014

³⁹ Interview member of the Sanimbia family, Tundayme, June 2014

⁴⁰ Interview leader of Paqintza, January 2015

⁴¹ The chackra is the piece of land used for which subsistence agriculture

⁴² In this case, an exception would be the efforts made by the FESZCH to recover the lost land and the community title deed for Paqintza, an action that would result in mestizos being expelled from their lands. However, not all leaders supported this claim, as explained above. Another effort to recuperate territory

occurred at the end of the term of the FESZCH's president, when he demanded that the land in Cordillera del Cóndor (then occupied by the mining concession) be returned when the extraction project concluded. This claim is highly questionable due to environmental impact and the duration of the mining project; and it was never convened.

⁴³ This might also be a result of the FESZCH not being ideologically aligned with national organizations that work in the defense of the indigenous territory, such as the CONAIE and the CONFENAIE in the Amazon region. On the contrary, other indigenous organizations have quite an elaborate discourse around the defense of the territory associated with the preservation of indigenous culture. See Sawyer (2004) for an analysis of an indigenous organization (OPIP) in the northern Amazon region and the analysis of the evolution of the Federation of Indigenous Organizations of Napo (FOIN) discussed by Perreault (2003a).

6

A transition to state control: the role of *Ecuador Estratégico* in the context of Project Mirador¹

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have concentrated on the Shuar population's political organization, identity discourses, and political strategies in the context of Project Mirador. I have argued that rather than having a unified political front, they have scattered positions on large-scale mining. This diversity of positions revolves around discourses on what it means to be Shuar within the larger mestizo society, issues of territory, and the transformation of the communities. In this chapter, I focus on a different actor in the extractive scenario, *Ecuador Estratégico*, and its role in the re-distribution of resources and implementation of development initiatives in the populations that live near the strategic projects. This role is closely connected to the interactions with local Shuar communities and their own expectations of development tied to the mining project.

As has been the case in many countries in the region under post-neoliberal governments, Ecuador has developed an agenda of intensive extractivism over the last several years, involving not only the exploitation of oil, but also aggressive attempts to develop a large-scale mining industry. As discussed in Chapter 3, while extractivism was also part of the previous neo-liberal agenda, an important difference between oil and mineral extraction in Correa's government was the integration of the principle of redistribution; this implies that shares of the profits from the extracted resources would be redistributed to populations in the area of impact and also invested in social programs around the country (Arsel and Avila 2011; Davidov 2013). This has allowed the state to recuperate its central role in mineral extraction. In its new role, the state receives percentages of utilities and royalties that had never before been negotiated with foreign companies and it now acts as the main

redistributing agent of royalties. As a part of this transition, a new government actor has emerged to claim control over the state. This institution, *Ecuador Estratégico*, is in charge of channeling royalties from projects considered to be strategic for the country (oil extraction, mineral extraction, and others) to the local communities most impacted by them.

The emphasis on extractivism in Correa's government has been criticized by academics and social organizations as a return to neo-liberal practices (Bretón 2013; Gudynas 2012; Walsh 2010a). After the incorporation of several articles of the Constitution of 2008 regarding the *sumak-kawsay* and the rights of nature, as well as the passing of the New Mining Law in 2009, there was great expectation that extractive practices would be limited and regulated. However, the government became very clear about its intentions to transform the wealth from the extraction of resources into funds for local development. Unlike previous neo-liberal governments, Correa would re-distribute some of these funds to the people living around the areas of extraction, making them a priority. For this reason, after the government had signed the contract for exploitation of Project Mirador with the Chinese company CCRC-Tonguan in 2012, Correa publicly declared that there should be no direct negotiations between the mining company and the local communities.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the political role of *Ecuador Estratégico* as part of a process of the re-politicization (Hogenboom 2012) of resource exploitation in which the overall objective is re-distribution and social investment. While in the 1980s and 1990s oil exploitation lost the importance and political significance it had once had as a symbol of progress throughout the "Oil-Boom" that began in the 1970s, oil and now mineral extraction have become strategic again as part of Correa's nationalist government program (Davidov 2013). Resource exploitation, especially mineral extraction, have become key in the implementation of social programs that aim to reduce poverty and bring development to those areas close to extractive projects, all of which are closely tied to the concept of *buen vivir*, which was incorporated into the Constitution of 2008.

In this chapter, I argue that, besides implementing development in local communities, *Ecuador Estratégico* serves a political function: by directly using the earnings and royalties from resource extraction to carry out development projects and promising *buen vivir*, it legitimizes and

justifies extractivism. Furthermore, it emphasizes a form of traditional development based mostly on the construction of infrastructure and large investment in specific projects, avoiding altogether the new approach to alternative development that was introduced in the new constitution as part of the notion of *buen vivir*. The discussion in this chapter considers how *Ecuador Estratégico* operates as well as the discourses and rhetoric it utilizes in a context of developmentalism, regulation, and redistribution of resources to the population. This analysis will help us to understand the politics of social and local development projects. I will also examine the practices, discourses, and interactions of the Shuar population vis-à-vis *Ecuador Estratégico* and argue that, unlike essentialized notions of being indigenous, the Shuar are constantly struggling to attain modernity and development as a way to achieve progress and become part of the mestizo national society. In most cases, their constant disappointment with this state institution and in the mining company are not necessarily because they feel that their traditional lifestyle is being threatened, but because both the company and the state have failed to fulfill their expectations. Underlying this discussion is the question of how both the state and local indigenous people conceive of development, either as the satisfaction of material needs or as a more encompassing perspective that also considers issues of equality, access to rights, and social justice.

I begin with a brief analysis of the concept of *buen vivir* in the constitution and how it is tied to a new regime of development. Afterward, I point out some of the discrepancies between development policies and programs in the *National Development Plan (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo)* and the *National Plan for Buen Vivir (Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir)*. As part of a discussion about the political role of minerals in the Correa's government, I will then focus on *Ecuador Estratégico*, the way it operates as a state institution in charge of local development, and its role in legitimizing extractivism and in controlling the local population. I conclude by analyzing the company's interactions with the local Shuar population and communities around Tundayme and their perceptions of development and well-being.

6.2 *Sumak Kawsay* and Development in the State's Constitution

The *sumak kawsay* has become an important concept not only in Ecuador's constitution but also in its *National Development Plan (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo)*, which is now known as the *National Plan for Buen Vivir* (Lu et al. 2017), and in several state institutions including *Ecuador Estratégico*. Because this institution seeks to improve people's quality of life, its work is directly associated with local development, *buen vivir*, and notions of interculturalism, especially when dealing with indigenous populations.

Taken from the foreword of Ecuador's Constitution of 2008, the following excerpt states the importance of the concept of *buen vivir* or *sumak kawsay* as a guiding principle in the construction of a new society. These concepts are the foundation upon which Ecuador is currently building its agenda of economic, social, and environmental rights (Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir, Secretaría Nacional de Desarrollo: 2013-2017).

We, the sovereign people of Ecuador, recognizing our ancestral, millennial roots, forged by men and women of different groups, celebrating nature, the Pacha Mama², of which we are a part and which is vital for our existence, invoking the name of god and recognizing our diverse religions and forms of spirituality, appealing to the wisdom of all our cultures, which make our society richer...

We have to build a new form of coexistence among citizens, in diversity and harmony with nature, to achieve *buen vivir*, the *sumak kawsay*. (Constitución Política de la República del Ecuador, Foreword 2008: 15)³

Although there is no precise definition of the concept of *buen vivir* in the constitution's text, two elements are clearly important: respect for cultural diversity and ancestral cultures as well as the importance of a harmonious relationship with nature and the environment. As expressed in Chapter II, Section II, Article 14: the constitution guarantees "the right of the people to live in a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, which assures sustainability and *buen vivir*, *sumak kawsay*" (Constitution 2008).⁴

Buen vivir is the Spanish translation for *sumak kawsay*, a Kichwa expression which generally refers to a holistic form of well-being in which people live in harmony with their social, natural, and spiritual

environments as expressed in their relationships to their communities, nature, and the spiritual world (Viola 2014: 58). Despite the accepted translation of the *sumak kawsay* to Spanish, some authors like Villalba argue that there is really not a single definition for the term and thus its application should depend on the context. In fact, according to Villalba, indigenous people tend to think that the incorporation of the terms *buen vivir* or *vivir bien* into the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia are only “a pale metaphor that tends to weaken their meaning in an anthropocentric manner” (Villalba 2013: 1430).

Whatever limitations the concept of *buen vivir* may have, it was inspired by the cosmovision and ancestral philosophies of indigenous people in the Andes where the notion of development is non-existent (Walsh 2010a). It also includes references to other philosophies or ideologies. For example, according to the *National Plan for Buen Vivir* (2013-2017), *buen vivir* is a notion common to all the native peoples of the world, including those from Western civilization. It may refer to the satisfaction of material needs but also to the cultivation of the mind, the practice of virtue, the concepts of beauty and pleasantness, and even the ethical considerations of what is good (2013: 23). Considering this reference of *buen vivir* as a universal concept, the plan states that the “Citizens’ Revolution’s Government” has incorporated some of the ideas from the Amazonian and Andean indigenous people of Ecuador alongside novel concepts to make it the central objective of its public policy. The closest to a definition of the *sumak kawsay* to be found in the *National Plan for Buen Vivir* reads, “it strengthens social cohesion, community values and the active participation of individuals and collectivities in relevant decisions for the construction of their own destiny and happiness...”⁵ It is also based on respect for diversity and the ecosystems around it (Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir 2013: 23). In addition to the constitutional articles in which the respect for diversity and the harmonious relationship with nature are fundamental, the *buen vivir* in the *National Plan for Buen Vivir* also includes elements of social cohesion, community values, and participation, which are associated with Andean cosmovision. In her analysis of this definition, Catherine Walsh argues that “equity, democracy, participation, protection of bio-diversity and natural resources, and respect for ethnic-cultural diversity” are also part of a new development framework known as human development,

which is also part of the Western, modern conception of the world (Walsh 2010a: 16).

Thus, the definition of *sumak kawsay* or *buen vivir* remains somewhat ambiguous; however, the use of this concept in the government's discourse should be read as strategic and responds to the need to create distance between its agenda and those of previous neo-liberal governments, which emphasized economic growth as a main pillar for development. The new government seeks to challenge "the profit-making drive integral to modernization" (Lu et al. 2017: 87). Furthermore, by proposing alternative forms of development connected to notions of well-being based on living a dignified life in peace and harmony with nature and other people, the constitution and the *National Development Plan* are key to building a path towards a new kind of society and moving away from old paradigms (Bretón 2013). Part of this strategy involves using two other elements besides the *sumak kawsay* that are also key to the objectives of the Citizen's Revolution, as expressed in the constitution, the *National Development Plan*, and the *National Plan for Buen Vivir*. As Walsh explains, *buen vivir*, the rights of nature, and a new regime of development make up a new triangular model of society; this model should be conceptualized as public policy (Walsh 2010a: 18) and implemented through the application of laws and a diversity of government programs. This new vision of society was defined after long debates in the National Constitutional Assembly mainly as a criticism of a development regime that was based on the accumulation of capital and the pursuit of efficiency, often at the expense of nature and the environment (Acosta 2010). The following is a conceptualization of development in terms of *buen vivir*, according to the *National Development Plan* (2007-2010):

...we understand development as the achievement of *buen vivir* for all men and women, in peace and harmony with nature and as the indefinite prolongation of human cultures. *Buen vivir* presupposes that liberties, opportunities, capacities, and the real potential of individuals are expanded in such a way as to simultaneously achieve that which society, territories, and collective, diverse identities—understood as universal and individual human beings at the same time— value as the object of a desirable life. Our concept of development obliges us to recognize, understand, and value each other so as to facilitate self realization and the construction of a

shared future. (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, 2007-2010: 54) (my translation) ⁶

According to this definition, development is understood as relative to what each person, individually and as part of a collective group, considers to be a desirable way of living; however, the *National Development Plan* establishes 12 specific national objectives to be accomplished in the period 2007-2010 (the next plan, the *National Plan for Buen Vivir* also establishes 12 objectives for the period of 2010-2013). Indeed, for development to be achieved according to this plan, it is necessary that the state recuperate its administrative, planning, regulatory, and redistributive capacities (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2007-2010: 6). As Walsh argues, development is actually conceived in the context of the state under a technocratic and economistic approach (Walsh 2010a: 20). Examples of this notion of development are included in the *National Development Plan* and the *National Plan for Buen Vivir* (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2007-2010: 63; Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir 2010-2013: 75) (in which there is reference to selective substitution of importations and extractivism as crucial to development). This notion is also included in actual government programs that link well-being to the extraction of resources and the development of infrastructure by institutions like *Ecuador Estratégico*.

Escobar's analysis of the *National Development Plan* also shows some inconsistencies between this new notion of development and mainstream development concepts, both of which are included in the plan:

It is telling, for instance, that the Plan speaks of 'strategic areas to amplify the economic growth that can sustain human development (energy, hydrocarbons, telecommunications, mining, science and technology, water and rural development)' as deserving 'special attention by the State' (p.73). This notion of strategic areas is problematic since they seem exempt from the cultural and environmental criteria that underlie the conception of the *sumak kawsay*; the government's recent mining policies operate under this principle. (Escobar 2010: 22)

Clearly, there are contradictions between the discourse of the constitution, policies, and Correa's government's real practices (Arsel 2012; Bretón 2013; Davidov 2013; Radcliffe 2012; Van Teijlingen and Hogenboom 2016). While the new constitution grants rights to nature, at the same time it is deeply committed to providing welfare to the

population, especially to marginalized groups with the greatest needs. The concept of *sumak kamsay*, which in itself implies a harmonious relationship with the environment and nature, could not be accomplished if intensive natural resource extraction (which is also associated with old models of development) is seen as the main mechanism to provide that well-being to the people. In this context, *Ecuador Estratégico* serves as an interesting case study to analyze the ways in which the government has managed to portray extractive practices as necessary and even desirable to help improve the living conditions of people and achieve their *buen vivir*, all the while investing in a model of development that is closer to the classic notions of the 1960s (Arsel and Avila Angel 2011; Arsel 2012). Lu et al. argue that, indeed, funding for social programs can only occur by intensifying the extraction of natural resources in a context in which the state “circularly justifies its presence” by attempting to find solutions to state-caused problems since the establishment of the oil industry in Ecuador (Lu et al. 2017: 93).

To understand the contradictions in the idea that extractivism, *buen vivir*, and the rights of nature can coexist, it is important and fair to acknowledge that in the government’s agenda, extractivism is only the first stage in the process of achieving *buen vivir*, which can really only be accomplished with a change in the productive matrix. The concept of a productive matrix is understood as the way in which a society is organized in order to produce goods and services, including the associated productive processes and the social relations (Senplades 2012: 7). The goal of this administration is to change Ecuador’s productive matrix based on a model of production/exportation of primary goods with low levels of technology and high levels of concentration of earnings.⁷ Ultimately, the administration seeks to transition from a society that bases its economy on resource extraction and exportation to one that privileges diversified production, is eco-efficient, and whose resources are also based on knowledge, capacity, and biodiversity (2012: 11). In this process, the goal is also to create new forms of creating and distributing wealth in order to incorporate actors that have been historically excluded from the market development scheme.

Therefore, the emphasis on this stage is to increase the production of wealth through extractivism and to re-distribute it to the most vulnerable populations, thereby alleviating poverty, providing basic services, and developing infrastructure. *Ecuador Estratégico* is key in this stage precisely

because it channels wealth derived from the extraction of natural resources towards local development which, at least for now, is understood as key to the development of infrastructure. As stated in the introduction, *Ecuador Estratégico*'s main political role is to effectively show that, in this government, the extraction of minerals serves a social agenda and that local populations are the main beneficiaries of the wealth that results from extractivism (unlike what previous neo-liberal governments did regarding oil extraction).

6.3 What is *Ecuador Estratégico*?

The public company of strategic development, *Ecuador Estratégico*, was created in September 2011 as the institution responsible for implementing local development programs in the area of influence of strategic projects⁸ including mining initiatives, oil exploitation, and hydroelectric projects throughout the country. This means that the company is in charge of overseeing the whole process, from planning, designing, evaluating, financing, to implementing social investment projects and programs. As specifically stated in its main social objectives, these programs should include the construction of *Centers for Buen Vivir*⁹, community police stations, health and education infrastructure, and any other project deemed necessary by Ecuador's president (*Ecuador Estratégico* official web site). In fact, this company has taken over the construction of roads, bridges, government star projects, and the millennium communities and schools¹⁰, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, in the last report published on their webpage (2017), sanitation projects, education, and road infrastructure are the most important objectives, having received around \$600 million in investment. Other important initiatives include health projects, electrification, telecommunications, urban development, sports, and the construction of Millennium Communities.

Ecuador Estratégico is unique in the way it operates; unlike other state institutions (such as ECORAE, the Institute for the Regional Amazonian Eco-Development or *Instituto para el EcoDesarrollo Regional Amazónico*) which depend upon the general state budget, *Ecuador Estratégico* receives a percentage of surplus and royalties from mining and oil exploitation directly from the State Bank/Public Treasury. This mechanism allows it to make decisions independently and work efficiently. In the words of a former manager of the company, local development has to be

accomplished both “quickly and efficiently” and “this is why it was decided to use the tools that are given to public companies.”¹¹ In different interviews with the authorities of *Ecuador Estratégico*, it became clear that a main concern (and simultaneously a measure of success) of this institution is the challenge to make large investments in local development projects in the shortest timeframe possible. The general manager said, “...even though the company was recently created, the investment that has been carried out is huge; in the Amazon region up to the end of 2013 it was over \$400 million, and this was accomplished even though the company was only created in 2011...”¹² Also, according to the latest information presented on the company’s web page (2017), the investment in all of Ecuador amounts to \$839.3 million dollars in 1,166 development projects in all 13 provinces in which strategic projects have been implemented (of which \$1.5 million were invested only in the province of Zamora Chinchipe). At this point, it is important to clarify that development projects are not only implemented where there are disbursements of money made by extractive companies. In Zamora Chinchipe, for example, while the Chinese company had paid the government \$40 million as advanced royalties, the money invested in that time period already amounted to \$77 million.¹³

According to *Ecuador Estratégico*’s strategic plan 2016-2017, the following financing sources are all included in the public treasury account and are all available to *Ecuador Estratégico* for investment in the kind of projects described above, or can be used directly by municipalities and head parishes (known as GADs, Decentralized Autonomous Governments or *Gobiernos Autónomos Descentralizados*), in areas of mining concessions or influence:

- 12 per cent of profits generated by private mining and hydrocarbon operators and 5 per cent of profits from small-scale mining.
- 70 per cent of royalties generated by mining (large or small-scale mining). The information on the exact percentage was provided by the general manager of *Ecuador Estratégico* (Interview February 2014).
- Contracts for mining services: 3 per cent corresponds to the municipal and parish government and *Ecuador Estratégico* is entitled to a percentage based on their needs.

- Any amount of surplus generated by public operators in strategic projects that should go to the general state budget (Update to the Plan Estratégico Empresarial de Ecuador Estratégico 2015-2017 2017: 12-13).

Ecuador Estratégico works closely with the ministries in charge of specific areas in which they develop projects (especially the ministries of education and of health) and the GADs (which include provincial and municipal parish offices and councils), which are the most important actors in the development of local projects. Projects developed in local (and indigenous) communities are supposed to be managed by municipalities and parish councils, since these administrators are most basic political-administrative units and should be aware of the needs of the local population. According to this plan, parish councils¹⁴ should carry out feasibility studies before *Ecuador Estratégico* begins any project or infrastructure initiative for indigenous communities. According to the general manager, this process is somewhat problematic because local GADs (especially parish councils) lack the experience, the administrative capacity, and budget to carry out such studies, develop projects on their own, or properly respond to projects presented by indigenous communities. Another problem in this organization is related to the historical difficulties and exclusion that indigenous communities and organizations have faced in dealing with government institutions. In the past, they had worked directly with government institutions, but are now excluded from such collaborations and have unrealistically been forced to develop projects on their own with the GADS or to present projects through them. These problems prompted *Ecuador Estratégico* to create a special agency to work directly with indigenous communities in the Amazon region: the *Regional Amazónica* was created in 2013 and is located in El Puyo, Pastaza (a northern province in the Amazon region). Through the office of the *Regional Amazónica*, *Ecuador Estratégico* was able to work directly with the indigenous communities. This meant that the company would be in charge of hiring experts to do the feasibility studies and facilitating the projects from beginning to end.

According to this organization, *Ecuador Estratégico* has to work with the local GADs, indigenous communities, and other institutions in order to meet the needs of the local population in different provinces. The manager of the company describes the way they work, saying:

For every project—be it sanitation, education, health, roadwork—we have to coordinate with the ministry in charge. So, for example, we know of a certain Kichwa community in the province of Pastaza that has needs in terms of health...so we ask the Ministry of Health if, within their own planning, they have considered serving this community. If they say, ‘Yes, we have planned to build a health center type B to satisfy the health needs of a certain number of patients,’ then we know that as part of the profiling we do, we should include a health center, or schools, or other types of infrastructure.¹⁵

In conclusion, *Ecuador Estratégico*’s work is complex because it requires coordination with many different entities at different levels. Furthermore, while its objectives revolve around the development of projects that include major investments in infrastructure related to health, education, and roadwork, in some cases it has had to absorb the work that should be done by other institutions, such as the GAD. By creating the *Regional Amazónica* and reaching out directly to the indigenous communities, this institution found a more efficient way to regulate local development. For this purpose, the office hired indigenous people from different indigenous nationalities and incorporated the notion of interculturalism into its approach to cultural diversity.

The development of projects in indigenous communities in the Amazon region was a definite challenge for *Ecuador Estratégico*. The decision to create this office was a response to several difficulties. To begin with, the limited administrative and financial capacity of communities to manage projects and contract third parties to do studies was a major hurdle that needed to be addressed. Additionally, the intention to establish a more direct communication with the people in the communities in order to understand their needs and cultural context required the establishment of such an institution. Finally, the creation of this office satisfied a formal petition made by the Amazonian nationalities to allow them to directly benefit from development projects. As the director of the *Regional Amazónica* affirmed, part of the government’s objectives is to satisfy the needs of the indigenous people in the region who had not received enough attention from previous governments. Thus, the work of the *Regional Amazónica* is considered

emblematic; as such, this is an important dimension of the discourse used by the staff.

The creation of this office is also important in terms of basic notions of redistribution and interculturalism, which are both tied to the goal of achieving *buen vivir*. The following quote from the manager of *Regional Amazónica* illustrates these principles, which are key to the government of the Citizen's Revolution and the constitution and which are expressed in the National Plan for *Buen Vivir*:

This is important because it shows that the government has actually implemented the new public policies designed for the Amazon region, in terms of fair and equal distribution of the gains that come from the non-renewable resources, such as mining...and this office here in Pastaza is the only one that has taken the element of interculturality into consideration; our team consists of people from seven different nationalities...which means that they are interlocutors when we go to the communities...this and our modest experience as Amazon people have helped us to collect information on the needs of the nationalities.¹⁶

Part of the office's work and the reason for incorporating staff from different nationalities was to facilitate the collection of information from indigenous communities in order to design a macro Plan for Nationalities (*Plan de Nacionalidades*). As part of this new intercultural approach, in 2013 the office started a new survey process in order to learn from the indigenous people about their needs and desires. Teams of indigenous staff implemented the survey over a period of two months in 399 of the 1,181 indigenous communities established in the Amazon region. Based on this survey, *Ecuador Estratégico* decided to create the Plan for Nationalities, which was created to delineate a plan of action for development in all Amazonian indigenous communities. The director of the *Regional Amazónica* anticipated that most people in the communities would agree that their priority was to create access to basic services like water and sanitation and then to continue on to other important areas such as sewage, education, and roads. This plan was supposed to be completed by January 2015, but still has not been published or made available in any way.¹⁷

Further along, I will address the notion of interculturalism in the work of the office of *Regional Amazónica*, especially in regard to the Shuar communities in the area of Tundayme. After having described the most

important aspects of how *Ecuador Estratégico* operates, I now discuss the politics of extractivism.

6.4 The Politics of Extractivism: *Buen vivir*, Development, and Redistribution in *Ecuador Estratégico*

Correa's government has been identified as part of the New Left, post-neoliberal regimes also present in countries like Venezuela and Bolivia because it has implemented a series of anti-neoliberal reforms in the mineral sector. After decades in which the governments of these countries had liberalized and privatized resource extraction, there has now been a change towards re-regulation, re-taxation, and even re-nationalization (Arsel 2012; Bebbington and Humphreys 2011; Davidov 2013; Escobar 2010; Gudynas 2012; Hogenboom 2012). Besides protecting the mineral and oil sector, a main objective of this agenda was to increase the budget to help finance social programs.

Davidov studies mineral extraction in Ecuador in the context of the International Monetary Fund post-nationalism (Davidov 2013). In this context, Correa's government is part of the leaders of the New Left who envision a kind of resource nationalism in which their country's economic growth is led by mineral extraction. This resource nationalism is also part of a new notion of state sovereignty. Davidov has argued that Correa created a public image of mining that distances itself from the way oil exploitation was managed in neo-liberal governments. Thus, while oil exploitation symbolized everything that was wrong with neo-liberalism—namely de-regulation of the private sector, low levels of social investment, and low levels of local development—mining represented a “new national enterprise” that could be “molded into an ‘authentically’ populist industry.” (Davidov 2013: 491)

Davidov argues that, while the image of oil exploitation has been permanently damaged and may no longer be important in the government's nationalist programs, it would seem that the policies regulating extraction itself (regardless of the type resource to be exploited) continue to be important. Hogenboom (2012) states that several leftist regimes in Latin America have implemented new policies on mineral extraction to accomplish several political objectives. One of these objectives is an attempt to expand social expenditures in the form of social programs directed at the most impoverished sectors of society (Bebbington and Humphreys 2011: 140). Thus, this strategic use of

resource extraction under progressive governments justifies mineral or oil exploitation by defining them as key for sustaining different social programs that are directed at the most impoverished in society (Arsel 2012; Gudynas 2012, 36; Lu et al. 2017). According to Hogenboom, there are only a few formal budgetary ways in which revenues are directed towards social spending but, in general, the income increase should lead to higher social investment. However, *Ecuador Estratégico* is part of those formal mechanisms in which income and royalties from oil and mining are directly invested into local development; as such, it makes an interesting case study.

The following quote from a former general manager of the company clearly illustrates the link between development and resource extraction and also the perception that extractivism is vital if well-being and development are desired:

In a very simple way and citing the president of the country a bit, being close to a mining project like you, should understand that this is a blessing, that this is reason for local development.¹⁸

According to this perspective, people are supposed to be thankful for living in areas in which strategic projects are implemented. As part of the resource nationalism model (which emphasizes the need to regain control of the operations and the financial gains of extractive companies), mineral exploitation ultimately seeks to reduce poverty and improve peoples' welfare (Arsel and Avila 2011; Bretón 2013, Davidov 2013; Lu et al. 2017; Van Teijlinge and Hogenboom 2016). *Ecuador Estratégico* has become a main re-distributing channel and a key actor in this political agenda.

While the link between *buen vivir* and the extraction of minerals can be problematic (Arsel and Avila Angel 2011), it is actually reinforced by the official rhetoric used by *Ecuador Estratégico*. It is present in official documents such as the Strategic Plan (2016), as part of its articulation of the National Plan for *Buen Vivir*, on the company's web page (www.ecuadorestrategicoep.gob.ec), in brochures that are distributed to local communities, and, of course, in the interviews I conducted with authorities of the company. In the company's official declaration of its mission, the distribution of benefits from the extraction of natural resources is a step towards the achievement of *sumak kawsay*:

To execute social investment plans, programs, and projects with efficiency and efficacy, contributing to an equal redistribution of those earnings generated by the responsible management of natural resources, in order to achieve Buen Vivir for those communities in the areas of influence of strategic projects.¹⁹

Buen vivir is understood as a direct consequence of the extraction of resources and subsequent reinvestment of associated profits in certain areas. To recall, local communities located in areas around extractive projects such as Mirador receive advanced royalties from the project itself but also benefit from other projects in different provinces. As the manager of the *Regional Amazónica* expressed in an interview, it is important that people recognize that the good things they have are a product of resource extraction, that they accept this reality, and commit to it: “we know that they (people from the indigenous communities) have understood that there has to be a commitment, that the resources to have a good school, to have a dignified home, to have water, come from a responsible exploitation of oil.”²⁰ In other words, there should be an acceptance and acknowledgment of the benefits of resource extraction.

The company’s official web site (www.ecuadorestrategico.gob.ec) also emphasizes the link between well-being and resource extraction: besides the two slogans that greet the reader, “*recursos que construyen felicidad*” (resources that build happiness) and “*el país de los sueños cumplidos*” (the country of fulfilled dreams), there is a permanent section that summarizes the development and infrastructure projects that the company has implemented in provinces in which strategic projects have been developed. In a video also presented on the web page, the message at the beginning is clear: “before, communities close to mining, oil and any other strategic projects could only dream of these things...”²¹ For example, the website includes a video made about the province of Zamora, showing the new river walk of the city of Zamora (which cost approximately \$3 million dollars). The webpage also showcases the construction of streets, parks, hospitals, and two millennium schools all in the area of two important mining projects, Fruta del Norte and Mirador (but none in the area of direct/indirect impact of Project Mirador).



Millenium School in Los Encuentros (close to El Pangui). The sign reads: Mining promotes education in your community

Photograph: Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

Besides the obvious link between *buen vivir* and resource extraction, there is another important message that is emphasized in interviews and on the website: that these communities were left out of the wealth generated from extractive projects in the past and this government is working for the benefit of local communities as no other administration has done before. This is a powerful message that the state is constantly sending to the people through the construction of infrastructure and the development of projects (both symbolically and specifically through signs and billboards). As the coordinator of the Shuar area in the office of *Regional Amazónica* enthusiastically affirmed, “this government is making the dream come true...the hope of the communities which have been forgotten for so many years, remembering, historically, since 1830, there have been many presidents, and the Amazon region was even considered to be a myth...”²²

Why is there a need to make the link between *buen vivir* and the extraction of resources so obvious? Why is it that people have to be aware that the Millennium School in El Panguí and the community police unit in Tundayme were created only because of the presence of Project Mirador? The most evident answer is that, while bringing local development can be understood as simply re-distributing resources and wealth to impoverished populations, it can also work as a form of compensation that aims to gain local support and, most likely, to isolate opposition groups (Pellegrini and Ribera Arismendi 2012: 114). In this case, compensation is reduced to a transaction that offers benefits for the costs and effects caused by extractive practices, while in reality the government dismisses important concerns that people historically affected by extraction might have (Lu et al. 2017: 92). As Ferguson argues (1994), neither state bureaucracies nor development projects are impartial, apolitical machines that exist only to promote social services. In this case, while *Ecuador Estratégico* is a company that works mainly to allocate resources in order to carry out projects and deals mostly with the technical aspects of these projects, it has an underlying political objective. While it legitimizes the extraction of resources through local development, it also helps to reinforce and expand the state's bureaucratic power and plays a role in the project of citizenship-making (Lu et al. 2017: 114). In this context, for example, people who are recipients of housing, water services, sewage, schools, and other mega infrastructure projects are definitely being influenced in their view of the source of this local investment, namely oil and mineral extraction. In other words, if people feel that their needs (which have been ignored for so long) are now being satisfied, then there should be no reason to resist extractive practices like large-scale mining.

This argument makes sense in a context in which strong efforts are made by the government to push for extractivism at any cost. As described in Chapter 3, after the New Mining Law was passed and the government's intention to intensify mineral extraction was made clear (Cisneros 2009; Davidov 2013; Weyland 2009), it also became obvious that any form of resistance or disruption to mining activities would be criminalized (Bebbington and Humphreys 2011; Bebbington 2012; Hogenboom 2012; Moore and Velásquez 2012). However, the government's efforts to redistribute wealth from resource extraction to the local population in order to guarantee their well-being contradict the

lack of community participation in decisions regarding extractive practices in their own territory (Cisneros 2009). Also discussed in Chapter 3, Correa has found ways to either control or co-opt the population in issues related to mining activities (Bebbington 2012; Moore and Velásquez 2012). While some of these forms of control might be violent or tend to neutralize organizations and communities, other forms of control are exercised through powerful bureaucratic machinery. For example, through its development projects, *Ecuador Estratégico* asserts the presence of the state and might be used as a strategy to regulate and control local communities that would otherwise organize themselves against extractivism.

In a similar line of thinking related to development projects, some authors argue that these projects could be considered a part of a patronage system that exercises new forms of domination over a population that has suffered a history of abandonment from the state; this is very true in the case of the indigenous communities in Zamora Chinchipe (Bretón 2013: 83; Tuaza 2011). Furthermore, Bretón argues that the notions of *sumak kawsay* and alternative development have been instrumentalized in the relationship between ethnicity and development in order to organize and regulate the indigenous population. Walsh also criticizes the use of *sumak kawsay* as instrumental and functional to the state: “the crucial question is whether *buen vivir* is becoming another discursive tool and co-opted term, functional to the State and its structures and with little significance for real intercultural, interepistemic, and plurinational transformation” (Walsh, 2010a: 20). In other words, besides bringing development to local communities and in some ways alleviating poverty (which, in the government’s rhetoric, is equivalent to *buen vivir*), *Ecuador Estratégico* is a means to keep people content with what they receive from mineral extraction and to prevent any possible source of conflict.

Indeed, the presence of *Ecuador Estratégico* and the whole government apparatus represented in the many different regional offices in the province of Zamora also evidence a sense of a “state comeback” (Bebbington 2012; Bretón 2013; Tuaza 2011) in rural areas, particularly in the Amazon region. This comeback has altered the dynamics of the interactions between the indigenous population and the mining company. As described in Chapter 3, while Shuar communities and organizations used to negotiate directly with ECSA to obtain benefits for

the Shuar people, new government policies took control both over mining activities and all social projects. Authorities from *Ecuador Estratégico* state that the mining royalties were not previously redistributed to Shuar and mestizo communities; as such, these communities were forced to deal with the mining companies' paternalistic treatment and were usually forced to settle for small projects, such as the construction of a community house or a small soccer field.²³ *Ecuador Estratégico* aims for larger, long-term infrastructure and development projects, exactly the types of projects Shuar leaders have been expecting from the mining company for almost a decade. However, while it is true that the Shuar people expect more than small, short-term projects, they also felt that they had more control over negotiations with the company. In dealing with *Ecuador Estratégico*, many Shuar seem to feel powerless and, once again, disappointed.

While the state attempts to expand its presence and control over the areas around extractive projects, the local populations react in a variety of ways. As has been discussed in previous chapters, indigenous leaders at the federation and community levels hold different positions regarding large-scale mining and the development projects. For the president of Yanúa, for example, the sort of development projects proposed by the mining company or *Ecuador Estratégico* were meaningless because he was more interested in claiming back the territory in the Cordillera del Cóndor. However, most leaders are eager to present projects to the company to improve life in the communities. In this final section, I will move away from the state rhetoric and concentrate on the Shuar's response to promises of *buen vivir*, expectations of development (Ferguson 1999), and their own vision of what good living should be in their communities. While there might be a contradiction between the notions of alternative development in the constitution and the type of development *Ecuador Estratégico* intends to implement, the Shuar people are very much aligned with the development ideals of the latter institution. The notions of modernity and progress present in the urban areas represent precisely the model they desire for their communities.

6.5 The Shuar Communities around Project Mirador: Passive Recipients of Policies or Active Subjects?

Authors like Martínez Novo (2014) and Bretón (2013) have argued that, while the state utilizes indigenous symbols, some elements of their

cosmovision, and even their demands as part of its political agenda, it does not really recognize indigenous people as actors on the political and economic scene. Concepts associated with being indigenous—like the *sumak kamsay* or interculturalism—which appear to entail a critical understanding of cultural diversity, seem to actually be used in ways that do not hold deep meanings but rather that are ultimately vague and ambiguous. As was discussed earlier, *buen vivir* or *sumak kamsay* began as an idea of well-being related to the harmonious relationship with the environment and ended up being expressed as a classical model of development.

However, I argue that the Shuar actively struggle and/or negotiate in different spaces and through different mechanisms to achieve what they believe is good for their people. Furthermore, while they feel that *Ecuador Estratégico* has not delivered on its promises of development, ideally the company offers them exactly the type of projects that they have expected from the state and the company for several years. Clearly, the Shuar's discourses about development have been created and continue to evolve in a complex context that defies any kind of simplification or essentializing from external actors.

From the perspective of *Ecuador Estratégico* and the government, communities located in the areas in which resources are extracted are privileged; if they have historically been neglected and excluded by the state, now they are the recipients of the distribution of the wealth that results from resource extraction in their territory. However, while authorities and staff in the state company talk about this privilege as well as of the concepts of *buen vivir*, interculturalism, and equality, people from local indigenous communities around Tundayme simultaneously complain about the lack of services and infrastructure as well as the unfulfilled promises of development.

Despite the creation of the office of the *Regional Amazónica*, leaders from the FESZCH feel cheated: although before the state was absent from the communities, at least they had some leverage to negotiate directly with the mining companies. Now, ECSA refuses to sign any agreement with the Shuar after having paid \$40 million to the state as anticipated royalties; the Shuar feel that these funds have not been yet translated into the much-anticipated development and infrastructure in the communities located in the areas of direct and indirect impact. The president of the FESZCH complains:

We met with EE a year and a half ago to learn about how the communities would benefit from the implementation of certain projects, to provide the communities with potable water, sewage and electricity, and now the manager of *Ecuador Estratégico* in Zamora calls us again to inform us of the same thing, that the projects had only advanced 0.5 per cent and that they still need 99 per cent to complete the programs. So, we decided not to stay in the meeting, we adopted a position of resistance and left the meeting; we did this because there is nothing going on in the Shuar communities.²⁴

The FESZCH is aware that *Ecuador Estratégico* is focused on building major infrastructure projects such as roads, hospitals, and millennium schools that should be beneficial to the population in Zamora at large; however, they question if the Shuar communities will receive specific attention. Leaders at the FESZCH feel that, via its relationship with the company, the government should specifically address the Shuar people and develop infrastructure, such as health centers and bilingual millennium schools in their own communities.²⁵ Furthermore, the Shuar Federation claims that the Shuar people have a right to be compensated in material terms because the company is located in ancestral territory and because the Shuar have been historically excluded and marginalized by the mestizo society (a message that was conveyed in the meeting with the technical staff from the *Regional Amazónica* in October 2013). The Shuar people perceive that new infrastructure is being developed in the city of El Pangui, Tundayme, and a range of other places, but not in the Shuar communities directly affected by Project Mirador; this fact cannot be denied.

While representatives of *Ecuador Estratégico* perceive that the Shuar people are only interested in small, irrelevant projects such as the community sport field (*la cancha*), testimonies from different community leaders evidence a different reality. Furthermore, federation and community leaders are very much aware that royalties from mining companies should be invested in local development as a way to attempt to compensate for years of poverty and exclusion.

For example, the leader of the community of Certero talks about projects that were unsuccessfully presented to the municipality of El Pangui several years prior; at the time of the interview, he thought that these projects would finally be executed through the work of *Ecuador Estratégico* and the *Regional Amazónica*.

We were invited to Pastaza to a meeting with *Ecuador Estratégico*; I took all 55 applications that I had turned into the municipality for different projects and had never obtained anything. The houses from MIDUVI²⁶ [Ecuadorean Ministry of Urban Development and Housing] were also not delivered over a period of 5 years...we don't want \$10,000 or \$40,000; in my community we need at least \$600,000. They did build the community house, but I want to have a sewage system because at the moment we only have septic wells? And that is not hygienic; we also want a sports field for the kids and grandchildren to play sports...and water and sewage, as well as modern houses. That is why I ask that amount because they have never helped the Shuar people. Where are the royalties? They come from our mining project...which is not located in another country, it is located on my land...so they said in February they will start building all this infrastructure.²⁷



Community Police Station in Tundayme

Photograph: Consuelo Fernández-Salvador

Unfortunately, the leader from Certero was still awaiting these projects a year later. In fact, most community leaders have the same complaint: they have presented projects and attended meetings in Zamora and El Puyo with the staff from the *Regional Amazónica*, but they have mostly returned empty-handed. They believe the government institution does not comply with their request because of the lack of budget or the fact that the projects they present to either *Ecuador Estratégico* or directly to the *Regional Amazónica* are not a priority according to their rationale. This is because the state company categorizes the types of projects that should be carried out in terms of how urgent and important they are for the welfare of the people.²⁸

At this point, it is important to address the communities' and federation's leaders' failed expectations related to the survey carried out by the office of *Regional Amazónica*. As part of the new approach of interculturality, the goal of this visit to communities was to create spaces of dialogue in which indigenous leaders could interact with the staff of the office whom they perceived to be their equals; these meetings would also provide opportunities for them to express the needs of their communities in terms of basic services like education, health, and other issues. In fact, while I was visiting the Shuar Federation, the president mentioned a series of meetings that the personnel of *Ecuador Estratégico* would be having in the province. The next day, I joined the vice-president of the FESZCH and the president of Asociación Shuar Kakaram in the parish council of Tundayme's office to attend this meeting. In this case, three members of the technical staff representing the *Regional Amazónica* who belong to the Shuar and Achuar nationalities were present at the meeting, which, in fact, seemed to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence with the presidents of the communities. Only representatives of two of the four communities in the area were present at the meeting. Overall, leaders of Churuwia and Yanúa, the president of Asociación Shuar Kakaram, the vice-president of the FESZCH, and the president of the parish council were present. The meeting started with a very strong nationalist speech given by one of the representatives of the *Regional Amazónica*, followed by a very practical, technical discussion by a staff member from the office in Zamora. On one hand, the representatives of the regional office addressed the fact that the Shuar people had been excluded by previous governments and that it was the president's intention to change this and work to benefit

them through *Ecuador Estratégico*. In their words, it was “time to close the gap between mestizos and indigenous people,” a sentiment that was obviously shared by all participants. On other hand, a member of the staff of the office of *Ecuador Estratégico* in Zamora discussed the priorities of the communities, emphasizing the information that was provided by the president of the parish council of Tundayme: all the indigenous communities that belong to the parish lack basic services and this is a priority for *Ecuador Estratégico* and the *Regional Amazónica*. However, while running water, electricity, and sewage are priority, feasibility studies would need to be carried out first to determine if they could actually be implemented in the communities.

Finally, the group ultimately agreed that the Shuar communities in the area needed to solve the most basic problems regarding water, electrification, and sewage. However, while the meeting was supposed to open spaces for the leaders to express their concern about these and other issues, the agenda for *Ecuador Estratégico*'s work seemed to have already been defined in advance. This was made clear in the statement made by the director of the *Regional Amazónica* regarding the priorities of the Plan for the Nationalities, as well as comments made by a member of the staff in charge of social programs. They said, “we told them we had to prioritize, we can't do everything, for us a covered sport field is not a priority, but water is...”²⁹

The real issue underlying these priorities is tied to the argument that development projects are not only related to the building of infrastructure or provision of services; rather, they are a way of controlling and determining how people should live and are linked to notions of “civilizing” and regulating the Amazonian indigenous communities. Furthermore, they express a paternalistic attitude that seems to permeate the relationship between indigenous people and *Ecuador Estratégico*'s mestizo staff, who view the desires and needs of some leaders as irrelevant, whimsical and not worthy of serious consideration. For the mestizo staff and directors, Western notions of a dignified life have to do with having a decent house, clean water, and, above all, access to electricity (I cover this more in depth in the next section). However, for the Shuar leaders, having access to a sports field, schools, and transportation is important not only because of their relevance to basic survival, but because they provide access to a mestizo

lifestyle and notions of modernization.³⁰ Thus, for them, all of those needs are a priority.

This discussion, the general complaints of the Shuar people regarding the lack of attention from *Ecuador Estratégico*, and even the superficiality of the meeting I attended raise questions regarding the issue of interculturalism. The *Regional Amazónica* was created to explicitly work with the indigenous population in the Amazon region and immediately introduced the concept of interculturalism as a way to acknowledge and respond to different cultural contexts. However, I would argue that, like the *buen vivir*, the notion of interculturalism is treated in ambiguous ways and is mostly limited to vague notions of cultural respect and diversity. According to Walsh, real interculturalism is a political project in process that should go beyond recognition and tolerance of diversity; it should seek to foster “the construction of a new and different kind of society, relations and conditions”³¹ (Walsh 2008: 140). This involves not only economic changes, but also the recognition and inclusion of different cosmologies, different forms of knowledge and ancestral memory, and ways of engaging to nature. Interculturalism also involves the realization that cultural diversity is framed within a context of power relations, as part of a racialized colonial structure (Guerrero 2011: 77; Walsh 2010b: 78). It is clear that the company does not really address any of these issues and that the concept of interculturalism is being used without any real meaning attached to it. In the interviews I carried out with the authorities from *Ecuador Estratégico*, the term was used often when referring to the nationalities of the Amazon region, but they never really explained how the concept would be practically implemented, how it would be considered when deciding what types of projects were more important to the communities, or how these projects would be administered. Furthermore, several leaders, including the leader from Certero who I quoted above, mentioned that interactions with the staff and manager of the *Regional Amazónica* never had positive results. The diagnostics meeting in Tundayme simply collected basic (but already known) information on the communities’ needs without considering any changes in the priorities, as illustrated in the example above. In a company context in which decisions are made based on technical and economic considerations, there seems to be little room for thinking beyond simplified assumptions of what cultural relevance and what real community participation should be. The question remains if the

diagnostics process was really part of a broader intercultural agenda to address issues of inequality or if these concepts were simply utilized as part of a rhetoric with no further meaningful significance.

6.5.1 Between Discourses and Reality: The Life Choices of the Shuar Regarding Development

Arsel and Avila (2011) and Davidov (2013) have pointed out the contradiction between the government and the Ecuadorean Constitution of 2008 in terms of development policies. While the new constitution grants rights to nature, at the same time, it is tied up to its deep commitment to provide welfare to the population, especially to those groups with the greatest needs. The concept of *sumak kamsay*, which in itself implies a harmonious relationship to the environment and nature, cannot be accomplished if intensive natural resource extraction is seen as the main mechanism to provide well-being for the people.

As discussed before, while discourses of redistribution and *buen vivir* are part of the institutional rhetoric of *Ecuador Estratégico* and the state regarding the importance of extracting natural resources, this alternative model of development incorporated in the constitution has remained an abstract concept. The classic view of development continues to underpin the government's agenda, at least in this stage of the transformation of the productive matrix. This notion of development has become a universal model since the end of World War II and it is based on the assumption that progress and well-being in a society will be reached through economic growth. Economic growth was (and still is) seen as the only way to alleviate poverty and to solve redistribution issues, as well as to help consolidate industrialization and production of technology (Gudynas 2012).

The intensification of extractivism fits within the classic view of development, which also emphasizes the construction of infrastructure that is symbolic of progress in the Western world: roads, bridges, hospitals, schools, and displays of industrialization (Arsel 2012; Gudynas 2003). Thus, in accordance with pre-established logic and notions of how development should work in both mestizo and indigenous communities, projects are designed by the state's technical staff and not by the communities. As Schavelzon suggests, it would seem that the *buen vivir* has become a bureaucratic replacement of the term "development," but with the same logic behind it (2015: 194).

In this context, the sort of development promoted by *Ecuador Estratégico* goes hand in hand with the logic of the POT, a system of development and planning based on territorial organization also implemented by the current government and regulated by the Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomies and Decentralization (COOTAD—*Código Orgánico de Organización Territorial, Autonomía y Descentralización*). While the POT defines parameters as to how the territory should be conceptualized and managed, *Ecuador Estratégico* establishes a development logic that privileges huge investments in infrastructure, resulting in what I would call a sort of Amazonian “urbanizing.” Ultimately, this serves as a way to organize and “civilize” the territory (Gudynas 2003). The state company’s star projects in Zamora Chinchipe and other Amazonian provinces (such as the millennium communities and schools) are also evidence of this perspective and logic. Although Tundayme has been chosen to be a Millennium Community due to its proximity to Project Mirador, the implementation of most of the new services and infrastructure has been delayed.³² However, two iconic communities in the northern part of the Amazon region (one in Panacocha and one in Playas del Cuyabeno) can serve as examples to understand the logic behind these initiatives. While *Ecuador Estratégico*’s staff and authorities recognized that different indigenous communities do not respond to a single model, it became clear that they should incorporate certain elements that are basic in an urban setting. To begin with, the layout emulates that of a typical mestizo town, although many indigenous communities traditionally live in a dispersed pattern usually around their farms and not concentrated around a specific center. Second, the communities incorporate all basic services (a school, a health center, a technology center, and even a police unit) and pay special attention to urban decoration (parks, river walks, and so forth), which is a clear way of organizing and regulating the jungle landscape and the life within it.

Thus, *buen vivir* is directly associated with having a civilized and dignified kind of life from a Western and urban perspective; as the director of the *Regional Amazónica* in El Puyo affirmed, “the people of the communities...I wonder if they ever dreamed of having their own house with water and sewage, living with dignity;” he added, “the idea of the Millennium Community is to provide them with all the basic services, that they have a town just as we [the mestizos] deserve, that they have

access to education....the idea is to give them that special treatment they deserve because they are living in an area close to the strategic projects...”³³ In the words of the former general manager of the company, “they feel proud that if they have a strategic project it has allowed them to have a place to live with more *buen vivir*, which is what they know as *sumak kawsay*.”³⁴ As noted before, the message sent by the government through *Ecuador Estratégico* is that it is making dreams—including the dream of achieving happiness—come true for these communities. The slogan on the webpage echoes this sentiment: “Resources that Build Happiness.”

While there is much debate as to what kind of development is envisioned by the government versus what is implemented by *Ecuador Estratégico*, it is important to ask what people in the local communities really want. Essentializing images and discourses on indigenous people many times portrays them in ways that might actually clash with their own vision of well-being. In the chapter on discourses and political practices, it is clear that while there might be a universal discourse on being Shuar tied to ideas of ancestry, everyday notions tend to be more changing and fragmented; it is also very much influenced by a mestizo logic. One of the leaders interviewed in my study made it very clear that, because of the influence and imposition of the mestizo society, the Shuar have had to adapt to modernity and become competitive with mestizos. According to him and other people from the communities, it is no longer sufficient or possible to live like their ancestors, who really did not need much besides what they could get from the forest.

As many people from the communities have stated, there was no need for their grandparents to read, write, seek education, or earn money. Nowadays, these needs have changed because their relationship and their insertion in the mestizo society has evolved. Today, the Shuar’s lives are very much entangled with their mestizo neighbors and they consider themselves to be part of Ecuadorian society. In this sense, they seek the same goods and well-being for their communities that any other citizen would seek for their families: decent living conditions, quality education for their children, and enough income to be able to satisfy most basic expenses. As was discussed in the chapter on discourses, several young community leaders have a different vision for their future which is not so closely tied to their communities’ land and the territory,

but rather to becoming entrepreneurs and developing productive projects. For example, the leader of Certero understands good living in terms of engaging in the hard work associated with maintaining his orchards and hunting (as his ancestors did). But, he also sees the value in those things that are important to mestizo society, “but now it is important to have good drinking water, good education, we want to improve ourselves, we want to be educated, we want a dignified life.”³⁵

In fact, most of the Shuar communities in this study are actively involved in the process of POT. The formulation and implementation of development plans must be articulated within the different levels of administrative division in Ecuador: region, province, canton, parish, and district. These must also correspond to the objectives defined by the National Secretariat for Planning and Development (SENPLADES—*Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo*) in the National Plan for *Buen Vivir*. Thus, the COOTAD serves as an instrument to homogenize and simplify all levels of public administration, from the parishes and municipalities to provincial councils and the nation (Lu et al. 2017: 111-112). Specifically, the objective of the POT or land use planning is to “complement the economic, social and environmental planning within a territorial dimension; carry out interventions in the territory; and, orient its development and sustainability”³⁶ (COOTAD Art 297). The point of this planning system is to grant more autonomy to local forms of government and authority such as the municipality and the parish and to incorporate rural communities in the process of development. For example, Article 308 of the Law of COOTAD specifies that indigenous communities with collective land titles are a form of ancestral territorial organization and are considered to be a basic unit of citizen participation within the GADs. Thus, development programs that are part of the POT of parishes and cantons should include a diagnostic process within indigenous communities that should help determine their needs and the projects or programs that should be implemented over the next four or five years according to an assigned budget. The objective of the POT is to prioritize the ways in which resources should be invested based on the proposals made to local government entities in order to reduce poverty, promote education, and facilitate the provision of social services (Lu et al. 2017: 112).

However, I would argue that this process is a way to rationalize and in a way “urbanize” the space and the territory of rural communities that

belong to each canton. As Lu et al. argue, while the COOTAD is supposed to be a guide for the development of local plans, in reality it “provides a vision of territory that is functional to the political project of the Revolución Ciudadana” (Lu et al. 2017: 112) since subnational governments should always work within the framework of the national level planning. For example, part of the POT process is to map out communities in new patterns of settlement so as to facilitate the eventual implementation of basic services. In other words, the communities would have to re-arrange their living spaces such that electricity, sewage, and running water facilities could be easily installed. This has required most Shuar communities to change their traditional, scattered living arrangements to adopt a community model in which households are structured around a main center. This arrangement includes a network of roads, and the creation of specific areas for certain activities, such as the community center, parks, “green” spaces, and so forth.

The mestizo-town logic is very much present in this new reconfiguration of the communities and it is justified by technical limitations important to the implementation of basic services. Furthermore, as stated in the COOTAD, this organization has also been imposed because communities are part of the administrative units in charge of elaborating development projects both at the rural and urban level. In this case, indigenous community spaces are not given any special consideration, although it has been acknowledged that implementing development projects in these spaces can be more complicated. According to the municipality planning director of El Pangui, while it is easier to plan within the Shuar communities that are part of the canton, communities that are located deep in the forest present more difficulties in every sense, especially because they are culturally very different. From the director’s perspective, the communities they work with have become acculturated and their aspirations are similar to those of mestizos’, which makes it easier to work with them.³⁷

Most Shuar leaders are very much “onboard” with the POT and/or with *Ecuador Estratégico*’s development projects. Several leaders showed me the recently drawn maps of their communities and explained how houses should be relocated and streets designed. None of the leaders were critical of or disagreed with the layout (including the green space designation that, I admit had bothered me so much because, as I

understood it, the whole community was already part of a “natural green space”). The leader of Etsa constantly compared his community to urban settings such as El Panguí and insisted that living in a town implied receiving many benefits from the municipal government, although he was aware that they also had a cost. Many leaders and members of the communities in the area feel this way, even if they are not completely involved in the process of the POT. For example, the president of San Andrés is very interested in having his community acquire the category of head parish. He said, “Why can’t the Shuar have a parish council? In this way, we can have a school in the parish and other benefits...”³⁸ Furthermore, as discussed in other chapters, many members of the communities actually live in El Panguí or Tundayme or they travel between these urban areas and their communities because they have access to schools and basic services that they do not have in their own communities. Thus, there is a sense of value attached to the urban areas because they can provide the progress they lack in their own communities; as such, the final goal is to make the communities as urban and modern as the nearby towns.

For example, in Churuwía, Santiago Paty, and Etsa, the desire to develop and modernize the communities is very strong and the community members see the process of “urbanizing” as the first step in that process. The president of Santiago Paty talks about his community in this sense, saying, “the community is a little more organized...we have a good location, a square layout as you can see, the houses and the streets; very nice as you can see.” In response to my question related to the official layout, he responded, “of course we have the layout and with that we have our development plan, with a budget and all, and we also aspire to have our Millennium Community.”³⁹ The president of Etsa referred to his community, explaining, “this is going to change pretty soon, they are going to open up streets, install potable water, build latrines, each time more and more like an urban center; that is what we are aiming for.”⁴⁰

The process of the POT and the projects carried out by *Ecuador Estratégico* are complex, bureaucratic, and require that the communities be recognized by CODENPE. Once this is verified, each community has to design the layout and mapping (which also involves a study for which they have to pay) and they have to work together with the technical staff

of the municipality and parish council to carry out a diagnostic process to determine the needs and priorities of each community.

Beyond the details of the process, it is evident that the Shuar communities have to work together with the local government as part of a development structure that is also tied to the state's national development plan. The POT is perceived by the communities as an opportunity to become modern and to exercise their rights and fulfill obligations as any other Ecuadorean citizen. The leader of Etsa perfectly illustrates this:

We want to have better services, as any other citizen, and pay taxes, of course. What is the importance of the community layout? The law says that we have to live in this way because otherwise we are not going to get anything...it is an obligation and a right to have the communities urbanized. They are municipal regulations and they are implemented through the parish councils and they bring documents and share the information in the communities and they say they have to urbanize the communities in order to provide benefits. For example, communities like Kimi, Valle del Kimi, Yanúa, and Mirador cannot receive any benefits because they are not urbanized. You have to show the community layout and map approved by the municipality, and comply with all the requirements, such as the number of households and people.⁴¹

As is clear from many of the examples and quotes from the Shuar leaders, most of the people in the communities in this study seemed to have already internalized the notions of modernity and development as they are considered signs of progress and well-being (Teijlingen 2016). Emulating mestizo, urban settings, is a way to belong to a modern national society, which is one of their greatest aspirations. This means that, in many ways, they acknowledge that a Shuar identity connected to the territory and traditional forms of subsistence can no longer continue to exist. It also means that, as shown in the chapter on Shuar discourses, the struggle to protect or recuperate a territory is not as important as the desire to belong to the modern national society.

6.6 Conclusions

This chapter had two goals: to examine the political role of *Ecuador Estratégico* within a nationalist agenda in which the extraction of resources is key and to understand how the Shuar population struggle in their

pursuit of development vis-à-vis the state company. To accomplish this twofold objective, I first demonstrated the contradictions between the concept of *buen vivir*, extractivism, and development, as conceptualized in the constitution and the National Plan for *Buen Vivir*. I then examined how these concepts were really implemented in extractive contexts and through *Ecuador Estratégico*.

On one hand, I argue that the state company has a political role in legitimizing mineral extraction by becoming a main regulator of wealth redistribution and local development. As such, it has incorporated and linked the notion of *buen vivir* to extractive practices and to classic forms of development. On the other hand, it has been clear that, despite all the conceptual contradictions, the Shuar people and organizations favor and even endorse *Ecuador Estratégico*'s development logic. This support of the state company's work makes sense considering that the Shuar people have important material needs, especially in terms of access to basic services and adequate living conditions. Thus, after years of exclusion and suffering the consequences of the colonizing process (which included landloss and changes in their subsistence practices as a means to adapt to the mestizo lifestyle), Shuar people expect the government to deliver on its promises to end poverty and improve life in their communities. However, the danger is that the Shuar may be satisfied with a notion of development that is limited to the provision of basic material needs and access to the amenities of the urban lifestyle, without demanding change related to the complex issues of inequality and exclusion. Ultimately, the Shuar, as most indigenous people in the Ecuadorean Amazon, continue to struggle to overcome structural issues that are the product of years of exclusion. What is really at stake is that issues of social justice may remain unsolved because, as Gudynas argues (2012), redistribution and local development in the way it is envisioned by the state company will not really change the economic structures of society that created and maintains that exclusion.

Notes

¹ The article 'La Minería para el Buen Vivir? Large-Scale Mining, Citizenship and Development Practice in Ecuador', based on this chapter and written in collaboration with Karolien van Teijlingen, was submitted to the *Journal of Latin American Perspectives* to be published in a special issue on *Buen Vivir* and at the moment it is being reviewed by the editorial committee.

² *Pacha Mama* is an Andean concept that generally refers to mother nature as the source of life.

³ Original text in Spanish: “Nosotras y Nosotros, el pueblo soberano del Ecuador, reconociendo nuestras raíces milenarias, forjadas por mujeres y hombres de distintos pueblos, celebrando a la naturaleza, la Pacha Mama de la que somos parte y que es vital para nuestra existencia, invocando el nombre de dios y reconociendo nuestras diversas formas de religiosidad y espiritualidad, apelando a la sabiduría de todas las culturas que nos enriquecen como sociedad...Decidimos construir una nueva forma de convivencia ciudadana, en diversidad y armonía con la naturaleza, para alcanzar el buen vivir, el *sumak kawsay*” (Constitución Política de la República del Ecuador, Foreword 2008: 15)

⁴ Original text in Spanish: “Se reconoce el derecho de la población a vivir en un medio ambiente sano y ecológicamente equilibrado, que garantice la sostenibilidad y el buen vivir, *sumak kawsay*.” (Constitution 2008)

⁵ Original text in Spanish: “fortalece la cohesión social, los valores comunitarios y la participación activa de individuos y colectividades en las decisiones relevantes para la construcción de su propio destino y felicidad...” (Plan Nacional del Buen Vivir 2013: 23)

⁶ Original text in Spanish: “...entendemos por desarrollo la consecución del buen vivir de todos y todas, en paz y armonía con la naturaleza y la prolongación indefinida de las culturas humanas. El buen vivir presupone que las libertades, oportunidades, capacidades y potencialidades reales de los individuos se amplíen de modo que permitan lograr simultáneamente aquello que la sociedad, los territorios, las diversas identidades colectivas y cada uno - visto como un ser humano universal y particular a la vez- valora como objetivo de vida deseable. Nuestro concepto de desarrollo nos obliga a reconocernos, comprendernos y valorarnos unos a otros a fin de posibilitar la autorrealización y la construcción de un porvenir compartido.” (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2007-2010: 54)

⁷ However, after 10 years of government, the change in the productive matrix is still in its early stages, since the country’s economy still depends greatly on oil and mineral extraction (which has not even started yet).

⁸ *Ecuador Estratégico* only operates in those 13 provinces where strategic projects are being developed. The state considers strategic projects to be those initiatives that generate high revenues and manage energy in any of its forms: oil and mining exploitation, electricity, water, and telecommunications.

⁹ These are *Childhood Centers for Buen Vivir* and are dedicated to providing care to children between 1 and 3 years old.

¹⁰ Millennium schools and communities (model communities that offer housing and provide basic services as well as technology and infrastructure to the people living in them) are the star projects of *Ecuador Estratégico*. They have been built throughout Ecuador, receiving great investment to develop infrastructure and technology.

¹¹ Interview former general manager of Ecuador Estratégico, February 2014

¹² Interview former general manager of Ecuador Estratégico, February 2014

¹³ Interview director of Ecuador Estratégico in Zamora Chinchipe, May 2014

¹⁴ Not all projects are part of the work *Ecuador Estratégico* does; for example, community houses, sports fields, and small projects should be managed by the local GAD. In fact, other important projects like electrification or systems for potable water are really part of the work the local GADs should be doing in the urban and rural communities, but many times *Ecuador Estratégico* has taken over these projects.

¹⁵ Interview former manager of *Ecuador Estratégico*, February 2014

¹⁶ Interview director of *Regional Amazónica*, December 2014

¹⁷ During the interview, I had asked if it was possible to have access to the plan, but apparently since it was not approved it was not yet public information.

¹⁸ Interview former general manager, *Ecuador Estratégico*, February 2014

¹⁹ *Ecuador Estratégico's* official web site:

http://www.ecuadorestrategicoep.gob.ec/misionvisionvalores_/

²⁰ Interview regional manager *Amazónica*, December 2014

²¹ (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_TIP9uR7p4)

²² Interview Coordinator of the Shuar Area of the *Regional Amazónica*, December 2014

²³ Interview manager of *Ecuador Estratégico* in Zamora, May 2014

²⁴ Interview president of FESZCH, July 2014

²⁵ It is interesting to observe some contradictions in relation to these categories: while there are many infrastructure projects such as the improvement of parks in El Pangui and the river walk in Zamora (in which \$3.7 million dollars were invested according to reports in *Ecuador Estratégico's* official web page: www.ecuadorestrategico.gob.ec) as well as the construction of a velodrome in the city of Zamora (which is one of three sports infrastructure projects built in the province with an investment of \$5.7 million dollars) and two Millennial Schools, Shuar communities in the area of direct impact of Project Mirador still have nothing to show; the only accomplishment in terms of basic services that I had witnessed throughout my fieldwork (2013-2015) was the installation of the

electricity network in the community of Etsa, for which its president had been doing paperwork for over two years.

²⁶ Ministerio de Desarrollo Urbano y Vivienda/Ministry of Urban Development and Housing

²⁷ Interview president of Certero May-June 2014

²⁸ The category of work with most priority is the one that includes basic living conditions such as running water, sewage systems, electricity, and waste management. The next category includes health and education as well as household construction. The last category includes roads, culture, sports, and so forth. Furthermore, Millennial Communities (one for each nationality, as ordered by President Rafael Correa) and Schools are considered emblematic projects and they, along with the construction of highways, are very important because they are part of the president's compromise to the people (Interview of staff member of *Ecuador Estratégico* in Zamora, July 2014).

²⁹ Interview, Ecuador Estratégico staff member, Dayana Erazo, July 2014

³⁰ In many cases, the communities might already have access to clean sources of water, even if they do not have infrastructure for every house to have direct access to it. Also having potable water and regular service implies that they will be charged for the service and people might not be able to afford it.

³¹ Original text in Spanish: "construcción de sociedad, relaciones y condiciones de vida nuevas y distintas." (Walsh 2008: 140)

³² In fact, throughout my study (2013-2015), only the police unit, a technology center, and the offices of the parish council were built as part of the project of the Millenium Community. In my last visit in 2016, the situation, in terms of infrastructure, was the same.

³³ Interview former director of *Regional Amazónica*, December 2014

³⁴ Interview former general manager *Ecuador Estratégico*, February 2014

³⁵ Interview president of Certero, January 2014

³⁶ Original text in Spanish: "...complementar la planificación económica, social y ambiental con dimensión territorial; racionalizar las intervenciones sobre el territorio; y, orientar su desarrollo y aprovechamiento sostenible..." (COOTAD Art 297).

³⁷ Interview director of the Planning Department, January 2015

³⁸ Interview president of San Andrés, January 2015

³⁹ Interview president of Santiago Paty, January 2014

⁴⁰ Interview president of Etsa, June 2014

⁴¹ Interview president of Etsa, June 2014

7.1 Introduction

The objective of this research was to understand the ways in which identity discourses are shaped and how these discourses define political practices and strategies within the Shuar Federation in its dealings with Project Mirador. The second objective was to determine if the practice of ethno-politics has been a useful strategy for the Shuar people in their struggles related to mining extraction as they attempt to connect responses of local communities to wider political and economic dynamics. It was also important to find out if there was a connection between identity discourses and political strategies and to determine how flexible and changing these were. While it is somewhat expected that in the context of large-scale mining there will be some level of division among the local population's positions and perspectives (Avci and Fernández-Salvador 2016; Buchanan 2013), two things were clear to me during the initial period of fieldwork in the context of Project Mirador. First, the largest and most influential Shuar Federation in the province was supportive of mining, while the strongest mobilization against the project had been led mostly by mestizos. Second, not only was there a variety of positions regarding mining amongst the Shuar communities, but these were highly flexible and changing. The challenge was to understand what was it that made the Shuar leaders, who belonged to one single organization, react so differently to similar conditions created by the presence of the mining company. It was also important to understand how these reactions, in turn, produced isolated resistance efforts or negotiation attempts.

As discussed throughout the thesis, the Shuar Federation and the community leaders are constantly struggling for access to resources to benefit the Shuar people and the organization itself, regardless of accusations of corruption or situations of conflicts. They struggle because they are always in a subordinate position, whether in their negotiations with the mining company, state institutions, or even with

missionaries (in earlier times). Being marginalized and historically excluded by the mestizo society and the state through specific laws and policies has meant that the Shuar have had to develop different strategies to confront the larger society. Identity discourses and political practices are part of the strategies through which the Shuar have had to re-invent themselves in a way so that they can continue being Shuar, but also become part of Ecuadorian society with all the rights and privileges that other citizens enjoy. Thus, I have emphasized the importance of not simplifying positions of identity and the political struggles, and instead I have concentrated on situations of diversity, transformation, and even conflict in those borderland areas. In this concluding chapter, I would like to highlight the main findings and contributions of this thesis (some of which are more predictable than others) as well as some questions that remain to be answered and that can lay the groundwork for future research.

Before addressing the main discussion, however, I would like to highlight what I consider to be future research possibilities in light of the contributions of this thesis. From my perspective, the most important task that was undertaken in this thesis was the study of the Shuar leadership in the communities of Zamora Chinchipe. While this research did not set out to do an ethnography of the communities in the area around Project Mirador, it did collect important ethnographic information on the communities themselves and on the Shuar political organization. Considering the groundwork of my thesis, I see two interesting starting points for future research. One of these would be an ethnographic examination of the Shuar communities that studies crucial issues such as the change in the way territory is conceived and managed, and in subsistence practices. While not first on the political agenda, the possibility that Shuar people in Zamora may map out and legalize, title deeds of the land (many of them in hands of the *colonos* without legal support), could be a tool to be used by any Shuar organization to strengthen the communities. Second, while the relationship between the Salesian missionaries and the Shuar in Morona Santiago has also been widely documented, the history of the Franciscan missions and the the contact and work they did with the Shuar people is somewhat scattered and should be systematized. These early contacts with the missionaries and the way they educated the indigenous people might also provide interesting information on issues such as the language loss and the

dynamics of the political organization in this province. All this information should contribute not only to an academic discussion, but could also help Shuar leaders strengthen their organization and the work they do in favour of the people in the communities.

7.2 Indigeneity and Positioning as Part of Territorial Dynamics

The framework of indigeneity (Valdivia 2007) and the concepts of articulation and positioning (Hall 2003) have been key to understanding identity discourses and strategies as they are framed and produced in specific conjunctures, as they inform the decisions made regarding large-scale mining, and as they influence interactions between the Shuar and different actors. At all levels of the organization—from the federation leaders to the associations and the communities—there are individualized micro discourses, positionings, and practices. There is also an apparent lack of collaborative, integrated work among the different organizational levels. Diverse positions connected to identity discourses (in some cases more than others) occurred not only between different communities but even among family members, as in the case of Yanúa and Churuwia. Thus, as Hall had suggested, there is not a Shuar identity *per se*, or a historical continuity that would serve as a basis for the articulation of identities, but rather particular interests in specific contexts.

From Hall's perspective, collective identities are articulated or enunciated around specific interests and they are not necessarily connected through a sense of historical continuity; however, in the case of the FESZCH and its community leadership, the notion of historical territorial dynamics (Little 2001) has helped us to understand the diverse ways in which indigeneity has been shaped. In this thesis, the concept of territorial dynamics has shown that the changing relationship of the Shuar with the territory and the transformation of the communities (both of which are the result of interactions with the mestizo beginning with the arrival of the missionaries and *colonos* and now continuing through the presence of the state and the mining company) have contributed to the construction of flexible and changing identities and positions regarding large-scale mining.

Although the notion of a territory is central in the discourse and strategy of many indigenous organizations in the Amazon region, it has

not been a priority for the FESZCH. The extreme division between the land in the communities, the land's proximity to the main provincial highway and to several urban centers, and the migration from communities in the north (favored precisely because of the strategic location of some communities in terms of access to schools and transportation), are all factors that have contributed to the fragmentation of the territory. Thus, it makes sense that, for most of these community leaders, the priority was not the territory and its protection (although it was of some concern), but rather the well-being in their communities, understood in terms of modernization and advancement.

As I have shown, many leaders in this study completely dedicate their efforts to working for concrete and material benefits for the people. Basic services that are still not provided for most communities in the area—such as electricity, drinking water, and sewage—are evidently the most immediate concerns and they are considered signs of progress. Other concerns are also highly valued; for example, the Shuar want access to education, the possibility of becoming entrepreneurs, and to live in communities that emulate mestizo, urban settings and all their amenities. To the Shuar, they see access to these goods and services as a means to insert themselves into the modern mestizo society. Thus, since the mining company has not delivered on its promises of well-being and development, all their expectations have been placed on *Ecuador Estratégico*, the state company in charge of managing the resources from mineral extraction and redistributing wealth.

7.3 Development in the Context of Extractivism

In Project Mirador, *Ecuador Estratégico* is the new actor in charge of local development. Despite its role as a strictly managerial company in charge of the technical aspects of development, it also serves a very important political role. The contradictions between the proposed concepts of *buen vivir* and the emphasis on extractivism as well as the development logic that replaced the notions of an alternative development have required the government to develop certain strategies to be able to continue with oil and mineral exploitation. As I have argued, the role of *Ecuador Estratégico* is to justify and legitimize the extraction of minerals by delivering development to local communities and, in a way, regulating and controlling the local population.

In this context, there are two important concluding points related to the interactions between the Shuar communities and organization. First, most leaders and people from the communities want the same kind of development that *Ecuador Estratégico* offers. Second, since *Ecuador Estratégico* is the company that mostly directs the development of infrastructure, the decisions as to what programs will be implemented and where appear to respond only to technical and financial considerations. This implies that, although there should be a strong intercultural component in their work with indigenous communities in the Amazon region, the reality is that projects implemented by the state company respond to a strong top-down approach and are not necessarily participatory. However, there is a perception among the Shuar people and leaders that, while the company has contributed to the construction of schools, hospitals, and roads, their communities (especially those closer to Project Mirador) are still being left out. The question they ask themselves is whether the decision for the implementation of projects is really just technical or has more political implications; in other words, it may be important for the government to show major infrastructure work in the main urban centers where they can gain support from more people, but not necessarily in the communities. Overall, the relationship between *Ecuador Estratégico* and the Shuar people reflects the same historical issues of exclusion and has left them struggling to obtain what they think it is fair for their communities.

Most Shuar leaders (except the leader from Yanúa) were actually in favour of the presence of the state company in the area and did not question its view on development for the reasons already explained above. It is clear that the work of *Ecuador Estratégico* is crucial to establishing the most basic infrastructure necessary to assuring people a decent and dignified life. As discussed in the introduction, classic definitions of development have been harshly criticized; however, poverty and unfulfilled material needs persist in these communities, and it appears that this company may be able to help address those needs to some extent. Nonetheless, the state company still supports a limited notion of development and well-being, and the danger is that Shuar leaders may give up on other important issues including their struggle for access to equal rights as Shuar and Ecuadorian citizens and their attempts to overcome a history of inequality and exclusion. Unfortunately, in a scenario in which local communities have been

historically abandoned by the state, everyday struggles to obtain basic living conditions for their communities occupy most of the leaders' efforts (especially at the community level). This, in turn, may prevent them from looking at deeper, long-term structural issues. In the end, the history of the FESZCH and other indigenous organization in Ecuador is one of constant struggle to overcome a situation in which they are seen of as the "other" in the state's hegemonic national project (Selverston-Scher 2001). Whether they succeed in becoming part of the national project on their own terms is still yet to be seen.

7.4 Main Conclusions and Contributions

After this brief discussion of the main findings discussed throughout the dissertation, in this final section I reflect on what I consider to be the most important insights and contributions of this study. One basic, relevant contribution of this thesis is that it challenges the dominant narratives of indigenous politics and organizations that tend to idealize, dismiss, or trivialize political struggles based on ethnic claims. Essentialized imaginaries about indigenous people used by the larger society, environmental organizations, and even academics obscure processes of change and marginalization (in terms of access to resources, control of their territory, and so forth) that groups like the Shuar have suffered as part of colonialism throughout the last century. These imaginaries of the Shuar usually emphasize their harmonious relationship with nature and the environment and lead to certain expectations of what their choices and political strategies should be. For example, in the context of large-scale mining, it is expected that indigenous organizations resist extractivism in defense of their territory and their culture, many times vilifying their efforts to negotiate for the people. Also, part of an idealization of indigenous groups and their political organizations is the assumption that discourses and practices are devoid of conflict and that the collective good is above all personal interests and power struggles. I must admit, that this was partly also my perspective when I started fieldwork and it took an effort to understand that complex power relations permeated the Shuar Federation as they would any other political organization.

The inclusion of other social categories in the analysis of Shuar discourses and strategies is also important to challenging the oversimplification and idealization of indigenous organizations and politics.

As stated in the introduction, the reference to other forms of social difference (such as age, status, and geographic mobility) and subsistence practices has helped the discussion stay away from binary readings that view indigenous people in opposition to mestizo people, as if they were two separate, monolithic groups. As Rivera Cusicanqui (2010) argues, denying the contemporaneity of Shuar people renews former colonizing practices by framing indigenous groups as passive recipients of an imposed worldview who are incapable of change, adaptation, and creation. From this perspective, the discussion of intersectionality proved useful in looking at the way different social categories interlock which, in many cases, leads to increasing and exacerbating hierarchies among and between groups. Furthermore, in the context of the Shuar political organization, it especially helped understand how leaders negotiate their position not only as part of the Shuar Federation or communities but also as part of the larger mestizo society.

Throughout the thesis, I have described the flexible categories or “situated accomplishments” (Mollet and Faria, 2013: 123) through which Shuar leaders constantly navigate, construct discourses, and define strategies. In chapters 4 through 6, I offered many examples of how discourses are shaped at the intersection of a variety of flexible social categories, but also through relationships with different actors and through specific experiences. For example, having a position of important status in the federation and direct access to the mining company is quite different from the experiences of certain community leaders. In Yanúa’s case, its leader felt cheated by the mining company and, through a strong relationship with an environmental NGO, he eventually developed an activist position of resistance towards mining. Thus, leaders make decisions and define their positions towards large-scale mining not only based on their sense of belonging to a Shuar community, but also according to their own personal and family interests and relationships with a variety of actors. Age also seems to be influential in terms of how the leaders think about development, modernization, and extractive practices. More distant from the experiences of older Shuar people, younger leaders are eager to participate in the larger society and they see large-scale mining as an opportunity to do so. Thus, indigeneity is constructed in conjunctures that go beyond ethnicity.

In this context of multiple, intersecting categories and experiences, how do we understand the construction of indigeneity as a political

strategy? Does the concept of indigeneity make sense when discourses and positions are very much influenced by other factors that are not related only to being Shuar or being indigenous? The framework used in this thesis states that there is no single or correct version of indigeneity. Rather, it is important to recognize the flexibility and space needed to negotiate the construction of political identities, as has been the case for the Shuar leadership. Although diverse, the construction of indigeneity at all levels of the FESZCH has allowed the expression or enunciation (Hall 1990) of shared interests and shared notions of exclusion among Shuar leaders. This is an important aspect of ethno-politics because it allows us to recognize the interplay between the issues of class and ethnicity (Grey and Postero 2014) and it is very relevant to the constant efforts for improving the material conditions of the Shuar people. As discussed in the thesis, all leaders have stories of marginality, racism, under-development, loss of land, and abuse from the company; all these experiences are related to the neglect by the state and the mestizo society. While a few leaders view themselves as rich in terms of the resources available in their territory (even though that territory has been significantly reduced), most think of their communities as poor and under-developed. Thus, while the Shuar struggle in contexts like large-scale mining might not respond to essentialized identities and a specific cultural distinctiveness, it does respond to a history of imposition by a colonial structure that has excluded them from the wider mestizo society precisely because of their cultural distinctiveness.

This discussion is also relevant when addressing the work of the federation for the people in the communities. Although in a position of marginality, indigenous organizations are not directly funded by the state, which means that the FESZCH's leaders are responsible for financing projects for the communities and also for looking for funds to sustain the federation, which is itself a titanic task. This is why it is important for organizations like these to build strong networks with national and international institutions, which the federation has not done because of its extreme dependency on the mining companies. These Shuar organizations have purposely stayed away from the national indigenous organization (CONAIE) because of its position of resistance against extractivism. Ultimately, this discussion showcases the level of marginality of local indigenous organizations and indigenous people in

Ecuadorian society, another important discussion within the study of ethno-politics.

While in this thesis I have engaged with postcolonial discussions in my analysis of the Shuar Federation, it is important to note some tensions in regard to the poststructuralist approach. The first tension is related to my use of Hall's discussion on identities as the basis for my analysis of indigeneity and the attention I pay to material dynamics throughout the thesis. The second tension is related to how I use poststructuralist thinkers to explain how indigenous leaders incorporate certain Western categories into their political struggles. As discussed earlier, some authors (De la Cadena 2010; Escobar 1995; Viveiros de Castro 2004) are critical of concepts that have been conceived and imposed by a Eurocentric perspective in a colonial context. Notions of territory, community, political organization/federation, development, and modernization have been forcefully incorporated by indigenous populations as part of the new order brought about by colonialism; these concepts are still constantly reinforced by the state apparatus. In fact, as has been discussed in several chapters of the thesis, all of these categories have been key in determining the relationship between the state and the Shuar people. In an effort to decolonize this hierarchical structure, many authors then question the use of these concepts among indigenous leaders and even among academics themselves.

From the perspective presented in this thesis, however, I understand that the strategic use of these pre-conceived Western notions has allowed the Shuar leaders to make concrete demands for their symbolic and material rights either by directly confronting or by opening spaces within the dominant institutions and structures. These categories may not always be used in the same fashion or carry the same meanings as they were originally conceived, but they have served the Shuar Federation in their struggle to gain some leverage vis-à-vis the state and other important actors. To recall Quijano's discussion in the introduction, while he argues that the entire experience of indigenous peoples has been permeated by colonization in such a way that colonial categories are even now a part of the way they understand the world, new meanings and forms of appropriation have also been used by them in order to make sense of the changing world (1998). On one hand, the concept of community has undergone important transformations for the Shuar people and they have given this concept and many others different

meanings or have used them strategically: for example, despite being an arbitrary concept for the Shuar in the beginning, the community has actually become an important space to interact and make demands of the state. On the other hand, while the concept of territory is part of the federation's official discourse, it has not become a universal priority for the community leadership because of other competing priorities. However, other notions like entrepreneurship are gaining more support. In this context, the concept of a Shuar communal territory (as in the global title deeds) becomes less important and useful because it cannot be sold or used in any way for individual commercial initiatives. These examples highlight how the Shuar people and leaders are in charge of the transformation of cultural categories and structures, many times discarding certain notions that are no longer useful to them.

The creation of the federation is perhaps the ultimate example of appropriation by the Shuar people in their attempts to negotiate with mestizo society and the state. As discussed in Chapter 4, even before the political organization was formed, the Shuar were already taking advantage of the forced contact with the missionaries and their education system. In accordance with Rubenstein's argument (2005), I have posited that the Shuar political organization—which, again, was created upon the foundation of early mission centers in order to protect the Shuar identity and territory—was crucial for the Shuar in becoming national citizens (which was as much their goal as it was the state's). However, while this group was structured in the same fashion as any other organization in the national political system, federations do not necessarily respond to the same Western mestizo logic of efficiency, consistency, and affiliation or membership. One of the reasons for this is that the federation represents a group that is based on ethnicity and kinship ties. Belonging to a federation is not necessarily based on a shared ideology or decision to support a particular line of action, but rather it comes along with belonging to a community. Furthermore, while members of the communities share a notion of belonging to a Shuar collectivity, participation as members and leaders of the federation is defined in terms of certain interests and needs. In this context, the decision of a leader to affiliate the community he represents with a specific federation is not made necessarily on its ideological position or the alliances it has with other regional and national indigenous organizations; rather, this decision is primarily related to how committed

the leadership believes the federation is to working for the welfare of the communities. At the same time, community leaders may not always agglutinate or express the positions of everyone in the community they represent. In Yanua's case, for example, while the leader was the main anti-mining activist in the area around Tundayme, he faced much opposition within his own family. Thus, from the outside, the positions and practices of the FESZCH regarding large-scale mining might appear inconsistent and scattered; however, in reality, this reflects a process in which the leadership negotiates the different positions and perspectives that the people and the leaders from the different communities have. Ultimately, beyond having all the community members on-board with an agenda of resisting large-scale mining or negotiating with the mining company, the federation's priority is to respond to the needs of the communities and deliver on their promise to improve the lives of people. Evidently, as has been discussed throughout the thesis, the FESZCH has faced many obstacles in meeting these expectations: conflicts within the organization because of power struggles, old family grudges, and conflicts in communities (many due to the presence of the mining company), lack of funding, the inability to negotiate with national and international organizations to obtain funding, and the marginality of which the FESZCH is part.

Thus, we could argue that the federation itself is a critical space through which the Shuar leaders negotiate between family, community and political/institutional relationships; it also allows them to negotiate between local/community notions of leadership (maybe even tied to past forms of dealing with conflict and exercising power), and those notions that are part of the national political structure. Furthermore, while the federation may not conform to a Western notion of political organization, it is definitely a predominant space from which Shuar leaders can act in favor of the people in the communities and interact with institutions at the local and national level.

To conclude this point, I would like to return to De la Cadena's discussion in which she argues that, unlike the use of imposed, Western concepts by indigenous leaders, the introduction of the concept of "earth-beings" into the political arena is a way of constructing indigeneity as insurgence. However, one could also affirm that certain forms of appropriation as well as the use of categories and institutions are also a way of disrupting or at least challenging the established order

and the expectations for indigenous organizations. For example, the desire of the Shuar Federation to control resources and to participate in the distribution of wealth in order to improve the communities' material well-being is already a strong stand. Just as is the case in the use of earth beings in certain contexts, the efforts to negotiate with extractive companies or demands to manage royalties from the projects may cause unrest among a variety of actors, from academics to government institutions and environmental organizations. From this perspective, the FESZCH and other indigenous organizations defy those imaginaries about indigenous people that tend to dismiss their material needs and aspirations based on romanticized notions of what is it like to live in the Amazonia. Furthermore, we can argue that many Shuar leaders (especially the younger ones) have already internalized many mestizo concepts about community, territory, and ways of engaging with mainstream politics; as Quijano would argue, these concepts have become part of their imaginary of being Shuar. For many young leaders, the community is not necessarily an arbitrary concept anymore; it is already part of their experience of being Shuar, as is being involved in the federation and engaging in a wider political arena. Thus, from my viewpoint, it is not useful to engage in a discussion that emphasizes a radical separation between the indigenous and the Western mestizo cosmologies because, ultimately, such discussions tend to reaffirm the static binary categories I have intended to disrupt in this thesis, and may even reinforce essentialized imaginaries of the Shuar.

Finally, the above discussion is relevant not only for the FESZCH but for many other organizations nationwide. While the indigenous movement in Ecuador is clearly diverse, it is possible to identify certain major tendencies developed over the last two decades which are also evident at the local and regional level. Broadly speaking, there is one line of action followed by organizations like the CONAIE (and at a local level, leaders like the president of Asociación Kakaram and leaders from Yanúa) that resist and challenge the state and its hegemonic view of the territory and the resources in it, in an effort to push for a real plurinational state. Another major tendency is followed by other organizations like the Council of Evangelical Peoples and Organizations of Ecuador (FEINE—*Consejo de Pueblos y Organizaciones Evangélicas del Ecuador*) which, for decades, had been struggling to incorporate indigenous people into the mestizo society and to improve their living

conditions. As the FEINE, the FESZCH and most of the Shuar community leaders in this study are seek to create spaces within the mestizo nation-state that would allow them and the people they represent to participate in the larger society. Their intention is to strategically play by the rules laid out by the state and the mestizo society because their aspiration is to be part of it, especially in terms of development, modernization, and material well-being. However, the definition of objectives and strategies in these terms has provoked criticism from other indigenous organizations, activists, and academics. They see their position as openly making alliances with neo-liberal actors, which have greatly contributed to their situation of marginality.

How should these two different positions and strategies be evaluated? Should indigenous leaders ally with those sectors that have subjugated them? Are they entering into neo-liberal dynamics, looking to obtain short-term results, and in the process ignoring important cultural and symbolic issues? Or are they simply making use of already established dynamics to demand what they consider to be their rights: compensation for the resources in their territory, investment in education, adequate housing and living conditions, and so forth? On the other, hand, is it possible to achieve well-being and solve basic subsistence problems for the people in the communities from a position of open resistance to the state? In today's Ecuador, is it still possible for indigenous people to think of well-being without considering material issues (which also include access to education, health services, etc.)? While impossible to answer these questions from an outsider, mestizo perspective, one thing needs to be clear: indigenous people should be able to make their own decisions and to have the ability to choose their own paths to well-being, without having to justify their actions to a mestizo society that has insisted on creating imaginaries and expectations based what it considers to be good, appropriate or even moral for them.



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Education

- 2012-2018 Ph.D. © Development Studies. International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam. Research for the thesis was carried out in Ecuador.
- 1994-1996 M.A. in Latin American Studies (specialization in Anthropology), University of Florida, Gainesville, USA.
- 1989- 1991 Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, USA.

Employment History

- 2001-Present. Lecturer. Department of Anthropology. College of Social Sciences and Humanities. Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador.
- March 2006- march 2011. Director of the Department of Distance Learning. Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador.

Publications

Fernández-Salvador Consuelo (2017) “Los Shuar frente al proyecto estratégico de El Mirador: el manejo de identidades y prácticas políticas fragmentadas” in Teijlingen, K. van, E. Leifsen, C. Fernández-Salvador and L. Sánchez-Vázquez (eds) *La Amazonía Minada. Minería a Gran Escala y Conflictos en el Sur del Ecuador*. Quito: USFQ-Abya Yala.

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