'In Honduras it is a Sin to Defend Life'

An Ethnography of the Discourses, Practices and Dangers of Opposition to Mining in Honduras

By Nick Middeldorp
July 2014

Title:	In Honduras it is a Sin to Defend Life / En Honduras es un Pecado Defender la Vida
Sub-title:	An Ethnography of the Discourses, Practices and Dangers of Opposition to Mining in Honduras
Date:	June 2014
Student:	Nick Middeldorp
Student number:	890705 – 570 - 040
Department:	Department of Social Sciences
Program:	MSc International Development Studies
Chair-group:	Rural Development Sociology / Disaster Studies
Thesis code:	RDS 80736
Supervisors:	Dr. Ir. Gemma van der Haar Drs. Carlos Morales Carbonell

Made possible with the support of:

Photo on the front page: 'No to the mine, yes to life'. A children's mural on mining, El Porvenir, Valle de Siria. Courtesy of Carlos Amador, Comite Ambiental de Valle de Siria (CAVS)

Abstract

This thesis documents opposition to mining in Honduras, a country at the verge of a mining boom. It describes why a broad movement has engaged in opposition to an industry deemed a national priority by the central government; and how this movement interacts with the communities it tries to mobilise. This thesis is based on multi-sited ethnographic research carried out in collaboration with a local partner embedded in the anti-mining movement, and describes opposition to mining on a national level. Data was collected across Honduras by carrying out formal and informal interviews with NGO, social movement, community, and company and state representatives; by participating in forums, community meetings and trainings; and by engaging in an analysis of local available documents. Predominantly, Framing Theory is used to analyse the interaction between movement, state, company and community; and to shed light on their respective perspectives and their relative success or failure. The thesis also shows that after the military coup of June 2009 political opportunities for the anti-mining movement on a national level diminished considerably, leading the anti-mining movement to increasingly focus on mobilising communities instead. The movement's discursive frame of access to uncontaminated water as an essentiality for livelihood and life, illustrated by the negative impacts left behind by Goldcorp's open-pit operation in Valle de Siria, has proven very successful in motivating communities to declare their municipality free of mining via public referendums. Whilst the discursive frame of proponents of the industry is generally received with distrust by the public, proponents of the industry may utilize the context of impunity by resorting to threats and violence instead as a means to pursue their interests. These measures raise concerns about the functioning of the Honduran government and international mining standards; possible ties between state actors and organised crime; and the human rights and lives of activists and communities engaged in the 'defense of life'.

Keywords: Honduras, Social Movements, Mining, Violence, Framing, Collaborative Research

Resumen

Esta tesis documenta la oposición a la minería en Honduras, un país a punto de un auge minero. Describe por qué un extenso movimiento se ha opuesto a una industria considerada una prioridad nacional por el gobierno central; y como este movimiento interactúa con las comunidades que trata de movilizar. Esta tesis está basada en investigación etnográfica en múltiples sitios, realizado en colaboración con un socio local que está comprometido en el movimiento anti-minero, y describe la oposición a la minería al nivel nacional. La información se recopilo llevando a cabo entrevistas formales e informales con representantes de ONGs, movimientos sociales, comunidades, empresas y gobierno; participando en foros, reuniones y capacitaciones comunitarias; y realizando un análisis de documentos locales disponibles. Principalmente se usa La Teoría de Enmarque para analizar la interacción entre movimiento, comunidad, estado, empresa y comunidad; y para iluminar sus respectivas perspectivas y su éxito o falla. La tesis también muestra que después del Golpe de Estado en Junio 2009 las oportunidades políticas para el movimiento anti-minero han disminuido considerablemente, una situación que hace el movimiento anti-minero se enfoque más en movilizar a las comunidades. El marco discursivo del acceso al agua no-contaminada como una esencialidad para el sustento y la vida, ilustrado por los impactos negativos dejado por la operación al cielo abierto de Goldcorp en el Valle de Siria, se ha demostrado muy exitoso en motivar a las comunidades para declarar sus municipios libre de minería por medio de cabildos abiertos. Mientras el público recibe el marco discursivo de los proponentes de la industria con desconfianza; los proponentes de la industria pueden utilizar el contexto de impunidad recurriendo a las amenazas y la violencia como medio de lograr sus intereses. Esto plantea preocupaciones sobre el funcionamiento del gobierno hondureño y los estándares internacionales de minería; posibles vínculos entre actores del estado y el crimen organizado; y los derechos humanos y las vidas de los activistas y las comunidades comprometidas en la 'defensa de la vida'.

Palabras Clave: Honduras, Movimientos Sociales, Minería, Violencia, Teoría de Enmarque, Investigación Colaboradora

Table of Contents

Map of Honduras

Source: http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/honduras.pdf

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Spanish full name / acronym	English acronym / full name
AC	Alianza Cívica por la Reforma de la Ley Minería	Civic Alliance for Reform of the Mining Law
ACD	Alianza Cívica por la Democracia	Civil Alliance for Democracy
AMT	Asociación Madre Tierra	Association Mother Earth
ANAMIMH	Asociación Nacional de Mineras Metálicas de Honduras	National Association of Metal Mining in Honduras
ASONOG	Asociación de Organismos No Gubernamentales	Association of Non- Governmental Organisms
CAVS	Comité Ambiental de Valle de Siria	Environmental Committee of the Siria Valley
CCODP	Organización Catolica Canadiense para el Desarrollo y la Paz	Canadian Catholic Organisation for Development and Peace
CEPRODEC	Centro Hondureño de Promoción para el Desarrollo Comunitario	Honduran Centre for the Promotion of Community Development
COHEP	Consejo Hondureño de la Empresa Privada	Honduran Council of Private Business
COPINH	Consejo Cívico de Organizaciones Populares e Indígenas de Honduras	Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras
CPTRT	Centro de Prevención, Tratamiento y Rehabilitación de Víctimas de la Tortura y sus Familiares	Centre of Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims and their Relatives
CNRA	Coalición Nacional de Redes Ambientales de Honduras	National Coalition of Environmental Networks
DEFOMIN	Dirección de Fomento a la Minería	Directive for the Promotion of Mining
EITI	Iniciativa de Transparencia de la Industria Extractiva	Extractive Industry Transparancy Initiative
ERIC-RP	Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación y Comunicación – Radio Progreso	Team of Reflection, Investigation and Communication – Radio Progreso
FETRIXY	Federación de Tribus Xicaques de Yoro	Federation of Xicaque tribes of Yoro
FNRP	Frente Nacional de Resistencia	National Front of Popular Resistance

	Popular	
ICMM		International Council on Minerals and Mining
ICF	Instituto de Conservación Forestal	Institute of Forest Conservation
IDAMHO	Instituto de Derecho Ambiental de Honduras	Institute of Environmental Law of Honduras
INHGEOMIN	Instituto Hondureño de Geología y Minas	Honduran Institute of Geology and Mining
MAA	Movimiento Ambientalista de Atlántida	Environmentalist Movement of Atlántida
MADJ	Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y Justicia	Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice
MNFMM	Mesa Nacional Frente la Minería Metálica	National Roundtable Against Metal Mining
MINOSA	Minerales de Occidente San Andrés	Minerals of the West San Andres
MNIGR	Mesa Nacional para la Incidencia de la Gestión del Riesgo	National Roundtable of Advocacy for Risk Management
M(R)IGR	Mesa (Regional) para la Incidencia de la Gestión del Riesgo	(Regional) Roundtable of Advocacy for Risk Management
OFRANEH	Organización Fraternal Negra de Honduras	Fraternal Black Organisation of Honduras
PROAH	Proyecto de Acompañamiento Internacional en Honduras	Project of International Accompaniment in Honduras
RENACAMI	Red Nacional de Comunidades Afectadas por la Minería	National Network of Communities Afected by Mining
RNDDH	Red Nacional de Defensores de Derechos Humanos de Honduras	National Network of Human Rights Defenders in Honduras
SERNA	Secretaria de Recursos Naturales y Ambiente	Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment
SPIA	Secretaria de los Pueblos Indigenas y Afrohondureños	Secretary of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Hondurans
UMA	Unidad Municipal Ambiental	Municipal Environmental Unit

Glossary

The following are frequently used (local) terms not always translated in this document

Asamblea   gathering, (community) meeting

Campesino   peasant, small-scale farmer

Cabildo Abierto   public referendum

Capacitación   training, empowerment

Consulta   consultation, prior informed consent

Dirigente   (community) leader within Tolupán tribal structure

Empresario   businessman

Junta de Agua   water management board

Ley Minería   mining law

Lucha   struggle, fight

Patronato   community council

Resistencia   resistance, also used to describe LIBRE / FNRP sympathisers

Dedication and Acknowledgements

Dedicado a todos que siguen en la lucha con convicción y perseverancia

Dedicated to all who continue the struggle with conviction and perseverance

Over the past years, I admired and was fascinated by the struggles of the many social movements across the world. I have always believed that positive, progressive social change cannot and should not be imposed from above. Quite to the contrary, it should come from the struggles of those who are at the heart of society. For the brief period of six months I became part of one such a struggle: I cannot think of a better way to conclude my studies.

Honduras: a country of wealth and poverty; of beauty and violence; of majestic cloud forests and dangerous passageways; of brave people struggling for their rights and of others profiting from injustice. So many opposites in one small country that will in a way stay with me forever: from the colonial streets of Santa Rosa de Copán, to the chilly mountain town of Intibucá, to the tropical warmth of coastal Trujillo. Never will I forget walking through the fields with the community of 6 de Mayo, sitting on the back of a dirt-bike heading to a tribal village, or having to listen to the numerous classics of Vicente Fernandez in the many long and lonely bus rides I took across the country. In just six months I experienced too much to recount, but I am without a doubt that this journey was a life changing experience.

None of this would be possible without all the people that supported me. To my mom, dad, and brothers: thank you for accepting me as the vagabond I am, passionate about travelling to faraway places. Wendy Wilbrink, thank you for helping me find a place to call home in Santa Rosa de Copán. Carmen Ramos Dubón, gracias por invitarme a vivir con usted como su hijo adoptivo; y Eva Torres, yo estaría perdido sin su hospitalidad y- tengo que repetirlo- sus cenas deliciosas. Ustedes me hicieron sentir bienvenido y parte de una familia. Magdalena, ojala un día podamos ir al mágico pueblo Lenca de Bélen Gualcho y disfrutar el aire fresco de montaña. Don Pedro, yo agradezco haberme quedado en su hogar, compartiendo en sus cosechos y el agua fresco y dulce nacido en la montaña. También quisiera agradecer a los amigos y las amigas que tuve la oportunidad de conocer a lo largo de Centro América: Alejandro Ramos, Maynor Peña, Sahady Mencia, Bettina Ide, Ilse Castillo, Kennia Suarez y Luis Alvarenga. Ustedes me han dado una muy buena razón para volver y vivir nuevas experiencias. Espero verles pronto. To my friends Jelle Eshuis, Thijs den Heijer, Anne de Jonghe, Sjors Bijen, and Bram Peters, thank you for your interest in my work and in supporting me throughout the writing process.

A Jose Ramon Avila y toda la gente de ASONOG y la MNIGR: sin su apoyo esta investigación no sería posible. Y no solo eso: durante medio año me mostraron su país, compartieron sus comidas y hogares conmigo, y me inspiraron en muchas formas. Bernardo

No puedes comprar el sol

No puedes comprar la lluvia

(Vamos dibujando el camino)

(Vamos caminando)

No puedes comprar mi vida

Mi tierra no se vende

You cannot buy the sun

You cannot buy the rain

(we are drawing the path)

(we are walking)

You cannot buy my life

My land is not for sale

Latínoamerica, Calle 13 – song played during a
community training program on mining

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Research Objectives

introducing extractivism, opposition to mining;
and the research questions

1.1 Introduction to the Research

Extractivism in Latin America

Conflicts over the control over natural resources have been a constant in Latin American history. From colonization up to the present day, land grabs and land reforms have constantly transformed the agrarian landscape. In the late 20th century and early 21st century a 'new rurality' literature focuses on the struggles between peasantries and landowners or on the impacts of neo-liberalism on rural territories (Llambi & Correa 2007). Apart from these (traditional) processes, two major 21st century land grabbing processes - fueled by increased resource demands and the resulting push into the resource frontier (Bunker 2003) - contribute considerably to the local conflicts of control over and access to natural resources in Latin America: the first is the upsurge of agri-businesses, notably palm-oil and soy; the second the expansion of the extractive industry. This research illuminates this social conflict caused by the expansion of the extractive industry by investigating opposition to mining at the dawn of a mining boom in Honduras.

The history of extractive industry in Latin America dates back to shortly after the Spanish Conquest of the Americas. Viewing the native populations as lesser humans (or less than human), many were enslaved and forced to work in the gold and silver mines. The Bolivian mine of Potosí alone produced tonnes of silver annually in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In exchange for extracting riches from the subsoil, the Bolivian mine of Potosí or '*la boca del infierno* (the mouth of hell) (Galeano 1973) is said to have consumed the lives of over 8 million indigenous slaves. This colonial resource extraction was an early stage of the modern world system we know today: whilst the influx of mineral wealth provided the European nations with the means to develop and modernise, the colonial economies of Latin America were structured around the extraction and supply of natural resources and agricultural products (Galeano 1973, Hogenboom 2011). Roughly five hundred years after colonisation and two hundred years after independence, much of Latin America retains the role of resource supplier to the West, and increasingly, China (Hogenboom 2011; Kotschwar et. al 2012): be it coffee from Brazil, soy from Argentina, metals from Chile and Peru, or the clandestine cocaine from the Amazonian jungle. Continent wide 20th century efforts to diversify domestic economies and to industrialise (under the so called 'import substitution programmes') were largely halted under military dictatorships, the 1982 debt crisis and the following phase of neo-liberalisation of most Latin American economies.

In recent days various Latin American governments, both neo-liberal and their leftist successors, have realised the transformative potential of the revenues that could be generated by the oil or mineral wealth in their countries' subsoil (Canel et al. 2010, Hogenboom 2011). The minerals present in the subsoil are seen as a buried treasure: who manages to unlock it has the power to 'set in motion a virtuous cycle of socio-economic change' (Bridge 2004, 225). Neo-liberal Peru and Chile traditionally lean on the mining sector economically (Bebbington & Valencia 2007; Bebbington 2010; 2012; Bridge 2004), and the Venezuelan government funds its 'Bolivarian Revolution' with the high rents it obtains from the extraction of its vast oil reserves (Corrales & Penfold 2010). Nevertheless, Acosta (2011; 83) speaks of 'two faces of the same curse' as in both neoliberal and statist approaches many problems - including environmental disaster, social tensions and the widely debated resource curse (Collier 2007) often remain unsolved. As national economies in the global South are structured around the extraction and export of natural resources, critical authors maintain that this economic model represents *acumulación por despojo*, or 'possession by dispossession', a mode of accumulation that leaves its impacts from the local to the global level, sustaining and reinforcing local and global inequality (Acosta 2011; Bebbington 2007; Svampa 2011).

The push of the resource frontier (Peluso & Lund 2011), or the accumulation of resources and capital at the cost of rural communities and the environment, does not go uncontested. A wide range of national and international protest groups (including development and environmental NGO's, social movements and indigenous movements) has developed since democratisation started in the 80's (Escobar & Alvarez 1992). This movement actively contests the 'extractivist' development paradigm, whether in the name of environmental sustainability, social justice or self-determination. Some of the resulting conflicts between state and civil society actors have turned violent, as in the particularly tragic case of the massacre in the Peruvian 'Devil's Curve' of 2009, where police forces clashed with indigenous protestors against an oil extraction concession on their ancestral land. The confrontation escalated and led to over 30 fatal casualties (Bebbington 2012).

Contested Extractivism in Honduras

The capital city of Honduras, Tegucigalpa, was founded in the 16th century as a colonial mining town. Indigenous as well as imported African slaves provided the required labour for the extraction of the highly valued silver. Over time the mining industry fell in decline, and Honduras became an insignificant supplier of metals in the centuries to come (Newson 1982), after independence structuring its economy around the export of agricultural products such as bananas, tobacco and coffee. However, the country's subsoil contains gold, silver, copper, lead, iron, zinc, and tin (Rabchevsky 1995) making Honduras a potential mineral exporter. In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch in 1998 - a natural disaster that destroyed large part of the country's infrastructure - a new policy was set in motion by the Honduran government. After extensive mining industry lobby a neo-liberal mining law - based on Chile's mining law of 1983 - was quickly drafted and passed congress after a single debate in a shock-doctrine like manner (Aráoz 2009; Moore 2012). Its intention was to encourage a mining boom in a country with relatively untouched mineral reserves.

The mining law and the resulting establishment of two Canadian open-pit cyanide leaching gold mines were met with fierce resistance by an emergent anti-mining movement. Its struggle bore fruit in 2005: thirteen articles of the Ley de Minería were declared unconstitutional by the Honduran Supreme Court, including the tax regime and the articles that permitted forced expulsion of communities living on conceded land. Furthermore, new mining concessions were halted for the time being. In 2008, under severe pressure by civil society, Goldcorp's San Martín Mine stopped operations. President Zelaya mustered a commission to draft a new mining law that would have raised taxes; included community consultation; banned open pit mining and the use of cyanide in metal extraction; and put a limit to water use. However, the law never made it to Congress. President Zelaya was ousted in the June 2009 military coup, and the post-coup government under interim-president Micheletti began awarding new mining concessions to counter the economic crisis aggravated by the coup. International lobbyists increased their pressure, and argued that due the lack of a mining law Honduras annually missed out on three billion US Dollars (Jamasmie 2012[1]).

The nationalist-led post-coup government considers the promotion and expansion of the extractive industry to be the spearhead of the national development plan. In order to facilitate the expansion of the extractive industry the new regime - encouraged by lobbyists from the Canadian government and the transnational mining industry (Moore 2012; Gordon & Webber 2011) - drafted a new Ley de Minería (Mining Law) in 2012. Despite renewed protest by numerous civil society organisations as well as by the political opposition, the new law went into effect on April 23th 2013. Hundreds of mining concessions have been awarded and hundreds of concession request await approval, totalling approximately 50% of Honduran national territory. As of February 2014, prospective drilling takes place in 950 locations across the country (La Prensa 2014).

Despite the precarious human rights situation in Honduras, in which activists of all kind are especially vulnerable (Yoder et. al 2013), opponents of mining are mobilising themselves once again in order to bring a halt to the current mining boom. The reconstituted anti-mining movement consists of environmental and indigenous social movements, development NGO's, human rights organisations and sectors of the Catholic Church. Foreseeing pollution and destruction of the environment, and social injustice to the communities living on or near mining concessions, the opponents of the extractive industry have joined to block the expansion of the mining industry by bringing the new mining law to court claiming it to be unconstitutional; and by mobilising the grassroots in defence of territory.

1.2 Research Objectives

Problem Statement

Scholars stress the need for a progressive legal and institutional framework, and the need for a democratic negotiation process (in both the 'home' countries of mining companies and the 'host' countries where extractive industry takes place) in order to minimise negative social

---

[1] http://www.mining.com/lack-of-mining-law-cost-honduras-us3000-million/

and environmental impacts and to provide for lasting positive change (Bebbington 2007; Canel et. al 2010; Coumans 2010; Fulmer. et. al 2010). However, such a framework is often missing as many states are either unable or unwilling (in order to attract investment) to provide for progressive legislation and to monitor mining activities (Bebbington 2012; Canel et al. 2010; Coumans 2010).

In 2007, Bebbington & Valencia (pp. 305) stated that Central America would become the new frontier of the extractive industry in the next decade. They stressed the challenge and the need of building governance systems that reduce conflict by protecting human and environmental rights. Several authors (e.g. Fulmer et. al 2008; Urkidi 2011; Yagenova 2011) have shown that conflict has not been averted in Guatemala. In Honduras, the situation has also unfolded as these authors feared: conflict has flared up since the launch of the new Ley Minería and the arrival of new foreign and national mining companies.

Anthony Bebbington (2012, 17) made another statement relevant for this research, arguing that sometimes 'social conflict is a necessary precursor to socially and environmentally progressive institutional change'. Honduran civil society organisations have succeeded in bringing this change before, but the military coup of 2009 and the new mining law of 2013 have turned the tables in favour of the extractive industry. As a consequence, the social conflict on mining has entered a new round. The overarching political instability and context of structural violence in Honduras (Cruz 2011) add a dynamic that cannot be ignored. Although different actors join to make a stance against the extractivist development model, they may have in mind different conceptualisations of the problem and its solution. Leftist social movements may demand higher royalties, compensation for affected communities or nationalisation of the mines; whilst environmental groups may stress to outlaw the usage of cyanide and mercury in mineral extraction or put a stop to extractive activities altogether. One actor may prefer dialogue with the state and the industry in order to achieve reform, whilst the other prefers direct opposition.

This research starts from the position held by Bebbington & Valencia (2007) and Bebbington (2012) that social conflict is sometimes a necessary precursor to progressive social and institutional change; and that social movements in particular have an important role to play in this process. I this research, I aim to give a better understanding of a) the social impacts of mining, b) the frames and actions of the Honduran anti-mining movement, and c) the current context of persecution and violence against social protest in Honduras. To this end I engaged for six months in multi-sited (nation-wide) ethnographic research in collaboration with ASONOG, a Honduran NGO embedded in the anti-mining movement. This local NGO - headquartered in the town of Santa Rosa in the western department of Copán - is one of the founding organisations of the anti-mining movement and helped create a number of platforms that have an important role to play in the movement's opposition to mining.

The aggressive push into the Honduran resource frontier is met with a strong counter reaction. In short, much like Urkidi's research on resistance to mining in Guatemala (2011), in this research I focus on how the dynamics of action and reaction concerning the expansion of the resource frontier take place and take shape on the ground, on the level of community and social movement.

Research Questions

More specifically, in this research I seek to analyse:

How do the Honduran anti-mining movement and the involved communities experience the extractive industry and how do they give shape to their response to it?

The following three interrelated sub questions are derived from this research question[2]:

1. *How is the Honduran extractive industry model constituted?*
   - This is a contextual question necessary to understand the legal-institutional context of mining in Honduras. Answering this question brings an analysis of the mining law and the parties involved in its construction, the institutions regulating mining, and the perspective of the Honduran government.

2. *How are the discursive frames of the Honduran anti-mining movement and involved communities about the extractive industry constituted?*
   - This question focuses on a sense of belonging/identity, perceived risks, motives for action, and proposed solutions; as well as the origin of these frames and diversity within the movement.

3. *How do the anti-mining movement and involved communities give shape to opposition to the extractive industry?*
   - This question seeks to answer how mobilisation takes its form and what actions take place; and how these actions can potentially contribute to change.

4. *What major social, economical and political dynamics affect opposition to the extractive industry?*
   - This question focuses on role of existing social & political conflict, the political opportunity structure available to the anti-mining movement, and the relation of these dynamics with mobilisation and sense-making.

1.3 Overview of the Chapters

The report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 and 3 do not provide actual field data, but place the research in its theoretical, epistemological and methodological context. Chapter 4 provides the necessary background context of Honduras: I sketch the socio-economic characteristics of the country; its political history and current situation; and I introduce the relevant state and civil society institutions. Chapters 5 and 6 describe the work of the anti-mining movement in a chronological manner, in which Chapter 5 treats the emergence of the anti-mining movement and Chapter 6 the change of legal context on mining. Chapter 7 provides three case studies of recent anti-mining struggles, and Chapter 8 takes these case studies and the current

---

[2] These sub-questions are not answered literally in the conclusion, but rather serve as analytical guidelines

anti-mining struggle on a community level to a more theoretical level. The last chapter provides a conclusion by answering the research question and discussing other relevant findings of this research. Following is an outline of the report:

- *Chapter 2 – Theoretical and Analytical Framework (pp. 8 - 20)*
  In this chapter I provide a quick overview on the environmental and social impacts of mining, as researched by other scholars in the field. I then proceed by introducing and theorizing social movements, and how framing theory can be applied in social movement research. I then bring these themes together by discussing prior findings on anti-mining movements in Latin America.

- *Chapter 3 – Research Methodology and the Construction of Knowledge (pp. 21 - 32)*
  In this chapter I explain the notion of ethnographic research; and I will discuss in length the notion of collaborative research and its implications for data collection and interpretation. I then reflect upon how this research methodology combined with my own choices and position in the field has shaped the construction of knowledge and trustworthiness of the research.

- *Chapter 4 - Contextual Analysis of Honduras (pp. 33 - 45)*
  I open this chapter by providing a demographic and socio-economic overview of Honduras. I then proceed by analysing the functioning of the Honduran state, in which I provide special attention to the military coup as well as the continuing use of violence by state institutions. I then introduce the institutions and regulations relevant for this research: the legal and institutional framework on mining, community based institutions and the Honduran anti-mining movement.

- *Chapter 5 – Birth of the Honduran Anti-Mining Movement (pp. 46 - 72)*
  This chapter provides crucial background context for the emergence of the anti-mining movement in the last decade. It is divided in two sections, as the Honduran anti-mining movement emerged in two different locales, in Western Honduras and against Goldcorp in Valle de Siria. Both stories still have relevance today: the San Andrés mine is still operating and the ongoing struggle for justice in Valle de Siria serves as a powerful symbol of the anti-mining movement. As such, the chapter not only shows what took place but also demonstrates the importance of these cases for the movement as a whole.

- *Chapter 6 – Changing the Rules of the Game (pp. 73 - 83)*
  Chapter 6 continues the historical context where Chapter 5 ended. The organisations involved in the anti-mining struggles began cooperating on a national level to lobby for a ban on cyanide leaching open pit mining and to create a new mining law. The movement made considerable advances until the military coup reversed its progress. The organisations now partaking in a reformed anti-mining movement abandoned the negotiations for the new law that went into effect in 2013.

- *Chapter 7 – Communities in Defence against the Mining Industry (pp. 84 - 108)*
  Chapter 7 provides three topical case studies of communities resisting the mining industry. The first is a successful anti-mining struggle, the second a mining-related conflict with fatal casualties in an indigenous community, the third a multi-scalar anti-

mining struggle against a company resorting to violence. These cases illustrate the positions of these communities as well as the context of lawlessness in which such struggles take their form.

- *Chapter 8 – A Renewed Struggle against Mining (pp. 109 - 126)*
This chapter looks at the current work of the anti-mining movement. Doing so, it is divided in two sections. The first analyses the interface between anti-mining actors and rural communities and argues that the strategic frame of water as a source of life is especially effective. The second part places anti-mining activism in its context of violence and crime, a complicating factor that constrains anti-mining activism.

- *Chapter 9 – Conclusions (pp. 127 - 142)*
Chapter 9 answers the research question, highlighting three issues. before raising a number of other points. I engage in a discussion on the viability of the mineral-led development model; the role of social movements in the creation of progressive social change; and I reflect upon the theoretical framework and concepts used for this research. Last, I provide a series of practical and theoretical recommendations.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical & Analytical Framework

discussing the state-of-the-art on the impacts of mining and anti-mining movements, social movement theories and framing theory

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I aim to do two things: the first is to highlight 'the state-of-the-art' on the impacts of mining and on anti-mining movements, and the second is to explain the theoretical and analytical framework used in this research, including a number of important concepts that will be used throughout the thesis. I first provide an account of the local transformations induced by the extractive industry, by discussing a) the possible environmental impacts of open-pit gold mining, and b) social transformations brought about by the establishment of mining companies in rural communities, as resistance against mining is a response to local impacts that are directly or indirectly caused by the extractive industry. Next to providing this necessary background on the impacts of mining, in this chapter I subsequently discuss the relevant existing knowledge and theoretical frameworks on social movements. Without ignoring material/organisational social movement aspects which are covered by resource mobilisation theory, this research focuses on a cultural approach to social movements and more specifically employs framing theory as analytical focus. Framing theory matches well with the cultural approach to social movements as it focuses on shared identity and meaning-giving, and observes how certain frames used by social movements 'resonate' with their audience. The political opportunity structure approach is discussed as well. Taken together, these approaches are useful tools in understanding how social actors give meaning to, and enact, their resistance against the extractivist complex. In a last section before bringing all these points together, I focus specifically on the existing academic knowledge on anti-mining movements.

2.2 The Extractive Industry and Local Transformations

Environmental Impacts of Open Pit Mining

Due to the high environmental risk associated with both cyanide leaching and open pit mining in general, these methods are now outlawed in various parts of the world, including several US states, the European Union, Costa Rica and several Argentinean provinces – not least due to civil society pressure and mobilisations. Although in Honduras the rural population is dependent on natural water sources, and the country has experienced the damaging impacts of these methods in the past, they continue to be used.

Mining activities, especially industrial scale gold mining, can have a profound impact on the local environment. Industrial open pit mines set in motion a radical transformation of the physical landscape, and risk causing severe environmental impacts. Forests are cut down or entire mountains are excavated and make place for a crater in the earth: the open pit mine. In open pit gold and silver mining, huge amounts of water with a cyanide solution are used in a so called leaching process to separate gold/silver/copper ores from waste rock, which constitutes over 99.5 percent of the total volume. A medium sized open-pit mine requires some 11 L/m2/h, resulting in tens of thousands of litres of water per hour (Bleiwas 2012). Deforestation, combined with the high water requirements of the separation process, can potentially lead to desertification of the immediate area (Bridge 2004). Cyanide forms an acute danger to life when released in the environment but the molecule is instable and falls apart rather quickly.

Acid mine drainage is a risk of another degree: a mine can continue to produce acid mine drainage hundreds of years after closure, rendering water sources contaminated for a long period of time. Acid drainage occurs when heavy metals and sulphur, released by the extraction process, react and are released into the water. When this takes place, toxic waste becomes part of the ecosystem as it spreads via the region's rivers (secondary contamination). A complicating matter in Honduras is that almost the entire Honduran subsoil contains a sulphuric layer above the desired metals, and that spills are more likely to occur due to other environmental factors that have a chance of occurring, notably tropical storms (including hurricanes) and earthquakes. The consequences of a spill can be catastrophic: in the 1980's, continuous acid-drainage of the Summitville gold mine in Colorado destroyed most life within 27 kilometres of the Alamosa River (Urkidi 2011). Similarly, the Berkely Pit in Montana –now flooded with rain and ground water – is one of the most inhospitable environments on earth, only providing a life supporting environment to so called 'extremophiles': microscopic organisms able to survive under extreme toxic and acidic circumstances. Various other environmental disasters caused by large-scale open pit mines across the world have been documented.

Environmental impacts are never purely environmental, but have social, health, and economic consequences. Both contamination and desertification entail a loss of (potable) water, directly affecting local communities because a) they depend of this water for subsistence agriculture (Acosta 2011, 98), and b) because the water is used for human consumption as well.

Socio-economic Impacts of Mining

The model of mineral led-development as promoted by the Honduran government is defined in this research as extractivism:

> 'the pattern of accumulation based on the over-exploitation of natural resources, largely non-renewable... and the expansion of frontiers into territories previously considered unproductive Svampa (2011, 2)'

Depleting mineral deposits, in combination with rising resource prices, have pushed the frontiers of the extractive industry (Svampa 2011; Araoz 2009): indigenous territories, natural

parks, and the bottom of the deep sea have become subject to the extractive industry (Canel et. al 2010), and contested methods such as cyanide leaching open-pit mining are applied.

In line with this definition of extractivism, and applying Peluso & Lund's argument on land control (2011), I argue that the expansion of the mining industry represents a push in the resource frontier – a push that requires distinct strategies of achieving land control. Land is claimed – and controlled – by the actors and processes that make up the 'extractivist complex': a configuration of contingent institutional and political economic forces (Watts & Peluso 2014), notably the mining companies, their lobby groups, and the (allied) state institutions that provide the legal and institutional playing field for these companies. According to Peluso & Lund (2011) four (interrelated) mechanisms are employed in the making of land claims and land control: enclosure, territorialisation, legalisation, and violence. Enclosure refers to both the physical separation of the claimed land (e.g. by putting barbed wire) as well as the institutional fences that deny and penalise access of 'intruders'. Territorialisation to the managerial practice of land claiming, which involve mechanisms such as applied legal instruments, institutional alliances and agreements between state and non-state actors. Legalisation refers not only to the institutionalisation of private property, but also to the (selective) application of law to legalise (and hence legitimise) the land claim. Violence, including militarisation and the use of terror, often also falls within the repertoire of resource and land governing. The resulting 'territoriality' represents

> 'power relations written on the land (...) it produces and maintains power relations among governed environmental subjects and between subjects and authorities. The power to draw boundaries, enclosures (…) Territorialized powers are able to inflict terror on the populations living, working or accessing those lands or resources' (Peluso & Lund 2011, 673)

Land control by the extractivist complex means a loss of land access and control by the communities living on this land. This profound local social impact is identified as '*acumulación por despojo*, or 'possession by dispossession', a term first coined by Harvey (2003). The process is described by Harvey as

> 'the commoditization and privatisation of natural resources such as water and land, forced displacement of peasant communities from their communal territories, transformation of various forms of communal property in exclusive or private regimes, suppression or neglect of alternative forms of production' (2003, 145, from Sosa & Zwarteveen 2011)[3].

Forced displacement and the loss of land by land grabbing are without question the most visible and crude forms of dispossession (Sosa Landeo 2012), which in combination with failing compensation policies only further marginalise the rural poor (Joker 2004). However, the notion of dispossession goes beyond that. Access to (clean) water is an issue that stems from the process of possession by dispossession, as the mining industry competes with local agriculture for water and is commonly favoured by the authorities (Budds & Hinojosa 2011; 2013, Perreault 2013).

---

[3] Mercantilización y privatización de recursos naturales como aguas y tierras, expulsión forzada de comunidades campesinas de sus territorios comunales, transformación de varias formas de derechos de propiedad común en regímenes exclusivos o privados, supresión o negación de formas alternativas de producción.

Dispossession is as much a sentiment as an action taking place: it is a sense of loss of control over one's living space: a sense of loss of control of one's 'own' resources and one's ability of self-determination (Bebbington et. al 2010). An exploration concession alone may be enough to invoke a sentiment of fear for loss of livelihood and control: people living on a concession know that any day they could hear that their land is no longer theirs, and therefore have to live with increased perceptions of insecurity and risk (Bebbington et. al 2010. 16). As noted by Coronel (2013) fear for water contamination can also play a large role. As such, dispossession should not be looked at from a purely economic or material perspective (dispossession of resources and or/insufficient monetary reward) but can be interpreted broader by including social tensions, forced displacement, loss of livelihoods, and the fear of loss thereof (Bebbington 2007; 2012; Thorpe & Orihuela 2012) and environmental impacts affecting local communities (Bridge 2004; Svampa 2011).

The transnational mining industry maintains that mining contributes to sustainable development: to back up its position the industry devised frameworks such as the 'Mining Contribution Index', an index that shows the contribution of the mining industry to a country's national economy (ICMM 2012). Indeed, mining can provide an important source of income to a government's treasure chest. But this does not automatically translate in better living conditions for the communities where mining activities are to take place. Modern large-scale mining competes with local agriculture for water and land use; is a highly mechanised activity that provides only limited employment for local (unskilled) workers; and municipal taxes are often low or mismanaged by the local authorities.

All investor owned, transnational mining companies claim to employ a CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) program. However, many scholars criticise these CSR programs for a number of reasons: mining companies are said to merely implement CSR out of self interest by ensuring a 'social license to operate' and by holding back possible re-regulation of the industry by the state (Canel et al. (2010, 9); the benefits received by local communities are often only supportive on the short term or tend to favour the local elites (Canel et. al 2010, Coumans 2010, Acosta 2011); and communities are not able to reject planned mining activities in the consultation process (Fulmer et. al 2008). Catherine Coumans (2010; 32) goes as far as to argue that mining companies operate with 'effective impunity' in countries with weak governance structures. Concluding her critical analysis of CSR programs of mining companies, Coumans writes that CSR is 'increasingly a movement firmly controlled by the corporations whose abuses it was meant to restrain' (2010, 45).

Perhaps some CSR initiatives are indeed well intended and beneficial for the community, but suspicion amongst communities is all too common (Canel et. al 2010). To give an example, writing on resistance to Goldcorp's Marlin mine in Guatemala, Urkidi (2011) notes that the local population has observed increased alcoholism, prostitution and rape, linking it to the social changes set in motion by the mining company. Last but not least, the local population itself may be split in two camps (pro- and contra-mining). In the exploration phase of a mining project, this is often the result of mixed expectations of the local population, fuelled by the contradictory statements of the publicity campaigns of mining companies on the one hand, who market themselves as good corporate citizens and agents of progress and employment, and awareness campaigns on the risks of mining by NGO's and social

movements on the other hand. In the exploitation phase of a mining project, this internal conflict may be deepened by an unequal distribution of costs and benefits within the local population.

CSR cannot be counted on as the magic bullet that turns the mining business into a socially and environmentally responsible industry. The need for socially and environmentally responsible resource governance is stressed in light of the failure of CSR guidelines and programs to minimise environmental damage and ensure adequate community consultation and compensation. The combined effects of dispossession, inappropriate or skewed compensation, and resulting social tensions, are able to disintegrate entire communities, resulting in conflict and loss of livelihood (Bebbington & Valencia 2007). In this case, it is up to civil society to 'bring a halt to the most harmful extraction projects, and/or obtain the best possible outcomes if such projects do go ahead' (Canel et. al 2010).

2.3 Theorising Social Movements

Definition and Approaches

For the matter of this research the concept of 'social movement' is defined, after Melucci & Avitser (2000; 518), as

> 'a form of collective action which has three characteristics: 1) the formation of solidarity,
> 2) the public presentation of existing conflict, and 3) the breach of the limits of
> compatibility of the system within which the action takes place'

The formation of solidarity refers to the aspect of collaboration of a number of groups or individuals into a more or less bounded movement. The public presentation of existing conflict: a conflict/struggle that otherwise remains invisible or underexposed is actively and strategically (re)presented by the actors involved in the movement. The last characteristic refers to the wider context that provides the necessity for mobilisation: if the core issue could be resolved by other social, political or institutional means (referenda, social policies, and legal frameworks) organising into a lasting social movement would not be necessary. When a pressing issue cannot be sufficiently addressed (let alone resolved) by such means, social movements provide for alternative ways to reach one's objective.

At their very basic, social movements can be seen as vehicles through which people organise themselves to defend their interests or obtain their objectives. This view is central in the *resource mobilisation approach* to social movements; an approach that asks which strategies a movement employs to achieve its objective. This approach analyses aspects such as organisational characteristics, what strategies are employed to gain support, and how the movement finances itself. The resource mobilisation approach stems from a positivist, rational choice perspective that views participation or non-participation in collective action is a rational choice based on a cost-benefit analysis (eg. Klandermans 1993). I argue this is its weakness: taken on its own and in its narrow form, the approach is rather reductionist in its assumption that social movements merely arise out of cost/benefit trade-offs towards reaching interests that are incompatible with the system. However, this is not to say that strategic decisions are not made or unimportant to look at, an issue to which the resource mobilisation

theory with just reason looks at. Beyond obvious resources such as money and other organisational capacities (trained staff, available equipment) for the resource mobilisation approach to become useful it is important to use it in more inclusive way by including intangible 'resources' such as leadership, strategic alliances, and (access to) knowledge.

Whilst adopting a broad interpretation of 'resource', in this research I focus on a *cultural approach* to social movement analysis. In line with this approach, I argue that social movements should be considered vehicles through which people struggle to meet their collective needs (Zibechi 2003); express their autonomy; and express and revalue their identity through rituals of solidarity (Melucci & Avitser 2000). In both approaches to social movements, there is the affirmation that interests or needs are a requisite for social mobilisation. However, the cultural approach differs from the resource mobilisation approach in its view that instead of merely rational choice, identity and meaning-giving play a key role in mobilisation. It stresses that there is more involved in both the birth of a movement and in its appeal to the public than a rational pursuit of certain objectives.

A third perspective comes from a *political opportunity structure* (POS) point of view. The POS approach tries to analyse the influence the political context has on collective action (Gleditsch & Ruggeri 2007, 4), by looking at the 'constraints and opportunities configured by the institutional arrangements and the prevailing patterns of political power' (Rootes 1999, 1). Taking these elements into consideration, one essentially looks at the relation between social movement and state. The degree of freedom of speech and freedom of organisation, political rights, and opportunities for political participation, as well as rapid political transitions are notable elements worth considering. Gotham (1999) adds to this that political opportunity structures interfere with a movement's collective action frames. In a similar vein, political opportunities structures are at least in part based on the perception that political elites maintain of the movement, a perception that influences their response to it (e.g. employing the police to suppress protest by 'radicals').Two last points are relevant: the more politicised a movement's core issue is in society, the more political opportunity structures are relevant to consider; and one should not overlook that other structural factors (societal, cultural) also provide opportunities or constraints (Rootes 1999). As pointed out by Rootes (1999, 2) the specific shape of a (political) opportunity structure affects a movement's choice of strategies and its capacity to change the local environment.

Social Movement Characteristics

The academic literature on social movements often makes a distinction between 'old' and 'new' social movements, where it needs to be noted that the difference between the two is gradual and not absolute: neither traditional nor new social movements are static or unchanging. Instead, the main argument is that new developments in social movements have been observed since the 90's (Escobar & Alvarez 1992). Women take a more active role as social movement members and leaders; class boundaries are more often transgressed; and an increasing number of movements have the aim of reshaping citizenship rights or society to nature relations (Foweraker 2001; Zibechi 2003). Moreover, new social movements often have a strong territorial focus, with their actions often being meant to be visible on the local level. Despite the territorial focus, creating a dense network of collaborating organisations (on

various scales) has become a main strategy for many social movements: in their effort to reshape power relations to their benefit, social movements have engaged in forming alliances with other social sectors.

Related to this point, it has to be said here that the dividing line between social movements on the one hand and NGO's or political parties on the other may be vague in some cases. Generally speaking, social movements can count on a great deal of popular support but in contrast to NGO's or political parties lack a formal organisational structure. However, they may seek to professionalise and effectively turn into one of such. The reverse also takes place: both NGO's and political parties can try to create social movements to establish or increase their own support base (Foweraker 2001). Nevertheless, social movements are commonly shaped in confrontation with the state. The state, as the referent of action, is often seen with distrust at the very least (Calderón et. al 1992; Foweraker 2001). Some movements negotiate and try to extract resources from the state that otherwise does not provide for adequate basic welfare (Foweraker 2001), others try to transform the state, and yet others seek to topple and replace the parties in control. Clearly, no movement is the same and different social movements can be widely divergent in their views, methods and goals. To provide two completely different examples, the Argentine Madres de Plaza de Mayo[4] peacefully demonstrates for punishment for the killers of their relatives during the military dictatorship; whilst Peru's Sendero Luminoso[5] saw violence as the main means to establish a communist state.

Social movements have a long history in Latin America. Historically, one can think of (often class-based) movements such as labour unions, as well as the various revolutionary armed groups found across the continent during the years of Cold War and military dictatorship. Since the 1980's, when democratisation set in across the continent, the spectrum broadened and now includes gay and lesbian, indigenous, feminist and environmental movements (Escobar & Alvarez 1992). The reason for this opening is manifold: to begin, debt crises, neo-liberalisation and state failures to provide for their people aggravated and continue to aggravate existing inequalities, fuelling marginalised people with the need for collective action (Zibechi 2003; Foweraker 2001). Second, the gradual shift from military dictatorships to democracy attributed to this opening by giving newfound space to civil society. Although democratisation gave citizens space to express their identity and concerns (Escobar & Alvarez 1992), traditional institutions and political parties were not/no longer able to give a voice to all the needs of increasingly complex societies (Calderón et. al 1992). Urbanisation also accelerated the emergence of new social movements (Calderón et. al 1992; Foweraker 2001). Lastly, the efforts of foreign developmental or environmental NGO's have facilitated the emergence of certain movements, like the Pan-Indigenous movement (Boud 2010).

In line with Melucci & Avitser's (2000; 518) concept of social movement, Alain Touraine (1985) argues that social movements are always defined by the prevalence of social conflict. He identified six different aims of social conflict: 1) the pursuit of collective interests, 2) reconstruction of social, cultural or political identity, 3) forming a political force aimed at

---

[4] Mothers of May Square
[5] Shining Path

changing the rules of the game, 4) the defence of a status or privileges, 5) social control over the main cultural patterns, and 6) creation of a new order, in its most extreme form through revolution. In his attempt to narrow down the concept of social movement, Touraine only considered 'type 5' social conflicts to be part of the field of social movements (Touraine 1985; 760). Most other scholars writing on social movements include the other five types as well.

In my view, what constitutes a social movement is always a combination of aspects and goals. To begin, a sense of exclusion, or relative deprivation, lies at the heart of the movement (Hellman 1992): be it exclusion from justice and publicity of the truth, or the structural exclusion of entire groups of society. A movement always pursues collective interest by expressing a certain identity and valuation; or by forming a social or political force that challenges dominant narratives and practices by making an alternative truth-claim. As written by Yagenova, (2010; 17),

> 'a key issue then is to confront the hegemonic power with a correlation of different counter-hegemonic forces that transcend questioning the system to the construction of other ways of life. In this sense, it is the social movements that through their repertoire of collective action construct critical thought and social practices that conceive alternative models. [6]

In this sense, the social movement is not only a vehicle through which people collectively express their identity and concerns, but also a vehicle through which people seek to challenge and overcome domination (Touraine 2004).

2.4 From Discourse Theory to Frame Analysis

Truth, Power, and Hegemony

Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci have taught us that power and truth are related to one another. The state, as an apparatus of power, determines what is to be accepted as good behaviour or opinions that fall in line: the 'truth'. In the perfect totalitarian world only one truth, or sense of social reality, exists. It is an inescapable set of rules, norms and values, as it is embedded in our way of thinking to such an extent that we are normally unaware of it. Discourse then, in the original Foucauldian sense, is a normative framework that determines human thought and action: it tells us what is correct and what is false. The Foucauldian perspective on truth and power is intrinsically linked to the notion of discourse. Hegemonic discourses shape what people perceive of as normal and accepted: their sense of reality. As written by Foucault, truth

> 'induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse that it accepts and makes function as true;

---

[6] Un aspecto clave entonces es enfrentar el poder hegemónico con una correlación de fuerzas de poderes contra-hegemónicos que trascienden el cuestionamiento del sistema hacia la construcción de formas alternativas de vida. En este sentido, son los movimientos sociales quienes mediante su amplio repertorio de acciones colectivas construyen pensamiento crítico y prácticas sociales que abonan a concebir modelos alternativos'

the mechanisms which enable one to distinguish true and false statements (Foucault 1977, 207).

Herein lays the power of a hegemonic discourse: it shapes peoples constructed reality and influences their actions. This truth needs to be continuously generated: this occurs through what Foucault calls the production of knowledge. Knowledge is 'produced and transmitted under the control, dominant but not exclusively, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, and media)' (Foucault 1977, 207). Such a world is described in Orwell's classic novel '1984', where an all-powerful state manages to internalise its views in its subjects, thereby pacifying people into obedience.

In our world this complete 'hegemony', in Gramsci's terms, is impossible to achieve. Dominant discourses and practices are continuously challenged by alternative norms, or counter-hegemonic projects (Yagenova 2010). Discourses are subject to change: Foucault himself indicates that a given discourse is neither static nor everlasting. When a discourse is being questioned, 'ruptures' take place and new truth claims come to the fore. Truth, therefore, is not pre-given but contested:

> 'The essential thing is thus not a battle for truth, to uncover universal truths, but rather the position of discourses and claims to truth, their specificities and political and economic standing in society…The political question, to sum up, is not error, illusion, alienated consciousness or ideology; it is the truth itself' (Foucault 1977, quoted from Calhoun et. al 2005, 208).

An alternative discourse may gain legitimacy, challenge the current hegemonic discourse, and eventually take its place. Foucault's famous example is that of madness (Foucault 1964). He shows how the shifting discourse on madness has altered which people are considered mad by society, as well as the way these 'deviant' people are dealt with. Thus, in an extreme case, people considered completely sane according to one discursive framework could be considered mad in the second. In this line of thought dominant discourses shape what is thought and what is done: the objectivity of truth is denied.

The Active Social Construction of Reality

An important lesson from discourse theory is that truth is not something to be observed 'out there', but is what people perceive it to be, and is therefore a social construction. In order to clarify this argument it is important to delve deeper into meaning and framing theory.

In my view, classic discourse theory is overly deterministic and poses a static view on social life in its view that discourse alone determines human action: it leaves little room for human agency or critical thought. The thought and conduct of people cannot be reduced to the discursive frameworks imposed upon them. This view takes distance from the original Foucauldian perspective on discourse, which sees narratives as an extension of an anonymous system of power that rejects individuals' noteworthy existence (Foss & Gill 1987; 389). Accepting that truth is socially constructed does not automatically imply that all narratives are devoid of value or meaning.

Instead, discursive frameworks are grounded in identities, livelihoods and concerns that cannot be endlessly deconstructed (to do so would do injustice to the people involved). In

order to bring back the role of human agency in the construction of knowledge, the meaning-searching 'homo interpreter' should be the point of departure (Arts & Buizer (2009). People are beings of meaning, and give own meanings to their social reality that do not necessarily correspond with the dominant system. In line with Gidden's theory on the Duality of Structure (1979) people may - through both intended and unintended actions - change the rules of the game and resultantly change their discursive frames with it (or those of others). The social construction of reality follows from human agency and critical thought but occurs within a framework of structural conditions – of which hegemonic discourse is but one. These structural conditions in turn are subject to changes induced by human agency.

Framing theory, as a bridge between discourse theory and hermeneutics (the interpretative approach), is a useful approach when taking into account the Duality of Structure. Framing is a strategy of 'promoting' an alternative discourse (and discrediting the dominant one). Framing is described by Benford & Snow (2000, 614) as an '*active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction*'. It entails the social construction of a shared identity and ideology; as well as formulation of the problem and its proposed solution, and therefore fits within the cultural approaches to social movement analysis. Benford & Snow (ibid) describe in detail the process of framing and are particularly interested in collective action frames used by social movements in order to mobilise the support of the public. The master frame, an overarching ideological, symbolic or identity-based framework or

> ' a relatively stable configuration of ideational elements and symbols, operates as a kind of grammar for the articulation of more specific collective action framing processes within social movements' (Steinberg 1998, 864).

Benford & Snow (ibid) identify three core framing tasks required to engage in collective action: 1) negotiating a shared understanding, 2) prognostic framing and 3) motivational framing. The first refers to the process of coming to a shared understanding of the issue. Prognostic framing refers to 'the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem or at least a plan of attack, and to the strategies for carrying out the plan' (Benford & Snow 2000; 616). Motivational framing is a 'call to arms' that provides the rationale for engaging in collective action. In the context of this research, frames are not limited to purposeful action: they also encompass the ways the extractive industry and collective action against it are interpreted, or given meaning, by the anti-mining movement and the communities involved.

Benford and Snow (ibid) came up with an extensive list of variables which are relevant to look at, as they influence the shape and relative success of the collective action frame. Variables internal to the framing process are problem identification and direction, flexibility versus rigidity, inclusivity versus exclusivity, variation in interpretive scope and influence, and resonance. Contextual variables are political opportunity structure, counter-frames employed by the movement's opponents, cultural opportunities and constraints, and the type of audience. The most important success factor is whether or not the frame makes sense to the people it tries to reach: it needs to resonate both in content and in generic presentation with the everyday, personal experiences of the people it tries to mobilise in collective action (Steinberg 1998, 854), or it is bound to failure. The ability to successfully present a discursive frame as common sense shows its power and its potential for becoming hegemonic

(Steinberg, ibid). As can be noted, not all of these aspects are inherent to framing theory itself: instead, framing theory becomes more useful to use when not overlooking other (structural or conjunctural) factors.

2.5 Struggles over Resources, Struggles over Meaning

Having discussed the impacts of the extractive industry, social movements as well as frame analysis, I will now bring these points together by discussing what scholars have written on anti-mining movements before.

The extractivist resource complex can be seen as a 'regime of truth' in the terms of Foucault, or 'hegemony' in Gramsci's terms. As stressed before, no such regime is ever complete or uncontested. The real and perceived threats to livelihoods and self-determination are responded to by means of collective action, often with the intent of bringing a halt to mining (resistance) or changing the conditions under which the extractive industry takes place (reform). Above all, collective action emerges as a means in order to defend one's livelihood: hence, it can be seen as a reaction to the mechanism of possession by dispossession. Often, the key actors in this process are social movements who actively challenge the institutions, discourses and practices that drive and permit the extractive industry (Bebbington et. al 2008, 2890).

Considered part of the 'new social movements', anti-mining movements in Latin America commonly have a strong territorial focus (Bebbington 2007), which is partly due to the profoundly local impact of mining. Despite their territorial focus, creating a dense network of collaborating organisations (on various scales) has become a main strategy for anti-mining actors: n their effort to reshape power relations, they engage alliance-building with other social sectors (Zibechi 2003; Svampa 2011). In Guatemala for example, resistance against Goldcorp's Marlin mine involved the mobilisation of a wide range of different organisations, including indigenous Maya organisations, social movements, environmental NGO's, the Catholic Church, and international NGO's (Fulmer et. al 2008; Urkidi 2011).

Escobar's (2008) work on the self-determination of an Afro-Colombian movement stresses that it is sometimes impossible to conceptually separate between environmental and social concerns. Leire Urkidi, in her study of the Guatemalan anti-mining movement, draws a similar conclusion: 'many communitarian struggles over the environment are not just expressed in environmental terms, but are combined with questions of social justice, land rights, ethnicity, gender and human rights' (2011, 559). In a context where people's livelihoods depend on the local environment, and where forced displacement most heavily affects the rural poor, it becomes clear that making a distinction is indeed not helpful. Anti-mining struggles thus result from inseparable social and environmental concerns. This type of conflict is described by Van Den Hombergh (2004, 65) as

> 'a conflict in which clashes based on opposing values, norms and interests related to the use and conservation of natural resources play a dominant role in the triggering, escalation and/or articulation of the conflict'.

The stakes in mining conflicts are particularly high, as Anthony Bebbington (2012, 5) notes: 'extractive industry produces both incredible wealth and destruction at the same time'. Potential high financial gains versus potential loss of livelihood, displacement and environmental destruction: the anti-mining struggles stem from different meanings given to what constitutes development: those given by the state and the industry on the one hand versus a wide range of grassroots movements on the other. In the context of this research, the mining conflict is as much a struggle over resources as a struggle over meaning (Hogenboom & Teijlingen, forthcoming). Mining conflicts can be seen as metaphorical arenas that posit different ideas on economic development, the role of local communities, and valorisation of the environment against each other. Anti-mining movements challenge the dominant model of mineral-based development by questioning its logic and by providing a grassroots alternative. In this process of collective action, new meanings are constructed and new values are created.

Maristella Svampa (2011, 4) identified four main narratives generally employed by anti-mining movements: 1) protection of (what is perceived of as) communal property, 2) environmental justice, seen in terms of sustainability and including future generations, 3) *buen vivir*[7], an ecological-communitarian narrative with indigenous roots, and 4) ecological justice, focusing on the protection of species and ecosystems. These frames are actively adjusted to different scales in order to mobilise support on all these levels (Haarstad & Floysand 2006). Bebbington et al. (2010) noted that the importance attributed to water is an especially relevant rationale for mobilisation across rural and urban communities. Similarly, past events are used for strategic purposes. For example, the Guatemalan mining conflict received national and international attention in 2004 after an indigenous protestor was shot dead by the police as he was trying to block heavy machinery from reaching Goldcorp's Marlin mine. As a consequence of the attention it generated, resistance became increasingly multi-scalar as well. Each scale required the anti-mining movement to employ another narrative: from defence of community values (the Maya Cosmo-vision), to ILO convention 169, to discourses on environmental sustainability.

This rescaling of narratives has another implication: social movements occupy a unique position as a nexus between the local and the global. They can act as a bridge between international Civil Society and local communities, by transmitting values and re-articulating local narratives and perceptions. In order to be more successful, social movements can translate community grievances into narratives of human rights or of the need for sustainable development. Environmental concerns may not originate from a community affected by the extractive industry: new ideas on the environment are brought to them, with all the effort may take to convince them, by the act of reframing by social movements that are linked with international (environmental) NGO's. By all means, mining conflicts are not merely conflicts about resources.

---

[7] 'Good living'

2.6 Conclusion: Connecting the Approaches

In this chapter I have discussed literature on the push into the resource (mining) frontier and the mechanisms employed to facilitate this push; the local impacts it causes; different approaches to social movements; as well as framing analysis as a specific method. The aim of this research is to analyse the anti-mining movement, however doing so is impossible without also coming to an understanding of the impacts caused by mining operations on local communities. These and other impacts or wider dynamics - the using the concept of the extractivist resource complex - will also be discussed over the course of this thesis, taking into the account the mechanisms of control identified by Peluso & Lund (2011). Similarly, the knowledge previously generated by authors writing on anti-mining movements will be built upon.

The resource mobilisation, political opportunity structure (POS), and cultural approach to social movements were discussed as approaches to the analysis of social movements. In this research I predominantly employ frame analysis – as part of the cultural approach to social movements - to analyse the anti-mining movement and its interaction with communities affected by mining. I do not rigidly employ all the terms coined by Benford & Snow (2000) to describe the characteristics of different frames: rather they serve as guidelines and can be found behind the lines.

It needs to be stressed that the dynamics of mobilisation and reactions towards it entail more than the discursive frames of the anti-mining movement and the counter-frames of the extractivist complex. Discourse is soft power: where it fails to reach its intended goal, both the anti-mining movement and its opponents engage in strategies that more reflect their arsenal of 'hard power'. This is not to say that these actions do not carry messages (not meaningful or lack a discursive component), but a narrow focus on the discursive act of framing would overlook the wider historical, social, political and economical context, and hence the other processes taking place that influence the dynamics of mobilisation against the extractive industry.

As I try to place my analysis within a wider context I borrow from the other approaches as well, making them complementary instead of absolutist and mutually excluding. For example, the POS approach is used to analyse the impact of the military coup on the relation between state and social movement, whilst a wide interpretation of resource mobilisation helps shed light on the strategies employed by movement and community to 'defend their territory' against the mining industry. In short, in this research I try to provide an integration of frame analysis (focussing on meaning and practice), with historical and politico-economical factors.

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology and the Construction of Knowledge

explaining and reflecting (up)on collaborative ethnography

3.1 Introduction

The information provided in this thesis is largely based on a six month stay in Central America, in which I carried out ethnographic field work in Honduras over a period of five months from June to August, as well as in October and November 2013. During the fieldwork I was supported by ASONOG[8] (Asosiación de Organismos No-Gubernamentales) and the M(N/R)IGR[9] (Mesa Nacional/Regional para la Incidencia de Gestión de Riesgos), two interlinked local organisations involved in the anti-mining struggle. Data collection in the field was preceded by desktop-research and other preparations: as part of the proposal writing process I reviewed part of the existing academic literature on social movements and mining related topics in Latin America and I took part in a specialised course on Mineral Governance & Extractivism in Latin America at CEDLA[10] in Amsterdam. After return from the field the process of analysis and write-up started. Some research findings required me to review additional academic literature, notably on water related conflicts and on organised crime and violence in Central America. In the meantime I kept a number of Honduran organisations informed on the writing process by sending them draft chapters; similarly they kept me updated on recent developments in their work.

In this chapter I go into detail about the methodology of research and related aspects: the scope of research, research planning and methods, questions of trustworthiness, analysis of results, and reflection on the research process as well as my own position as an 'activist' researcher. As such, the chapter is divided in four sections. In the first section, I describe the point of departure and the scope of the research. In the second section I explain the methodology of ethnography and the specific methods that I employed during the fieldwork period. Ethnographic field research is a highly interactive process and collaborative research arguably even more so: therefore, the third section provides a reflection on my position as a foreign researcher in collaboration with a local organisation – a position that inevitably shaped the aim and the course of the research (Van Der Haar et. al 2013). Based on these three aspects –scope of the research, methodology, and reflexivity on my own position in the construction of knowledge- in a concluding section I go into questions of trustworthiness, as well as the limitations of this research.

---

[8] Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
[9] National/Regional Roundtable of Risk Management
[10] Centre for Education and Documentation on Latin America

3.2 Scope of the Research

This thesis documents resistance to mining in Honduras on a national level, in which past events dating from 1998 form crucial background context whilst the focus of research lies on recent events. Across Honduras I carried out interviews with environmental activists, representatives of NGO's, social movements, state and mining companies; I attended community meetings and community trainings; and participated in local forums and events. Whilst not ignoring the perspective of state and industry, the position of the anti-mining movement and mining affected communities stand central in this research.

Gaining entry to the field can be a difficult and time consuming task. Strength of this research is that access to the field was negotiated before starting the fieldwork: from the start of the research I was embedded in ASONOG, a local NGO based in Santa Rosa de Copán that forms part of the Honduran anti-mining movement. One of my academic supervisors -having a work history with the organisation- was able to introduce me to the organisation. In the e-mail conversations that followed I explained my intentions and I was welcomed as a volunteer. My association with ASONOG gave me perfect entry into the field: apart from being an organisation with a history of resistance against mining, ASONOG provided logistical support and access to rural communities affected by mining. My affiliation with ASONOG also ensured that other NGO's within the environmental coalition could receive me with a degree of trust. The ease to which I had access to most rural communities and anti-mining actors stands in contrast with the difficulty I had in speaking with relevant state institutions or mining companies. Nevertheless, in the end I succeeded in interviewing some relevant industry and state actors – important to be able to underline their perspective to the matter.

As it goes with ethnographic fieldwork, the fieldwork experience did not match with the plans made before-hand: it was shaped and changed course on site. Initially, I planned to stay for four months and to focus on resistance to mining in Western Honduras only (the departments surrounding Santa Rosa de Copán). However, I decided to lengthen my stay with two months and to increase the scope of my research: I expanded the research to a national level and also spent several weeks investigating in neighbouring El Salvador in September 2013. The reasons to expand the research to a national level were manifold: to begin, shortly after arrival in Honduras ASONOG and I established a list of potential informants for the research: some necessary interviews with other organisations involved in the anti-mining movement, or with state representatives, required me to travel a number of times to Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula or El Progreso. Hence, at the start of the fieldwork experience it became clear that a focus on Western Honduras would be too narrow. Second, ASONOG works on the theme of mining on a national level. Doing so, it cooperates closely with the MIGR, which operate on a regional basis in most of the country's departments. With ASONOG and MIGR I participated in forums as well as community trainings in Santa Rosa de Copán, 6 de Mayo, Intíbuca, Tegucigalpa, Valle de Siria, Danlí, Catacamas, and Trujillo. Third, as I proceeded with the research I felt that some events that took place in Honduras required deeper investigation, even though it required extensive travelling. To this end I decided to lengthen my stay with two months. Whenever possible I travelled with someone of ASONOG or the MIGR, but I could not avoid spending many hours by myself in public transport. This can be a complicated matter in Honduras:

travelling by bus after dark is not recommended and once I had to take a 300 km detour to avoid a route where armed assaults are rumoured to take place. Apart from the common flat tire and police or military checkpoints, I never experienced any trouble and wherever I went local people were waiting to help me out.

By the end of the research, I visited-and spoke with people in- all locales mentioned in Chapter 5 (San Andrés, La Labor, Valle de Siria), which are at the same time case studies as well as important points of reference for the anti-mining movement. I also attended several community meetings and trainings across the country (Chapter 8). The three case studies presented in Chapter 7 are chosen for a number of different reasons. The first case- the anti-mining struggle in 6 de Mayo- came as an early opportunity: it unfolded as I arrived in the country; and its proximity to Santa Rosa de Copán permitted several visits to the site. At first I went three times with ASONOG; later I also made independent visits to the community. I chose to investigate the second case- the fatal anti-mining struggle in the indigenous community of San Francisco de Locomapa- for the severity of the case. My arrival in the region, two months after three protestors were killed, was well timed: for the first time since the event, the anti-mining organisation involved (MADJ) and the tribal leaders met and discussed the situation. I was able to make a single visit to the remote community itself to speak with its community leader. Nevertheless, due to its remote location I was not able to return. I decided to include the last case, of Nueva Esperanza, because this specific anti-mining struggle was at the time especially meaningful to the anti-mining movement, and it provided a complex case where many different actors (Church, community, anti-mining movement, international organisations, police, company, armed groups) all played their part. Nueva Esperanza represents the only case where data collection did not include participant observation: I reconstructed the case with the help of interviews, a recently made documentary, spoken and written testimonies that were spread on the internet, as well as journalistic articles.

By the end of august 2013 I went for three weeks to neighbouring El Salvador. I investigated in El Salvador because a) the anti-mining struggle is not limited to national frontiers and interconnected on a regional level, b)it was suggested to me by ASONOG, curious of the successes of the Salvadorian struggle, and c) El Salvador provides for an interesting comparison with Honduras: whilst the Honduran government promotes mining as the saviour of Honduras, the Salvadorian government - pressured by an anti-mining movement that holds a more uncompromising position than in Honduras (it aims for the prohibition of all metallic mining versus a prohibition of open-pit metal mining) - suspended all metallic mining activities. For a downside: I am not as familiar with the Salvadorian context as with the Honduran context. However, the side-step to El Salvador was logistically very feasible: my supervisor was able to introduce me beforehand to the Mesa Nacional Frente la Minería Metalica[11] (MNFMM) based in the capital, El Salvador is a small country (five times smaller than Honduras) and in Santa Rosa de Copán I lived closer to San Salvador than to most Honduran destinations. In the thesis, occasional references to the situation of El Salvador are made but it is no focus point: I have passed on all digital voice recordings of my interviews with the members of the MNFMM to

---

[11] National Roundtable against Metallic Mining

another MSc student who more profoundly investigates resistance against mining in El Salvador.

3.3 Ethnographic Research

To achieve a greater understanding of the dynamics of resistance against the mining industry, I conducted multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork from the June to December 2013 (a period of six months). Ethnographic fieldwork is particularly useful to this type of research because has the purpose of coming to an understanding of the practices and notions of a more or less bounded group in its full context, by paying attention to its social, political and economic surroundings (Van Maanen 1988; Eriksen 2004). In ethnographic research the researcher him/herself is the main research instrument, as (s)he is required to involve him/herself with the experiences of the people (s)he seeks to understand. It requires encountering informants in formal as well as informal contexts. Preliminary plans and assumptions notwithstanding, in practice research plans always have to be modified once 'in the field': the reality of doing research remains chaotic, unpredictable, and beyond full control of the researcher. Although it is a time intensive research method, if carried out well ethnographic fieldwork is able to provide for rich and nuanced data. Included in the methodology of ethnographic fieldwork are specific methods such as formal and informal interviews, participant observation and document analysis (Gobo 2008), all considered methods of qualitative research. In combination, these methods allowed me to uncover the history of the movement, the different perceptions and frames about the problem of extractive industry, the actions that are undertaken, as well as get a sense of the obstacles the movement is facing.

The first weeks of my stay I was dedicated to a review of available documents. This included an analysis of the newly approved mining law; newspaper reports on the new law and the expansion of the industry; announcements made by the industry; the state; or the environmental coalition; as well as documentation on the past anti-mining struggle in Western Honduras led by ASONOG. As the research proceeded and the number of informants grew, I obtained new documents that were included in the final analysis. Documents were analysed both for their factual content (description of events that took place, regulations, etc.) and well as for the discursive frames (implicit or explicit) they contain. Based on the pre-departure literature review, initial document analysis as well as my research questions, I constructed a topic list that would initially serve as a guide for my fieldwork.

During my second week in Santa Rosa de Copán, ASONOG and I established a list of potential informants (persons or organisations) that I should interview. In the end, I conducted 37 formal, semi-structured in depth interviews that were prepared beforehand with an interview guide: a list of open-ended questions from which can be diverged during the interview (Heldens & Reysoo 2005). Initial interview guides were based on the topic list made beforehand, but as the research proceeded I let go of the topic list and I increasingly based my questions on new insights and the specific background of the informant. Some of my informants are nationally known state representatives, or internationally known anti-mining activists who use their international publicity as a safety strategy: their names are given in this research. However, for safety reasons the majority of names mentioned are either pseudonyms or simply left out.

All formal in depth interviews and the majority of informal interviews are a result of purposive sampling. I managed to contact most informants beforehand by phone and by making arrangements for interviews, but whenever the opportunity presented itself I used snowball sampling or opportunity sampling to be able to speak with community members during community visits across Honduras. I spoke to representatives of a small number of international solidarity organisations via Skype; with others I had e-mail contact. Despite various attempts I was unable to get in touch with COPINH (Consejo de Organizaciones Populares e Indigenas de Honduras[12]), an indigenous (Lenca) social movement involved in a complicated anti-dam struggle. Most likely, this is related to the fact that COPINH is in distress for it faces heavy repression, but I would have been enriching to hear the perspective of this organisation, being an important indigenous movement. I also received no response from ANAMIMH (Asociación Nacional de Mineras Metalicas de Honduras)[13], representative organ of the transnational mining industry, despite writing various e-mails and making numerous phone calls.

I recorded and transcribed most of these in depth interviews. However, in two cases I was asked not to record, and another two recordings were flawed. I also conducted numerous informal interviews: I spent many hours travelling and sometimes lodged with people of ASONOG and the MNIGR, which gave us ample opportunities to discuss the topic and share experiences. Similarly, during community meetings and community trainings I was able to speak with both activists and community members. Whenever possible, I recorded these conversations for later analysis. One some occasions, informal settings are better sources of information than formal interviews, and I was careful not to push people for formal interviews: people have their own ways of telling their story. An example that comes to mind is a *campesino* leader who invited me to his village, where I stayed for a weekend. I ate with his family; I tasted the water that sprang from the mountain; and I was shown the fields (conceded to a mining company) where the community grows its crops. Such impressions can be more revealing than a lengthy interview: relying on interviews alone may leave false or incomplete impressions.

This brings me to the third main method employed in ethnographic research: participant observation. Simply defined, participant observation entails 'participating and observing in social action as the action is happening' (Lichterman 1998, 401). In the context of researching activism, 'participant-observers can find out what traditions, symbols and stories make activism meaningful *as it is happening* in everyday life (Lichterman 1998, 410, emphasis in the original). Like interviewing, participant observation is an interactional event. But whilst interviews constitute an interactional event between the interviewer and the interviewee where the interviewer decides on the direction of the conversation, participant observation allows the researcher to witness another type of interactional event: in my case within the anti-mining movement, between social movement and community, and between community and mining company. Participating in interactions between the community and the anti-mining movement, I could witness the 'rituals of solidarity' – the measures and frames used by anti-mining actors to appeal to the community and to bridge the gap between activist and its public. Second, as I will argue ahead, participant observation in activist circles can also bridge the gap between activist and researcher – although this also brings certain complications. Nevertheless, participating in

---

[12] Council of Popular and Indigenous Organisations of Honduras
[13] National Association of Metallic Mining of Honduras

the movement from within can be very enlightening on the implicit meanings of anti-mining activism and the organisational culture that stems from these implicit meanings.

During the writing process I made a number of decisions that I wish to make explicit. To begin, for the writing of this thesis I have chosen to frequently use quotations. This is not only done for stylistic or illustrative purposes. First, I consider making visible linguistic expressions to be a necessity when using frame analysis; second, I feel that people's voices deserve to be heard. All translations from Spanish to English are my own; but I decided to leave the original in the footnotes for those interested. I often make use of the 'I perspective', for the reason that the in the field I was the main instrument of research, and an interpreter in the construction of knowledge. Last, although covered by the research questions I have dedicated considerable space to describing the impacts of mining (especially in the case of Valle de Siria), considering it remains important to denounce violations of any kind. To this end I have also chosen to include a number of images which though shocking gives a concrete account of what takes place.

3.4 Collaborative Research & Reflexivity

Collaborative & Activist Research

As an ethnographic researcher of anti-mining activism, it was both impossible and perhaps even irresponsible to remain indifferent towards the struggle I tried to make sense of. Regardless of my involvement, I try to stress in this work that anti-mining activism is a response to real damages done in the past, and that lack of control by the state and human rights violations are as real today as they were in the period when the anti-mining movement was formed. In my point of view, for as long as these conditions are so clearly present, anti-mining activism is a legitimate activity. With this position taken, I tried to engage in collaborative and activist research, which ideally can be used to formulate strategies for achieving positive social change (Hale 2001). Although the terms *collaborative research* and *activist research* are conceptually close, I will make a gradual distinction. I employ the term 'collaborative research' to describe the type of research that a) covers the practical/operational side of doing research (a reciprocal relationship with a local partner: benefits of access and security for the researcher against valuable information for the host organisation) and b) implies a view of knowledge as interactive (co-constructed) and value-laden.

I will employ the term 'activist research' to move beyond collaborative research by paying specific attention to the sentiment and motives of the researcher him/herself in carrying out a particular type of research. Whilst I maintain that social scientific research can never be value-free, these values are more pronounced, play a more articulated guiding role, in activist research. Paul Lichterman (1998, 401) wrote that 'participant-observers get to experience the same exhilaration, frustration, and awkwardness as the activists we study'. Based on my experiences in the field I can agree with this statement, which also implicates that self-reflection on part of the position of the researcher is sheer necessity. This holds especially for activist research that relies on a highly interactive methodology such as ethnography.

From the start of the research I took distance from the viewpoint of social science as a discipline that stands 'above'- or 'objective' towards- the *object* of study. Not only can collaborative and activist ethnographic research, with its direct involvement of local actors as research *subjects* and partners, produce more rich in depth knowledge, it also carries more relevance and 'touch' with the experienced social reality. With this view on social science and collaborative ethnographic research in mind, I began this investigation from the vantage point that social movements are key actors in the effort of creating a more socially and environmentally responsible model of resource extraction (Bebbingon 2012). In line with Hale's vision on activist research (2001), this research therefore tried to emphasise the commitment of the movement towards 'progressive social and political transformation' as well as 'collaboration throughout the research process with social actors' (Van der Haar 2009, 122). As pointed out by Burdick (1995), ethnographic analysis of social movements specifically has the potential of making a positive contribution to the movement's practice, because the research can uncover implicit sentiments that otherwise remain obscure to the leaders and members of the movement.

Concretely, collaborative research entailed that ASONOG provided me with access to the field, and helped establish a list of relevant actors for interviewing. Throughout the research process I reflected on the findings with people involved with ASONOG and the broader movement. In turn, I joined in the organisation's work as a participant observer. Second, as a foreign student I had access to information that otherwise remains inaccessible for the organisations involved in the anti-mining movement. This includes access to academic articles, but more importantly it meant I had access to information provided by public officials, information that I could afterwards share with my research partners: ASONOG as well as a number of other actors I got to know during the research process. Third, more broadly speaking, Honduras is a country with a complex problematic, of which mining-related conflicts are only one. I hold no illusions that achieving progressive social and political transformation is an easy task to which this research can clearly contribute. However, both the anti-mining struggle as well the general human rights situation in Honduras are serious issues that deserve more visibility on an international level. This is a need to which I hope to contribute with this research.

This project was intended from the start as collaborative research, but it was in the field that I gradually assumed a position of 'activist' researcher. Community leaders undergo their 'rite of passage' into the anti-mining movement by visiting Valle de Siria, a region where the health impacts of Goldcorp's San Martín mine are clearly visible and where the local population continues to seek justice for the damages done. At the moment of visiting Valle de Siria I did not think of it as such, but later I realised that the visit had a similar effect on me: I underwent my rite of passage. Witnessing the health issues of the people of El Porvenir in Valle de Siria –a reality that stands in stark contrast to Goldcorp's presentation of the project as a success story- made me experience the same sense of injustice that motivates the anti-mining movement. Similarly, it is impossible to remain indifferent to –not to morally condemn - threats or acts of violence against community members or activists who exercise their rights. With these experiences, the anti-mining movement's pleas for a 'defence of

territory' become very understandable: nobody wants such things to happen to his or her community, let alone in conditions of impunity.

As mentioned by Van der Haar (2009) in collaborative research the researcher has to be careful of not becoming involved to such an extent that it blinds him/her from seeing or appreciating other perspectives, which can lead to external (or dissident viewpoints within the movement) no longer receiving the attention they require. I cannot deny that the broader Honduran anti-mining movement and the organisations and networks that constitute it have their differences, which also led to internal conflict. Nor do I wish to advocate that the position of the anti-mining movement is absolutely right, or that mining is absolutely wrong. I can also understand the Honduran government's view that mining can potentially be an important activity for a country that desperately needs a source of income. In this report I will not argue like some anti-mining activists that every mining concession brings corruption or that every open pit gold mine will leave behind a destructive legacy like Goldcorp did in Valle de Siria. But corruption is a serious issue in Honduras, and who is to guarantee that 'another Valle de Siria' will not happen again? Why would mining bring less inequality and injustice to one of the most unequal countries in the world, if the military police is sent against its own population to facilitate such projects? Do people not have the democratic right to decide for their own future, if they so want free of mining practices that have long since been outlawed in the EU, where I am from? Although such questions played a role in my decision to investigate this topic in the first place, as I experienced the impacts of mining firsthand I more frequently asked myself such questions.

Another thing I must stress, in order to explain why I came to see myself as more of an activist researcher, is the respect and sense of involvement I gained for the people who continue in the struggle despite the difficulties they face. At the time of writing this chapter, in e-mail conversation with one activist I regard highly he wrote to me:

> 'I tell you I have been criminalised for my struggle in defense of the natural resources and a lot of persecution to myself but we continue in the fight partner (…) I am evaluating to move for a period out of Honduras to lower the attention on me[14]

He was not the first to tell me something like this but it remains difficult to hear; and more difficult yet to give him a satisfactory answer – what can I concretely do for him? Still, it makes me feel a sense of commitment which provides a growing rationale, or a meaning, for continuing and accomplishing this research other than it being merely a project necessary for graduation. This meaning I gave to the research experience – or was it the research experience and the people involved that provided this meaning to me? - left an impact for carrying out the fieldwork and beyond.

The Construction of Knowledge

Ethnographic research is a matter of 'double hermeneutics' (Giddens 1984): it is the researcher's task to make sense of the sense-making of others. Furthermore, in collaborative

---

[14] te cuento que he estado criminalizado por mi lucha en la defensa de los recursos naturales y mucha persecución hacia mi persona pero seguimos en lucha compa (…)estoy valorando moverme un tiempo fuera de honduras para bajar un poco la atención sobre mi persona

research, as in any other interactive research, knowledge is co-constructed and interpreted by the researcher as well as by all local actors. The construction of knowledge therefore involves a series of interrelated factors: background and 'positionality' of the researcher, the nature and quality of interaction with local research partners and subjects, as well as the nature of the data received.

Although awareness and cultural sensitivity help, nobody can fully escape interpreting the surrounding world from his/her own socio-cultural background. My own specific background - middle class, white, European, male, heterosexual, university-educated, secular – implicitly influences how I perceive social reality. Likewise, people's background influences how they are received and interpreted: in my case it was not uncommon for people to ask me if I was a Peace Corp volunteer[15] or an NGO worker. Related to my background is that my unfamiliarity with the Honduran context has surely affected the research process. Becoming familiar or accustomed with the local context is a matter of time, a process that I underwent rapidly in the first months of my stay. With sheer luck, I got to know a Dutch woman who had previous working experience in ASONOG in Santa Rosa de Copán via ICCO, a Dutch development agency. With her aid I encountered a local family that welcomed me as an 'adopted son' for the period of my stay. Living with a local family and being embedded in a local NGO allowed me to more quickly grasp the broader Honduran context. As I grew more familiar, my dependence on ASONOG lessened and my national network grew. It made me feel more able to attend new locations and expand my research. Likewise, whilst I spoke moderate Spanish when I arrived in Honduras, my language skills improved greatly over time to the point that the details no longer escaped me and I started to speak fluent Spanish.

Apart from awareness of one's own background and familiarity with the local context, trust and positionality - both partly shaped by the researcher's attitude and choices in the field- are two dimensions that affect the course of research and the data received. In this section I elaborate more profoundly how the collaborative nature of this research and the position I took have influenced data collection and the construction of knowledge. In this I am in line with Van Der Haar et.al (2013, 21) who

> 'consider collaboration between host organisations, host populations, local research assistants and others as research encounters that shape the process by which knowledge is constructed, and hence the nature of the knowledge generated'

I will illustrate this point by discussing a selection of 'research encounters', for which I must first stress that the researcher, host organisation, and local people are all interactive participants in the construction of knowledge. For one thing, my position as a collaborative and activist researcher generally contributed to the process of gaining new contacts and building trust. For example, after three months in the field I was approached by a local researcher with whom I exchanged valuable information, and whom I regularly met for joint reflection. However, one's position can also work the other way: when speaking with the Tolupán tribal leaders in Yoro, I found out that I wrongly presumed that they were 'in the struggle', which they in reality opposed. With this experience, I was confronted with the fact

---

[15] The Peace Corps has a long working history in Honduras, but suspended its work in September 2012 for security reasons

that my own disposition, combined with partial and insufficient information, also gave me presumptions of the position of others – which in turn affected how I approached them and what questions I asked.

Nevertheless I was aware from the beginning that the question of trust and positionality also brought forth some research moments that required strategic representation: I was advised not to mention my affiliation with ASONOG when interviewing state or company representatives and as such told I them I was interested in 'how mining can contribute to the development of Honduras'. Mining is a politically sensitive subject in Honduras and as commented by Sluka (1990, 123) 'the more political or controversial a subject one researches, the more likely one is to be suspected of bias or partisanship'. When Congressman Donaldo Reyes Avelar asked me at the start of the interview if I was working for an environmentalist organisation, I replied I did not. Indeed, technically I did not: I did not have any working contract and ASONOG is strictly speaking no environmentalist NGO. Responding with 'no' did not cover the whole situation but telling so might have endangered the course of the interview. Similarly, I got acquainted on an informal basis with someone working for MINOSA, the Canadian mining company based in Santa Rosa de Copán. With her help I was able to interview the mine's manager, but I had to be careful not to mention to her my affiliation with the local NGO that long opposed that mining company.

Another exemplary research encounter, an example on how the position of the researcher in the field can affect data – and perhaps the course of events - was my direct involvement with the anti-mining struggle in the community of 6 de Mayo. I was aware that the miners tried to determine my role as I was standing between the community members, listening and making notes of the confrontation that took place. By the community I was placed on their side: 'he is European but he is in the struggle', commented a community member to the rest, after holding a discourse on how historically the Spanish came from Europe to plunder Honduras for its silver and gold. Indeed, I was there not only as a foreign researcher on resistance to mining (the topic already raises ideas of involvement), but also as a volunteer of ASONOG, the organisation that had vowed to support the community in its struggle. This position legitimised my presence in the field and gave me access to the community: I felt less of an outsider. On the other hand however, this position also shut all doors to speaking with the miners.

Similarly, although I did not consider myself an expert on mining, I was given that role nonetheless by the community leader. Several times I was asked on my opinion and on what steps to take as a community. I could only answer what I learnt from the mining law and ASONOG, and what common sense told me: 'the mining company broke the law by appropriating land without making a land deal first, a creek of which various families depend runs close past the pit, you have to declare it as a drinking water source, and the company by law has no right to exploit without the community's approval'. In any case, the community felt strengthened by my presence and luckily my advices were not put to the test: the community succeeded in banning the mining company. In any case, although the exact effects are immeasurable; this case stands as example of how the presence and interaction of the researcher may affect the dynamics of a local situation.

3.5 Conclusion: Trustworthiness and Research Limitations

Having discussed the scope of the research, the research methodology employed, and my own position as a researcher, I will now turn to questions of trustworthiness and research limitations.

To begin, I need to stress that the concepts of reliability and validity are mostly associated with quantitative research and a positivist research paradigm (Golafshani 2003, 597), whilst this qualitative research departs from a moderate constructivist perspective instead: facts may be very real but their interpretation plays a large role in constituting social reality. When taking into account that knowledge is a) limited, and b) constructed by both informants and researcher, and when taking into account the complexity of the situation on the ground, a purely positivist stance becomes impossible to maintain.

Nevertheless, the issue is not completely irrelevant either. In line with Golafshani (2003) I argue that reliability cannot be established in qualitative research: it instead it needs to be derived from trustworthiness. Trustworthiness does not mean to say that the data presented in this research can be tested (reproduced) or easily generalised towards other contexts. Instead it is derived from the research methods as applied in the field and analysed afterwards. Triangulation, the use of mixed methods, is an important concept that comes to mind. Ethnographic research by its very core employs mixed methods: formal and informal interviews, participant observation and document analysis. The chapters and cases presented in this research have all been established with the results of a combination of different methods and different sources.

Besides triangulation as a means of achieving trustworthiness, this research allowed for several moments of joint reflection on (parts of) the research findings to achieve internal validity. This usually happened implicitly and informally, for example when discussing findings in the office or when reflecting upon community meetings on our way back. More explicitly, I wrote and shared reports on the anti-mining struggle in 6 de Mayo and San Francisco de Locomapa (Chapter 8) and halfway the research wrote a mid-way analysis which I shared with ASONOG. During different points of the research I met with a local scholar investigating mining to discuss our findings. The last week before my departure I was able to participate in a national meeting of RENACAMI (Red Nacional de Comunidades Afectadas por la Minería)[16], in which a number of relevant Civil Society organisations were present. There I presented my research and its findings, which gave room for discussion and joint reflection. A last moment of joint reflection will follow in August 2014 at another meeting of RENACAMI.

An issue that questions the trustworthiness of qualitative research is the credibility of documents or interview accounts: a number of interviews I took were highly specific and cannot easily be triangulated with one another. However, I argue that this is no huge issue as interview data, like any data, should not be looked at as a source of 'objective' data. The informant's interpretation of events, or sense making, is just as valuable as the factual events that took place. To give a theoretical example, an interview in which the truth is not told still contains valuable

---

[16] National Network of Communities Affected by Mining

information: the informant has a conscious or unconscious reason for not telling the (whole) truth, or has a different perception of reality. This kind of meta-data can be very relevant to the researcher (Fuji 2009). In several occasions in this research, the information did indeed not add up. Instead of discarding this information or presenting it as fact, I have tried to make these discrepancies visible as they form part of the research context and the position taken by the different actors involved. Therefore instead of presenting facts I engage in sense-making. As commented by Van Der Haar et al (2013, 21) 'fragmented data and a high degree of ambiguity shape knowledge construction, not just by the researcher but also by all social actors in that locale'. Such data may range from different opinions on the negotiation process of the new mining law (Chapter 6), to different versions of the 'truth' in a conflictive setting (Chapter) to contradictory blood test results (Chapter 5).

There are some limitations to this research however. For one thing, this research is limited by time-span: over the period of six months I have only witnessed a small part of an ongoing and dynamic struggle. I also did not speak with members of indigenous social movements, nor did I document current struggles against purely transnational companies trying to gain a foothold. Of course, every qualitative research is limited by time constraints and questions of access, and one has to keep in mind that knowledge provided by local actors is always partial (incomplete and not neutral) and situated (Van Der Haar et al 2013, 25). As rightly noted by Lincoln (2001; 4) 'society is more complex than the sum of its parts': 'adding up' different clusters of partial and situated knowledge will never be able to reconstruct or fully represent social reality. This research does find some recurring themes or patterns relevant for understanding opposition to mining, but it is impossible to establish that these will in every situation play an equally important role. This is by no means a limitation, but an essential characteristic of qualitative research. What I try to do is make understandable the complexity that shapes anti-mining struggles in Honduras. To this end, I have employed mixed methods, different cases and multi-sited research, and moments of joint reflection with my research partners.

Chapter 4 –
Contextual Analysis of Honduras

social, economic, political characteristics; & relevant institutions

4.1 Introduction

In order to understand this research in its specific setting, it is important to first provide the necessary contextual information. Therefore, in this chapter I will sketch the contextual setting in which resistance to mining in Honduras is embedded. To do so, this chapter is divided in three sections.

To begin, I provide an account of the socio-economic and political aspects of Honduras, in which I provide information such as ethnic make-up, poverty rates, sources of income, etc. I also provide attention to the presence of crime organisations and the situation of structural violence and crime affecting the country. These dimensions are then linked to the political reality of Honduras, in which I pay special attention to the 2009 coup d'état that caused a lasting division in both Civil Society and in the political arena. In the third section I narrow the focus down by explaining the role of the institutions (civil society and state) that will regularly be mentioned in the thesis due to their relevance for the topic: a) the different state institutions responsible for mining regulation b) the organisational structure of Honduran communities, and c) an introduction to the Honduran anti-mining movement. In this section I will also provide some necessary background to understand the relative vulnerability of rural communities versus mining companies.

4.2 Socio-Economic Characteristics of Honduras

Honduras, located in the heart of Central America, had a registered population of 7, 55 million in 2011 (data.un.org), a number that, when taken into account continuing population growth, is now more likely to have reached 8 million. Latin America is a highly urbanised world region: approximately 80% of its population lives in an urban setting. Honduras is a notable exception: nearly half of the Honduran population (47%) still lives in rural areas. This percentage is slowly decreasing[17].

Apart from the ladino group that makes up most of the country's population, Honduras is home to seven recognized ethnic minorities that inhabit different regions of the country. Together these groups make up for approximately 9% of the total population of Honduras (7% indigenous and 2% Afro-Honduran). The Ch'orti'- Maya live near the Guatemalan border, the Lenca inhabit South-Western Honduras bordering El Salvador, the Tolupanes are

---

[17] http://data.worldbank.org/country/honduras

a small minority scattered across the central department of Yoro, the Pech and Tahwaka communities located further west in Olancho and Colón, and the Misquito form the majority population in the coastal zone of the remote eastern department of Gracias a Dios, (also known as the Misquito Coast or La Misquitia). The Garífuna, a large ethnic minority which can claim mixed indigenous and African descent, have their communities spread across villages and cities of the Caribbean Coast. Due to specific historic circumstances, (e.g. discrimination and isolation) the Garífuna and the Misquito have retained both their language and many customs (Anderson 2009), whilst the Lenca language on the other extreme has been lost. Largely attributed to the work of Guatemalan indigenous activists, the Ch'orti' ethnicity and language is currently undergoing a revitalisation or re-discovery in Copán, and to some extent in Ocotepeque (Metz 2010).

Honduras is characterised by extreme levels of inequality and poverty. Only preceded by Haiti, Honduras has surpassed Nicaragua as the second-poorest country of the Western Hemisphere. With an average GDP per capita of US $ 2250 (2011), an estimated 66,5% of the Honduran population currently lives under the national poverty line, with extreme poverty as high as 46% (Johnston & Lefebvre 2013): a percentage with a rural, gender and ethnic bias (IDAMHO 2013, 13). Although the legal minimum wage, depending on the sector, surrounds US $300, 43, 6% of the Honduran workforce receives less income. Both the levels of extreme poverty and inequality have declined under the Zelaya administration, gains that were reversed by the post-coup government. Social spending by the government has reduced, and the percentage of extreme poverty has increased sharply by 20.9 percent over the 2010-2012 periods (Johnston & Lefebvre 2013). Johnston & Lefebvre, in their report on the social and economic implications of the 2009 coup conclude:

> 'Although Honduras has experienced positive economic growth in recent years, social indicators have worsened considerably. In the two years after the coup, Honduras had the most rapid rise in inequality in Latin America and now stands as the country with the most unequal distribution of income in the region' (Johnston & Lefebvre 2013, 14).

As such, Honduran society is structured pyramid-wise: with a small and rich upper class and a large, impoverished majority. Given this reality it is not surprising that many rural Hondurans continue to migrate to the main cities, or attempt to reach the US as *mojados* (lit. 'wet'): travelling as undocumented migrants via Guatemala and Mexico. An estimated one million Hondurans live in the USA, with another significant number living in Mexico. Remittances sent by these migrants represented 15,6% of GDP in 2012, the second-largest source of income for the country. Agricultural production (bananas, coffee, palm-oil, cultivated shrimp, etc.) is the first contributor to the national GDP, followed on the third place by forestry. In 2010, at a time when two industrial mines were in exploitation, mining only contributed to 1,2% of GDP (ICMM 2012). Current government policy is to elevate mining to become the main source of income for Honduras.

Another relevant – yet controversial – contributor to the national economy of Honduras is the cocaine trade. Pushed by the war on drugs in Mexico gaining momentum (Williams 2009), and pulled by the political instability generated in by the military coup (UNODC 2012), Honduras became an increasingly attractive base of operations for transnational organised crime networks. Currently, Honduras (along with Guatemala) serves as a major node of the

drug trafficking route from Colombia towards the United States. These well-armed organised crime organisations, mainly originating from Mexico but with local counterparts, are the de facto rulers of several rural territories and have an eroding effect on the already weak rule-of–law, having penetrated local businesses and government institutions alike.

Criminal violence has a profound impact on Honduran social life. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has identified eight central problems of criminality in Central America: drug trafficking, homicide,

Share of GDP represented by value of cocaine transiting each country, 2010

Figure 1: Source UNODC 2012

youth gangs, domestic violence, firearms trafficking, money laundering, and corruption (Cruz 2011).Several of these dimensions of crime are, of course, interrelated: drug trafficking organisations require firearms, may employ urban youth for their 'dirty work', and invest in legal businesses to laundry their illicit income. As mentioned by Cruz (2011, 2)

> 'This crime wave has turned these countries into the most violent countries in the world, producing the paradox of regimes that are electoral democracies but live under a de facto state of siege produced by violent crime'

Central America is currently the most violent region in the world, surpassing (post)-conflict areas such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Honduras in particular now has the highest homicide rate in the world: it rose from 32 per 100.000 inhabitants in 2004 to 91.6 per 100.000 inhabitants in 2011 (UNODC 2012). Most of these murders are never investigated, let alone trialed, creating an environment of impunity.

4.3 The Honduran State

The Military coup and its Implications

Honduras has turbulent political history, a history that played a key role in shaping the public domain as it is today. Up to the 1950's the United Fruit Company, locally nicknamed 'the Octopus', was deeply involved with Honduran politics (Barahona 2005). The country has suffered from various military coups and dictatorships, and its military government during the 80's provided a base of operations to the US military and the Contras[18], at the time being the only Central American country without a civil war waging.

Democratisation has been a gradual process with serious setbacks, and remains contested up to this day. The process of democratisation began with the end of military rule in 1980 and the 1982 constitution (Boussard 2003). This constitution, although marking the start of the democratisation process, is seen by some as a pact of political, business and military elites,

---
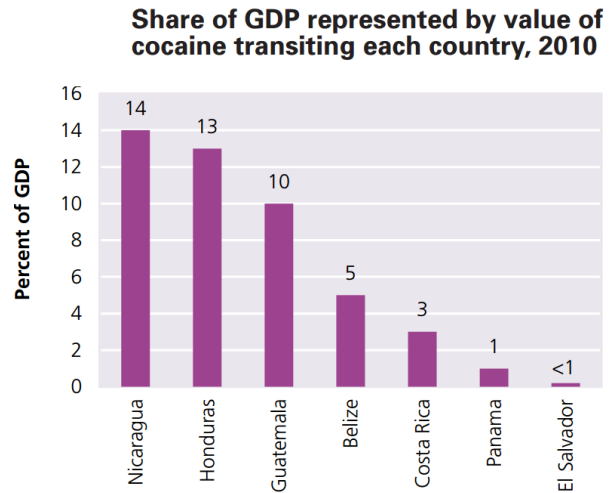
[18] The Contra's were a Nicaraguan rebel group based in Honduras, armed and trained by US army, with the intention of toppling the Nicaraguan Sandinista regime.

who traditionally used a combination of politico-military (repression & force) and politico-cultural (media, church, etc.) measures to maintain their position in power (Irías & Sosa 2009) and to allow for democratisation on their own terms. Under this system the two dominant political parties, Partido Liberal and Partido Nacional[19], could alternate in positions of power for nearly three decades without having to deal with any kind of disturbance by a third party or ideology. However, the military remained 'a power behind the throne' in the 1980's (Barahona 2005, 240), with the enforcement of the Doctrina de Seguridad Nacional (Doctrine of National Security) legalised by the Antiterrorism Act. Under this doctrine, people suspected of (sympathising with) communist insurgency were set in prison, kidnapped, tortured, or made to disappear. Over the course of the 90's until 2009, suppressive measures gradually became less dominant whilst Honduras showed more signs of moving towards a civic democracy. In the same period, the country also showed high economic growth figures. However, economic growth did not translate in better living conditions for the poor, and disinterest in the political system was widespread: between 1980 and 2009, absence from voting increased from 18 to 50, 3% (IDAMHO 2013, 14).

The panorama appeared to change in the aftermath of the election of Manuel 'Mel' Zelaya as president in 2005, when he gradually turned towards a more reformist course (Irías & Sosa 2009). This course consisted of various measures varying from increasing minimum wages, joining ALBA[20], to plans of amending the Constitution itself. As mentioned before, under this administration extreme poverty and inequality diminished, whilst foreign investment grew. Although repression continued, the presidency of Manuel Zelaya also proved to be an opening of political opportunities for various social movements existing within the country, including the anti-mining movement: they were able to achieve more dialogue than ever before (see Chapter 6).

Zelaya's new course did not go uncontested however: his perseverance to hold a referendum about changing the Constitution was the final drop that culminated in the military coup of June 2009. Zelaya's opponents –opposition leader and future president Lobo, the military leadership, as well as discontented members of his own party – maintained that organising a referendum about changing the constitution was unconstitutional and that it was a strategy pursued by Zelaya to allow him to run a second term as president[21]. On the night of the 28th of June 2009, on orders of the Supreme Court, president Zelaya was lifted from his bed by the military and put on an airplane to Costa Rica. Head of Congress Roberto Micheletti assumed position as interim-president for the following six months, a period in which continuing anti-coup protests were heavily suppressed by the police and the military.

The coup d'état has split Honduran Civil Society in two, resetting the relationship between the national state and social movements to one of distrust to outright hostility (Irías & Sosa 2009, Gordon & Webber 2011). Proponents of the military intervention argue it was no coup at all: the Honduran Supreme Court gave the order to the military and Zelaya had no legal right to

---

[19] Liberal Party; National Party
[20] ALBA (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América, is a regional economic collaboration treaty set up by Venezuela under Chavez. It is meant to provide a regional alternative to the free trade agreements with the USA.
[21] In Honduras, presidents cannot be reelected.

call for a referendum. Opponents condemn the coup, which they see as a setback towards the repressive times of the 20th century. Indeed, the 2010 elections, after which Zelaya's opponent Porfirio Lobo became president, are regarded as fraudulent and carried out under repressive circumstances (Commission of Truth 2013).

Opponents of the military coup have formed a nationwide social movement, the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular[22] (FNRP), simply called Resistencia, which sought to break up the two-party system. Various Honduran social movements and grassroots organisations were involved with the creation of the FNRP. Ex-president Zelaya returned to Honduras in 2011, took up residency in the Brazilian embassy, and formed the Resistencia's political party LIBRE (Libertad y Refundación): a party with an outspoken left-wing ideology.

Zelaya's wife, Xiomara de Castro, ran as the only candidate for president for LIBRE. With the Nationalist Party controlling traditional media, it managed to win the national elections held on the 24st of November 2013. Nevertheless, a questionnaire held by Jesuit organisation ERIC-Radio Progreso found that 5 of every 10 respondents saw the electoral process as fraudulent (Moreno 2014). The elections resulted in LIBRE managing to become the second party of Honduras, gaining 29% of votes against 37% for the Nationalist Party. The PAC (Partido Anti Corrupción), a more moderate political party that also arose as a response to the coup, gained another 13% of votes. The two-party system that dominated Honduras for over a hundred years has now ended. Still, violence and repression continue unabated (Comision of Truth 2013): it remains to be seen if this changes under the current government, but this is a dynamic that impacts social organisation and collective action by social movements.

The Violent State and State Capture

The rampant homicide rate of Honduras is commonly attributed to the *Maras* or *pandillas*, the street youth gangs that have taken hold in Tegucigalpa, San Pedro Sula and other urban centres. Without downplaying the role of gangs like the Mara Salvatrucha and Barrio 18, Cruz (2011) argues that the structural violence characterising Honduras is also caused by two factors related to the state itself: a) the complicity of state institutions in outright criminal activities, and b) the persistence of the employment of 'violent entrepreneurs': armed actors informally linked to the state operating in the management of 'public security'. To give examples of the first, already in 1988 information came up that linked high ranking military officers with international drug trafficking (Barahona 2005, 274), and an anonymous police commander commented in 2007 that 30% of police chiefs in Honduras also hold decision making positions in drug trafficking organisations (Cruz 2011). To provide an example of the second, human rights organisations claim that military and police continue to make use of informal armed individuals or groups (community watch, vigilante justice groups, death squads, assassins), for the so called 'social cleansing' of street children and gang youth, as well as the targeting of civilian leaders.

The Commission of Truth (2013, 24) recorded 5418 crimes linked to the Honduran state in the period of interim-government and in the years following the military coup up to 2012, including 552 cases of aggressive suppression of demonstrations, 241 illegal detentions, 94

---

[22] National Front of Popular Resistance

cases of torture, 58 political killings and more specifically 14 assassinations of journalists. The numbers underline that violent repression is an integral part of Honduran governance.

These examples and figures indicate that despite the transition to democracy set in motion in the 1980's, security institutions never completely transformed into rule-of –law institutions. In Honduras this is very visible with the military: instead of being a state institution that answers to an elected government, it should be seen as a semi-autonomous entity that wields considerable political power in its own right. 34 years after a formal return to civilian rule, retired generals wield positions of power in government, and elite associations connect high ranking military officers with business executives.

This brings me to the phenomenon of State Capture, defined by Garay-Salamanca and Salcedo-Albarán (2011) as

> 'the intervention of individuals, groups or lawful firms in the drafting of laws, decrees, regulations and public policies in order to obtain long-lasting economic benefits'.

The coup d'état of June 2009 stands as a 'gloomy confirmation of the transition shortcoming' (Cruz 2011, 14) and of a quite literal form of State Capture by the military. Examples more true to the definition of State Capture by the military is the establishment of security taxation for key industries (mining and oil) that generates extra revenues for the military, and the creation of a military police force (MP) in September 2013. Whilst one of the processes of the transition from military dictatorship to democracy was the independence of the police from the military (bringing police duties and rights under civilian rule) the recent creation of the MP – a police unit with military equipment and under military command – is a clear step towards a reversal of this separation. Preceding the elections on the 24th of November 2014, the MP harassed and intimidated opposition leaders, and the day before the elections invaded LIBRE's headquarters in Tegucigalpa and cut off affiliated Radio Globo, revealing that from its foundation the MP is used with a political agenda.

In turn, both the military and other state institutions are subject to state capture by lawful firms, both Honduran and transnational. The creation of the 1998 mining law is an illustrious and relevant example: it was approved by congress in a single debate, shortly after Hurricane Mitch devastated the country in 1998. The law was very lax on environmental regulation, allowed for the forced expropriation of entire communities, and established mere 2% royalties. Further on in this report, it is shown that more recent legislation on mining also reflects the interests of the industry (Chapter 6). The thesis also provides empirical grounding to the notion of Cruz (2011) that violence in Honduras is partly stems from illicit armed groups linked to state institutions (Chapters 7 & 8), both as a means of exercising social or political control as well as a means of furthering criminal interests – the latter representing an advanced form of state capture in which illicit economic groups control parts of the state for their private gain (Garay-Salamanca & Salcedo-Albarán 2011).

In short, Honduran governance is to a large extent defined by a) lack of the rule of law, b) violent repression and c) an agglomeration of interconnected political, economic and military elites. These conditions allow these elites to operate with effective impunity, defined by the Commission of Truth (2013, 18) as

'the failure to bring to trial or punish those guilty of gross violations of democratic rights and freedoms; defined more widely it includes the lack of knowledge of the truth on the part of the victims and society as a whole, as well as the lack of reparations for the harm inflicted. This concept also includes the fact that the state is not taking appropriate measures to prevent future abuses.

The term 'impunity' is, with appropriate reasons, often being used by anti-mining activists who reflect on the damages left behind by Goldcorp in Valle de Siria (Chapter 5), or who have faced threats or violent repression due to their activism (Chapter 7 & 8).

4.4 Regulations and Actors Relevant for the Research

Legal and Institutional Framework on Mining

The state body responsible for regulating the mining industry is called INHGEOMIN: Instituto Hondureño de Geología y Minas[23]. Before the launch of the new mining law in 2013, the institute went under the name DEFOMIN: Dirección de Fomento a la Minería[24]. Hence, as I will refer to the institute as DEFOMIN in Chapter 5, I will use the term INHGEOMIN in the subsequent chapters. Up to the institute's restructuring in 2013, it was a sub-section of SERNA: the Secretaria de Recursos Naturales y Ambiente[25]. Under the current mining law, INHGEOMIN has become independent of SERNA but now answers to the Presidency. The institute is led by the lawyer Aldo Santos, who previously held the position of head public persecutor of environmental affairs[26]. It is INHGEOMIN's task to promote, administrate, and monitor mining activities in the country: it processes concession requests by reviewing whether or not all demands are met and whether the requested concession lies within forest reserves or areas protected by ILO convention 169, ratified by Honduras in 1994. With a team of five investigators it also carries out environmental controls, a responsibility still shared with SERNA. To carry out these tasks, under the current mining law INHGEOMIN directly receives tax money from the industry in the form of a 0,5% royalty. As it both regulates and promotes the industry, and directly receives mining company royalties, INHGEOMIN is commonly criticised for both being *juez y parte*, judge and associate, of the mining industry.

From 1998 to 2013 the mining industry was regulated by the 1998 Ley General de Minería. 13 articles of this law were found to be unconstitutional in 2005, rendering the law partly obsolete and paralyzing the growth of the mining industry. On the 23rd of April 2013 a new Ley de Minería went into effect, and contains specific articles that are meant to ease Honduras' admission into the international EITI[27] agreement (see Chapter 6).

The Mining Law should not be looked at in isolation from the broader legal framework that affects mining. Having secured its dominance over the state for another four year period, the

---

[23] Honduran Institute for Geology and Mines
[24] Directive for the Promotion of Mining
[25] Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment.
[26] This is the controversy surrounding Aldo Santos. As a public persecutor of the environment he has a history of being critical to open-pit mining, yet now embraces the practice as the director of the mining institute.
[27] Extractive Industry Transparency Iniciative

nationalist party has begun to pass a number of laws that were too unpopular to pass in the months before the elections. A notable example is the impopular Ley de Promoción del Desarrollo y Reconversión de Deuda Pública[28]. This law unleashed a storm of societal protest when it suddenly passed Congress in July 2013, forcing president Lobo – with sight of the coming elections – to veto the law. In January 2014, with the electoral victory secured, the law went into effect anyhow[29]. This law fits within the neoliberal course of the Nationalist Party: it allows the Honduran state to mortgage the country's 'activos ociosos' (idle assets), intended to be exploited in the future, to foreign states and companies. Idle Assets: water bodies, forests, untitled land, minerals, as well as state-owned companies (notably Hondutel, the national telecommunications company). The term 'idle' frames these resources as unused or underused; nonetheless communities depend of many of these resources for their livelihoods, even though it does not directly translate in monetary gain. Nevertheless the titling of the law suggests that mortgaging the country's natural resources to foreign capital represents development itself.

Other laws affect how mining will be regulated – and enforced – as well. The Ley de Propiedad (Law of Property) – that was launched as early as 2004 - has set in motion an ongoing process of the dismantling of communal property towards private property only – facilitating the acquisition of land by mining companies. A new Ley de Municipios (Law of Municipalities) will be discussed by Congress this year, and may centralize local decision making in the hands of the major and will allow him/her to assign part of the municipal territory as reserved for 'special development projects'.
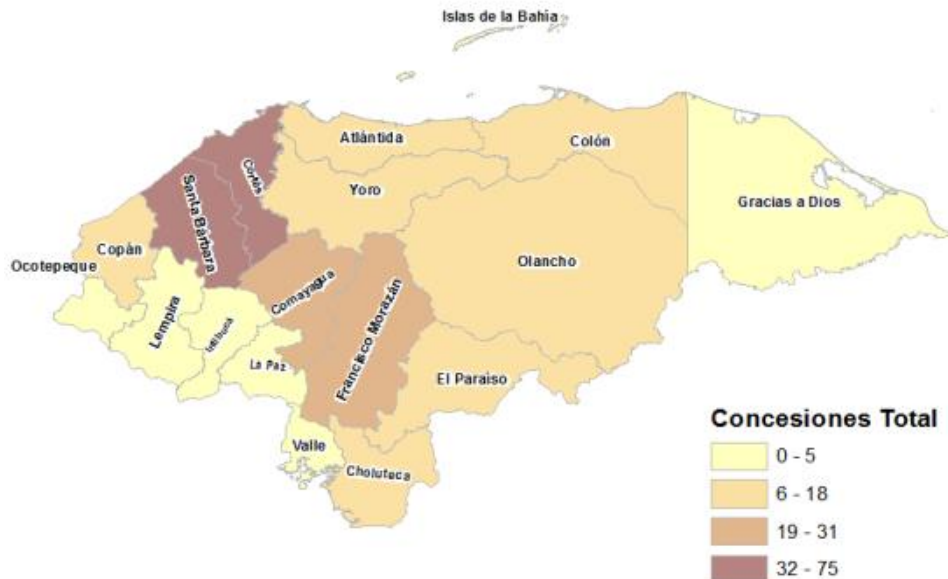
Figure 2: Mining Concessions given per department (estimation). Source: CEHPRODEC

The number of mining concessions or the percentage of national territory conceded to the mining industry is unknown. In August 2013, an interview in INHGEOMIN revealed that

---

[28] Law of Promotion of Development and Reconversion of Public Debt
[29] http://www.elheraldo.hn/Secciones-Principales/Economia/Vigente-ley-hipoteca-para-reconversion-de-la-deuda-publica

Honduras at the time had 864 mining concessions[30]. However, some concessions are outdated and it has to be noted that a single company can own several concessions: the El Mochito subterranean mine in the department of Santa Bárbara alone counts 45 mining concessions (see figure 2). In 2009, the Honduran NGO ASONOG estimated that 30% of Honduran national territory was conceded to the mining industry. This percentage is now probably closer to 50%. To give a comparison, neighbouring Nicaragua (where this information is public) has 301 mining concessions, representing 13,26% of its national territory[31].

Artisanal mining does not require a mining concession: artisanal mining permits are negotiated with the municipal government and subsequently ratified by INHGEOMIN. Environmental controls of artisanal mining are not carried out by INHGEOMIN or SERNA, but are the responsibility of the municipal government as well. To this end, municipalities depend on the UMA: Unidad Municipal Ambiental[32], a unit that normally deals with pest control, registering water bodies, etc. The professional expertise of the UMA is often questioned.

Rural Communities: Institutions and Legal Vulnerability

Two community based institutions are especially relevant for this research and require further explanation. These are the *Patronato* and the *Junta de Agua.* As community leaders and institutions of local water management, these two institutions play a key role in community mobilisations by the anti-mining movement. Mining is related to questions of control over land and water: as such, I will also provide attention to the problem of unregistered property rights and water sources.

Patronatos are community councils recognised by Honduran law, usually represented by five to eight elected members. Once elected, these members hold a position in the Patronato for two years. These people are commonly considered community leaders, and it is their task to mediate between community and local government, propose community projects and request funding, or mediate and decide on matters affecting the community. In theory the Patronato represents the community as a whole and is a politically neutral institution, although it is sometimes criticised that the Patronato is sometimes used by its members to grow ties with the local political establishment or as a step-up for a local political career. It is common for each rural community or urban neighbourhood to have its own Patronato, but cases also exist where several rural communities have joined under a single Patronato. In turn, these local community councils are overarched by a town-level Patronato (in the case of larger towns) and regional councils that connect the local Patronatos of different municipalities together (this may transcend departmental boundaries). In rural communities, where social cohesion is generally stronger, the Patronato institution plays a larger role than in urban settings. Some indigenous minorities do not have this institution, instead relying on (elected or not) tribal leaders.

---

[30] 310 metallic mining concessions awaited approval, 109 were given. 261 non-metallic mining concessions were awaiting approval, 184 were approved.
[31] Gobierno de Reconciliación y Unidad Nacional, Estadísticas Mineras Julio 2013
[32] Municipal Environmental Unit.

Another community-level institution of importance is the Junta de Agua, or Water Board. Although Honduras is abundant of water resources, 95% of the rural population does not have access to public water (IDAMHO 2013, 13). In rural communities the Juntas de Agua, elected boards of up to five members, are tasked to ensure the community's access to potable water. The level of organisation and achievements of these Juntas de Agua vary greatly: some communities have, often with outside financial support, constructed their own pipelines that transport the water from the springs to the village. Wells and water tanks that capture rain water for the dry season are also not uncommon; and where this water infrastructure is absent or insufficient people rely directly upon the rivers and creeks for consumption and agricultural production.

Under current mining legislation, mining concessions cannot be granted in areas that are registered as *zonas productoras de agua declaradas*: declared zones of water production. However, most springs and creeks are not registered in SERNA, whilst mining companies are granted the right to use unlimited amounts of water within and outside of the conceded area. Similarly, the negotiation position of rural communities vis-à-vis mining companies is relatively weak due to their general lack

Figure 3: a water source with pipeline. Source: author

of formal property rights. Land distribution is highly unequal in Honduras, with the *latifundio* (large estate) / *minifundio* (smallholder) complex dominating: most land is in the hand of a few national landowners (e.g. ranchers) as well as a number transnational corporations: the upper 1% of landowners holds 25% of all land in latifundios whilst approximately 70% of small farmers hold 10% of land in minifundios. Of all privately owned land, approximately 80% is untitled or improperly titled, whilst only 30% of legal property is registered as such (USAID 2010). Land can either be registered as private or as communal property, although the Ley de Propiedad (Property Law) of 2004 has set in motion a process towards dismantling communal property in favor of private property. Nevertheless, communal or private, most land belonging to rural communities is not registered, making them most vulnerable to expropriation.

The Honduran Anti-mining Movement

Whilst many organisations and networks that constitute the Honduran anti-mining movement will be mentioned ahead in this research, before that an introduction to the movement is appropriate. For the purposes of this research, I consider all actors involved in opposition to mining as being part of the anti-mining movement. This means that communities taking a stance against mining are also included: as will be shown further on in this thesis, it is often communities that make a plea for broader organisations to support them.

Many current Honduran social movements as well as formalized NGO's (some of which currently play their part in the anti-mining movement) have their origin in– or are offspring of

movements that were born in- the 80's of the last century. Honduras was officially no longer under military rule since 1980, but the Doctrine of National Security ensured that the military remained in power as a *de facto* parallel government. Insurgent groups did exist in Honduras at the time, but were never able to mobilise mass support like the FMLN did in El Salvador. Non-insurgent social movements arose during this period of limited democratization, including the Frente de Unidad Nacional Campesina (FUNACAM)[33] and the Federación Nacional de Desempleados[34]. However, under the security doctrine the leaders of these movements faced persecution, and some were obliged to leave the country for their own safety. To provide an example, the diocese of Copán was heavily suppressed: two promoters were assassinated for providing emergency aid to Salvadorian refugees crossing the border into Honduras (Barahona 2005, 266). Over the course of the late 1990's up to 2009 democratisation continued but the root causes of the need for mobilisation (inequality, land rights) were never sufficiently addressed, providing space and rationale for the growth of Honduran social movements.

The anti-mining movement of Honduras is not static or bounded: it consists of a number of interconnected platforms and networks, which include local NGO's with an environmental, human rights or community-development focus, environmental movements and committees, ethnic platforms, and segments of the Catholic Church. A variety of organisations bannered under a single cause. Some have withdrawn from the movement, but the movement is growing as more organisations continue to take a stance against mining. The Honduran anti-mining movement should not be looked at in a vacuum: many of its organisations are supported by Western donors, financially or otherwise; continuously exchange information and mutual support throughout Central America, often via direct personal contact; and exchange information on a Latin-American level via international platforms such as OCMAL[35] and the Tribunal Latinoamericano de Agua[36]. Hence, the Honduran anti-mining movement can be seen as one scale of a broader movement existing on a continental level.

This research was carried out in collaboration with ASONOG, a local NGO based in Santa Rosa de Copán. ASONOG has its origins in the early 1980's, as an informal organisation providing support to the refugees from El Salvador who sought shelter in Honduras. Nowadays it is a professional NGO that works on various themes such as rural community development, citizen participation & empowerment, and disaster risk management (its opposition to mining falls under the last category). Like ASONOG, most platforms or organisations involved in the anti-mining struggle also deal with other themes (related to mining or not), including but not limited to community development and empowerment, anti-corruption or anti-hydroelectric project activities.

During the first phase of the anti-mining struggle (up to 2009), the ACD (Alianza Civica por la Democracia)[37] was the main platform of the anti-mining movement. It was formed in 2005 as an alliance between ASONOG and Caritas-Copán, headed by the local (currently emeritus)

---

[33] Front of National Peasant Unity
[34] National Federation of Unemployed
[35] Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de America Latina (Observatory of Mining Conflicts in Latin America)
[36] Latin American Water Tribunal
[37] Civic Alliance for Democracy

bishop Monseñor Luis Santos. The ACD was soon joined by two notable organisations. The first is the Comité Ambiental de Valle de Siria[38] (CAVS), a local committee of concerned citizens in Valle de Siria that continues to play a key role in the struggle against Goldcorp. The second is the MNIGR, a network of various local Civil Society institutions such as Patronatos, Juntas de Agua, environmental committees, other social movements, Red Cross and fire department (the latter technically a state-institution). Its aim is to engage in political advocacy towards local governments to make them take appropriate measures that reduce risks to the environment or the local population. Apart from disaster risks, the roundtable considers food insecurity and mining amongst others to be risks that need to be dealt with. Accompanied by ASONOG, this roundtable was formed out of the regional roundtables that have a much longer history. The MNIGR and ASONOG continue to maintain close ties (ASONOG is a member organisation of MNIGR and is maintains responsibility for its funding).

For reasons detailed in Chapter 6, the ACD ceased to be the main platform of the anti-mining movement after the military coup in 2009. In the current phase of the struggle against mining, all organisations mentioned beforehand, and others that will be mentioned throughout this thesis, are now bannered under the Coalición Nacional de Redes Ambientales[39] (CNRA). Other platforms also exist, notably the ethnic NGO's COPINH and OFRANEH (Organización Fraternal Negra de Honduras), and the social movement MADJ (Movimiento Amplio por la Dignidad y Justicia)[40]. Next to the work of ASONOG and MNIGR, MADJ will receive considerable attention in this thesis as it is involved in various anti-mining struggles and manifestations. This movement has its origin in a hunger strike of four prosecutors of the Public Ministry in 2008. The hunger strike lasted for 38 days and was made as a statement against the corruption they found in high levels of government. The strike was imitated in different parts of the country, after which MADJ was called into being. Nowadays, 'corruption' and 'natural resources' are the movement's main themes of work.

4.5 Conclusion

Honduras, although experiencing economic growth, is characterized by extreme, and rising, levels of inequality and poverty. Income, property and political decision making are concentrated into the hands of a small political, economic and military elite. The coup d'état of June 2009 has shown that this elite has been willing to take drastic measures to maintain the status quo. In a period when organised crime is on the rise, human rights organisations have witnessed a deterioration of the already dubious human rights situation since the onset of the military coup up to this day. Events show that in Honduras, the 'violent state' has survived the past authoritarian regime of the 1970's (Cruz 2011, 19). Having lost its monopoly on violence, the state has become a 'broker' of violence instead. Old informal violent entrepreneurs, or informal agents linked to the security apparatus, were never wiped out by

---

[38] Environmental Committee of Valle de Siria
[39] National Coalition of Environmental Networks
[40] Black Fraternal Organisation of Honduras; and Broad Movement for Dignity and Justice respectively.

democratization; and new ones (organised crime organisations) have claimed a central role on the stage, corroding the rule of law and producing insecurity and violence.

Mining, an industry with national priority for the government, is regulated by a newly approved mining law and supervised by INHGEOMIN. The disposition of the Honduran government towards the promotion of the mining industry and the entanglement of INHGEOMIN with the mining industry are important elements of the Honduran extractivist complex. Second, the lack of formal property rights and registered water sources are conditions that also affect the power imbalance between rural communities supported by the anti-mining movement, and the mining industry. But these legal and institutional conditions are not the only obstacles that communities and the anti-mining movement have to cope with: it is within this complicated context of impunity and violence that mining affected communities and the anti-mining movement have to manoeuvre and position themselves.

Chapter 5 -
The Birth of the
Honduran Anti-Mining Movement

the entry of transnational mining companies, giving form to the discourses and practices of the Honduran anti-mining movement

Figure 4: cases detailed in Chapter 5

5.1 Introduction

The passing of the 1998 mining law led to the entry of three transnational companies in the late 90's and early 2000's. The impacts this generated on the local level led to social mobilisation in the two regions where these companies were located: the birth and first experiences of the Honduran anti mining movement. In this chapter I delve into the two movements that emerged as a response to the operations of these mining companies. With these experiences as a frame of reference, the two anti-mining movements grew closer together and eventually merged into a unified movement operating on a national level in an attempt to change mining legislation (Chapter 6).

The first movement emerged as a response to Canadian owned San Andrés minas in Copán, the first industrial open-pit mine to begin working in Honduras. Despite the efforts of the movement, consisting of an alliance between ASONOG and Caritas, no lasting organised

resistance arose from the affected communities at San Andrés. Nevertheless, local communities, with the support of these organisations, managed to prevent another Canadian mining company from installing nearby La labor, Ocotepeque in 2004. The mine of San Andrés is still in operation, although it has faced several community protests over the last year.

The second movement formed around San Martín minas in the Valle de Siria, and tells the story of an ongoing struggle against Goldcorp: its mine closed in 2009 after considerable pressure, but community members are still seeking recognition and justice for the damages caused. I provide extra attention to the impacts of mining in Valle de Siria due to the lasting importance of Valle de Siria for the Honduran, and even Central-American anti-mining movement: the local environmental committee that played a central role in the struggle in Valle de Siria (the Comite Ambiental de Valle de Siria, or CAVS) now functions as a hub for the anti-mining movement; whilst Valle de Siria stands as a regional symbol of the impacts caused by open-pit mining.

The anti-mining struggles described in this chapter have their own dynamics and outcomes, but there are recurring defining themes: first, the right of access to uncontaminated water was a main and effective motivation for mobilisation, anti-mining actors actively sought for legal and scientific evidence to support their position, and have always attempted seek to scale up protest by calling the help of external actors (national and international). To continue, without an exception opponents of anti-mining protests have used (the threat of) violence in an attempt to weaken or break the protest movement: this ranges from physical intimidations from employees or sub-contractors of the mining company, to death threats directed at the leaders of the movement, to a number of deaths which activists believe to be linked with opposition to the mine.

5.2 Resistance to Mining in San Andrés, Copán; and La Labor, Ocotepeque

Introduction

In this sub-chapter I provide a history of resistance against mining in Western Honduras, notably against the San Andrés mine in Copán and against a mining concession nearby Ocotepeque. The impacts generated by mining in this region as well as the experiences of resistance have had a lasting impact on the discourse and practices of the anti-mining movement.

The San Andrés mine, located in the municipal area of La Unión Copán, is named after one of three villages that lie on the conceded territory: the other two are called Azagualpa and San Miguel. Next to agriculture and livestock keeping, artisanal gold mining had always been practiced in the region. In fact, according to local lore, the gold deposit of San Andrés was discovered by the Spanish, who used indigenous slave labour to extract the gold and ship it to Europe. In 1995 Greenstone Resources acquired the mining concession held by a local small-scale gold mining company named Minerales de Copán (Cárcamo & Machado Leiva 2004). A

large scale mining operation began in 1998, setting in motion a series of drastic changes: the entire community of San Andres was relocated, whilst the community of San Miguel disappeared. Only a few houses are still inhabited, the rest being abandoned. Azagualpa, laying further up the mountain, is currently facing relocation due to the mine's need for expansion. In April 2014, local resistance to the impending relocation was violently beaten down by police and military.

The property changed hands a number of times: its first owner, Greenstone resources, went bankrupt in 2001. The mine was sold to the Honduran bank Banco Atlántida, which called into being a company named Minerales de Occidente San Andrés (MINOSA). In 2005 the mine was bought by Yamana Gold (Canadian), which in turn was taken over in August 2009 by the company Aura Minerals (Canadian as well). MINOSA, now as a branch of Aura Minerals, still operates the mine[41]. Its territory stretches over an area of various kilometres (988.93 hectares), of which 399 hectares are currently in use. Using a cyanide leaching system, the mine processes around 400,000 tons of material each month, with an average monthly production of 176 kilograms of gold. Doing so, it uses an estimated quantity of 20,000 litres of water per hour, taken from the local river Rio Lara[42].

The San Andres mine is subject to a lot of controversy: it has caused two known cyanide spills, and is known for various violations of the local communities' rights. Worse still, the mine is said to be linked with several death threats against- and possible assassinations of- its opponents. Following the perceived human rights abuses by the company, ASONOG –an NGO based in nearby Santa Rosa de Copán-, as well as the diocese of Copán became involved with the topic of mining. They organised independent environmental studies and made visible the human rights and environmental violations occurring in San Andrés minas, with the support of the advocacy NGO's Mining Watch Canada and Rights Action. ASONOG and the Diocese of Copán together formed a new organisation in 2006: the Alianza Civica por la Democracia (ACD). This organisation grew became the driving force behind of anti-mining movement in Western Honduras. However, no lasting organised resistance arose from the affected villages, and the ACD collapsed in 2009 for reasons both internal and external.

Although the anti-mining movement has failed to block the mining operations at San Andrés, resistance to mining in nearby La Labor Ocotepeque was, in the words of one activist, 'a total success'. In 2003, the Canadian mining company Silver Crest Mines obtained a mining concession in the buffer zone of the cloud forest reserve El Guïsayote, spurting an almost instant protest from the adjacent community of La Labor. Thousands of people from La Labor and neighbouring communities were mobilised, receiving support not only from ASONOG and Caritas but from their local governments as well. As a result of the struggle, the concession was withdrawn by the government.

The bankruptcy of Greenstone Resources and the three following takeovers are widely regarded to be conscious attempts of these companies to 'shift the blame' for damages done and to avoid agreements made by earlier companies running the mine

[42] To compare, in dry season the nearby town of Santa Rosa de Copán, also depending of Rio Lara, only has 8 hours of running water per week.

San Andrés minas: taken by surprise

The arrival of Greenstone Resources was met with distrust in the municipality of La Unión. The concession was bought from a local company and the method of extraction directly negotiated with the Honduran government, lacking transparency. The company did not receive the support of the municipal government of La Unión however: allegedly the then-mayor of the municipality of La Unión was fervently against the instalment of the mine, and took legal steps to block access for the company. Days before he would attend a seminar on mining in the Centro Humboldt (from Nicaragua) he died in a traffic accident. The lawyer hired by the major of La Unión died shortly after. In the same year, the president of the Patronato of the village of San Andrés –who resisted the eminent relocation of his community – also died in a traffic accident. These are the official stories: nevertheless, it is believed by anti-mining activists that these deaths are not coincidental.   The Patronato of San Andrés resisted its relocation, but Greenstone Resources pressured the community by shutting down its water supply when the community refused. In one occasion, the mine's Canadian manager is known to have bulldozed the community's water tank, injuring a local inhabitant (Marsh, 2001). The company also handed gifts to community members, fuelling divisions within the community.

Eventually, under the condition of receiving land titles, the community of San Andrés accepted relocation (Cárcamo & Machado Leiva 2004, 80). The inhabitants of Nueva San Andrés did not receive these land titles until after the takeover of the mine by Yamana Gold: in a failed attempt to avoid bankruptcy, Greenstone Resources mortgaged the lands to a Canadian bank (ibid). Only prolonged community protests ensured that the territory was not sold to a third party– and forced the new owner of the mine to guarantee the community's land titles.

Figure 5: the relocated village of Nueva San Andrés. Source: author

The community of San Miguel was never relocated like San Andrés, but faced problems related to the mine's daily operations: for one thing, the constant detonations caused the walls of many houses to crack. Worse still, as told by Monseñor Luis Santos,

> 'There was a primary school close to – a hundred meters from a mine…They are children, above all children. They were at a hundred meters from the leaching pads. That is, where there were 29 sprinklers spraying water, and that is how they create breathing risks. And clearly, here is a constant breeze. Generally the breeze runs from north to the south. And the school was at the south. And the leaching pads to the north. It is clear that all this cyanide, mixed with water because the sprinklers spray water, water mixed with cyanide, it was falling in the eyes and the skin of the children. So there were many people with diseases, also with stains on the skin'[43]

---

[43] 'Había una escuela primaria cerca de – a cien metros de una mina. Son niños, sobre todo niños. Estaban a cien metros de las pilas de lixiviación. O sea, donde había 29 posos tirando agua, así es como se hace riesgo de

Viewing the behaviour of the mining company as a human rights violation, ASONOG began supporting the communities of San Andrés and San Miguel after community leaders requested help. According to the NGO's current director:

> ASONOG established a commitment with the communities in which it worked, to accompany them in whatever process that goes against the rights of the communities. Under this principle, we are in the obligation to respond to these types of violation, in a national framework'[44]

ASONOG started accompanying the community in 2001 and facilitated exchanges between the people of San Miguel and Valle de Siria, where community members starting opposing the mining company installed there. During these meetings, community members realised they were facing the same kind of problems, and decided for a first time that open-pit mining should be prohibited. ASONOG also adopted this position and invited the mining-specialized geochemist Dr. Morán to conduct an environmental study of the operations at San Andrés. His access to the site was severely hampered by the security guards of the company, making an investigation impossible. A year later, in 2003, the first documented cyanide spill occurred: an estimated1800 liters of contaminated water entered the river Lara, resulting in at least 18,000 dead fish as well as other dead animals. It was the first documented cyanide spill, although inhabitants of San Andrés claimed it happened before.

Local journalist Gérman Antonio Rivas, head of the television channel Maya Visión, denounced the environmental damages caused by MINOSA and reported extensively on the anti-mining struggle in nearby Ocotepeque. Having survived an attempt on his life in February 2003, he was assassinated in front of his house later that year. His death was never investigated by the authorities: it is not known what motivations laid behind his assassination. Nevertheless, anti-mining activists do not exclude the possibility that it may have happened because of his key role in framing the mining industry as a bad business for Honduras.

A people united: expelling Silver Crest from Honduras

Less than 40 kilometres from the San Andrés mine, the concerned inhabitants of La Labor and adjacent communities managed to expel a Canadian mining company in early 2004 – after a struggle that lasted just over a year. The Canadian mining company Silver Crest Mines, its local branch Maverick Copán, obtained a gold mining concession in the vicinity of the community of La Labor, Ocotepeque. Despite a media campaign, and piñatas and other presents handed out by the company, a number of inhabitants of La Labor opposed the project. They claimed that the mining concession was located within the Reserva Nacional el Güïsayote: a national cloud forest reserve and the main source of drinking water for the community. These concerned inhabitants sought the support from ASONOG and Caritas, who joined in informing community leaders about the impacts of mining. Visits were organised to

---

respiración. Y claro, aquí hay briza casi constantemente. Y entonces la briza generalmente corre del norte al sur. Y la escuela estaba al sur. Las pilas de lixiviación a cien metros al norte. Es claro que todo el cianuro, mesclado con agua porque los posos tiraban agua, agua mesclada con cianuro estaba cayendo en los ojos y la piel de los niños. Entonces había mucha gente con enfermedades, también manchas en la piel'

[44] ASONOG estableció un compromiso con las comunidades en cual trabajaba, de acompañarlas en cualquier proceso que contra los derechos de las comunidades. Y bajo este principio entonces, estamos en la obligación de responder antes estas tipos de violación en marco del territorio nacional.

the operational mines of Valle de Siria and San Andrés, and these community leaders concluded that mining would not bring prosperity to their communities. They managed to quickly mobilise the majority of La Labor, as well as the neighbouring communities of San Marcos, Sensenti, Fraternidad, Lucerna and San Francisco del Valle, against the mining concession. Only a small minority – those who had lands to sell to the company –was in favour. Be it due to the pressure put onto it or not, the local government supported the protest and openly opposed the concession. The mining concession also raised concerns in Santa Rosa de Copán, a city of 50,000 inhabitants located downstream Rio Lara. Its major, Juan Carlos Elvir, supported the anti-mining protest and openly proclaimed: 'far from generating development, it opens the possibilities to destroy the environment and awards concessions to the mining companies outside of all logic'[45]. Juan Carlos Elvir claims to have received death threats, but continued his support of the struggle against the mining concession.

As expressed by one anti-mining activist, the mining concession in the cloud forest reserve augmented the perception that mining involves corruption:

> 'They manipulated the ministry of environment therefore, they manipulated many functionaries of Natural Resources, they manipulated the environmental impact study. And that is how it was made to look that the mining area was outside of Guïsayote. But we succeeded in proving that mine was within the reserve and the water sources of some six to eight communities'[46]

The quote not only highlights this widely held view, but also demonstrates the discourse of water as vital and as belonging primarily to the nearby communities, not to a foreign company.

Officials within SERNA[47] initially responded to the protestor's demand by expressing that a cancellation of the concession was impossible: it would result in a lawsuit of the company against the state. After six months of failed negotiation with the government, protest marches were organised in the cities of Nueva Ocotepeque and Santa Rosa de Copán, and 4000 protestors from La Labor and adjacent communities blocked the international highway that connects Honduras with El Salvador and Guatemala. Two battalions of the army were sent in, but did not intervene. According to interviewees, the responsible colonel did not dare to when the protestors showed him a copy of *decreto 88-88*, a congressional decree proclaiming that all kind of economic activities are prohibited in cloud forest reserves. After 40 hours of blockade, DEFOMIN's directives were flown in by helicopter. In the following negotiations with the spokesmen of the protest (the majors of La Labor and Santa Rosa de Copán, as well as ASONOG's director Francisco Machado and Monseñor Santos) DEFOMIN withdrew the concession at last.

---

[45] 'lejos de generar desarrollo, abre las posibilidades para destruir el ambiente y otorga concesiones a las mineras fuera de toda lógica'

[46] 'Manipularon la ministra del medio ambiente entonces, manipularon a muchos funcionarios de recursos naturales, manipularon al estudio de impacto ambiental. Y así parecía que el área de la mina estaba fuera de la, de la Guisayote. Pero logramos mostrar que la mina estaba encentro de la reserva, y las fuentes de agua de unas seis u ocho comunidades'

[47] Secretaria de Recursos Naturales y Ambiente (Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment)

Upon visiting La Labor I meet a community leader who, nine years later, still wears a T-shirt saying 'life is worth more than gold': a slogan introduced to the anti-mining movement in 2003 by Dr. Juan Almendarez, a leading figure of the anti-mining struggle in Valle de Siria. The community activist expresses his view that an open pit mine nearby La Labor would have dried out and contaminated the community's water supply. With nostalgia about the demonstrations, he comments:

> 'we won't fall in their trap. It is a pride for this village… if they return we will be waiting, and mobilise even more people this time!'[48]

His statement not only reflects pride for the achievement of La Labor, but also a sense of uncertainty. Many people fear that, in fact, the concession is not withdrawn, but that the company awaits more favourable conditions: a population that does not pay attention and a local government that is willing to negotiate. The activist is worried for his personal safety as well: he survived an *atentado* (assassination attempt) in the past, and is uncertain if it might happen again would the mining industry seek to return to La Labor.

Nonetheless the anti-mining struggle in La Labor, Ocotepeque is rightly seen as 'a total success'. Communities, church, NGO's and local governments stood united in their reject of an open-pit gold mine in the Reserva Nacional Guïsayote like neighbouring San Andrés. The unanimous reject of mining was motivated by a generalised fear for drinking water contamination –not least due to the recent cyanide spill by nearby MINOSA in the same river. The reject of the mining company led to mobilisation of thousands of people from Labor and neighbouring communities, and was strengthened by the evidence that the concession in Guïsayote did not have legal grounds. The popular protest song '*el pueblo unido jamás será vencido*' (the united people will never be defeated) proves to be very true in this case.

Box 1: a look across the border

In 2004, merely 80 kilometers from Ocotepeque, a similar anti-mining struggle played out on the other side of the border region in Chalatenango, El Salvador. The Canadian mining company Au Martinique Silver Inc. obtained a mining concession and began exploration, but alerted community members contacted local NGO's and began an anti-mining struggle. Community members visited the San Andrés mine in Honduras, and concluded they did not want their communities to transform into mining towns. Via a rapid spread of information, communities and municipal governments unanimously rejected mining. Eventually, the government withdrew the concession. Referring to the civil war that hard-hit the region of Chalatenango, which only ended 12 years earlier with a deal on land reforms, one local leader commented: 'this earth for us is bathed in blood, blood of heroic people that died so that we would have a piece of land. To sell this land is to betray these people'.

---

[48] 'No caemos en las trampas de ellos.. Es un orgullo para este pueblo. Si vuelven vamos a estar esperando, y movilizamos a más personas esta vez'

MINOSA: Veni, Vidi, Vinci

Whilst Maverick Copan got cast out of Honduras through a massive anti-mining protest, the cooperation of ASONOG and Caritas with the communities of San Andrés gradually eroded. Yet, Mennonite preacher Francisco Machado (ASONOG), and Catholic bishop Monseñor Luis Santos (Caritas) continued their activism against the mining company. Due to their joined experience in La Labor, Ocotepeque, ASONOG and Caritas deepened their alliance and called into being a new organisation in 2006: the Alianza Cívica por la Democracia (ACD). The ACD became the main platform through which both organisations were active in the anti-mining movement.

They invited Flaviano Bianchini, an Italian activist researcher, to take water samples from the streams of San Andrés leading to Rio Lara. The study found elevated levels of iron, manganese and aluminium. Although the company was fined 1 million Lempira's (57,000 US dollars), in an appeal it got exempted from paying. In response to my question on the cyanide spill, an employee of MINOSA argued that the spill was most likely an act of sabotage, carried out by the mine's opponents to cast a shadow upon the company's public image. The results of the study did not move the company towards raising environmental standards: in 2009, another cyanide spill occurred, with 570 litres of cyanide solution entering Rio Lara.

The ACD maintained a critical attitude towards MINOSA, supporting a sit-out of community members of San Andrés against the demolishment of their graveyard in 2008[49], but the aim of mobilisations and other actions gradually shifted from opposing the company towards changing the Ley de Minería: it realised the company was not about to move. Nowadays, the anti-mining movement uses photographs of dead fish in Rio Lara and the cracked, abandoned houses of the ghost town of San Miguel to remind communities of the consequences of allowing an open-pit mine in their territory. However, it no longer meddles with MINOSA itself.

The mining company in turn has expanded its power in the region. To begin, it gained control, both through acquisitions and due reputation, over regional media (Van Der Borgh & Terwindt 2009). 'The mine, in this area, is a forbidden topic', comments one journalist from Copán, referring to the threats journalists have received in the past, as well to as the assassination of Germán Antonio Rivas. The rebellious community of San Miguel slowly vanished due to emigration out of the area: only 7 of 76 houses are still inhabited. Also, under its new management MINOSA developed

Figure 6: abandonded house in San Miguel; the mine at the background. Photo: author

clientelist ties with the local government of La Unión Copán and with the Patronatos of

---

[49] The protestors were arrested and jailed, but after intermediation of ASONOG's director the community members were released.

Nueva San Andrés and Azagualpa. Various Patronato members of Nueva San Andres are on the company's payroll, profiting from better jobs in the mine than other community members employed by the mine. Meanwhile, local agriculture has collapsed due to lack of land: before the entry of the company, 50 Ha. of land was cultivated by the community of San Andrés, being reduced to 5,5 Ha. 6 years later (Cárcamo & Machado Leiva 2004, 85). As a result, community members are dependent of the mine for employment.

Under Yamana Gold and Aura Minerals, the company constructed water pipelines for the communities of Nueva San Andres and Azagualpa, pays for the primary school teachers, and began offering scholarships to young students from the villages. Acts of corporate responsibility perhaps, but also a conscious move towards strengthening its foothold: in the same period the only other open pit gold mine in Honduras closed after continuous protests by the inhabitants of Valle de Siria, and the anti-mining movement was making advances with the central government. As said by the mine's managers themselves, it is in the company's own interest to ensure a level of social spending. The strategy seems to have worked, as commented by a critical community member of Nueva San Andrés reflecting on the mine:

> 'Before they fought for the forests, now so that the mine does not leave, because if it leaves these villages will disappear… the people have much blame for no thinking of their future'[50] (community member, Avila 2013)

This comment captured the gradual change of the community's relationship with the mine. The mine has become a fact of life for the people of San Andrés: their livelihoods have increasingly become entangled with the mine. This relationship leaves for little space for anti-mining protests, but carries with it its own problems (Box 2). MINOSA may be in an uneasy relationship now with the municipality and with communities of Nueva San Andrés and Azagualpa, but it is one that cannot be broken. As rightly observed by one community member from Nueva San Andrés, nor the major nor the government, but 'the mine is the central government here'. A recent protest by the community of Azagualpa (April 2014) against the forced resettlement of the community and the destruction of its graveyard was violently repressed by police and military operating in favour of the company. MINOSA came to La Unión Copán, saw there was gold, and conquered an undisputed place there.

Figure 7: confrontation at Azagualpa. Source: Azagualpa resident

---

[50] 'Antes se luchaba por los bosques, hoy es porque la mina no se vaya, porque si se va todos estos pueblos desaparecen…el pueblo tiene mucha culpa de no pensar en su futuro'

Box 2: the marital crisis of MINOSA and its host

Nowadays, with the gold price having lowered, and export taxes having increased from three to six percent under the new mining law, social spending in Azagualpa and Nueva San Andrés is being decreased by the company. In different occasions in July and August 2013, mining operations were halted due to protests and road blockades held by the inhabitants of Azagualpa and Nueva San Andrés. The protestors demanded better working conditions and continuity of social services. The strikes are met with incomprehension by the mine's managers who ventilated their frustrations to me in an interview:

> If there are that many people working, why not offer food? If you know we use uniforms, why not create a workshop to make uniforms? There are so many things that I can do. Why do they not take the initiative? How many years is the mine here? Twenty. And they are the same. It is a cultural question? I do not understand, I cannot believe it. I do not know if they lack education. I do not know if it is because they are comfortable, if they do not have the need.
> -And the strikes?
> Because they want more. They are fine but they want more. And they do not understand that what they want is not self-sustainable, because it is not an NGO. If we explain it is impossible, they say, 'that is a strategy to deceive us', blablabla'

The municipal government, having opposed the mining company in its early years, also seems to be on one line with the company. Upon entering the *alcaldía* of La Unión Copán, I am received with suspicion by its functionaries. Nevertheless, after agreeing not to record the conversation, the municipality's vice-mayor agrees to an interview and tells me that MINOSA is an excellent company that represents 'a rational form of exploitation'. However, relations between the company and the municipality may not be as smooth as portrayed by the vice-mayor of La Unión, as told by the managers of MINOSA:

> 'We are paying taxes, we are paying health centers, we are paying for the road which is not a road of the mine, and that along with the payment of taxes. The problem lies with the municipality that has to take its responsibilities. They already think that the responsibility is of the company. They have picked up that idea. They want to charge rents, with fines. Those things are not thankful and they do not do anything'

Both quotations are very similar in the sense that they highlight how the municipality and the local communities are perceived of as ungrateful free-riders suffering from a dependency syndrome. For one thing, it is true that there is no transparency on the amount of tax income and it's spending by the municipal government, and critics claim that the major of La Unión Copán is using the tax money for his own profit – not for the benefit of his municipality. Whatever may be the case: these are questions that lie outside of the scope of this research.

5.3 San Martín Minas, Valle de Siria, Francisco Morazán: from Local Resistance to an International Symbol of the Anti-Mining Movement

Introduction

The following case study focuses on Goldcorp's San Martin mine, located in a region called Valle de Siria in the department of Francisco Morazán, 70 kilometers north-east of Tegucigalpa. The now closed San Martín mine has a lasting impact on Valle de Siria, as well as lasting importance for the Honduran anti-mining movement. Hence, with this case study I intend to highlight three aspects of the San Martín case: the impacts caused by the mine in Valle de Siria itself, the resulting conflict, as well as the experience of Valle de Siria in both the formation and symbolism of the Honduran anti-mining movement.

Valle de Siria was considered a region of agricultural production, with many small farmers depending on small-scale agriculture and cattle. The villages adjacent to the mine, El Pedernal, (Nueva) Palo Ralo, Esquanito, and San Miguel de Barrosa, total a population of around 4500 people. Although being closest to the mine, they do not form part of the municipality the mine is located in. The valley as a whole is home to around 22,000 inhabitants.

In 1999 the mining company Entre Mares, a company fully owned by the US mining company Glamis Gold, commenced operations in the valley. Seven years later Entre Mares was taken over by Coldcorp. Under the previous mining law community consultations were not required for neither exploration nor exploitation activities, nor was it done voluntarily by the company when it began installing the San Martín Mine. Part of the community of Palo Ralo was forcibly relocated, for gold was found under the community. In total, 23,000 hectares were conceded to Entre Mares. The mine operated two sites where gold was extracted: Tajo Rosa (42.3 hectares) and Tajo Palo Alto (80.43 hectares, from which a total of 54,376,288 tons of material was extracted. The rocks containing gold were processed via a cyanide leaching platform of 98.66 hectares, resulting in a total production of 15.55 tons of pure gold over the ten years the mine was in operation. At the time mining companies were required to pay 1% municipal tax, calculated by IDAMHO (2013) to equal 2,570,750 US dollars over the period it operated. The company received governmental authorization to use up to 800 liters of water per minute, and its daily water usage fluctuated between 10,000 and 227,400 liters, taken from local water sources within and outside the concession area. Operations of the San Martín mine closed in 2008.

The company did not consult the local population, but did organise parties and handed out piñatas to the children in an effort to gain support. Despite the company's efforts to win over the local population, soon a local environmental committee was formed by concerned citizens: the Comité Ambiental de Valle de Siria (CAVS). The concern and constant struggle of the CAVS turned out to be with reason: the environmental, health and social impacts generated by the San Martin mine are particularly grave, as the population of Valle de Siria continues to feel Goldcorp's legacy. After 10 years the mine closed, according to activists '*por pura presión*' (due to pure pressure). Nowadays, the CAVS forms a key organisation in the anti-mining movement, as it continues to receive monthly delegations from across

Honduras and neighboring countries to confront them first hand with the impacts of open-pit mining. Hence, five years after the closure of the San Martin mine, the experience of Valle de Siria continues to serve as a central symbol for the anti-mining movement, within Honduras and on a regional scale.

A Tour through (the Impacts of Mining in) Valle de Siria

Having arrived in Honduras just over three weeks ago, I am travelling from Santa Rosa de Copán to Tocoa, a bus ride of approximately ten hours. In Tocoa I am to meet Josue, an NGO employee, who invited me over to join him on a work trip to 'an opportunity I cannot miss'. Josue works in the coastal departments of Atlántida and Colón, informing communities- in whose territories mining and hydroelectric concessions are given- about the impacts of these activities.

After meeting up, the two of us set out for the rural community of A Abiscinia, located in the mountains south of Tocoa. The Chinese have obtained a mining concession here. They have already begun installing the required machinery to extract iron oxide, and are making efforts to gain the trust of the local communities: community leaders have been offered trips to China, and the company has offered to arrange for transport for the school children. We head towards the community to pick up two *Patronato* members (informal community leaders), to convince them of the opposite by confronting them with the reality of Valle de Siria: one of the main strategies of the anti-mining movement in *socializar* (creating awareness) and mobilising communities to prevent a mine from installing in their territory.

Upon entering the dirt road that leads up the mountain, Josue comments to me: 'here, there is no more state. There is no law. The only law here is the law of the gun'. Josue reacts nervous when he notices we are being followed by a pick-up truck with blinded windows, asking me if I can see more clearly whether the car behind us features anything unusual. Josue parks his 4x4 at the side of the road and lets the other car pass: it carries nothing but a number of mattresses in the trunk. He has received various death threats for trying to mobilise communities against the mining industry, and admits feeling threatened whenever he notices a blinded car or a motorcycle 'with two types'[51] seems to follow him. He tells me he will not stay in the region for much longer.

The two Patronato members already await us when we arrive. We head back to Tocoa with the two passengers, discussing politics along the way. More people from different communities facing mining operations join us in the hotel where we stay for the night: Patronato members, representatives of the *Juntas de Agua* (water boards), a member of the fire department and a journalist. The next morning, the group of around 25 people heads out towards Valle de Siria in a hired bus.

The following morning, before visiting Valle de Siria, Josue gives a speech to the group comparing the mining industry with high-end crime:

> 'You have to show them your balls, your testicles, to defend our territories! If the poor
> steal from the rich, then it is called violence right..But if the rich steal from the poor, then

---

[51] As an attempt to prevent drive-by killings, motorcycles are not allowed to carry a passenger in Honduras

it is called negotiating. With all the promises they make, they come and deceive the people!'[52]

The argument of 'deceiving people' is often used in this context. Essentially it discredits the discourse of development and prosperity maintained by the mining industry, by counter arguing that the mine's riches do not benefit the communities at all. One of Josue's colleagues is less fierce in his rhetoric: he advises the group to negotiate better deals with the company, as they are the only 'true' owners of the land, and to register their water sources. 'Nothing is worth more than the water', he concludes, water being the vital substance that maintains the campesino-livelihood.

The group is joined by Eli, a member of the CAVS. With her, we set out to Valle de Siria. The land surrounding the small creeks that we pass shows signs of cracking. The apparent desertification is explained by Eli as a result of the company's water use. We exit the bus outside the village of El Pedernal, at a series of hot springs that give birth to small streams. A strong sulfuric smell fills the air. The water from the hot springs is used for preparing food, cleaning oneself, laundry as well as recreational purposes by the local community. The mine itself is invisible and inaccessible: the company used the surplus excavated earth to create a hill between the community and the mining pit, with a barbed wire fence cutting off access.

Access to water is one of the main issues that sparked the mining conflict at Valle de Siria. The huge amounts of water used by the mine led to strained relations with community members who depend on the same water sources for their daily needs. To the detriment of the rest of their communities, a number of local people saw business opportunities and started commercialising the water sources on their land, selling it to the company. According to local peasants, water became scarce after the mine started operating: 18 out of 22 local wells dried out. In the words of Carlos Amador, spokesperson of the local environmental committee:

> 'In summer (dry season), there is no water. And before the mine yes there was. And now there is not. Because the mine consumes water all day. It is a disaster because the water that is here for consumption got lost. The water for the peasants got lost. The water for the people that lived of agriculture went to the mine. So instead of bettering the conditions of life, it affected food security of the population. Because now Valle de Siria brings all its food products, it brings them from Tegucigalpa. And before it was from Valle de Siria, to Tegucigalpa. And now it is turned around, from Tegucigalpa to Valle de Siria'.[53]

The mine, offering 140 local jobs at its apex, did not fill the employment gap that was created by the steady decline of agricultural production and resulting loss of work and income. Hundreds of peasant families have left the region, migrating to Tegucigalpa or the United

---

[52] Hay que ponerle los cojones, los testículos, ¡para defender nuestros territorios! Si el pobre robe del rico, eso se llama violencia verdad. Pero si el rico robe del pobre, eso se llama negociar.. con todas las promesas que hacen, ¡vengan a engañar a la gente!'

[53] En verano, no hay nada de agua. Y antes de la mina sí había. Y ahora ya no hay. Porque la mina consume agua todo el día. Es un desastre porque el agua, que ahi esta para el consume, se perdió. El agua para los campesinos se perdió. El agua para la gente que vivía de la agricultura, iba a la mina. Entonces en cambio de mejorar las condiciones de vida, afectaba a la seguridad alimentaria de la población. Porque ahora en valle de siria trae, todos los productos alimentarios, les trae desde Tegucigalpa. Y antes era de valle de siria, hasta Tegucigalpa. Y ahora es invierto, desde Tegucigalpa al valle de siria.

States. In response to the water loss the company constructed a well for the community of El Pedernal. However, the rumor went that the water was contaminated. The company had the well removed before the water could be investigated by DEFOMIN inspectors. Later, the company constructed a water tank for the community instead, located across the road from the cyanide leaching pads. It had regular shortages, and its location close to the poisonous water caused distrust. As a result, many local people opted to collect the scarce water from the creeks again.

In various instances, the mining company was confronted with investigations that point toward water contamination. In 2009 Caritas, with aid of the UK-based NGO CAFOD, arranged for an independent investigation on possible water contamination caused by the mine. It began by a quick on-site visit by Professor Paul L. Younger, followed up by a more detailed examination by two Newcastle University professors. In their report, they confirm a high concentration of metals and acid mine drainage in the ground water (Davis & Amezaga 2009), and strongly advise the company to adjust its closure plan and repair the environmental consequences of the contamination caused by the acid drainage.

Based on the report, central authorities filed criminal charges against senior officials of Entre Mares (Van De Sandt 2010). Sometime later however, the charges were dropped for unknown reasons. In a similar account two years earlier, DEFOMIN inspectors found the water sources to be below acceptable standards, and fined the company one million lempira's (50.000 dollars). However, Goldcorp denied responsibility and appealed against the results of the sample. The company was exempted from paying the fine: it was ruled that DEFOMIN did not collect valid proof to make its case. Nevertheless, the institute's director, at the time head *fiscal de ambiente* (environmental prosecutor), still maintains that the San Martin mine did not operate without leaving an impact: 'the San Martín mine has a problem. As a functionary I will not hide that'.

Coldcorp continues to deny ever to have caused any contamination. Goldcorp employees Roldan and Purvance (2011) write in their paper presenting the mine's 'successful' closure that 'monitoring of the ground and surface waters continue to show no indication of leakage or contamination from the closed facilities' (Roldan & Purvance 2011; 6).

 Many inhabitants of Valle de Siria suffer from diseases (skin rash, respiratory problems) that they themselves link to exposure to contaminated water. Across the village, different people show us their skin rash, allowing the visitors to take photos of their affected skin and to ask them questions about their experience with the mining company. One lady, suffering from the symptoms herself, allows her voice to be recorded and photos to be taken of the rashes on her back and her arms, but asks the public not to photograph her face or mention her name, fearing possible consequences. Surrounded by the group, she tells:

> 'Here are plenty of people with skin diseases. Almost of all us have skin problems. Some
> more than others. Here in this neighbourhood, here where we live, are approximately

around 30 cases. There on the other side used to live a family, and the child of five years old died of cancer. My neighbor of 25 years old died of cancer'[54]

In reality the 5 year old child, a girl named Leslie Yanitza, did not die of cancer. She was diagnosed with the Werdnig-Hoffman syndrome: an incurable genetic disorder that causes muscle paralysis. Her lower body was already paralyzed when she died (Almendarez 2011). Nobody in her family history had the syndrome however, but blood tests revealed an increased lead level of 173 μg/ dL, as well as an increased arsenic level of 263 μg/ dL, both able to cause genetic mutations. Acceptable levels of lead and arsenic in the blood range between 10 and 30 μg/ dl: levels above 100 μg/ dl are considered critical (IDAMHO 2013, 26). Leslie was one of six children conceived by different local mine worker families of this community over a three year period in which the mine was active. Three were aborted during pregnancy; the other two did not survive their first year (Bianchini 2006; 2007).

The group continues its walk, taking photos of affected people. Eli, the CAVS member who leads the group, asks us to enter a house and a few people join her inside. We walk through the house heading to a back room: the source of a penetrating smell of what reminds me of something rotting. In the back room a man lies on a bed, his legs covered in bandage. The bandages have turned brownish, and parts of his legs not covered in bandage reveal bleeding flesh, his skin having disappeared. The man tells says he cannot walk anymore due to the pain, and has difficulty falling asleep. His only confirmed

Figure 8: Affected Skin of a Valle de Siria resident. Source: Carlos Amador

condition is diabetes, which seems to have multiplied the effects of his skin rash, a symptom that started becoming serious two years ago. The journalist accompanying the group, still videotaping the man, asks him:

-Let me ask you something: do you believe that the people are ill because of the contamination of the waters, the mining activities in this area, have you accepted this?
-I did not work there-
-But you do drink the water?
-Yes, I take it from here from the creek.[55]

In 2005 Goldcorp hired a dermatologist and conducted a study of 200 cases of people with skin problems. Its research concluded that they were common, poverty-related health issues (OXFAM 2008), with no relation to mining activities whatsoever. Allegedly, when a CAVS

---

[54] Aquí hay bastante gente con enfermedades de la piel'. Tenemos casi todos problemas con la piel. Unos más que otros. Aquí en este barrio, aquí donde nosotros vivimos, hay aproximadamente como 30 casos. Ahí al otro lado, vivía una familia, y la hija de cinco años murió de cáncer. Mi vecina de 25 años murió de cáncer.

[55] Déjeme preguntarle algo: usted cree que la gente está enferma por la contaminación de las aguas, la productividad minera en esta zona, ¿usted ha aceptado esto?
-No trabajaba ahí –
¿Pero usted sí consume el agua?
-Sí, lo tomo de aquí de la quebrada.

delegation went to Canada to confront the company with the diseases in their community, one Canadian Goldcorp representative commented that 'it is because your people do not wash themselves properly'.

In 2006 the Italian activist Flaviano Bianchini, equipped with a mobile laboratory, went to Valle de Siria to take blood and water samples. Having received threatening phone calls and messages for taking water samples in Guatemala's mining affected regions, and cast out of the country by the Guatemalan government, he turned to Honduras to continue his work. In Valle de Siria, Bianchini took water samples from the local creeks, and found arsenic levels of 0,71 g/L and lead levels of 0,51 g/L in Quebrada Guajiniquil, the most contaminated creek. The local drinking water source for the village of El Pedernal was found to have arsenic levels of 0,33 g/L and lead levels of 0,16 g/L. To make a comparison: WHO standards on drinking water establish a maximum level of 0,01 g/L of both materials (Bianchini 2006). Bianchini also took several blood samples from the inhabitants of El Pedernal and Nuevo Palo Ralo. His studies revealed an average level of 111,5 μg/dL of lead, and 156,6 μg/dL of arsenic in the blood of the people he took samples from.

In response to the results of the research, Entre Mares published a news bulletin claiming that the tests carried out by Bianchini lacked scientific vigor and were therefore inaccurate.

After leaving the ill-fated man behind, the group heads to a new house. Its inhabitants open the door and head out towards us, carrying with them a series of documents. They turn out to be forensic medicine reports issued by the Public Ministry, detailing the results of a blood test carried out by the Honduran government in 2007. The results of the study were not revealed until after four years. The study reveals results quite opposite to those of Bianchini's private investigation: an average level of 13,33 μg/dL of lead, and 3,36 μg/dL of arsenic. The study concludes: 'not a single result surpasses the results of the external references'. When these people show me the documents, I wonder if they fully understand their contents, as they deny any contamination – opposite to what they claim. Regardless, their contradiction to Bianchini's research is a striking observation. Dr. Almendarez, one of the leading individuals of the anti-mining movement, regularly visits Valle de Siria with a medical brigade. He is very clear in his opinion on the matter:

> 'the fact that cyanide, metals and semi-metals were not detected and that there was no follow-up on the health of the affected people indicates that the sample testing was inadequate and as well, that the Government and Goldcorp (Entre Mares) have been irresponsible with respect to human life and the environment. Above and beyond the irresponsibility, they participated in a cover-up. For four years, they hid this information, further aggravating the bad health of the people affected by the Goldcorp mining operation' (Almendarez 2011).

The CAVS member leads the group into one final house before exiting El Pedernal and heading out to Nuevo Palo Ralo – the village relocated by the mining company. An elderly lady sits in a chair; we take our seats on the sofa in front of her. Like many, she has skin problems, and she has recent hair loss: she is holding a lock of hair in her hand. The lady has her own explanation of her health problems: 'I think it was the soap that I used'. As she continues to speak about her opinion on the mine:

'One night died like sixteen cows. They took water that came from the mine. After the torment.
-What is your observation about the mine?
-That nobody wanted the mine. But they paid well for the terrain. People who had terrain sold it'[56]

The cows died after a torment blew water from the cyanide leaching pads into a creek meant for the cattle.

In her account, the old lady also touches a subject before left untouched during the tour: conflicts that arose between those who profited from the mine, and those who did not. Indeed, the people who owned terrain had sold it for high amounts of money. As mentioned before, others maintained economic ties with the company by selling water to the mine. Tensions arose between those who profited from the mine by selling land or water – and those who were disadvantaged instead.

The presence of the mining company flared a land conflict between a landowning family from the capital and the CAVS. Starting from 2007, the mining company developed a particularly close tie with one wealthy family residing in Tegucigalpa but originally from the area. The family appropriated 800 hectares of forestland by obtaining a private land title for land considered communal by the community. Once the appropriation was complete, armed guards were moved in to secure the land. This family then obtained a permit from the ICF to cut down the forest, with the intention of selling the deforested land to the mining company – it is easier to for the company to obtain new concessions when the area is already deforested. The plan of the family was met with resistance of the CAVS – which in turn for many years requested the ICF to declare the forestland a protected area. The CAVS, with the support of other community members, repeatedly prevented access to the area by the woodcutters employed by the family.

In April 2010, the government intervened in favor of the landowning family: eighteen arrest warrants were issued against CAVS and local Patronato members. Fifteen policemen armed with assault rifles entered the primary school where Carlos Amador, member of the CAVS and the FNRP[57], works as a teacher. Upon discovering he was not present, they entered his house, interrogating his underage daughters. Amador voluntarily reported himself to the police, upon which he was detained and interrogated about his fellow CAVS members. Amador was detained for several weeks before being released – after considerable international pressure (Rights Action 2011). In the end, the charges filed against him and the other accused people did not make it to court.

The trees were cut. IDAMHO (2013) calculates the total damages done to forest since the mine's start at 39 million lempira's (1, 95 million US dollars), 76%) of total taxes paid by the company to the municipality.

---

[56] Una noche murieron, como dieciséis vacas. Tomaron agua que venía de la mina. Después la tormenta.'
-¿Cuál es su observación sobre la mina?
-Que nadie querría a la mina. Pero pagaban bien para el terreno..Gente que tenía terreno, lo vendió
[57] In the year following the military coup, police repression of Resistencia advocates was not uncommon

Another tense conflict arose between the CAVS and the company's hired water transporters, who developed a lasting business relationship with Entre Mares. It was their task to supply the mining company with water, and to distribute water rations to the people whose water needs were affected by the company's water use. At one occasion, during a gathering of the CAVS in a local primary school, the transporters surrounded the school threatening to rape the women and to kill the men present.

Possibly, this is not the only violent act carried out by a sub-contractor of the company. According to a report by IDAMHO (2013, 24),

> 'Entre Mares contracted, for security, an ex-member of Battalion 3-16, the well known death squad that operated in times of the National Security Doctrine in the 1980's, kidnapping, torturing, murdering and disappearing persons considered to be opponents of the regime then in place. This guard is indicated to be responsible for the torture and murder of Rolando Gutierrez, who arrived looking for work in the mine and disappeared the same night. Rolando Gutierrez is brother of a known human rights activist'[58]

Like most murders in Honduras, the case remains unsolved. Nevertheless, the report shows that it is believed a link exists between the murder and human rights activism.

The group continues its way to the relocated village of Nuevo Palo Ralo, where we visit another CAVS member, Bernardo. He used to be a mine worker but quit the job and joined the environmental committee instead. He comments how it took the relocated community eight years to obtain land deeds of 'their' new plots, which are located on territory of the company. The man tells about his observations when working for the mine: to deal with the long working days of 12 hours in the sun, various local employees turned to drug use, notably marihuana and cocaine. One of his colleagues was responsible for the burning of used cyanide containers and believes his leukemia is a result of the hazardous work he carried out without protective equipment.

As pointed out by the IDAMHO report on Valle de Siria (2013, 17), the mine affected both genders differently. In both the locally recruited labor intensive work and higher functions, women were absent. One very clear instance of exclusion was the relocation of the community of Palo Ralo: not all adult people, but the 'family heads' (men) were consulted by the mining company. Due to the water contamination, women and girls are exposed to greater health risks and –problems, as they are traditionally charged with responsibilities such as washing clothes, hygiene, and cooking. It becomes a double burden when considering their responsibility of taking care of ill family members.

Upon returning back to the hotel Josue gives a speech, stressing that the excursion to Valle de Siria is not a 'tourist trip'. The promises made by mining companies are 'pure lies', and 'one cannot negotiate with life'. This reasoning is simple but effective: mining contaminates water, and without water life is impossible. What is to negotiate with something that threatens the

---

[58] 'Entre Mares contrató para seguridad a un ex-miembro del Batallón 3-16,el reconocido escuadrón de la muerte que operó en tiempos de la aplicación de la Doctrina de la Seguridad Nacional en los años ochenta secuestrando, torturando, asesinando y desapareciendo personas consideradas como opositoras del régimen entonces vigente. A este guardia se indica como responsable de la tortura y asesinato de Rolando Gutiérrez, quien llegó buscando empleo a la mina y desapareció esa misma noche. Rolando Gutiérrez es hermano de un reconocido activista de la defensa de los derechos humanos'

essence of life itself? The group is unanimous in its decision to take steps against mining, and engages in a discussion on how to proceed[59]. In conclusion, one lady, community leader of a Lenca village, proclaims:

> 'We ourselves are the government; we must fight for a cause. It is time that we decide: we are leaders; therefore as leaders we must defend our peoples. God did not give us nature to destroy her, but to contemplate and thank her'.[60]

This phrase can be seen as a 'call to arms' based on two arguments: the widely held sentiment that the official government is not interested in providing for its people (the people therefore have to claim their own rights as citizens), and the argument that people's well-being is intrinsically linked to nature - which is endangered by the mining operation.

That night, the people responsible for the excursion go for a beer in the local *cantina* (bar). The role of (international) NGO's regarding mining is discussed: those receiving money from the mining industry are criticised as they are 'washing the face of the mining industry'. Indeed, over the years a growing number of NGO's have gotten directly or indirectly involved with Valle de Siria. It is not appreciated that some organisations initially supporting the struggle have weakened their claims to allow for negotiation with the mining industry lobby, especially regarding chemical use and open pit mining.

From Installation to Post-Closure: a Growing Sowball of Resistance

Resistance against mining in Valle de Siria grew out from the local to the global, resulting in a costly victory of the anti-mining movement: closure of the mine, albeit with high environmental, health and social damages done to Valle de Siria. Resistance began in 1999 when shortly after the installation of the San Martín mine, a group of community members started actively opposing the mine by organising themselves into the CAVS. But aside from the CAVS, the number of organisations involved in the struggle against the mining company steadily grew.

Valle de Siria marked the beginning of the involvement of sectors of the Catholic Church in the struggle against the mining industry: the CAVS, looking for ways to gain support, found its first partner in Caritas shortly after its foundation. Via Caritas, the Tegucigalpan Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez visited Valle de Siria in 2001, proclaiming that

> 'we thus cannot allow that those dark histories of the past are repeated, because we are beginning a new century and a new millennium, which should make us reflect about the mistakes of the past, to not commit them again in the future. We have to learn the lessons from history, we are not against development but it should be a human development and a sustainable human development' (Caritas 2002)[61]

---

[59] Chapter 8 goes into detail on the strategies taken in attempts to prevent mining

[60] nosotros somos el gobierno, nosotros debemos de luchar para una causa. Es tiempo de que nosotros decidamos. Somos líderes, así como lideres debemos defender a nuestros pueblos. Dios no nos dio la naturaleza para destruirla, sino para contemplar y agradecerla'.

[61] No podemos entonces dejar que se repitan esas historias tenebrosas de siglos pasados, porque estamos comenzando un nuevo siglo y un nuevo milenio que nos debe hacer reflexionar sobre los errores del pasado, para no volver a cometerlos en el futuro. Necesitamos aprender las lecciones de la historia no estamos contra el desarrollo pero debe ser un desarrollo humano y un desarrollo humano sostenible.

The implicit message here is that the San Martín mine did not provide for sustainable human development for the people of Valle de Siria. The alliance of CAVS and Caritas initially sought for legal ways to cancel the concession, and organised an exchange of experiences with mine-affected communities in Costa Rica. It also began networking with other organisations in Honduras, such as ASONOG in Western Honduras.

By 2003 Dr. Almendarez had formed a movement called Movimiento Madre Tierra, a movement that grew to be one of the leading organisations in the struggle against Glamis Gold/Goldcorp. He denounced the violations of Entre Mares, attracted international attention to the case, carried out interviews with the people of Valle de Siria, and began providing medical support after disease symptoms started appearing in the local population (Almendarez 2004) - a practice that Almendarez continues to carry out up to this day. His efforts contributed greatly to the 'globalization' of the case, attracting the attention of international organisations such as OCMAL (Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de América Latina) and the TLAA (Tribunal Latinoamericano de Agua), a symbolic tribunal that judged GoldCorp to be responsible for loss of water and water contamination.

Almendarez' work was also not left unnoticed by his opponents, who resorted to threats of violence to obstruct his work:

> 'the health brigades and the works of investigation that we realised with the Movimiento Madre Tierra were valuable to present the problem to the national and international community, to the extent that the manager of the mining company threatened to send the author of this article to jail, as well we received various death threats for our struggle for human rights and environmental justice. A complete archive of our investigations was stolen from our offices, leaving behind death threats' (Almendarez, undated)[62].

The threat continues up this day: in December 2013 Carlos Amador of the CAVS reported being followed by unidentified vehicles (OCMAL 2014).

Since 2004 the Canadian NGO's Rights action and Mining Watch Canada started denouncing the harms done by Canadian mining companies in Central America, including the San Martín mine in Honduras. Inviting CAVS representatives over to Canada, these NGO's denounced the environmental destruction and health consequences via press releases, letters to the company's institutional investors, as well as visits to the company's headquarters. Advocates from Valle de Siría and San Miguel Ixtahuacán (Guatemala) pleaded the company to introduce voluntary *consultas* (consultations) with neighboring communities, a proposal that was rejected by 90% of the company's shareholders. Oxfam America started publishing its own documents on mining in Central America, taking an explicit anti-mining stance (Rodríguez 2007). Four years after the mine's closure, some organisations that accompanied the community in its struggle have since left the picture: others are still active, using the case of Valle de Siria as evidence of the detrimental effects of mining.

---

[62] Las brigadas de salud y los trabajos de investigación que realizamos con el Movimiento Madre Tierra fueron valiosos para presentar el problema a la comunidad nacional e internacional, a tal grado que el gerente de la Empresa Minera amenazó con enviar a la cárcel al autor de este artículo y así mismo se recibieron varias amenazas a muerte por nuestra lucha en pro de los derechos humanos y de la justicia ambiental. Un archivo completo de nuestras investigaciones fue robado de nuestras oficinas dejando amenazas a muerte.

> **Box 3: Goldcorp in Guatemala and El Salvador**
>
> The Guatemalan Maya communities of San Miguel Ixtahuacán and Sipacapa maintain that GoldCorp's Marlin mine is responsible for various human rights abuses. In a referendum held in 2005, 98% of Sipacapa's population voted against the company. Like Valle de Siria, the case became internationally known: in 2010, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) investigated the case and called for a closure of the Marlin mine, a call that was repeated by the Organisation of American States (OAS) in 2011. However, the mine is still in operation. Goldcorp is in the process of opening another open pit mine: the Cerro Blanco project. The project borders the protected Guija Lake, which is the main water source for the Rio Lempa, the sole river from which El Salvador depends. The Salvadorian anti-mining movement fears this cross-border project will affect El Salvador, and is looking for ways to amplify its opposition to pressure the Guatemalan government.

On a Central American level, communities affected by Goldcorp are finding each other. In 2012, community members of the Maya community San Miguel Ixtahuacán, affected by Goldcorp's Marlin mine, set up the Health Tribunal Project. The project, aimed at highlighting the damages done to people's health and well-being by GoldCorp, as well as issuing a verdict towards the company, has since then been joined by community leaders and advocates from Sipacapa, Guatemala, Valle de Siria, Honduras as well as Carrizalillo, Mexico. Although accepted by the Canadian embassy in Guatemala, the company did not accept a copy of the verdict (healthtribunal.org), and refused to engage in dialogue with the community leaders of San Miguel Ixtahuacán.

Goldcorp does not publicly explain its reasons for the closure of the San Martín mine, but Honduran anti-mining activists maintain it was a result of the constant struggle of the people of Valle de Siria and the anti-mining movement. There is reason to this: expanding the mine into a new area would have been very difficult under the changed circumstances. By 2006, sixteen articles of the Ley Minería were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, including the article that allows for forced evictions. Also, evidence unfavorable to the company was accumulating, putting its international reputation under pressure. This evidence even forced the Honduran state to be more critical towards the company. Combined, these actions may have provided the necessary pressure to close the mine. Nevertheless, the mining area is still inaccessible, and the concession still held by the company. This remains a source of uncertainty for the people of Valle de Siria: many fear that the company will return one day.

The Contested Meaning of Valle de Siria

Valle de Siria grew out to be more than just a location on the map where mining took place; it has, on a regional level, become a symbol of resistance and mining industry impacts. The active role of the CAVS is essential in keeping this symbol alive. The anti-mining movement, within and outside of Honduras, actively uses Valle de Siria as a central point of reference when showing the impacts of mining. 'Pictures are a thousand times more effective than

words', is often said, and photographs of the ill people from Valle de Siria are spread on the internet and are demonstrated by anti-mining actors during community meetings on mining. Community leaders are given a choice: to defend one's territory, or not to defend. Those who choose to defend their territory are brought to Valle de Siria: this way they can witness Goldcorp's legacy with their own eyes. This step forms a key aspect of their *capacitación* (training) in resisting the extractive industry. Hence, Valle de Siria carries a strong symbolical meaning. Discussing mining with one activist from the Bajo Aguan region, she tells me:

> 'That is what I do not want: that Aguan turns into another Siria.
> -And the people from Valle de Siria?
> -They want to be a light for us, so that we do not suffer like they did'
> -Are those your words?
> -That is how they themselves say it.'[63]

The quote underlines the importance attributed to Valle de Siria. Although it is never stated literally, Valle de Siria stands symbol of a costly victory of a rural community against a transnational mining company, of human suffering and continuing *lucha* (struggle). By being an example through showing the impacts caused by the mining company on them to the outer world, the same fate might be prevented for others who face similar risks. This role is both bestowed upon Valle de Siria by the anti-mining movement, and embraced by the community itself, as spoken by Carlos Amador:

> 'We are peasants. Peasants with the will to fight, to care, to protect. Nowadays, we generate a voice so that the communities know, so they do not permit that the companies enter in the communities'-Carlos Amador-CAVS[64]

As such, the excursion of community leaders facing mining concessions to Valle de Siria is an essential step in the rite of passage from a concerned but uninformed community leader into 'becoming' anti-mining, being truly aware of the consequences of mining and ready to defend one's territory.

Whilst for the anti-mining movement Valle de Siria stands example for the impacts of open-pit mining and a long community struggle, Goldcorp uses Valle de Siria for opposite purposes. Goldcorp is one of the largest gold mining companies in the world, operating various mines throughout the Americas. Its size requires the company to cultivate a positive public image. 'Responsible mining and creating sustainable value remain at the core of our business' one reads when opening Goldcorp's website (www.goldcorp.com). In its discourse of Responsible Mining, the company coins terms like 'sustainable prosperity', partnerships and business opportunities with aboriginal and indigenous peoples', 'sustainable community investments', and 'sustainable development'. Furthermore, the company is member of/partakes in organisations and initiatives like the ICMM (International Council on Mining

---

[63] Esto es lo que yo no quiero: que el Aguan se convierta en un Siria más.
-¿Y la gente de Valle de Siria?
-Dicen que quieren ser una luz para nosotros, para que no suframos como ellos.
-son sus palabras?
-así dicen ellos mismos.
[64] Somos campesinos. Campesinos con la voluntad de lucha, de cuidar de proteger. Hoy en el día, estamos generando una voz para que las comunidades conozcan, para que no permitan que las empresas entren en las comunidades' – Carlos Amador

and Metals), UN Global Impact, EITI (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative), Business for Social Responsibility, Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights, and the International Cyanide Management Code. To sum up its excellent community relations, Goldcorp argues that

> 'At Goldcorp, we are committed to making a positive difference in the communities and countries where we are located. We strive to improve local socio-economic circumstances through economic contributions,, community involvement, community consultation, support of health and education, and the sponsorship of special events. We work in partnerships with community bodies, government officials and other stakeholders to increase understanding of cultures, customs and values, and to encourage open, constructive dialogue and trust.' [65]

Goldcorp's voluntary memberships and principles, as well as the images it presents, have had considerable success: Goldcorp is mentioned in the list of Canada's top 100 employers (2012) and is mentioned in the Nasdaq Sustainability Index (2011) and Dow Jones Sustainability Index North America (2012).

Goldcorp presents its San Martin project as a success story of post-closure environmental reclamation and community development. In a promotional video posted on YouTube and Goldcorp's website,[66] the company's vice-president John Allan informs the viewer about the importance of a well-prepared mine closure with lasting benefits. San Martin is presented as a case where the company has had a harmonious relationship with local communities, and where these local communities- due to the company's effort- 'continue to prosper', even though the mine has closed. The video shows footage of happy schoolchildren, smiling *vaqueros* (cowboys) with missing teeth, and teenage boys playing football, whilst informing the viewer on the ecotourism hotel (with its swimming pool) and local livestock projects set up by GoldCorp's San Martin Foundation, a charity set up by the mining company after the mine closure. Similarly, in a paper describing successful mine closure in 'undeveloped countries', GoldCorp employees Roldan and Purvance (2012) describe the San Martín mine as having left a 'positive legacy' for surrounding communities. They conclude that 'mining can be beneficial to the surrounding communities, the company and the mining industry in general'.

Figure 9: Gold Mining is Sustainable! (photo: author)

Their claim that mining is good for the mining industry makes perfect sense. Whether or not, and how, mining can be beneficial to surrounding communities is subject to debate. But the promotional material of the company creates the image that not only mining can be beneficial,

---

[65] http://www.goldcorp.com/English/Responsible-Mining/Partnerships-and-Programs/Sustainable-Community-Investments/Education/default.aspx
[66] http://www.goldcorp.com/English/Unrivalled-Assets/Mines-and-Projects/Central-and-South-America/Operations/San-Martin/Overview-Operating-Highlights/default.aspx

but that mining equals development: rural communities in 'undeveloped countries' can only prosper due to the mine, a savior coming from a 'developed' country. In this framework, these communities are reduced to passive recipients of aid, as objects of intervention. The closure plan and the charities are safeguards that allow communities to overcome the impact of the mine's closure, for they have depended on the mine for their well-being and development.

These communities, far from being grateful recipients of aid, claim that the mine has contaminated their water. When asked, local people claim not to know the people shown in Goldcorp's promotional video, and claim that the eco-tourism hotel is manned by employees that are not from the area. Despite the numerous indications pointing at contamination, Goldcorp's strategy remained denial of contamination and denial of responsibility. I argue that Goldcorp could maintain this attitude due to its relative power vis-à-vis the Honduran state. On both occasions that he state acted against the company by fining the company for causing environmental damages, Goldcorp managed to avoid sentences. Arguments that challenge Goldcorp can hence be dismissed as false or irrelevant: after all, the company was never found guilty of causing illness or contamination.

Given the history of the Valle de Siria mining conflict, it is very unlikely that the company truly believes that community relations were excellent or that its closure was (would indicate that the company by default causes conflicts). Yet, Goldcorp presents its San Martín mine as a success story; despite it being revealed to be a hoax by NGO's such as Mining Watch Canada and Oxfam America. As it seems, despite the globalization of the Valle de Siria case, these alternative voices do not penetrate the walls of the stock market, where Goldcorp is rewarded a place in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index instead.

5.4 Conclusions: the Lessons learnt from the Past

The anti-mining movement of Honduras was born as a response to the experiences of Valle de Siria and San Andres Minas, both mines that started operating in the late 1990's. Both are foreign owned, industrialized open pit gold mines. The conflicts surrounding these mines evolved over time: as more problems came to light, the number of actors that got involved with the theme steadily grew. In the early stage of the mining conflicts in San Andrés and Valle de Siria, concerns were not yet linked to the mine's open-pit character- but to the invasive behavior of these companies that ignored the right to self-determination of these communities. Included are concerns over access to water and land, as well as the grief caused by the forced evictions and demolishment: both resulting from the process of enclosure and possession by dispossession. In Valle de Siria, these problems brought the CAVS into conflict with those who profited economically from the mine: the local landed elite and the water transporters. In a similar situation in San Andrés, it brought the inhabitants of San Andrés in direct conflict with the employees of the mine.

Although this remained an issue as time went on, the significance of water as a central motive of resistance grew when people in Valle de Siria and San Miguel started experiencing health problems and linked these to the mining activities. The consequences of the cyanide spills in San Andrés only contributed to this: fear of contamination grew, and as a consequence

cyanide-leaching open pit mines began to been as violations of the community's access to clean drinking water. Fear for water contamination - and its visible impacts in Valle de Siria and San Andrés - was pivotal in the near unanimous reject of an open-pit mine nearby La Labor, Ocotepeque in 2004.

Although both the San Andrés and San Martín mines were under considerable pressure, the respective situations developed differently. Both companies excercised land control via the mechanisms identified by Watts & Lund (2011): enclosure, territorialisation, legalisation, and violence. A major difference lies in the company's behavior towards their 'host' communities. MINOSA combined repression of its opponents with rewards for those who opted for cooperation. The community of San Miguel disintegrated entirely, whilst the community of San Andrés got economically dependent of MINOSA and lost its ability to speak out against the company as community leaders were incorporated into the mining company. As such, the company slowly developed a patron-client relationship with the community and the municipal government, diminishing political risks: the mine became a fact of life in La Unión, Copán. Now that this patron-client relationship is currently under pressure due to decreased revenues for the company and the social tensions surrounding the forced relocation of Azagualpa, conflict flares up again.

In Valle de Siria repression also took place from the start, but the affected communities never benefited from taxes, privileged jobs or other services provided by the company. In Valle de Siria, neither Glamis Gold nor Goldcorp managed to develop clientelist ties with the affected communities, facilitating a sustained unanimous reject of the mining company and legitimacy for the CAVS instead. The different behaviour of the companies in San Andrés and Valle de Siria may contribute to an explanation of the fact that whilst in Valle de Siria a local environmental committee was formed that would take a central role on the stage; no local leaders appeared in San Andrés: it was possibly due to an early absorption of its Patronato into a clientelist relationship with the mining company. Without local leaders opposing the San Andrés mine and acting as 'bridges', the anti-mining movement of Western Honduras slowly lost its ties with the community.

In both cases the anti-mining movement sought to collect evidence of water contamination to mobilise external support and to move the state into acting. To a different degree they both succeeded in making visible and proving the environmental and health impacts caused by open-pit mining. However, the health impacts in Valle de Siria stand unparalleled. As such, whilst for the anti-mining movement San Andrés stands example of a mining company that could not be beaten, Valle de Siria became a powerful symbol – in both discourse and practice - of the impact of open-pit mining and of resistance: it grew out from a local mining conflict to a central hub in a Central American anti-mining struggle. Valle de Siria, on the theme of mining, merges the local with the global, both in its history and in the actual context. It became the symbol of a need for change, and attracted international actors to the theme of mining in Honduras. Supported internationally, the CAVS has taken Valle de Siria to Canada itself, and formed an international anti-mining network with Mexican and Guatemalan communities also affected by Goldcorp. Delegations from across Honduras and Central America, and even beyond, continue to visit Valle de Siria to learn first-hand about the impacts of mining and the need to 'defend one's territory': an integral part of the anti-mining

movement's strategy in initiating community leaders in the struggle against the extractive industry.

The nature of these mining companies and the way they operated also shaped the anti-mining movements' discourse. As told by a CAVS representative:

> 'therefore I tell you, if this gives food insecurity, if this has generated peasant unemployment, if this has provoked health problems, problems of production, what are we speaking of? What development are we speaking of? We say a development 'feet up'. Or, with the feet here and the head here (points to the ground). Yes there is development. For the big transnational corporation. A lot of money. And the country? It leaves me environmental problems, health problems – Carlos Amador, CAVS[67]

In this framework, mining is seen as a neo-colonial sacking of the country's resources: Honduras' mineral wealth is taken away by foreign companies who barely pay any taxes, whilst the country is left with the damages done. However, I argue the anti-mining discourse entails more than what the mining industry calls 'resource nationalism' (Willis 2012): protectionism over one's 'own' resources that are taken away by a foreign company. Instead, I argue that the anti-mining movement would not have arisen in the first place if the different perceptions, or *valuation systems* (Martinez-Alier, personal communication) on what constitutes development were not incompatible between the industry and the government on the one hand, and Honduran communities and organisations on the other hand. The position of the anti-mining movement fits in the more encompassing frameworks of protection of communal resources and Environmental Justice (Svampa, 2011). In these frameworks resistance to mining is not simply a calculation of monetary costs and benefits. Livelihood, wellbeing, health and environment are dimensions with intrinsic values attributed to them: values that cannot be expressed in mere monetary terms. These dimensions are interconnected through the *bienes naturales (*commons): land, forest and most importantly water, a substance of which life depends: '*la vida vale más que el oro'* (life is worth more than gold', the catchphrase of the anti-mining movement, stands example of this. This valuation system contradicts the view of the mining companies and the Honduran government: in their view the environment is separated from human life, and moreover, it has a price, one that is low enough to allow for cyanide leaching open pit mining. These different viewpoints are incompatible, as is well known by anti-mining activists when they proclaim that 'one cannot negotiate with life'.

The anti-mining struggles detailed in this chapter have taught a number of important lessons to the anti-mining movement: to begin, the national government is more aligned with the interests of the extractive industry than with the interests of its citizens. Second, it is impossible to negotiate with the industry itself on cyanide use or open pit mining: mining companies will continue to deny that their practices are environmentally hazardous. Moreover, between the industry and the government lingers corruption, a lesson learnt from

---

[67] Y por eso te digo, si eso da inseguridad alimentaria, si esto ha generado desempleo campesino, si eso ha provocado problemas de salud, problemas de producción, ¿de que estamos hablando? ¿De qué desarrollo estamos hablando? Nosotros decimos un desarrollo patas arriba. O sea, estamos con las pies acá y la cabeza acá. Sí, hay un desarrollo. Para la gran corporación transnacional. Muchísimo dinero. ¿Y el país? Me deja problemas ambientales. Problemas de salud.

the illegal mining concession in the Guïsayote national park. To continue, the takeovers by new companies are seen as a strategy of the industry to avoid responsibility for promises made or damages done under former management. Lastly, anti-mining activism is dangerous: without an exception, the leaders of the anti-movement have received anonymous death threats or other types of intimidations. From the start of the extractivist complex in Honduras, violence was utilized as a governance tool to sustain it.

United a movement stands stronger: the organisations opposing MINOSA and Silver Crest Resources in Western Honduras, and those dealing with GoldCorp in Valle de Siria, were quick to find each other and to advocate a national ban on open-pit mining under the banner of the Alianza Civica por la Democracia. The next chapter deals with this process up to the current situation.

Chapter 6 -
Changing the Rules of the Game

from the struggle against the 1998 mining law towards the negotiation and approval of the 2013 mining law

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I describe the struggles of the anti-mining movement to change national legislation. The chapter is divided in two parts: the first section describes the struggle of the ACD to make the national government implement a mining law that would have included community consultations, raised taxes, and prohibited open-pit mining. The organisations involved in the struggle against the San Andrés mine in Copán and against Goldcorp in Valle de de Siria (ASONOG, Caritas and -CAVS), grew closer together as the years passed. By 2005 this now national anti-mining movement had gained enough momentum to put successful pressure on the national government, and to make the Supreme Court declare 13 articles of the Ley Minería of 1998 unconstitutional. These organisations established formal alliances in 2006 and 2008: the Alianza Civica por la Democracia (ACD) and the Red Nacional de Comunidades Afectadas por la Minería en Honduras (RENACAMIH). These became central platforms for mobilisations and pressures towards changing mining legislation. The movement made considerable advances by pressuring the Zelaya administration; successes that were made undone after the military coup of June 2009.

The second section, making a jump in time to 2012, describes the negotiations for a new mining law that became active on the 23th of April 2013. Unlike the 1998 mining law, this law was to be negotiated with all stakeholders over the course of the year 2012. Whilst the ACD ceased to exist as an influential force in 2009, many anti-mining organisations (currently 49) are now bannered under the Coalición Nacional de Redes Ambientales (CNRA), inter alia ASONOG, the CAVS, CEHPRODEC[68], ERIC-Radio Progreso[69], the Mesa Nacional de Incidencia para la Gestión del Riesgo, the Red Nacional de Comunidades Afectadas por la Minería, and IDAMHO[70]. The CNRA is a platform whose principal aim is to oppose open-pit mining as well as other megaprojects (e.g. hydroelectric dams and African palm plantations). Although government officials claim that the resulting mining law is well-balanced and '*socializada' (*negotiated) with all stakeholders, the CNRAH eventually left the negotiation table because it felt that its voice was not taken into account. The most recent step of the CNRA is that IDAMHO, an institute on environmental law, recently began a lawsuit against 25 articles of the new mining law in an effort to make the Supreme Court declare them

---

[68] Centro Hondureño para la Promoción del Desarrollo Communitario (Honduran Centre for the Promotion of Community Development)

[69] Equipo de Refección, Investigación y Comunicación (Team of Investigation, Reflection and Comunication).

[70] Instituto de Derecho Ambiental de Honduras (Environmental Law Institute of Honduras)

unconstitutional. Nevertheless, with the electoral victory of the Nationalist party in November 2013, it is expected that the mining industry will grow unaffected.

6.2 From Court to the Roadblock

As the Honduran anti-mining movement grew, new alliances were formed and the aim of resistance expanded from opposing the mining companies in San Andrés and Valle de Siria, towards changing the legal framework on mining: it was felt that only a total prohibition of open-pit mining would prevent 'another Valle de Siria'. Already in 2002, Caritas-Tegucigalpa - being involved with the struggle in Valle de Siria- joined with AMHON (Asociación de Municipalidades de Honduras)[71] and created a platform called the Alianza Cívica para la Reforma de la Ley Minería[72] (from here on called AC, not to be confounded with the ACD). The AC aimed to increase taxes, allow for community consultations, to prohibit environmentally damaging practices such as cyanide use and open-pit mining, and to abolish DEFOMIN and bring mining regulation under SERNA[73] instead.

The AC was supported by international Catholic NGO's such as CAFOD and CCODP[74], and gained several victories initially. Pressured by the platform, president Zelaya called for a ban on new open pit mining operations '*for as long as Honduras lacks the means to properly regulate this practice*' (CCODP 2007; 5). Likewise, the AC successfully addressed several issues in the mining law: thirteen articles of the Ley General de Minería were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Honduras in 2005. These articles include the clause that paved the way for forced expropriation of communities as well as the tax regime. The tax regime was declared unconstitutional for establishing a mere 2% royalty, but this only worsened the problem: technically speaking, with the tax regime declared invalid mining companies were no longer legally obliged to pay any royalties at all. As explained by an INHGEOMIN representative, as an act of goodwill a number of companies then opted for 'voluntary payment' of these 2% royalties.

But the same year the AC got split in two in an internal conflict, resulting in two different Civic Alliances. Calculating its chances of achieving its objectives, the AC decided that working towards a ban on open pit mining would never lead to consensus with the mining industry, which was increasing its own lobby activities and threatened to cancel future investments: as a consequence, the item was dropped from the AC's demands. This decision created a split. Unwilling to give up on the proposed ban on cyanide and open-pit mining the diocese of Copán, led by Monseñor Santos, broke from the AC and together with ASONOG formed the Alianza Civica por la Democracia (ACD). Soon after, the Comité Ambiental de Valle de Siria (CAVS), unwilling to support mining law reform that allows for cyanide leaching open-pit mining, stopped supporting the AC and joined the ACD instead.

---

[71] Asociation of Municipal Governments of Honduras
[72] Civic Alliance for the Reform of the Mining law
[73] Secretaria de Recursos Naturales y Ambiente (Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment)
[74] Canadian Catholic Organisation for Development and Peace

The emergence of the ACD was received with disapproval of the AC: the ACD maintained close ties with Dr. Juan Almendarez, who at the time also led a left-wing minority political party (Unión Democrática), described by the CCODP as 'radical' and 'populist'. The AC feared that the ACD's 'radical' stance and its ties with Dr. Almendarez would overly politicize the debate on mining, and bring about an unnecessary conflict with the majority of the Church. The AC's sudden framing of the ACD as a radical and populist movement is probably a political move: after all the AC itself was called into being with the same objectives in mind (a ban on open-pit mining), and Dr. Almendarez was linked with the ACD due to his work in Valle de Siria with the Movimiento Madre Tierra, not through his leadership of a marginal political party that never gained over 1,5% of votes. And so the AC distanced itself from the struggle it was once called into being for.

The Honduran government initially did not respond to the demands of the ACD. A draft proposed mining law was vetoed by the Head of Congress and future president, Porfirio 'Pepe' Lobo. Alongside the growing evidence of the problems caused by the mining industry, lawsuits as well as various mobilisations were required for the movement to move forward. On the 25th of July 2007, the ACD managed to mobilise over 20,000 people in an anti-mining protest. In a coordinated event, the protestors blocked the highway across six locations Western Honduras, cutting off the country from Guatemala and El Salvador for six hours. The protests did not take place without facing heavy repression: in the community of 6 de Mayo, one of the locations where the manifestation was held, people were beaten down by riot police, and unknown gunmen shot three protestors.

When asked about his motive for this manifestation, one ACD activist tells me:

> 'I believe it is just. It is the only way that is left for the people, is to manifest in the streets. Even though it may not be legal, but it is just. Well nobody, nobody likes taking a road you see. Nobody likes it that they will beat your people. But in some moments…the politicians only respond to force and to pressure'[75]

The AC on the other hand, criticised and rejected the protest:

> 'The protestors set up roadblocks, ignoring calls from the authorities to demonstrate without blocking roads. Police heavily repress the ensuing demonstration. While all democratic sectors in Honduras criticize the repression, the Civic Alliance for the Reform of the Mining Law believes that demonstrators calling for a new mining law have been misled. In the context of real progress in achieving a new consensus among civil society, it calls for a just and responsible mining law' (CCODP 2007, 16).

The quotations illustrate again that the two Civic Alliances differed greatly: not only in their opinion on what constitutes a just and responsible mining law, but also in both their structure and their perception on how to negotiate with the state. The AC lacked a grassroots base: its only Honduran base organisations were Caritas-Tegucigalpa and the association of local governments. The ACD on the other hand had the capacity to mobilise thousands of people, realised that its proposed ban on open-pit mining could not be met through direct negotiations

---

[75] Yo creo que es justo.Es la única manera que se queda el pueblo, es manifestar en las calles. Entonces aunque no sea legal, pero es justo. bueno a nadie, a nadie le gusta tomarte la carretera va. Nadie le gusta que se va a golpear a su pueblo. Pero en algunos momentos…Los políticos solamente responden a través de la fuerza y a través de la presión.

with the industry, and argued that without pressuring it, the government would not listen. Its manifestation of July 2007 aimed to ban mining concessions in natural parks, a temporal halt on mining concessions, and the approval of new mining law that legally established these demands. Somewhat surprisingly, president Zelaya gave in to one important demand: he ordered DEFOMIN to stop awarding new metallic mining concessions.

In 2008, two new organisations in the anti-mining struggle were called into being. Under the financial support and accompaniment of ASONOG, regional risk management advocacy organisations joined up and formed an umbrella organisation: the Mesa Nacional para la Incidencia de Gestión del Riesgo. In the same year, another organisation was created from the MNIGR: the Red Nacional de Comunidades Afectadas por la Minería en Honduras (RENACAMIH), initially with members from Valle de Siria and San Andrés. Through its advocacy work in rural communities, the network organisation quickly expanded to include other communities with mining concessions, and now includes communities from the departments of Olancho, El Paraíso, Comayagua, Santa Bárbara and La Paz. These grassroots network organisations have a greater role to play in resistance against what can be regarded the second mining boom in Honduras (2013-current), and their work is discussed with more detail in the following chapters.

Despite the progress made, the ACD ceased to be functional in 2009. An internal conflict lingered between ASONOG's director and Monseñor Santos over leadership over the ACD, management of funds, as well as due to differing religious views between the two men of church. More importantly, outside actors forced ASONOG's director to give up on the struggle: death threats directed at Francisco Machado were perceived a serious and instant threat, as detailed in a report of the Mennonite Central Committee (2010):

> 'Francisco learned that his name was included on a black-list of some 130 individuals that was in the possession of government operatives. In September, he was followed and his home watched. Believing that agents linked to the military were likely planning an assassination attempt on Francisco's life, the Machado family escaped to the United States where they have received political asylum'[76]

In 2009 Francisco Machado, already living in the US, was invited to Canada via the Mennonite Church, where he participated in various events to raise awareness of the impacts of mining in his home country.

Monseñor Santos received death threats as well, but was also obstructed otherwise via the official, political canal. The committee of the Tribunal Supremo Electoral (TSE), the state institution that supervises the national elections, accused Monseñor Santos of creating unacceptable societal unrest and of making unfounded accusations of certain congressmen accepting stipends from the mining companies, to be used in their election campaigns. The TSE sent a letter to the Vatican requesting it to revoke his position as a bishop. Not much later, the Tegucigalpan Cardinal Oscar Andres Rodriguez commanded Monseñor Santos and the diocese of Copán to 'stop touching the theme of mining'. The event shows that the cardinal, who once proclaimed his solidarity with the anti-mining struggle in Valle de Siria, had clearly changed position: he went from supporting a grassroots struggle to banning open-

---

[76] Mennonite Central Committee, http://mccottawa.ca/miningjustice/casestudies/sanandres

pit mining towards aiding in the dismantlement of the most influential organisation of that very same movement.

The ACD lasted long enough for a draft mining law which would have banned open-pit mining to be made. Blocked by the head of congress in 2006, the law was again waiting to be approved by congress in August 2009. However already - due to pressure by the mining sector lobby group ANAMIMH - president Zelaya had the Secretary of State of SERNA, who was open for dialogue with the ACD, removed from office (Yoder et. al 2012). One is left to guess whether or not the proposed mining law would have passed: the coup d'état that ended Zelaya's presidency also ended – and reversed – the advances made by the anti-mining movement. In the ensuing political and economic crisis that followed various donor organisations, essential partners in providing the necessary resources for the ACD's mobilisations, withdrew from Honduras. As a sum of these factors the ACD was dismantled, and in the six months of interim-president Micheletti an unknown number of new mining concessions were made. Yet, it would take until 2012 before a new mining law was underway.

Box 4: El Salvador's Ban on Mining

The Salvadorian anti-mining movement is headed by the Mesa Nacional Frente la Minería Metálica (MNFMM), a civil society platform that unites local development NGO's, environmental and law institutes, and the Catholic Church. Nationally and internationally, it receives the support of over 300 civil society organisations. With the ecological vulnerability of El Salvador through its dependence of Rio Lempa as source of drinking water as its most powerful argument, in 2008 the anti-mining movement has managed to successfully pressure the central government to implement a total suspension of metallic mining exploitation. The struggle has been especially conflictive in the department of Cabañas, where three local anti-mining activists supported by the local NGO ADES were assassinated in 2009. They are now remembered as martyrs of the struggle against mining. In turn Pacific Rim, the Canadian mining company awaiting to exploit in Cabañas, has begun a World Bank lawsuit against the Salvadorian government, claiming US$ 315,000,000 as compensation for lost investments and 'lost' future profits. Despite the substantial claim of the multinational corporation against El Salvador, the suspension of metallic mining is still in place. Uncertain whether the suspension will hold, the MNFMM is pressuring the FMLN government for a law that prohibits metallic mining. Meanwhile, it encourages communities to declare their municipality free of mining via public referenda.

6.3 Negotiating a New Regulatory Framework

During the second half of the administration of Porfirio 'Pepe' Lobo of the Nationalist Party, efforts were made to create a new mining law, with the aim of turning Honduras in a mining-based economy much like its examples Peru and Chile. More than ever, mining is now believed to be the main path towards alleviating poverty and paying back the huge foreign and domestic debt of the state. To this end, a congressional committee (the Comisíon Minería del

Congreso Nacional) was set up and charged with seeking admittance to the EITI and creating and promoting a new mining law. As expressed to me by INHGEOMIN's director Aldo Santos, there is a sense of urgency and desperation in the renewed effort of the government to develop mining as Honduras largest industry:

> 'If there is no signature with the [International] Monetary Fund, from where will we get money? To pay the social debt that the country has? Honduras has an internal circulating debt of more than 23 billion of Lempira's, owing to internal providers. And according to projections of the Central Bank of Honduras and international organisms, Honduras will arrive already, I believe we already surpassed 2,5 billion dollars of external debt. (…)That is, my children, my grandchildren, my grand-grandchildren, they are condemned to pay part of their income. Given this panorama, there is nothing else from where to draw money. From what to pay the rampant internal and external debt? From mining. That is the reality (…) From what else? There is no production. From what else, from what else?[77]

The country seeks admission to the EITI (Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative), an initiative of which Honduras is currently a Candidate country. EITI is an international standard, operating under a number of guiding principles that hold that the exploitation of mineral/fuel resources can and should be used for 'sustainable economic development' and poverty reduction. Neither environmental nor human rights indicators are included in EITI standards: in order to become a full member, member states have to adhere to the standard of financial transparency of tax revenues generated by the mining industry. Although I was aware of this limitation of the EITI, in august 2013 (after the murder of three indigenous protestors (Chapter 7)) I wrote an e-mail to a Dutch board member of the EITI, in which I expressed my concerns about human rights violations and the extractive industry in Honduras. In an unsurprising response he replied:

> 'It is important to mention that EITI is not the solution for social and ecological aspects, it only focuses on financial transparency. Also, it is not a human rights initiative'

Nevertheless, EITI membership is used as a measurement of good governance. EITI membership is explained by government representatives as a much needed step to 'wash the face of mining' (to improve its negative image) and to provide legitimacy. Civil Society participation was a requirement of become an aspiring EITI member: this participation was found in nine organisations (EITI 2012), including private business lobby groups, four universities, an anti-corruption council and Caritas, the only Civil Society organisation present with previous dealings with the theme as a mining critical organisation. Caritas keeps on working with the theme of mining, but has changed course towards cooperation with the mining industry in an effort to promote 'responsible mining'. Its cooperation with EITI stands

---

[77] Si no hay firma con el fondo monetario, de donde vamos a sacar dinero? Para pagar la deuda social que el país tiene? Honduras tiene una deuda circulando interna. De más de 23000 millones de lempiras. Que le debe a proveedores internos. Y según proyecciones del banco central de honduras y organismos internacionales, honduras va a llegar ya creo que superamos ya los 2500 millones de dólares de deuda externa. (…)O sea mis hijos, mis nietos, mis bisnietos, están condenados a pagar parte de sus ingresos. dado este panorama, no hay más de donde sacar plata. De donde pagar este deuda galopante interna y externa? Es de la minería. Eso es la realidad. (…)Es que de donde más? No hay producción. De donde más? De donde más?

example of this; more recently in February 2014 it organised an event in cooperation with ANAMIMH called 'Mineria: ¿Riesgos u Oportunidades? (Mining: Risks or Opportunities?)[78].

For the draft of a new mining law Honduras received help from the official Canadian International Development Cooperation. Under orders of the president, the law was to be 'socializada' (communicated, discussed) with the mining sector and Civil Society alike. In different regions of the country, the law was discussed over a period of six months in 2012. Government representatives express their content with the successful *socialización* of the Mining Law. Nevertheless, the negotiation table did not bring the different stakeholders closer together: environmental organisations and other mining-critical organisations bannered under the Coalición Nacional de Redes Ambientales de Honduras eventually withdrew from the negotiation table. It was felt that they could only sign a premade law and their main demand, the prohibition of cyanide-leaching and open-pit mining, was not going to be met. As commented by dr. Almendarez:

> 'It was a farce the socialization. The new law. It will only reaffirm the continuity of mining exploitation based on cyanide and on an open-pit basis. It reproduces the same mining production model'.

The movement's continuing opposition to the proposed mining law and its withdrawal from the negotiation table has been met with discontent from the government, whose representatives commented that logically not all demands made by environmental organisations can be met for Honduras to be an attractive country, relative to neighboring Guatemala and Nicaragua, for foreign investors. Furthermore, it is claimed that opponents of the mining law has politicised the theme by appearing at the negotiations with flags of the FNRP / LIBRE. Congressman Donaldo Reyes Avelar, president of the Mining Commission, complains:

> 'This means that they, that they live to draw money, stealing. It is illogical that they are annoyed; it does not make any sense. They do it for that; look (makes a gesture of receiving money). (…) Generally these people who are involved in this opposition are people of the left, who form part of a political party here. The day that they would want to have power, they immediately say 'let's exploit'.'[79]

The debate on mining is indeed politicised, although it inevitably became politicised already once the first new mining concessions were given in the months following the military coup that deeply divided the country in two camps. Nevertheless, LIBRE / FNRP have indeed held their own mobilisations against the mining law and a number of mining critical organisations and movements maintain informal ties with this political movement. Nevertheless, the organisations bannered under the CNRA have consciously distanced themselves from the actions of FNRP / LIBRE, not wanting to frame their resistance to open-pit mining as strictly a concern of the political left. Although LIBRE has the sympathy of many activists, the CNRA strategically frames its resistance to mining as a 'concern for life' itself, arguing that

---

[78] http://semanariofides.com/2014/02/14/mineria-en-honduras-riesgos-u-oportunidades/

[79] Esto quiere decir que aquellos que, que ellos viven para sacar pisto, robando. Es ilógico que se molesten, no tiene sentido. Ellos lo hacen porque de eso, mira (un gesto de recibir billete). (…)Generalmente estas personas que andan metidas en esta oposición son personas de izquierda, que de repente forman parte de un partido por aquí. El día que ellos quisieran tener el poder, inmediatamente dicen 'vamos a explotar'.

visibly siding with LIBRE would endanger its ability to mobilise support regardless of political affiliation.

Despite the withdrawal of several Civil Society organisations, the final law passed congress in January 2013 and was activated on April 23th that same year. Different protest marches were held before the law's activation, organised by COPINH and OFRANEH, two movements with an ethnic (resp. indigenous and Garífuna) basis. The CNRAH's decision to step out of the mining law negotiations was not merely a symbolic act but strategic as well: one cannot practice anti-mining activism whilst having signed the mining law earlier. The most recent step of CNRAH is that its member organisation IDAMHO began a lawsuit in early 2014 against 26 articles of the new mining law. Given the earlier success of the anti-mining movement in paralyzing the development of the mining industry by succeeding in proving the unconstitutionality of the1998 mining law, there is a fear that the movement again succeeds. However, in 2012 congress has proved to be able to dismiss and replace Supreme Court judges who rule against its laws[80], a fact that raises questions about the independence of the Supreme Court in making such decisions.

Government officials agree that the 1998 Mining Law had serious flaws and argue that environmental organisations had legitimate reasons to oppose the former law. To name a few, it gave mining companies de facto ownership over the conceded territory, did not establish limits to the number of concessions, did not establish strict environmental controls nor penalties, and it allowed for the forced expropriation of communities. Several of these issues are indeed rectified in the new mining law: concessions are divided between exploration and exploitation concessions, and a section on artisanal mining is established to facilitate for legal mining operations accessible to the poor. The territorial canon has increased to US $ 1,50 per hectare for metallic exploration concessions and US $ 3,50 for metallic exploitation concessions (as compared to rates as low as US $ 0,25 under the former mining law), and royalties (special taxes above regular taxes) have risen from two to six percent of profits, in which the percentage left to the municipality has doubled from one to two per cent.

A new aspect of the current mining law is the *consulta* (consultation, prior informed consent) that has to be held for a company to be able to proceed with the exploitation phase. In the words of the president of the Comisión Minera, this is

> 'a very important fact. Who decide if there is mining or no mining? The people. The municipalities. The people that want and analyse that mining exploitation can be good and bring growth, and over there others who say no, well let them live in their poverty if they want'[81].

Under the new law, DEFOMIN is restructured into INHGEOMIN. The institute is no longer a subsection of SERNA, but now falls directly under the Presidency. This is both a symbolic move to emphasize that mining is a strategic industry of national importance, as well as a institutional reform meant to create a degree of independence between the mining institute and the Secretary of Natural Resources and Environment, which retains responsibility for

---

[80] https://www.un.org/apps/news//story.asp?NewsID=44024&Cr=judicial&Cr1=

[81] Un hecho bien importante. Quienes deciden si hay minería o no hay minería? Los pueblos. Los municipios. El pueblo que quiere y analiza que puede ser buena la explotación minera en su término municipal crece, y otros allá que dicen que no pues que vivan en su pobreza si quieren.

environmental controls. Many of these reforms are similar to those proposed by the AC (Civic Alliance for the Reform of the Mining Law) a decade earlier.

Nevertheless, the new mining law retains a number of points of controversy. There is no upper limit to the number of years a concession can be held. Neither artisanal & small-scale mining nor exploration activities require environmental permits. Artisanal mining does not require a mining concession, but the permit is directly negotiated with the local government. Mining companies are free to choose any method of extraction they see fit, and are allowed to use unlimited water within and outside of the concession. No areas can be declared permanently free of mining, and when a concession is located in multiple municipalities only one municipality has the right to a consulta. When a community opposes mining in such a consulta, the result is valid for three years only – whilst an approval has no time limit. Last but not least, the mining law establishes a *taza de seguridad* (security tax) of 1/3 of total royalties paid, to be spent on strengthening the police, the military and the newly created military police. According to Pedro Landa, coordinator of the CNRAH, the security tax does nothing to contribute to security for the Honduran people, but provides

> 'security in support of the transnational corporations. But to the contrary they will convert themselves also in instruments of more repression towards the communities that are ready to defend their natural resources and their territories against the threat that the mining company represents to the communities'[82]

As the case of Nueva Esperanza (Chapter 7) and recent events in Azagualpa show (see picture), the police can indeed be used in force to repress uncooperative communities. The security tax forges a direct financial link between the police/military and mining companies, in theory providing these institutions with an additional incentive for acting in favor of the company. However, this is often already the case and it remains to be seen if and what extent this tax influences the behaviour of these institutions.

Figure 10: Police and military kicking a protestor at the San Andrés mine, April 2014. Source: Azagualpa resident

Ironically, the anti-mining movement shares its disapproval of the Security Tax with MINOSA, as the company's manager Canadian complains:

> [The tribute] has risen with a hundred percent in a time when prices are dropping. This has left a huge impact, I think, in the profitability of foreign investments in mining. Good, there is always an element they want to invest in the country but it is not that attractive. What are we gaining with our tributes? Juridical security, physical security? All these things lack. The security situation is the same or worse: we have to pay for our own security. [83]

---

[82] Seguridad en respaldo a las corporaciones transnacionales. Pero al contrario se van a convertir también en instrumentos de mayor represión hacia las comunidades que están dispuestos a defender sus recursos naturales y sus territorios ante la amenaza que representa la empresa minera a las comunidades.

[83] Ha aumentado un cien por ciento en un tiempo cuando están bajando los precios. Y han hecho un gran impacto, yo creo, en la rentabilidad de inversiones extranjeros en la minería. Bueno siempre hay un elemento

Still, the company relied on the state security apparatus in April 2014 to deal with a road blockade set up by residents of Azagualpa who were unwilling to give up their homes. Police and military were sent in en masse, and used tear gas and live rounds to break the protest.

Although taxes have risen, MINOSA has found its legal ways to avoid them. The company is not directly Canadian owned, but owned by two mailbox firms in Belize and the British Virgin Islands, both known as international tax paradises. Juridical insecurity is a more serious blockade for foreign mining investment than physical insecurity; a grave problem that mostly affects the urban poor and which can be easily diminished for mining companies by hiring cheap security labor[84]. The unconstitutionality of the former mining law and political instability are two examples. As told by INHGEOMIN's director, the US embassy has informed at INHGEOMIN's director what an electoral victory of LIBRE on the 24th of November 2013 would mean for the mining sector, and many mining companies were awaiting the election results before commencing exploration activities. LIBRE did not win the elections however, and with the victory of the Nationalist party under President Juan Hernandez Orlando – the first time in Honduran history that the same party got reelected – the same course will be followed.

Honduras counted 864 mining concessions[85] in August 2013, a number that will have risen at the time of writing. Given that the legal pathway is secured with the new mining law and the continuation of the same economic model, several of these concessions will see activation in the course of 2014 depending on fluctuations of resource prices on the world market. As expressed by an INHGEOMIN employee, 'it is our fear that if this avalanche comes we do not have the capacity to act upon everything': the institute only has five employees responsible of carrying out environmental controls. Although the institute directly receives as a tribute 0, 5% of profits, it remains to be seen whether the institute can keep up with the expected growth of the industry.

6.4 Conclusion

With the 1998 Mining Law clearly favoring the extractive industry, the emergent anti-mining movement, unified under the AC, used whatever political opportunities it had at its disposal to lobby for an alternative model. With support of the Church, international NGO's, as well as municipal governments, the anti-mining movement succeeded in bringing the Mining Law before the Supreme Court, who declared it unconstitutional. However, the formal democratic route proved to be a dead-end in making further advances, leading to a split within the movement: the AC withdrew its demand of prohibiting cyanide usage and open-pit mining but lost all popular support, becoming an arena for foreign NGO's and political games

---

que quieren invertir en el país pero no es tan atractivo. (…) ¿Que estamos ganando con nuestros tributos? Seguridad judicial, ¿seguridad física? Todas estas cosas faltan. La situación de seguridad está igual o peor. – nosotros tenemos que pagar nuestra propia seguridad.

[84] For example, MINOSA's armed door guard in Santa Rosa de Copán receives a monthly wage of US$ 150, half the country's official minimum wage.

[85] Source: interview at INHGEOMIN. 310 metallic mining concessions awaited approval, 109 were given. 261 non-metallic mining concessions were awaiting approval, 184 were approved.

instead. National NGO's and environmental committees, strengthened by the diocese of Copán, split from the AC and continued the struggle under the ACD.

It is interesting to note that at this point two separate movements pursued different goals: the AC pursued a reformist course to mining, whilst the ACD pursued a strategy of opposition. Political opportunities were greater for the AC – who due to its moderate standpoints was able to negotiate with both the industry and the state. Contrary to what logically follows from a POS explanation of social movement success or failure, the AC was unable to match the success of the more uncompromising ACD. The AC lacked base organisations and lacked a powerful discursive frame, whilst the ACD managed to mobilise thousands of people with its master frame 'life is worth more than gold'. One of the principal demands of the ACD in its struggle for a new mining law was the prohibition of chemical use and open pit mining – demands that are intrinsically linked to the valuation of water as something that transcends the commonly shared frustration over the low taxes (2% royalties) established by the mining law. The ACD's capacity for mobilisation in turn allowed it to exercise significant pressure and to actually widen its political opportunities on a national level.

As noted, the ACD became a powerful social movement until its leaders were forced, by direct threats as well as political games, to abandon the movement; and until the military coup plunged the country into a state of chaos. The shock doctrine (Klein, 2013) was repeated: the central government opened up for the transnational mining industry for the first time directly after Hurricane Mitch devastated the country; and for a second time began selling concession rights shortly after a military coup caused a man-made shock in Honduran society. The interim government immediately commenced negotiations with the industry, but it took almost three years for the issue of mining to resurface in 2012.

The ACD was dismantled by the movement's opponents and longer serves as the main platform of the anti-mining movement, but it is noteworthy that its replacement, the CNRAH, is compromised of the same organisations, whose perspective on mining remains the same. The current mining law has addressed several issues of the former, but the negotiation phase of the law revealed that the interests of the Honduran government and the anti-mining movement are simply incompatible and that mutual distrust has defined the character of negotiation. The CNRAH eventually left the negotiation table, whilst the Mining Law, the EITI and other initiatives proceeded -and continue to proceed- as planned by the government, as new laws are created that aim to facilitate the expansion of the extractive industry.

Although IDAMHO has initiated a legal campaign against the current Mining Law, it is widely felt that political opportunities are now lacking at the national level. As such, the main strategy of the Honduran anti-mining movement has shifted from organising mass protests towards preventive mobilisations of rural communities in declaring their municipalities 'free of mining'. The next two chapters highlight this new approach, as well as three recent cases of anti-mining struggles. As shall be seen, the current situation is more complex: next to an increase in foreign companies, unsupervised artisanal mining causes uncontrolled environmental damages, and Honduran mining companies, possibly linked to organised crime cartels, are using violent 'divide and conquer' strategies in order to manipulate or bypass community consultations.

Chapter 7 - Communities in Defence against the Mining Industry

3 case studies: mobilisation, scaling up resistance, and violent repression

Figure 11: Location of Case Studies

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I look closer into three cases of three recent anti-mining struggles by the affected communities, to a different degree supported by the anti-mining movement. In contrast to the anti-mining struggles detailed in Chapter 5, these cases all concern Honduran mining companies – new actors in the mining industry in Honduras. These companies are different from transnational companies in three respects: a) the scale of operations is smaller; b) these companies do not partake in international CSR treaties (e.g. The Cyanide Management Code); and c) being Honduran they are not under the scope of international watchdog organisations such as Mining Watch Canada.

The first case study describes how a well-organised community manages to ban a mining company with minimal help from outside actors. The second case study describes an environmental conflict within an indigenous tribe, one which has cost the lives of three protestors against antimony mining and logging. The last case study describes how a rural

community, supported by the MADJ, the Church as well as international actors, fails to prevent the instalment of a mining company in light of severe repression by both the company and the local authorities.

Although the cases I present all have very different outcomes, there are common elements to be found, similar to Chapter 5: for the communities involved a) a call for self-determination and b) the role of water in the defence of livelihood are important rallying cries; the companies always respond to mobilisation with a different degree of (a threat of) violence; and the authorities are either absent or work in favour of the industry, either way contributing to the escalation of conflict. These case studies reveal that without outside support, the balance of power favours the industry as such, that extractive activities can either take place without holding a consulta, or communities are violently coerced to accept. Hence, the legally established consulta before entering the exploitation phase becomes of little importance as a safeguard for fair decision making.

7.2 Case One: Banning a Mining Company from 6 de Mayo, Santa Bárbara

Introduction to Case One

This case tells the story of a community anti-mining struggle that played out from May to July 2013 in the municipality of 6 de Mayo, which consists of six communities with their own Patronato: 6 de Mayo proper, Flor de Mayo, El Paraiso, Valle de Angeles, Callejones and La Concordia. In April 2013, a company named ECADEH (Empresa de Calidad Ambiental y Desarrollo de Honduras)[86], solicited the municipality for permission to carry out prospection activities in the rural area north of the communities. Exploitation of antimony was deemed profitable and the Honduran mining company Génesis y Agregados moved in to extract antimony, meant for export to the United States, notably for use by the US Corps of Engineers. The company solicited a municipal permit for artisanal exploitation – a form of mineral exploitation without the use of heavy machinery. It obtained permission from the Patronato of La Concordia, the community adjacent to the concession, as well as from the Unidad Municipal Ambiental (UMA). Negotiations with the local landowner for the sale of his land were still in process, but this did not stop the company from appropriating the terrain and starting to dig for antimony.

When a concerned Patronato member from Flor de Mayo found out about the mine she contacted ASONOG. In the steps taken in the months that followed, the involved communities rallied against the mining company. Three months after its arrival in April 2013, the company left, leaving only a huge hole in the ground as a reminder to the landowner, who felt hard pressured and threatened to sell his land. The case stands example of a well-organised and early response to the entry of a company, factors that contributed to the rapid success of the community in banishing a mining company from their territory.

---

[86] Company of Environmental Quality and Development of Honduras

Rallying the Community against the Company

When Maria Magdalena, president of the Patronato of the nearby community of Flor de Mayo, gets notice of the mine she is alerted. Having over a decade of NGO work experience in OCDIH[87] she contacts ASONOG, a nearby partner organisation of OCDIH. ASONOG responds by sending an employee to a Patronato meeting organised by Magdalena in early June. Patronato members are present from all six communities of 6 de Mayo: 6 de Mayo proper, Flor de Mayo, El Paraiso, Valle de Angeles, Callejones and Concordia. Around 30 people occupy the community center. Before the start of the meeting I lend my copy of Galeano's 'Las Venas Abiertas de América Latina' (1971) to Josue, ASONOG's employee who is about to give the presentation. He opens the book and reads one of the title pages: 'Spain had the cow but others took the milk'. 'A good read', comments Josue. 'It is like that: we have the cow, but others take the milk'. He is convinced that the mining company, although it appears Honduran, is run by foreign capital[88].

In an informational meeting of over an hour Josue tells about various topics: the impacts of open-pit mining, the legal framework of mining and the past struggles of Civil Society to change the mining law, and the steps the community needs to take in order to block the installation of the mine. Josue begins by telling the history of the anti-mining movement: the struggles of the AC and the ACD, the proposed law that would have banned open-pit mining, and the threats directed at the leaders of the movement. He also tells about the process of socializing the new mining law, in which 'civil society has been ignored'. The history of the mining industry in Honduras is explained by Josue as being a result from the social, political and economic crises suffered by the country: both after Hurricane Mitch in 1998 and after the coup in 2009 the government began 'selling our country', a situation taken advantage of by the mining industry. 'Honduras is open for business' tells Josue in English, a rhetoric trick underlying his statement that Honduras is mostly open for business for foreigners.

In his speech about the impacts of mining, Josue draws heavily from his knowledge of what happened in Valle de Siria, San Andrés, and La Labor: he mentions the demolishment of churches and graveyards as took place in San Andrés, and refers to the health investigations carried out by Dr. Almendarez in Valle de Siria, with the serious health impacts they revealed. The PowerPoint presentation shows dead animals and people with skin infections, underlining his argument that the state is incapable of regulating a dangerous industry: 'there is no capacity for controlling the mining exploitation. It is not capable, it is a corrupt state', comments Josue. He uses La Labor, Ocotepeque as a proof that a united people can stop a company. 'However', Josue warns, 'the companies will do anything to convince you'. He warns that mining companies create internal conflict within the community via gifts, promises and stipends, something that can only be avoided by stopping a company before it has gained a foothold.

The informational meeting is not limited to a demonstration of the impacts of mining. Josue discusses technical details of open-pit mining operations, and discusses the articles in the

---

[87] Organización Cristiana de Desarrollo Integral de Honduras
[88] Génesis y Agregados has offices in the US, which makes Josue's claim very plausible. However, it is certainly no longer the case that all mining companies are foreign-owned.

mining law that he considers relevant for the community as well: most notably the right of the company to use unlimited water within and outside of the concession, and the *consulta* that is required before the exploitation phase. These two points are relevant in Josue's discourse: the company's legal right to unlimited water is presented as a direct threat to the communities, whilst the point on the consulta stresses that communities can legally reject a mine in their territory. Josue concludes:

> 'They will sack all there is. We do not want any more than that the communities defend their territories. Count on us, we are always there to support you, companions!'[89]

The community leaders are strictly advised not to organise a *cabildo abierto* (public council) before they have discussed the theme in their communities and rallied support. Everybody is given educational material: prints of the mining law with highlighted articles, as well as photos. Josue leaves his PowerPoint presentation to Magdalena - a presentation that will lead its own life and find its way to other communities affected by mining (box 1).

Confronting the Miners

Three weeks later, another *asamblea* (meeting) is organised by Magdalena in a local primary school building, a meeting that results in a unanimous reject of mining in front of the representatives of Génesis y Agregados. The inhabitants of 6 de Mayo are all invited, as well as the CEO of the mining company. Along with a few employees of ASONOG I am attending the meeting as well. The patronato members who attended the earlier meeting have spread the information given by Hector in their communities, of which over a 150 people have come to the school building to attend the meeting. The building is full; and outside people peek through the windows to be able to view the event. Photos of ill people from Valle de Siria are circulating amongst the crowd. The miners are sitting on a stage opposite to the community, microphones in their hand. The event is being filmed on camera.

The meeting stands example of absolute mutual distrust. Magdalena gives an introduction to the asamblea, saying that for her concern for the community's water supply she called for this meeting, for which the company, the communities, the church and NGO's are invited. The CEO of the mining company responds first: 'we are here because apparently Magdalena is concerned and is misinforming you'. As if they are one person, community members shout to the miners: 'we are all concerned!'

The company begins defending its position by employing a legal and technical discourse towards the community: the concession is obtained according to law, the company has received permission of the local authorities, will conduct an environmental impact assessment, and the company is only in the exploration phase. None of this is of any concern to the community however. A member of the local transparency committee stands up from the public, pointing towards the pictures of ill people in Valle de Siria in his hand, stating that this is what mining has left Honduras in the past. Another community member soon speaks up as well:

---

[89] Van a sacar todo lo que hay. No queremos más que las comunidades defiendan a sus territorios. Cuenten en nosotros, estamos siempre para apoyarles compañeros

'The water is of the communities. You cannot go and destroy it. (…) Mining in Honduras does not bring us anything good. We have the experience of Entre Mares: a massive destruction. There we have the exploitation of San Andres. It has changed completely the life of the community. (…) The water is life of the population. To defend the water is to defend life! What mining has left is misery. Ill people, dead already!'[90]

In response, the miners distance themselves from what happened at Valle de Siria by telling that this '*barbaridad*' (barbarity) was caused by a foreign company under an old mining law. The CEO of the company tries again:

'We will obey the law (…) our work is clean (…) we are here because we have an agreement, not only with you, but with God! We have nothing to hide, whilst there are opportunities for progress in this community, so that this country prospers little by little. We are Hondurans, and I also have the right to work!'[91]

The miners may have a right to work, but the community has the lawful right to decide whether or not it accepts the mining project. When the miners are done talking, a young man steps on the stage and takes the microphone. The miners try to stop him from speaking but they are shouted at by the community. The man gives a long speech, concluding with a few words directed at the miners: 'if you want to help us, leave us alone and go away from here!' He receives an ovation from the public, after which a teenage boy enters the stage. 'Mining exploitation yes or no?' he asks, followed by a loud and unanimous 'no'. The meeting ends: as we exit, an employee of ASONOG mentions that this is the best organised community meeting he has ever seen. The young man who earlier received a standing ovation for his fierce opposition to the miners speaks before the camera and denounced he has received anonymous death threats. He claims not to have any enemies; but that the threats started after the miners found out he was informing his community of the impacts of mining. 'These men are a disaster', he concludes. 'They come to threaten my people, to threaten the water'.

A declaration of opposition to the project now circulates and is signed by the crowd. To give the document legal weight, a number of articles from the Ley de Municipalidades and the Constitution are referred to in the document, notably to right to public assembly and article 24 in the Ley de Municipalidades (Municipal Law):

'Concerning the obligations of the populations: to participate in the safeguard of patrimonial assets and civic values, morals and cultures and to preserve the environment'.[92]

---

[90] El agua es de las comunidades. No se puede ir y destruirla. (…). La Minería en honduras no nos trae nada bueno. Tenemos la experiencia de Entre Mares. Una destrucción masiva. Allá tenemos la explotación de San Andrés, ha cambiado totalmente la vida de la comunidad. El agua es la vida de la población. ¡Defender el agua es defender la vida! Lo que ha dejada la minería es miseria. Gente enferma, ¡muerte ya!'.

[91] Vamos a someter a la ley (…) Nuestro trabajo es un trabajo limpio (…) estamos aquí porque tenemos un compromiso, no solo con ustedes, ¡pero con Dios! No tenemos nada que esconder, mientras hay oportunidades de progreso en esta comunidad. Para que este país poco a poco prospere. Somos hondureños, Yo también tengo el derecho de trabajar'.

[92] De sus obligaciones de las poblaciones: participar en la salvaguarda de los bienes patrimoniales y valores cívicos, morales y culturales y preservar el medio ambiente.

Box 5: visiting a mining-affected rural community

The men sit in a circle, discussing the status of their cattle. On the porch to the side are their wives, sorting out *frijoles* (beans) for the evening meal. When the *campesinos* (peasants) are done talking, I meet Don Pedro. He leads me through the village, to pause in the field where he cultivates *maís* (corn) y frijoles. The plot is part of a communal property, but has been awarded as a mining concession to a Honduran mining company. The company has been awarded four adjacent concessions of 1000 hectares, and without consulting the population already began digging for iron oxide in one of the concessions. Don Pedro, member of the *Junta de Agua* of the village, has formed a local environmental committee and resists the threat for the drinking water of the village and its communal land.

The region is known for its drug trafficking and the complicity of the local authorities in the trade. The owner of the mining company is a locally known drug lord, and puts the community in a difficult position: many wish the company to leave, but several families have debts standing with him. Don Pedro's oldest son, engaged in resistance against the mine, has escaped the community fearing for his life. The peasant, supported by IDAMHO, went to the capital several times to discuss the situation with INHGEOMIN, but without results so far. 'They do not respect us campesinos, neither in conversation nor in writing', comments Don Pedro.

It becomes dark and we are heading to Don Pedro's self-built house, where I will stay for the night. Chickens, ducks, geese, pigs, cats and dogs surround the house; a sleeping calf blocks entry to the front door. Don Pedro's youngest son shows me the garden and tells me which ones have medicinal attributes. The light is turned off early after a meal of tortillas, beans, cream, fresh cheese and avocado. Tomorrow morning we head out at 6.

The next morning, we walk to a nearby village to discuss the mining issue in a meeting of the regional Patronato: it also has other communities worried. On the way don Pedro shows me the water source: it springs from the hill here, and a self-made pipeline brings the water to the community. 'This water values more than iron and more than gold', comments Don Pedro. 'But it costs people to learn this'. When we continue, a motorbike passes us by, shortly after followed by a pick-up truck loaded with people. They are *indocumentados*: illegal migrants on their way to the US. Not only drug traffickers use this way north.

The Patronatos have gathered, as well representatives of the Catholic and Evangelical Churches, and the left-wing political parties LIBRE and UD (Union Democrática). During the meeting, a Patronato member shows a PowerPoint presentation about the impacts of open pit mining - the same presentation passed on by Josue to the Patronato of 6 de Mayo a month earlier. Concerned about the region's drinking water, the community leaders decide to stand united in their reject of the mining companies. On the way back, sitting in the trailer of a pick-up vehicle, the catholic priest talks with nostalgia about the days in which the ACD mobilised thousands of people against mining.

By framing the assembly as an act of defense of values and the environment, strengthened by an article from de Ley de Municipalidades, the mining project is framed to be a threat to local livelihoods and the environment, to which the community is legally obliged to respond to. We agree with Magdalena that she should present the document to the municipality, as part of a process to declare the congregation free of mining.

The meeting is a clear statement towards the company, but before the miners give up on their project in 6 de Mayo a second confrontation takes place, this time at the mining pit. Days before the second meeting I make an inspection of the mining site with Magdalena, the landowner, and a small team of ASONOG. Although the company did not come to an agreement with the landowner yet, it already began excavating: what was once a field meant for cattle grazing is now a hole of an estimated 30 meters wide and 12 meters deep. The creek that provides water to the communities downhill runs no more than 20 meters from the hole. Although the Ley Minería states that artisanal mining concerns manual techniques only (art. 89) heavy machinery was used to create a pit this size. The land was appropriated by the company based on a verbal agreement with the landowner, who changed his mind when he got notice that his community was against the concession.

Two days after the visit, the community sets out to inspect the mine and to confront the miners. A truck and a number of cars have been arranged to transport the people towards the mining site, a ride of half an hour up the hill. The president of the regional Patronato is also present. Magdalena called the meeting with the intention of allowing the major of 6 de Mayo to issue a final judgment on the situation; however he was absent. Representatives of the UMA were sent instead, along with the miners. In the ensuing discussion between three miners and 50 community members, the miners repeat the same arguments as before, as shown in the following quotation:

Figure 12: community members inspecting the mine. (Source: author)

> 'You took a decision in the assembly, but this decision is not grounded. It is not grounded because we as Hondurans also have the right to work. Let's await the study, so that you know of the environmental impact study, with all details, so that you can take a decision. But let's continue. We cannot make a decision like this (…) It will verify there is no single danger; therefore we can implement the development program we have'.[93]

---

[93] Tomaron una decisión en la asamblea, pero esta decisión no está sustentada. No esta sustentada porque también nosotros como Hondurenos tenemos el derecho de trabajar. Esperemos el estudio, para que conocen de este estudio de impacto ambiental, con todos detalles, para que puedan tomar una decisión. Pero, continuemos: no podemos tomar una decisión así. Se comprueba que no hay ningún peligro, entonces nosotros podemos implementar nuestro programa de desarrollo que tenemos

The miner's discourse employs various aspects: it calls upon the community to accept the authority and scientific knowledge of the environmental impact study, and it calls for recognition of his right to work. By naming the mining project a development program he consciously frames mining as an activity that brings, to use his own words, prosperity and progress. At the same time however, the miners put pressure on the landowner by going to court and demanding a compensation of 2 million lempira's (100,000 US$) as compensation for the lost investment if the community disagrees. Backed up by his community, the landowner speaks up against the miners:

> 'I told you that, if the communities do not want, I will not be against the community. I feel threatened; I want to leave the country already because I am afraid. They took a photograph of my family from a black SUV; it was parked at my family. Therefore I, what I want, let us stop this. Let us stop this. Do you know why? These two men, I know them, they have threatened me'.[94]

The miners do not respond to this, instead repeating their argument of conducting an environmental impact study. But again, the meeting ends with the community pronouncing itself fervently against the mine. In a last, but failed, effort to convince the landowner, they contacted his son who lives in the United States. Nevertheless, after this event the miners are not seen again in 6 de Mayo.

Discussion

Although Génesis y Agregados ultimately had no choice but to accept the decision of the community, the case of 6 de Mayo shows that it is not due to the consulta established in the mining law. The mining company's discourse of 'respecting the law' notwithstanding, it did not respect any lawful procedure. Land was appropriated by the company without any kind of formal agreement, no environmental studies were carried out before mining activities started, machinery was used in what was permitted by the local UMA as an artisanal mining exploration, and different people were being intimidated. These things were not left unnoticed by the community, fueling distrust that could not be diminished by the company's promises of development and denials of any risk of contamination.

Instead of the process stipulated by law, the success of the community in blocking the company stems from local leadership, organisation, and unity. Notable in this case are the leadership and organising capabilities of Magdalena: she was swift to contact ASONOG, played an important role in the diffusion of the information received by the NGO, and successfully organised a series of events in which the community pronounced its voice in front of the company. Of all the arguments provided by ASONOG in its informational meetings, one especially resonates with the community: mining puts the water at risk. Like fear for water contamination was the main reason for La Labor and surrounding communities to resist a mining project in 2004 (see Chapter 5), water, being linked with health and

---

[94] 'yo les dije que, si las comunidades no quieren, yo tampoco voy a estar en contra de la comunidad. Yo me siento amenazado me quisiera ir del país ya porque tengo miedo. Tomaron una fotografía de mi familia desde una camioneta negra, estaba parqueado donde mi familia. Entonces yo, lo que quiero, vamos a parar esto. Vamos a parar esto. Saben por qué? Estos dos señores, y yo les conozco, me han amenazado'.

livelihood, became a unifying factor and a leitmotiv for resisting the eminent mining project in 6 de Mayo. Total distrust in both the company and the government led to a unanimous reject of the project before any proposed Environmental Impact Assessment could be done.

7.3 Case Two: Tribal Affairs, Resource Extraction and Martyred Defenders in San Francisco de Locomapa, Yoro

Introduction to Case Two

The following case describes the struggle of a divided Tolupán tribe in the department of Yoro to defend its territory from logging and antimony mining companies. The Tolupanes live in 32 remote tribal villages scattered throughout the department of Yoro, totaling around 15.000 people. The ethnic group has a long history of marginalisation. In colonial Honduras, the Tolpanes/Tolupanes (or Xicaques/Jicaques) managed to resist enslavement and Christianisation by the Spanish until well into the 19th century. Xicaque is a term that was initially used by Spanish settlers to describe non-Christianized or 'savage' indigenous populations, and is still used by non-indigenous locals when they refer to the Tolupán people. In order to avoid the Spaniards, the Tolupanes gradually withdrew further into mountainous and remote territories. The last retreat into deeper mountain forests occurred in the mid 19th century, during a time of increased international demand for sarsaparilla beverages[95]. The Tolupan people were militarily forced to collect sarsaparilla roots and bring them to the coast for shipment (Chapman 1985), but many escaped by retreating deeper into remote areas. Following the decline of the sarsaparilla market, coffee growers and lumber companies moved in the Tolupán territories, after which many Tolupanes lost their land and became wage laborers (Chapman 1985). As is shown with this case study, the marginalisation of the Tolupán people is as real today as it was in the past.

The identity of most of the companies sacking wood and minerals from the tribe's territory is unknown, although they are expected to be Honduran. A group of members of the tribe as well as other residents from the area were resisting resource extraction from their territory for years, receiving support and becoming part of the MADJ since 2010. The MADJ is a social movement that was sparked by four prosecutors working in the Public Ministry. They went in a hunger strike in 2008 to protest against the widespread corruption within the ministry. The hunger strike was repeated in various parts of the country, giving birth to MADJ. In the turbulent year that followed, MADJ had a key role in the protests against the military coup and in the formation of the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (FNRP). ERIC-Radio Progreso on the other hand is a Jesuit social organisation that uses its radio station to provide an 'alternative voice', providing educational radio programs and denouncing acts of corruption and human rights violations.

The struggle of the protestors belonging to MADJ stands opposite to the decision of the tribe's leaders not to meddle with the business interests. This divided the tribe between proponents and opponents and led to an escalation of events in August 2013: the protestors

---

[95] A soda that is also considered a 'root beer'. At the time it was popular in Mexico and the US-Midwest

were banned from the tribe by the leaders of the tribe; in response the protestors began a roadblock to prevent access to the loggers and miners; and ultimately the protest was ended by hired gunmen opening fire on the blockade, killing three people. The remaining protestors left the community and went into hiding. The identity of the businessmen is unknown; despite repeated calls by the MADJ the authorities never intervened; and the murderers were left to roam around for months. This suggests that acts of corruption played a significant part in the development of the situation.

Mining Murders in the News

Honduran newspapers report murders on a daily basis, covering one or two pages with bloody images or portraits of the victims. Usually, one is left to guess about the exact reason for their deaths or the motivations of the murderer. Therefore it was all the more striking when on the 26th of August 2013 the national newspapers headed 'Assassinations of Tolupanes for opposing the mine' (La Tribuna) or 'they assassinate three Tolupanes for opposing illegal logging in Honduras'[96] (La Prensa). The news of the murder of three indigenous protestors against mining and logging was rapidly picked up by both Honduran and international social movements and NGO's and quickly spread in various Latin American newspapers.

According to newspaper reports, a group of around 150 people from the indigenous community of San Francisco de Locomapa in the department of Yoro were maintaining a roadblock, blocking passage of the vehicles transporting antimony and wood from their territories. They identified themselves as belonging to the MADJ. After almost two weeks of blockade and death threats faced by the protestors, two men on motorbikes demanded passage. They drew guns, dispersed the protest, chased the brothers Armando Fúnez Medina (44) and Ricardo Soto Fúnez (40) into a nearby house, and shot them dead. Upon witnessing the massacre that took place in her house, María Enriqueta Matute (71) was murdered as well.

It was due to the proclamations of solidarity by a number of movements and NGO's that a fatal protest in a remote indigenous village in Honduras the protest became international news within a day. When the violence took place, I stayed in neighboring El Salvador attending a meeting of the Mesa Nacional Frente la Minería Metálica (MNFMM). News of the blood spilt in San Francisco de Locomapa did not pass the Salvadorian anti-mining movement unnoticed; and the Salvadorian roundtable quickly pronounced its solidarity with the conflictive struggle in Honduras. The day after the killings, the CNRAH published a statement heading 'Mining keeps snatching away lives in Honduras'[97]; holding the state responsible and claiming the violent event to be a consequence of the recently approved mining law. The Canadian NGO Rights Action, receiving regular updates from the Honduran environmental movement, also published on the fatal protest in the Tolupan community. RNDDH (Red Nacional de Defensores de Derechos Humanos), CPTRT (Centro de Prevención, Tratamiento y Rehabilitación de Víctimas de la Tortura y sus Familiares), COPINH, OFRANEH (Organización Fraternal Negra Hondureña) and ODHPINH (Observatorio de los Derechos

---

[96] Asesinatos Tolupanos por oponerse a la mina; asesinan a tres tolupanes por oponerse a la tala ilegal en Honduras (they assassinate three Tolupanes for opposing illegal logging in Honduras)
[97] La minería sigue arrebatando vidas en Honduras

Humanos de los Pueblos Indígenas de Honduras)[98] also denounced the situation. The latter two proclaimed that the death of the indigenous protestors is an outcome of 'the war for the exploitation of the commons they are privatising in Honduras'[99]: a clear political message in which they hold the state ultimately responsible for what happened.

For months I had been hearing reports of intimidations and death threats against anti-mining activists and protestors. Moreover, only one month earlier another indigenous protestor, Tomás Garcia, had been killed by a soldier at a confrontation during a demonstration of COPINH against a hydroelectric project being installed in indigenous territory. As such, the news did not come as a surprise. Nevertheless at the time I thought the event would spark a turning point in the debate on mining in Honduras, and I hoped to be able to make a contribution by documenting the testimonies of affected community members. I decided to let the case rest for the time being, but felt it was necessary to investigate further.

The Position of the Authorities

Six weeks later, and four days before travelling to Yoro to learn more out what happened, I enter the office of INHGEOMIN's minister-director Aldo Santos to conduct an interview for my project of 'studying the role of the mining industry in the development of Honduras'. After 45 minutes of discussing the mining law and the necessity of expanding the mining industry, I ask him:

> M: At the end of august there was an accident we could say. I read in the newspapers a case of the Tolupanes in Yoro, that there were three deaths. What happened there?

> S: How good you bring up this question. The mining sector has many enemies. I want to tell that the topic of the Tolupanes, a Honduran ethnicity (..) was not exactly about a mining project. But hydro-electric. Water energy. (..)They were opposing exactly because one or two hydroelectric projects were authorized by SERNA. They were invading territories that ancestrally belong to them. There was not one mining related issue, it does not exist. (..) We do not have concessions in indigenous territories. There are none. I can establish that like exact science. The case of the Tolupanes was, entered an armed conflict, unfortunately died these three Hondurans, but it had nothing to do with any mining activity. (..) I, what position do I have? Yes, I regret the blood of the people, because God gave us these lands to exploit in a respectful way. (..)The tribal groups, the forests, lands of the tribal groups, or tribes, must have special care from the state. And one of the things in relation to having special care is the new law, which is one of its advantages as well; it establishes that Honduras cannot grant concessions in areas reserved via convention 169. The tribal groups.

> M: without their permission right.

> S: that is how it is.[100]

---

[98] National Network of Human Rights Defenders, Centre of Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture Victims and their Families, Fraternal Black Honduran Organisation, Observatory of Human Rights and Indigenous Peoples of Honduras

[99] la guerra por la explotación de los bienes comunes que se está librando en Honduras

[100] N: al fin de Agosto había como un accidente se puede decir. Yo leí en las noticias de un caso de los Tolupanes en Yoro, que hay tres muertos. ¿Qué pasó ahí?

The state's highest authority on mining contradicts with the newspaper reports and the statements of MADJ, by claiming no incidents around mining have ever occurred. I started wondering: are the newspaper reports based on false information? Is the minister himself misinformed, or is he well aware that he is not telling me the truth? Nevertheless it is curious that one of his first comments on my question was that 'the mining sector has many enemies'. This statement, although not directly related to answering the question, implicitly contains the accusation that 'the enemies' of mining have consciously twisted the facts, turning a fatal anti-dam protest into a fatal anti-mining protest in order to generate negative publicity for the mining sector.

Upon visiting Yoro, I learned that the protest did center on the extraction of both wood and antimony. But it is of secondary concern whether or not the protest was anti-mining, anti-logging, or anti-dam. After all, the Honduran constitution (art. 346) says the following:

> 'It is the duty of the State to dictate means of protection of the rights and interests of the indigenous communities existing in the country, especially in the lands and forests where they are seated'[101].

INHGEOMIN's minister-director Aldo Santos discourse does not match with what happened on the ground: mining-related violence did occur (and not only in Locomapa, as the next case study will detail) and the legal consulta does not guarantee a fair process. However, he is technically right in the sense that no mining concession is given on land that is registered as indigenous, at least in the case of San Francisco de Locomapa. This is a tricky part however, in the case of artisanal mining, neither concessions nor environmental studies are required, avoiding regulations on indigenous territory and avoiding environmental controls. A company can directly appeal to the local major for a license to exploit. Once the license is given, a copy is sent to INHGEOMIN for verification. This step was probably not made, and the fact that artisanal mining has no INHGEOMIN supervision makes it very susceptible to local practices of corruption.

The Position of the Tolupán Leaders

My investigation on the possible mining conflict in Yoro began with visiting FETRIXY's office. Each tribe has an elected board of *dirigentes* (leaders). The tribes in turn are organised

---

S: quiero contarle algo. Qué bueno que usted trae esta pregunta. La minería tiene muchos enemigos. Quiero contarle que el tema de los Tolupanes, una etnia hondureña.(..).no fue precisamente por un proyecto minero. Pero un hidroeléctrico. Energía hídrica.(..).Ellos estaban oponiéndose precisamente uno o dos hidroeléctricas que han sido autorizadas por la SERNA. Estaban invadiendo a los territorios que ancestralmente pertenecen a ellos. No ha habido ningún trámite de materia minera, no existe.(..). No tenemos una concesión minera en terrenos de indígenas. No hay. Lo puedo establecer a ciencia cierta. El caso de los tolupanes fue, entrado un conflicto armado, murieron lastimosamente estos tres hondureños, pero no tenía nada que ver con la actividad minera.(..). Yo, ¿qué posición tengo? Sí lamento la sangre de las personas. Porque Dios nos dio estas tierras para explotarlos, de modo ser respetuoso.(..). Los grupos tribales, los bosques, las tierras de los grupos tribales, o tribus, deben tener especial cuidado del parte del estado. Y uno de las cosas en relación de tener especial cuidado es que la nueva ley, eso es una de las ventajas también, establece que Honduras no puede otorgar concesiones en áreas apartadas en el convenio 169. Los grupos tribales.
N: sin su permiso verdad.
S: así es.
[101] es deber del Estado dictar medidas de protección de los derechos e intereses de las comunidades indígenas existentes en el país, especialmente de las tierras y bosques donde estuvieron asentadas'

in FETRIXY (Federación de Tribus Xicaques de Yoro), which serves as an umbrella organisation for the Tolupan people as a whole. 'I hope they speak Spanish!' joked the taxi driver when I asked him to bring me to FETRIXY. In reality, only one of 32 tribes has managed to keep the Tol language alive, although in informal conversations at FETRIXY many expressed to me their desire to learn their language from the few elderly people who still speak it. Upon entering the building, I read FETRIXY's mission statement, saying

> 'To achieve a tribal development congruent with the Tolupán cosmo-vision, based on the harmonic use of the earth and the natural resources'[102]

The mission statement gave me the impression that FETRIXY must have supported the protest. But I was wrong: speaking with FETRIXY's president, I realize the conflict is much more complicated than I had initially expected. The actual mining concession is located outside of-but next to- the area over which the tribe of San Francisco de Locomapa has territorial rights. The mining company's trucks pass indigenous territory, but the local *dirigentes* had decided not to take steps against the mining and logging activities. However, a small group of local inhabitants opposed these projects. To my surprise, FETRIXY's president speaks with hostility about this group of protestors. 'The tribe has its own laws', he repeats a number of times, 'and they broke the *ley interno* (internal law) by entering in protest against the decision of the majority'. Moreover, MADJ and non-tribal residents of San Francisco de Locomapa are blamed for interfering with issues of the tribe's concern, and for using the tribe's name for the promotion of their own agendas. Later that week a first meeting would take place between MADJ and the indigenous leaders, a relevant meeting for which he invites me over.

Although criticising the protest, FETRIXY's president speaks with concern about the mining issue. 'It may bring a lot of wealth', he says, but I have also heard it has many negative consequences. Do you have more information about this?' I decide to bring him in touch with the local MRIGR.

Before attending the meeting between MADJ and the Tolupan leaders, I make a visit to San Francisco de Locomapa, a village of around 1200 people. Together with a cousin of a Mesa member, sitting at the back of a dirt bike, I head out to the indigenous village to seek out the tribe's dirigente, a ride of over two hours via dirt road in which we cross hills, forest and streams. Via connections of the regional Mesa de Gestión de Riesgos I manage to receive the name of the dirigente of the tribe. Sitting on a porch in San Francisco de Locomapa with the dirigente of the tribe, I explain the intentions of my research and my interest in learning about the tribe's history of resistance against mining. 'Resistance'?' she comments. 'You talk about MADJ and Radio Progreso, they are Resistencia[103]. It is regrettable that they came and destroyed the tribe'. Her account is very similar to what I had heard in FETRIXY before. Whilst the tribe's *asamblea* (board of dirigentes) had approved logging, it had not made a decision about mining. As the mineral extraction takes place outside the area awarded to the tribe, the tribal leaders maintained that the tribe has no right to decide on the matter.

---

[102] alcanzar un desarrollo tribal congruente con la cosmovisión Tolupán, basado en el uso harmonico de la tierra y los recursos naturales'
[103] 'They are Resistencia', is a possible reference to the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular, the social movement that emerged as a response to the military coup of 2009. MADJ was involved in its foundation.

Nevertheless, some of the tribe's members, who were 'being used' by MADJ, opposed the position of the asamblea. A minority of the tribe, along with community not belonging to the tribe, actively opposed resource extraction projects in the territory. For ignoring the ley interno of the tribe, for following the leadership of non-indigenous people, and for leaving the community 'totally divided', the asamblea decided to expel the dissidents from the tribe. Their expelling is not to be seen as direct physical displacement, but stripping them from tribe membership and having a voice within the community. It was seen as the only measure capable of restoring order and unity within the tribe. Nevertheless, in response to their *expulsión* (banishment) the dissident group started a road blockade. According to the tribe's leadership this was done not to block access, but '*por el pisto pues*' (for the money), demanding a toll payment for anyone seeking passage.

Curiously, none of the people I speak to mentions anything about the assassinations that took place nearly two months before. When ask about it, people would give a short reply, quickly shifting to another subject.

Although blaming the MADJ for the tribe's peculiar situation, she and the other community members that joined the conversation also express other concerns. Community members comment that the nearby river, Rio Guaymon, used by the community, has changed color and is now contaminated with antimony. People claim not to know the identity of the miners: they only negotiate via intermediaries. Via these intermediaries, the miners offered to build a paved road and a health centre, offered 10.000 lempiras (500 US dollars) to the dirigente to buy her support, and offered to pay to the community 1000 lempiras (50 US dollars) for every ton of material extracted.

The marginalised state of this village is evident and a cause of concern of its inhabitants. Infrastructure (roads, water, and electricity) and schools are absent, and the remote location only further contributes to the marginalised state of the tribe. Moreover, people express concerns about non-indigenous landowners encroaching on tribal land, and the outflow of young people due to emigration to the city and intermarriage with non-indigenous. 'The major knows about the situation that we live in. Here we are forgotten we indigenous. Here we are forgotten, I tell you'[104], concludes the leader of the tribe.

The Reunion

In a meeting room in a monastery in Yoro the indigenous leaders meet with representatives of the MADJ. The delegation of San Francisco de Locomapa and FETRIXY representatives take their seat on the opposite side of MADJ members: white and ladino Hondurans from San Pedro Sula, equipped with laptops, voice recorders and cameras. The Tolupán leaders start the discussion by accusing MADJ of being solely responsible for the division within the community and the murders. MADJ responds that they were approached by community members themselves, and asks the Tolupán leaders to denounce the assassinations of the '*defensores martirizados*' ('martyred defenders)' and to revoke the expulsion of its community members. FETRIXY however expresses doubts about denouncing the

---

[104] El alcalde sabe la situación que vivimos nosotros. Aquí estamos olvidados nosotros indígenas. Aquí estamos olvidados le digo yo'.

assassinations, expecting the state to ignore them and fearing further reprisals. In defense of their involvement in the struggle in Locomapa, one MADJ member argues:

> 'One does not understand why in these rich places live people so poor. And that contrast moves us. That is the MADJ. We are interested in that the indigenous peoples in this country decide for their own future, a different future. With all the mineral wealth that you have, water wealth that you have, why do you not convert that in the social formation of your own? Why, if you approve for the exploitation of these resources, why do you not do it yourself? And there are mechanisms, compañeros, how to apply the consulta. If you decide to administrate the forest, if you decide to administrate the water yourselves, you could be the promoters of your own transformation.'[105]

Essentially, this monologue of the MADJ is a plea for self-determination. A desire for self-determination is what sparked the initial protest and is what brought the MADJ to support it.

At the end of the meeting, the atmosphere is less hostile. However, distrust does not dissolve with one meeting. Before heading back to FETRIXY in his brand-new SUV, the Federation's president comments to me: 'they made the mistake of not working with us from the beginning'.

The Position of MADJ and ERIC-Radio Progreso

The following week I visit MADJ in San Pedro Sula and ERIC-Radio Progreso in nearby El Progreso. These two organisations maintain close ties. As I expected, their version of what took place does not completely add up with the version of the tribal leaders. According to MADJ and ERIC-Radio Progreso, the three murders have to be seen in the light of a history of violence against the tribe. Since the 1980's, fourteen members of the tribe of San Francisco de Locomapa have been murdered for being involved in struggles for land rights and against logging activities in their territory. The latest conflict has a history of at least ten years. Unauthorized logging activities began in the 2000's. After years of illegal activity Kenton Landa, the *empresario* (businessman) behind the logging activities, received a formal logging permit by the ICF in 2011. It was also approved by the tribal leaders, according to them via a community assembly. However, the dissident group claims that whilst a sales agreement was made for 2000 m3, 5500 m3 is being exploited by the *madereros* (lumberers), and this is known by the dirigentes of the tribe. In a letter of 2010, written to the ICF, they write that

> 'Instead of gaining as a tribe this is destroying us because we stay without forest and soon without water because it will become scarce. We who are owners we do not take notice and this only benefits a group and as the majority we do not benefit in any way.'[106]

---

[105] Uno no entiende por qué, en estos lugares tan ricos, vive gente tan pobre. Y ese contraste nos mueve a nosotros. Eso el movimiento para la dignidad y justicia. Estamos interesados en que los pueblos indígenas de este país decidan por su propio futuro, un futuro distinto pues. Con toda la riqueza de minerales que tienen, riqueza de agua que tienen, ¿por qué no se convierte esto en la formación social de ustedes? ¿Por qué, si ustedes aprueben al aprovechamiento de los recursos, porque no lo hacen ustedes mismos? Y hay mecanismos compañeros y compañeras, como se aplique la consulta. Si ustedes deciden administrar el bosque, si deciden a administrar el agua ustedes, pueden ser los promotores de su propia transformación.

[106] En vez de ganar como tribu eso no está destruyendo porque nos estamos sin agua porque se va a escasear..nosotros que somos dueños no nos damos cuenta y eso solo beneficia a un grupo y la mayoría no nos beneficiamos de ninguna manera.

In February 2012, these members of the tribe faced legal charges for obstructing logging activities. Antimony extraction also occurred in the 2000's under the former Mining Law, and was likewise met with resistance from within the community. Whatever be the reason, mining halted for a time. Six years later, with rising antimony prices on the world market, the empresarios reopened their mines.

The leader of the dissident group lives in San Francisco de Locomapa, but is not considered part of the tribe– a cause of distrust with the tribal leaders. He and his group sought the support of MADJ in 2010. With MADJ's support, the group started denouncing the practices of 'illegal logging' on a national scale, writing letters to various ministries such as SERNA and SPIA, demanding state intervention[107]. Initially, hundreds of community members opposed the extraction of wood and minerals from their territory, but the cause gradually lost supporters. According to MADJ

> 'this situation has intensified when they received a quantity of money – the directives of the tribe. And there from the directive they were providing 100 lempiras 200 lempiras to every indigenous person. And so that is the situation where many people do not speak'[108]

A local armed gang, La banda de los Matute, was also formed and operated on behalf of the empresarios, intimidating and threatening the protestors. MADJ and ERIC-Radio Progreso maintain that the major of Yoro has financial ties with the empresarios, and that a military colonel stationed in Yoro has provided the gang with firearms. Hence, a combination of stipends, threats of violence, and involvement of local authorities seems to have considerably weakened the protest. In the words of a journalist of Radio Progreso, who investigated the case:

> 'Many people have fear. Fear to die, to lose their life. Because everybody in Locomapa knows, who is the family of thugs, those who are threatening, who have made themselves powerful due to their weapons, right, that they have received. You can notice that Locomapa is an impoverished area, the people live in poverty. So the situation forces them right, it forces them. With whom do I go, with the poor, of with those who have control around here?[109]

Nevertheless, a core group of 20 people, both Tolupán and non-indigenous, kept on protesting. When the armed gang started appearing and the protestors started receiving death threats in July 2013, they alerted the police. Radio Progreso publicly petitioned the state in early August to intervene before the situation would escalate, but all proclamations were ignored by the authorities involved. After being banished from the tribe, in a final attempt to resist the extraction of wood and antimony, the local protestors started a road blockade which they held for almost two weeks –until the gang intervened. The murderers are identified as Selvin Matute and Carlos Matute – they are members of the tribe – and an arrest warrant was

---

[107] Secretary of Natural Resources and the Environment, Secretary of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Hondurans
[108] Está situación ha habido intensificado que ya han recibido una cantidad de dinero – la directiva de la tribu. Y allá desde la directiva se estaba proporcionando 100 lempiras 200 lempiras a cada indígena. Y entonces esta es la situación donde mucha gente no habla.
[109] mucha gente tiene miedo. Miedo a morir, a perder la vida. Porque todo el mundo sabe en Locomapa, que es tal familia de matones, que es son los que amenazan..que se ha hecha poderosa por las armas, verdad, que han recibido..usted puede notar que Locomapa es una zona muy empobrecida, la gente vive en pobreza.. entonces la situación los pone verdad, los pone. Con quien me voy, con los pobres, ¿o con los que tienen el control aquí?

issued. However, they were never arrested by the police. In a news bulletin released by ERIC-Radio Progreso it is written that 'they are untouchable because they guard the interests of the grand plunderers of the tribe' (Mejia Guerra 2013).

This I did not know at the time of visiting the tribe- it is only with hindsight that I realize that my earlier visit to Locomapa was with greater risk than anticipated before, and why the people I spoke with were hesitant to speak about the murders.

One week after the assassinations, the leader of the dispersed protest found the following note in his house:

> 'We know where you are, but we are going to get you where it hurts you most. You do not know with whom you have messed, this is going to burn, so better prepare yourself. We warned you in time, we do not care less about eliminating someone, less so rats that are only good to fuck over. Attentively, your enemies![110]

The remaining protestors have since gone into hiding. Given the dangerous situation they face, and disinterest of the state to arrest the murderers, MADJ and ERIC-Radio Progreso brought the case to the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, with success: the petition for help has been approved and the protestors are – at the time of writing- benefiting from a protection program, and have recently been able to return to their community.

Discussion

When conflict runs so deep within a community it is probably impossible to reconstruct what exactly happened. Different parties have different opinions, and some may be consciously lying or hiding the truth – for strategic purposes or out of fear. Nevertheless, a picture emerges when one hears the story from different sides and when one takes into account the history of the tribe. The specific shape or aim of the struggle in Locomapa may vary from resisting land grabs to resisting resource extraction, but in essence it remains part of the same: the current conflict has to be seen in the historical context of an ongoing struggle against marginalisation and for self-determination, in which control over natural resources (whether land, timber, or minerals) forms a key dimension.

The context of lawlessness in Locomapa; power and knowledge inequalities between the tribe and the empresarios; and internal divisions within the community itself all contributed to how the conflict took its shape. Suspicions against local people who are not part of the tribe, bribes, threats, and state neglect led to a situation in which the community itself became the theater of conflict. Seeking support from MADJ was a strategy of the protestors to find outside support in a struggle they could not win on their own. MADJ provided the protestors with legal expertise and scaled up the visibility of the protest to an international scale. Nevertheless, it was unable to diminish the internal conflict that ultimately led to a disastrous ending.

---

[110] 'ya sabemos dónde estás, pero te vamos a dar donde más te duele. No sabes con quienes te has metido, esta va a arder, así que mejor prepárense. Se los advertimos con tiempo, nosotros para eliminar a alguien no pensamos, peor ratas que solo para joder son buenos'. Atentamente sus enemigos!'

Although the conflict has a history of several years, the state remained absent. Even after the murders there was no state intervention whatsoever, despite all the publicity it generated on a national and international level. It is impossible to prove the involvement of government officials, but the total neglect of the state is evident and is a determining factor in the conflict: it gave the empresarios unlimited room to maneuver, and left legal tools of the protestors useless. Both the MADJ and the tribe's leaders perceive the authorities as corrupt and compliant with economic interests rather than involved in improving the livelihoods of Locomapa's residents, a very plausible argument given the fact that the murderers were never captured.

Assuming bribes were accepted, the case shows that accepting bribes is sometimes an act of self-defense: people can choose between giving in and accepting a stipend, or resisting and putting their lives in danger. And who is to speak publicly about the murderers, when they continue to live in the same community? The banishment of the protestors from the tribe can be seen in this light: it was a desperate act of the tribal leaders to maintain the peace in an increasingly conflictive situation, and to exercise control over a divided tribe. But as events have shown, the tribe has not succeeded in escaping historic marginalisation. Self-determination remains out of sight for the Tolupan people of Honduras.

7.4 Case Three: Resistance to Mining and Violent Repression in Nueva Esperanza, Atlántida

Introduction to Case Three

Like the case of San Francisco de Locomapa, this case tells the story of an anti-mining struggle with that grew in scale but was met with violence, leading the community to eventually back down and agree to sell its and to the mining company. On the 12th of July 2012 the Honduran businessman Lenir Perez, owner of Alutech[111], a company producing iron products, and son –in law of the (in)famous oligarch Miguel Facusé[112], obtained a mining concession of a thousand ha. in a region known as La Florida, home to sixteen communities united in a single Patronato. When the inhabitants of the village of Nueva Esperanza (approximately 30 families) found out about the pending exploration by the company Sociedad Mercantil la Victoria in their territory, they initially mobilised themselves by holding a road block – which was ended after the police intervened and opened fire on the protestors. However, resistance continued and gained support from the neighbouring communities in La Florida, the regional Diocesis based in Tela, MADJ, ERIC-Radio Progreso, the CAVS as well as international human rights observers from the Honduras Accompaniment Program.

---

[111] Ironically given the actions of Lenir's mining business, the vision of Ulutech states: 'to establish ourselves as the best metal transforming industry in Central America, both in its social responsibility as well as the quality and excellence of its products' (www.alutech.hn).

[112] Owner of the Dinant Corporation (palm oil plantations and processing). Known for his involvement in the land conflict in the Bajo Aguan region that claimed the lives of over a hundred peasants.

Despite the widespread attention to the case, and despite repeated pleas made to the authorities to interfere and to revoke the concession, the mining project proceeded. Instead of allowing a public referendum as stipulated by law, death threats were aimed at the leaders of the protest and the mine's security guards armed with automatic weapons went in and occupied the village, terrorizing the local population. Eventually, the villagers sold their land due to the pressure. This case shows that although resistance may be successful in the sense of being near-unanimous and multi-scalar, its chances of success are negligible when the opposing actor is able and willing to use violence as a means of pressure, whilst the local and national authorities are non-responsive or even complicit.

Initial Response & Scaling up Resistance

Under unclear circumstances, the empresario Lenir Perez obtained 27 hectares of land near the community of Nueva Esperanza. Tests were carried out and it was found that it is profitable to mine iron oxide from the area. Perez consequently solicited and obtained a mining concession of a thousand hectares at DEFOMIN. The local community was informed – not consulted – of his intentions, and an environmental impact study was presented to- and signed by the municipality of Tela[113]. It has to be noted that Lenir Peréz is man of influence and reputation, as summarized by a journalist of Radio Progreso:

> 'If they know that he is the son in law of Miguel Facusé, people already have fear. Miguel Facusé is a figure of a lot of repression, of money, of weapons. One knows of the situation in Bajo Aguan, of that many dead. The people have fear – it is very complicated'[114]

A health worker also moved into the area and was used by the mining company as a promoter of the mine, promising employment and motorbikes as well as wages of at least 9000 lempira's (450 US dollars) to the youth. A number of young people began to identify themselves as potential mine workers, creating conflict within the community. Nevertheless, the communities of La Florida, through Radio Progreso, announced their opposition to the mining project. In response a police post, consisting of six regular police and four men of the COBRA unit[115], was set up in the remote village of a 150 inhabitants. When the company tried to move in its machinery in May 2013, the community was alerted and prevented further access by putting up a road barricade. However, the police ordered the barricade to be removed because the community was 'violating the right to free access' of the company's vehicles.

In response to the occupation of their village by the police, the Patronato of La Florida sought the support of MADJ - a strong movement in the region. The MADJ, along with the Movimiento Ambiental de Atlantida (MAA)[116], supported by a number of local priests from the Catholic Church, began doing *capacitaciones* (training meetings) with the community

---

[113] The major of Tela is reported to have received 7 million lempiras (350,000 US$) for his support of the project
[114] Si se sabe que él es cuñado de Miguel Facusé, la gente ya tiene miedo' Miguel Facusé es una figura de mucha represión, de dinero, de armas. Se sabe de la situación del Bajo Aguan, de tantos muertos. La gente tiene miedo. Es bien complicado.
[115] Police special forces, modeled after- and trained by- the US SWAT
[116] Environmental Movement of Atlantida.

about the impacts of mining and on how to halt it via a legal process. These priests, as well as community members, went to Valle de Siria, San Andrés minas, and El Mochito in Las Vegas[117] to witness mining affected communities by themselves and to verify its impact. The network of the Catholic Church also ensured that Spanish documentary makers went to the community to document the struggle o the community. As commented by one priest in an interview with a Spanish documentary maker:

> 'Here we have in Honduras very sad experiences of contamination, of ill people with cancer, with skin diseases, because of the contamination of their waters, their rivers. They are situations in which there was no way for the government to control'[118]

This mention is clearly referring to the damages left behind in Valle de Siria, which the priest has seen with his own eyes. The dioceses of Tela also invited Carlos Amador of the CAVS himself to Nueva Esperanza, along with a number of inhabitants from there. In a meeting with the communities of La Florida, one lady from Valle de Siria told the crowd:

> 'It is an irreversible harm. We no longer have water, they dried out the creeks. It does not rain anymore because they brought down all the trees. We do not have where to wash anymore, where to take water to drink. And so it is that we are totally ruined'[119]

Communities can well imagine that without water they are ruined. The bishop of Tela took up the issue and tried to mediate, organising meetings between the community, the mining company, and representatives of INHGEOMIN. In a meeting in May 2013, INHGEOMIN's director Aldo Santos stressed that the community should not worry, for the company is only exploring -not exploiting. This is an argument heard more often in defense of a mining project, but is easily discarded by both communities and anti-mining actors: it is reasoned that if a company is so strongly interested in its exploration project, it can only be that it wants to continue exploiting. Hence, despite the intentions of INHGEOMIN to convince the population to be at ease, the outcome of these meetings was clear: the community rejected the mine, unwilling to give up its land and risking its water to be contaminated.

With a twist of irony, Carlos Amador of the CAVS noted in his speech toward the community of Nueva Esperanza:

> 'The fact that we go around with a hat, or a cap, or with humble shoes or humble clothes, does not mean we do not know how to defend what God has given us. And what has God given us? Nature. But in Honduras it is a sin to defend life'[120]

In Honduras it is a sin to defend life: those who defend their water, territory, and livelihood can expect to be punished for it. Amador can relate this to his own experiences of persecution

---

[117] El Mochito is, next to the exploitation at San Andrés, the only large-scale mining project currently operating in Honduras. It has been in operation for over 50 years and is no open-pit mine, and therefore has never been targeted by the anti-mining movement.

[118] Aquí tenemos en Honduras experiencias muy tristes de contaminación, de gente enferma con cáncer, con enfermedades en la piel, por la contaminación de sus aguas de sus ríos. Son situaciones de que no ha habido forma de que el gobierno controle.'

[119] 'Es un daño irreversible, ya no tenemos agua, se secaron las quebradas. Ya no llueve por que se cortaron todos los arboles. Ya no tenemos donde lavar, donde ir a coger agua para tomar. Y asi es que estamos totalmente arruinados.'

[120] 'el hecho que andemos con un sombrero, con una gorra, o con zapatos humildes o ropas humildes no es que no sabemos defender lo que Dios nos ha dado. ¿Y que Dios nos ha dado? La naturaleza (....) Pero en Honduras es un pecado defender la vida.'

for being an environmental activist. Unfortunately, his words also summarized what was coming ahead for the inhabitants of Nueva Esperanza: instead of respecting the decision of the community, violent methods were employed to 'convince' the community otherwise.

The Escalation of conflict

Death threats[121] directed at the president of the Patronato of La Florida and his family, as well as the priests involved in the struggle came as early as February 2012, long before machinery moved in. As a consequence, the priests had to withdraw from the area. Next, Lenír Pérez began buying the land surrounding the mining concession, up to an estimated 33 *manzanas* (approximately 23 hectares). Villagers report to have sold the land out of fear. A local 79 year old campesino was shot at by the police. After the community's Patronato denounced at the Public Ministry the illegal acts of the policemen involved, the authorities responded by transferring the involved policemen , only to be replaced by new police officers. Armed guards, reportedly belonging to the Orion security company[122], were stationed in the village to prevent access of the community to the mining site, after which they no longer knew what took place there. The mine's security guards also entered the village at night, firing their illegal automatic weapons[123] as means of intimidation.

In response to the hostilities, two international human rights observers from PROAH (Proyecto de Acompamiento Internacional de Honduras), through its connections with MADJ, went to stay with a local family. However, they were captured by 40 guards and mine workers armed with machetes and firearms. They were interrogated, driven to a village outside of the region, and released under the condition that they would be killed if they ever returned to Nueva Esperanza. A few hours later, the guards shot at the man who hosted the human rights observers. He and his family managed to flee from the community. Several people have since been displaced from the community, and the local school suspended classes as the local school teacher fled as well. Reporting extensively on the mining conflict, the monthly magazine of ERIC-Radio Progreso wrote that

> 'The petition of the children and parents is that the businessman Lenir Pérez retreats his armed men from the sector, for they seed terror and intimidate every person who disagrees with the death project that the businessman is boosting'[124]

In this act of public naming and shaming, 'death project' has a double meaning. It is first a reference to the open-pit character of the mine, seen as a source of contamination of the community's drinking water and source of life. Second, the project installed by Sociedad Mercantil la Victoria can be considered a 'death project' due to the extreme use of terror as a means to facilitate the continuation of the mining project.

---

[121] To give an example, an ill-written text message reading 'bamos a pedacear a bos i monja' (we will cut you and monk to pieces)

[122] Being connected with kidnapping, torture and murder of peasants in the Bajo Aguan region (FIDH 2011)

[123] In Honduras, firearms are generally legal but full-automatic weapons are prohibited for civilians

[124] La petición de los niños y padres de familia es que el Empresario Lenir Pérez retire a los hombres armados del sector, pues viven sembrando el terror e intimidando a toda aquella persona que no esta de acuerdo con el proyecto de muerte que impulsa el empresario'

These acts of violence and intimidation have all been reported by the community and the MADJ at the Public Ministry and INGHEOMIN. However, the Public Ministry has not acted upon the case; the police claims not to have seen anything; and INHGEOMIN simply responded that its task is not administrate mining and not to resolve social conflicts.

With a police post manned by ten officers in a community of 30 families, it is impossible that these acts were left unnoticed by the police. In an interview with Spanish journalists covering the mining conflict in Nueva Esperanza, an employee of a local radio station – with ties to Radio Progreso – commented that

> 'It is ironic because, supposedly the police exist to give security, but when one looks at the police one does not feel secure, rather one feels fear. Fear because many of them are complicit with the delinquents'[125]

The constant threat posed by the mining company's employees and the police force led to a sustained situation of fear. The mining conflict was also internalized within the community's families themselves: different young people believed the mine would bring them employment and other benefits. 'There they go threatening their own families. It is very tough, it is very tough', comments a spokesperson of the MADJ to me in an interview.

The situation which the villagers found themselves in led many to remember, and to associate it, with an earlier land conflict in the early 90's, where seven community members from La Florida were assassinated with impunity for resisting land grabs. Hence the name of the Spanish documentary made on the Nueva Esperanza mining conflict: Martires de la Tierra. The documentary did not help to resolve the situation: it was made before the situation escalated. Eventually, the villagers felt forced to sell their land and lost any supervision they could have on the mine. Nevertheless, for reasons unknown the mining project was abandoned in early December, and the major who backed the project has not been re-elected in the general elections on the 24th of November. As mentioned on the Facebook page set up by the community and MADJ: 'God has listened to the cry of its people (…) No to mining, yes to development without destruction!'

Discussion

Much like 6 de Mayo, Nueva Esperanza represents a case in which an alerted rural community resisted and sought help from other actors: in this case the MADJ and the Catholic Church, both institutions/organisations of importance in the region. The dioceses of Tela, MADJ and ERIC-Radio Progreso played a key role in the empowerment of the community, undertaking all possible steps: from studies of the mining law to travels towards other communities affected by mining. These organisations also actively scaled up of the scope of the protest towards an international level, by inviting Spanish documentary makers as well as international human rights observers. ERIC-Radio Progreso published articles on the situation, MADJ posted accounts on the internet in both English and Spanish, and a Nueva Esperanza Facebook page was launched, dedicated to the community's defense of its natural

---

[125] Es irónico porque, se supone que la policía es para dar seguridad, pero cuando uno mira la policía no se siente seguridad, más bien se siente temor. Temor porque muchos de ellos son cómplices de los delincuentes.

resources. The organisation of defense could not have been better. As concluded by a Radio Progreso journalist:

> 'It has been a broad process in which the Catholic Church, the environmental movements, the Broad Movement (MADJ), and other sectors have been involved in the sense of aiming to give elements to the population so that they have that self-determination'[126]

With so much involvement and international attention; as well as the community's legal right to say no to a mine, it is discomforting to note that repression did not diminish, but only increased. All authorities remained unresponsive over the duration of the conflict (a year)[127], and the installation of a heavily manned police post, with police firing at the villagers in different occasions, suggests that the police were there not to keep the peace but to protect the mining company from the community. This unresponsiveness or complicity of the authorities gives a lot of space to a company to manipulate a consulta (or ignore it) by any means it sees fit. A single article in the mining law, already tricky as the article is, does nothing to guarantee self-determination.

7.5 Conclusion

The three cases presented in this chapter all have very different dynamics and outcomes. Yet, a number of general conclusions can be drawn about both the workings of the extractivist complex and about the counter reactions of the affected communities.

To begin, despite their discourses of development and progress in neither of the cases weres the mining companies able to convince the involved communities. Instead of relying on communication and negotiation, a range of other methods were employed instead to reinforce the land claim of these companies: physical enclosure of the conceded territory, the acquisition of land through coerced land sales, the criminalization of protest by the police and legal system, unresponsiveness of the state towards violations by the involved companies, bribes to cause divisions, and the threat and use of terror. A striking example of the partiality of the state is the use of police aggression as a means to guarantee 'the right to free access', by a mining company, whilst it allows the same company to employ heavily armed guards to deny access to community members.

A related issue is the laissez faire attitude of the Honduran state. In neither of these cases did the Honduran state intervene, despite repeated calls by community members as well as the organisations backing them up. Calls for a fair decision making process, denunciations of death threats and armed groups entering the territory, the tragic assassination of three community members in San Francisco de Locomapa: nowhere did the state intervene whilst early intervention could have prevented the escalation of conflict. These cases reveal that the Honduran legal and penal system fails to protect its citizens on the most critical moments. Whether due to partiality, corruption, incapacity or disinterest, the absence of the state in the

---

[126] 'Ha sido un proceso amplio en la cual, la iglesia católica, es decir, los movimientos ambientalistas, el movimiento amplio, y otros sectores han estado involucrado en el sentido de pretender darle elementos a la población para que tengan esa autodeterminación'.

[127] Not also INHGEOMIN's director's statement in an interview that 'mining related issues do not exist' (see previous case study), even though he visited Nueva Esperanza himself

lawful resolution of tensions also gives space to these companies to employ violence in order to pursue their interests.

When noting that already in the exploration phase of a mining project the land is claimed by the extractivist complex, it becomes a logical consequence that the legally established consulta for the subsequent exploitation phase does not provide any safeguard for fair decision making. In the case of San Francisco de Locomapa, the tribal leadership was not aware of its right to consultation –therefore it simply did not take place. In the other two cases, the company sought to manipulate the consulta by coercing communities into accepting with the implicit or explicit threat of violence. The failure of this consulta can partly be contributed to the fact that it is established for exploitation phase instead of the earlier exploitation phase. The exploration phase of a mining project requires a significant investment of time and money: the company is dependent of exploitation for a return of investment. If a consulta were necessary before the exploration phase starts, there would not be a significant financial loss when a community rejected a mining project. Therefore, using illegal means to convince a community is perhaps more likely when a company runs considerable risk of losing its earlier investment.

These cases also reveal that artisanal mining permits can be used to avoid environmental and other controls by INHGEOMIN: artisanal mining does not require a mining concession but is directly negotiated with the local government – which is most likely more prone to corruption. In 6 de Mayo, this did not stop the mining company from using heavy machinery. In San Francisco de Locomapa, artisanal mining offers a way of resource extraction in indigenous territory, off limits for formal mining concessions.

The defense of territory – a widely heard discursive frame of communities involved in opposition to mining – stems from the aggressive methods of land claiming by these companies and the memories this invokes of past struggles of these communities over access to land and natural resources, struggles that claimed the lives of several community members who are now remembered as martyrs. Similarly, the fear of water contamination contributes to the view that the entry of a mining company violates the territorial integrity of these communities. In the cases of 6 de Mayo and Nueva Esperanza, this fear for water contamination led to a near-unanimous reject of mining and mobilisation of all communities concerned. Partly due to its isolated location, the mobilisation of additional communities failed in the indigenous community of San Francisco de Locomapa.

Communities should not be seen as monolithic entities: different positions exist and can form a catalyst in the escalation of conflict. In Nueva Esperanza, different young people began to identify themselves as future mine workers, threatening their own family members. In San Francisco de Locomapa, a similar community division was taken advantage of by the interests behind resource exploitation, leading to the banishment and assassination of local activists by their own community members. Compared to these cases, the smooth success of the anti-mining struggle in 6 de Mayo can partly be attributed to the community's unity against the mining company – unity that was enforced by a generalised fear for water contamination as well as group pressure.

When state institutions fail to guarantee a fair process and fail to manage conflict, and when companies are prepared to use the threat and use of violence as a means of furthering one's interests, mobilising new actors and scaling up protest to national or even international levels is the only way for a community to win the struggle. In this process, anti-mining organisations acts as catalysts, using their transnational network to connect Honduran rural communities with international solidarity organisations or human rights watchdogs. In 6 de Mayo, a very swift call for help to ASONOG (and possibly my own presence as an 'international observer' during community-miner confrontations) led to a relative swift success of the community. In Nueva Esperanza, the Church, media, social movements as well as social movements were mobilized. Although mobilisation was met with criminalization and violence, it was again countered by the anti-mining movement with an up-scaling of protest by denouncing these violations internationally and by gaining the support of international human rights organisations. In the indigenous village of San Francisco de Locomapa, this strategy was perhaps employed too late: only after corruption, community divisions, and escalating violence had turned the scales too much in favour of the economic interests behind the extraction of wood and antimony.

Chapter 8 - A Renewed Struggle against Mining

new players and new strategies: mobilising the grassroots in defense of community and territory
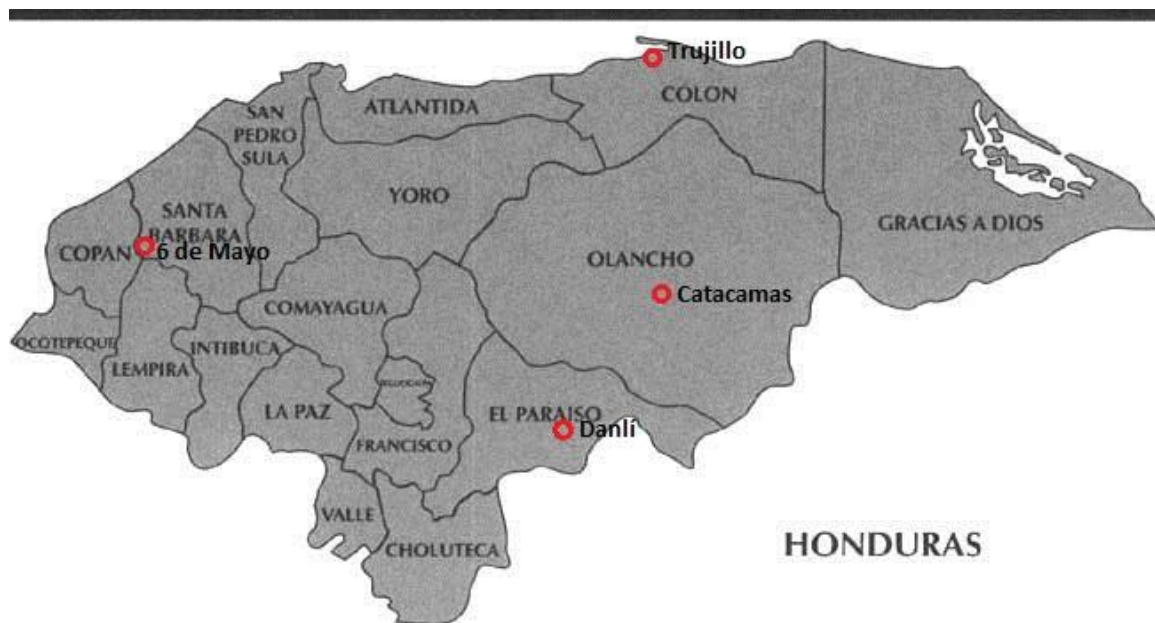

Figure 13: attended community trainings on mining

8.1 Introduction

Now lacking major political opportunities on the national level, the actions of the anti-mining movement have largely shifted from working on a national level back towards working with the communities where mining concessions are located. Experiencing the recent establishment of national and foreign mining companies in their territory, the number of local organisations involved in the anti-mining struggle has grown significantly. MADJ, mentioned before in the previous chapter, is a notable new actor. Although Caritas has moved towards cooperation with the mining industry towards 'responsible mining'[128], other segments of the Catholic Church are still supporting the cause. In the new strategy of the anti-mining movement, municipalities are declared free of mining in preventive actions, and communities trying to resist a mine already in the process of installing are empowered on their legal right to reject a mining company in their territory. This has proven an effective strategy in declaring over 20 municipalities free of mining. I have to note though that although this work leaves

---

[128] http://semanariofides.com/2014/02/14/mineria-en-honduras-riesgos-u-oportunidades/

communities empowered and vigilant, it remains to be seen whether or not the action of declaring a municipality 'free of mining' has any legal validity.

This chapter is divided in two sections. First, I go into the preventive work of the anti-mining movement with the communities where mining concessions are located, in its effort to mobilise these communities against the industry and declare their municipalities free of mining. In this section I pay attention to the discursive frames of the anti-mining movement, as well as the disposition of rural communities towards 'defending their territory' and siding with the anti-mining movement. Water, in its physical, symbolic and discursive dimensions has a central role.

In the second part I highlight a series of notable threats to grassroots activism. I go into the perceived and real dangers of anti-mining activism in Honduras: different activists have received death threats or feel otherwise threatened due to the position they are advocating. Here it is argued that certain opponents of the anti-mining movement consciously provoke generalised fear as a means to prevent the movement from achieving its objectives. Another recent development that limits the space of the anti-mining movement is the entry of drug cartels into the mining sector: at least one case is proven, but reports are more wide spread. Fearing fatal repercussions, certain communities allegedly affected by narco-mining (legal and illegal firms with ties to drug trafficking cartels) are not approached by the anti-mining movement. Nevertheless, different activists have decided to continue denouncing what they observe is taking place – aware of the risks they take.

8.2 Mobilising the Grassroots

Capacitating Communities in Defense of Territory

'If we take a street the police will pour at us. If we pay a means of communication so it sends a message against the mining companies, they have a channel that works 24 hours for them. If we put a spot on the radio, they are capable of buying all the radios so they do not speak against the mining sector. Here, in any place in Honduras. So, we cannot compete against the economic power of a transnational mining company. Against the lack of political will, that favours these businessmen (…) the only that is left for us is to work with the communities. With the grassroots. There, in the territory, where they say, if you install a mine here, this is what will happen. Organise them, train them in the theme of mining, in the theme of political advocacy, and empower them so they can create resistance in their own communities'[129] – Jose Ramon Avila, director of ASONOG.

---

[129] 'Si nosotros nos tomamos una calle nos echa la policía. Si nosotros pagamos un medio de comunicación para que emita un comunicado en contra de las compañías mineras, ellos tienen un canal, 24 horas trabajando para ellos. Si nosotros ponemos un spot en la radio, ellos son capaces de comprar todas las radios para que no se hablen en contra de la minería. Aquí, en cualquier logar de Honduras. Entonces, no podemos competir contra un poder económico de una transnacional minera. Contra la falta de voluntad política del gobierno, que favorece estos grupos de empresarios, ni contra una estructura al nivel de… lo único que nos quede entonces es trabajar con las comunidades. De base. Ahí, en el territorio, donde se digan, si ustedes instalan una compañía minera, esto, esto es lo que se va a pasar. Organizarlos, capacitarlos, en el tema de minería, en el tema incidencia política, y empoderarlo para que puedan hacer la resistencia en sus propias comunidades'

As rightly noted by ASONOG's director, the anti-mining struggle is characterized by huge inequalities in political and economic resources between the extractivist complex and the anti-mining movement. The mining sector's association ANAMIMH[130] owns a national television station that projects the mining industry as 'the savior of Honduras'. Nationwide anti-mining protests have been met with heavy repression in the past, and the organisations involved in the anti-mining struggle felt ignored in the creation of the mining law that went active on April 23th 2013. There is widespread consensus within the anti-mining movement that the post-coup government is even more prone to ignore the protestor's demands and to employ repression as an answer to protest. Unable to achieve serious dialogue with the national government, and with the pressing matter of as many as 950 sites currently being prospected in Honduras (La Prensa, 30th of January 2014), the anti-mining movement has turned back from organising protest on a national scale towards empowering and mobilising affected communities about the theme of mining. This is a widely adopted strategy in which grassroots network organisations such as the Mesas de Incidencia para la Gestión de Riesgos play a key role.

The three case studies detailed in the previous chapter deal with communities that sought outside support in their struggle against a mining project trying to install in their territory. As will be shown, these struggles are not without difficulties: mining companies employ their own discourse of development, offer services or stipends, commonly have state institutions on their side, or threat with/resort to violence as a means to coerce a community. To avoid these complicated situations, anti-mining actors actively contact community leaders in communities where they know inactive mining concessions are located in order to warn them of the risks of mining and empower them of their legal rights regarding mining in their territory. This has proven to be a successful strategy: political opportunities often (not always) still exist with local governments, and communities are often eager to take up the topic. Community activists, empowered by the anti-mining movement, have managed to declare over 20 municipalities 'free of mining' by educating their community and pressuring their local government by holding a public referendum. The number of municipalities declared 'free of mining' is growing by the year[131].The last declaration took place in the municipality of El Negrito, Yoro, after a mobilisation of 10,000 people, inter alia supported by MADJ.

As mentioned before, information about mining concessions is not publicly accessible: the list of concessions downloadable at INHGEOMIN's website (www.inhgeomin.gob.hn) has not been updated since 2003 (most likely as a response to the work of the anti-mining movement). '*Bajo bajo*', underhanded, the anti-mining movement has managed to obtain an incomplete list of recent mining concessions. Based on this information communities are visited. For instance, ASONOG cooperates closely with the regional Mesas de Incidencia de Gestión del Riesgo. These Mesas can count on a broad local/regional network, which enables them to identify and make contact with local community leaders. Other organisations also make use of existing networks in the region. Patronatos, Juntas de Agua as well as other important

---

[130]Asociacion Nacional de Minerías Metalicas de Honduras (National Asociation of Metallic Mining in Honduras
[131] Including Santa Bárbara, Atima, Colinas and San Francisco de Ojuera in Sánta Barbara; Chinaclas and San Jose de la Paz in La Paz; Belen Gualcho in Ocotepeque; Yorito in Yoro; Juticalpa and Olancho in Olancho; Danlí and Teupasenti in El Paraíso; Jesus de Otoro in Intibuca; and Saba in Colón.

community members are identified by the regional Mesa, contacted, and brought together for extensive training meetings or *capacitaciones*. The set-up of these training meetings, which can last several days, is very broad: community leaders are taught about the emergence of the extractivist model in 1998; the history of the anti-mining movement; the mining law; the impacts of mining; the complicity of the state and the partiality of INHGEOMIN; the Chinese expansion in Honduras; the community member's rights as citizens, and how to legally block a mine.

When I attended two capacitaciones near Catacamas and in Danlí, the Nueva Esperanza mining conflict (Case three in the next chapter) was escalating: armed men entered the village and displaced several families under threat of violence. The case was immediately used in these meetings as an example: a documentary made by Spanish journalists just weeks before about the mining conflict in Nueva Esperanza - Martires de la Tierra- was shown and discussed. The account of violence against this community, as well as the story of the death threats received by the leaders of the ACD in the past and other activists nowadays, are told: far from dissolving protest as it is intended by those behind the violence, these accounts serve as a legitimization and justification of the struggle. 'We do not want martyrs', warns Gabriela, employee of ASONOG: better to win a struggle before it starts, by declaring the municipality free of mining before a mining company enters.

Other videos are also shown, ranging from spots of Argentinean and Colombian celebrities proclaiming to be against open-pit mining, to documentaries of anti-mining struggles elsewhere in the continent[132]. The mining company's disregard for – and demolishment of- the church and graveyard at San Andrés is criticised, and it is questioned if accepting money and services from mining companies at the cost of environmental destruction raises the quality of life. Doubts are raised about the level of taxes paid; about mining company's ability to generate sustainable employment; and about the capacity of the state to control whether or not companies secretly exploit more or other metals than those reported. Communities are also taught about the causes and effects of climate change, and the mining industry's contribution to this process. Nevertheless, of all arguments none is as effective as the argument that mining forms a threat to water and life itself – with the striking example of the health impacts on the people of Valle de Siria.

Using Valle de Siria as a powerful example, mining is actively framed as a threat to the right to a healthy environment and a threat to life itself by giving special attention to the substance of water. In rural Honduras, over 90% of rural households do not have access to running water (IDAMHO 2013), meaning these households depend on the local rivers and creeks for consumption and agricultural production. 'Life is worth more than gold', the master frame of the anti-mining movement, comes to the fore here. The community leaders are attended that mining, most notably open-pit cyanide leaching gold mining, dries out the local water sources and contaminates them: 'without water, there is no life (…) nothing is worth more than the water of the communities' as told by one activist during a community capacity training.

---

[132] Anti-mining movements continent wide are able to quickly spread information, both due to networks with neighboring countries as well as due to the work of organisations such as OCMAL (Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de América Latina) and the TLAA (Tribunal Latinoamericana del Agua).

During these capacitaciones shared dinners and prayers can be seen as acts that essentially serve as 'rituals of solidarity' (Lichterman 1998) between activists and community members. There is also room for more spontaneous acts that serve this goal: on one occasion, a MNIGR member – already famous in the region for his radio transmissions, began chanting the famous Chilean protest song 'el pueblo unido jamás será vencido' (the united people is never beaten), receiving full support from the community leaders. Similarly, the egalitarian discourse employed by activists (us the people against the powerful) helps create a symbolic bond. In the cases of San Francisco de Locomapa and more so Nueva Esperanza (Chapter 7) the inclusiveness of the anti-mining organisation MADJ goes as far as to MADJ becoming an additional identity marker for the communities it supports.

In the training meetings, these community leaders are taught about the mining law, notably two articles: article 53c, which gives mining companies access to unlimited water within and outside of the concession area; and article 67, which holds that a consulta must be held before a mining company can proceed with the exploitation phase. The former is presented to underline the threat posed by mining companies to the community's water; the second as the only article that benefits local communities. Once made aware of the impacts of mining and the necessity to 'defend life', community leaders are advised to create a plan of approach (Box 5) and to form a local environmental or vigilance committee. Additionally, when resources permit it, community leaders are brought to Valle de Siria to speak with the inhabitants of the region and to witness the health impacts of mining for themselves (see Chapter 5, Valle de Siria), a step that can be seen as an initiation ritual into the movement.

Having passed all these steps, it is up to these community leaders to capacitate their community members, using the experience and educational material they have received. Once a clear majority of the population supports the cause, the community is able to pressure the local government into holding a *cabildo abierto* (public referendum) in which the municipality is declared free of mining. It has to be noted however that this step is more symbolic than legal: the Mining Law only establishes that a *consulta* must be held before the exploitation phase of a mining project. If a community votes against a mining project the result is valid for three years. Therefore, legally speaking, exploration activities cannot be legally prevented with this declaration, and the public referendum needs to be repeated every three years to ensure a municipality remains free of mining exploitation.


Figure 14: Mobilising the Community. The banner reads: we can live without gold but not without water. (Photo: author)

Box 6: a Community Strategy on the Defense of Territory

'Danlí is crucified with concessions', begins Gabriela. During the three day training of community leaders in Danlí, she asks them to form groups and create an approach of how to prevent access to a mining company. The community training, held in July, was succesful: newspapers report on the 22nd of Ocotober 2013 that Danli is now declared free of mining.

The following picture (source: author) shows one of the community plans.
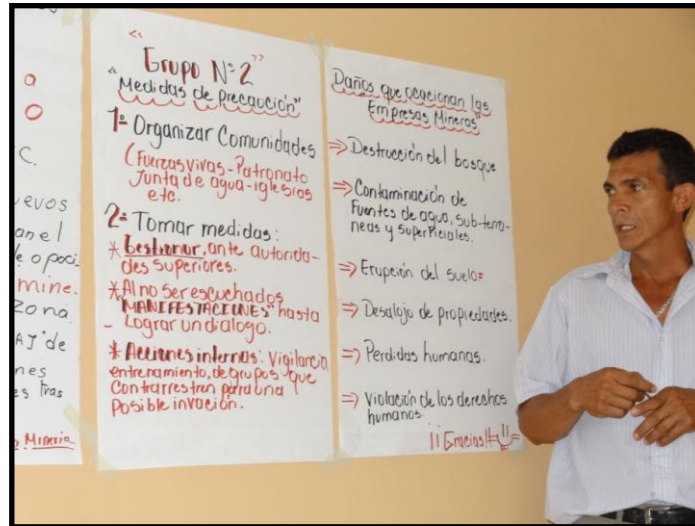
'Precautionary measures'

1. Organise the communities (Patronato, Junta de Agua, churches, etc.)
2. Take measures: 1) to advocate towards the authorities; 2) if they do no listen manifestations until we achieve dialogue; 3) internal actions: vigilance, training of groups who counter a possible invasion.

'Damages that Mining Companies cause'
-Destruction of the forest; contamination of the water sources, subterranean and superficial; soil erosion; human losses

---

Tug-of-War with the Communities

'It is practically a war', comments a functionary of INHGEOMIN. Being well aware of the work of the anti-mining movement in the communities he recommends mining companies to raise local support for their projects as early as possible, before the exploration phase starts. Mining companies enter communities with discourses of prosperity for the community, good wages and other benefits; community leaders are targeted with offers of trips abroad and well paid jobs. Two radically opposing discursive frameworks, one of prosperity and development carried by the industry, and the other of human rights violations and contamination carried by the anti-mining movement, both seek to gain the favour of the communities. This has given the anti-mining movement a sense of urgency to reach communities before the mining industry does: there is a commonly expressed concern that communities who are not aware of

the dangers of mining, may –out of poverty and lack of knowledge- accept a mining project that may ultimately bring them more harm than good. As told by a member of the MADJ:

> 'the people have to be informed, that is to say, not only what the miners manifest, and let us say they have the right to their approach, but on the other side the people have to be informed of all that mining brings. See, a consulta or an assembly, if the people are not well informed they may quickly manifest themselves in promotion of mining without knowing the entire context'[133]

Despite this concern the anti-mining movement, both through its work in the communities and through the nationwide manifestations of the past, has been successful in convincing the population of the harms of mining: a survey carried out by CEDPAD[134] in 2011 revealed that 91, 1% of the Honduran population disagrees with open-pit mining. This percentage correlates with the feeling of many activists that nowadays many more people are aware of the topic than in the past.

According to INHGEOMIN on the other hand, the anti-mining movement does nothing to solve the lack of knowledge of the communities, but quite to the contrary abuses the lack of knowledge *of the benefits of mining* for the sake of obtaining funds and maintaining its own existence as an anti-mining movement:

> 'we believe it is a Modus Vivendi – a way of life of these organisations. To obtain funds; in a way attract attention and create antibodies against the mining activities in the country. Which are not grounded, scientific, real. The problem with this is that the people in this country unfortunately are not educated, to have the capacity to 'say yes this is true 'or 'no this is not true'. So what is does is create fear in the population, fear for a mining project. Fear of change. So there is a lot of refusal in the communities. Many communities say 'I prefer to stay in my condition of poverty, without change'. Because of all this work that these environmentalist organisations have realised in the communities'.[135]

Mining is presented as rational; grounded and safeguarded by scientific knowledge; and as the path towards escaping poverty and facilitating development. The environmental organisations - by cultivating emotional and ungrounded fears about mining projects - sabotage development itself: not because they believe in an alternative development model, but because they maintain their existence by acting as a parasite of the mining industry.

---

[133] 'la gente tiene que estar informa, es decir, no solo lo que manifiestas los mineros, y digamos que tienen el derecho a su planteamiento, pero por otro lado la gente tiene que estar informada de todo lo que trae la minería. Ya va, una consulta o una asamblea, si esta gente no está bien informada rápidamente puede manifestarse en promoción de la minería sin saber todo el contexto'

[134] Centro de Estudios para la Democracia

[135] Nosotros creemos que ya es un modus vivendi – una forma de vida de estas organizaciones. A conseguir fondos. Es en alguna manera de llamar la atención y crear anticuerpos en contra la actividad minera en el país. Que no son fundados, científica real. El problema con esto es que la gente de este país lastimosamente no es educada, como para tener una capacidad de decir sí es cierto o no es cierto. Entonces lo que hace esto es crear miedo en la población, miedo de un proyecto minero. Miedo a cambio. Y hay mucho rechazo dentro las comunidades. muchas de las comunidades dicen 'yo prefiero estar en mi condición de pobreza, sin cambio'. Por todo este trabajo que han realizado estas organizaciones ambientalistas en las comunidades.

INHGEOMIN is well aware of the negative reputation of the mining sector and is making efforts to 'wash the face' of the industry. As mentioned before, it strictly advises companies to promote their project to obtain a 'social license to operate'. On a national level,

> 'Nowadays we have a television channel, a national channel, in which every Wednesday we speak of things related to mining, so practically the people will begin to see that mining is a process linked with our lives and that we cannot live without mining extraction. Because the discourse that these environmentalist groups have is zero mining. Zero mining would be a regression in society'.[136]

The television programs that are broadcasted feature MINOSA's house journalist Wendy Guerra drinking water from the creeks near the mine and commenting it is perfectly safe, show that mundane and 'safe' items like cigarettes also contain cyanide, and lets mine workers express their happiness with their job. But in reality, the Honduran state does not have a television channel that promotes mining. The television channel in question is owned by ANAMIMH, the Asociación Nacional de Mineras Metálicas de Honduras[137] – the main lobby group of the transnational mining industry. The use of the word 'we' in this context suggests that INGHEOMIN, far from being an impartial state institution that regulates mining, maintains close ties with the lobby group seated by the transnational mining companies operating in Honduras.

Three years after CESPAD found that over 90% of Hondurans rejects open-pit mining, it remains to be seen with another survey whether or not this percentage has decreased significantly. But in any case, in the six different community meetings on mining I attended - in which Patronatos, Juntas de Agua, members of Church, as well as other community members from at least 20 different communities were present- people spoke without exception about the need to defend one's community, water sources, and territory against the threat posed by the mining industry.

The Disposition of Honduran Rural Communities

Why are so many Honduran rural communities ready to defend their community, water sources, and territory against the mining industry? I argue it is only partly a direct result of the advocacy work of the anti-mining movement: the generalised distrust of large scale projects and the national government, as well as the community's view that its livelihoods are dependent from their physical environment and the resources it offers, play important roles as well.

The anti-mining movement partly consists of grassroots organisations with a regional or local focus: local environmental organisations, Patronato members, and local radio stations for

---

[136] En la actualidad nosotros tenemos un canal en la televisión, un canal nacional, en el cual todos los miércoles hablamos de cosas relacionadas con la minería, prácticamente la gente comienza a ver que la minería es un proceso que está involucrado con nuestras días y que no podemos vivir sin extracciones mineras. Porque el discursos que tienen estos grupos ambientalistas es cero minería. Cero minería vendría a ser un retroceso en la sociedad

[137] Although called a national mining association, ANAMIMH's member companies are transnational mining companies only. Despite the closure of its San Martin mine four years ago, Goldcorp also maintains a seat in ANAMIMH.

example. These people can often count on a broad local network, have knowledge of local events, and are sometimes well-known locally. Against the degree of trust in these people, stands a shared distrust of the state and the projects it promotes. As told by an activist of the MIGR in an information meeting,

> 'We do not know the treaties those above there are making. They are making them in Tegucigalpa but those who live in the territories are we (..) the owners of the territories are we. Although over there they are handing out the country like they hand out a pie. We have a national congress that has been handing out the commons! [138]

Many rural communities can link these proclamations with their own knowledge and own experiences regarding the loss of '*patrimonio*' (patrimony, heritage). In the coastal zone, it is widely accepted that the Garífunas do not live in better conditions after having sold their land to the tourist industry, the beaches now being private property and inaccessible for the common Honduran, and the Garífuna territory now being scattered. Community members comment that decades of foreign owned banana plantations have not brought them any prosperity. Everybody is aware of the forced expropriations taking place in the Bajo Aguan region to develop the palm-oil industry, and the numerous fatal victims amongst the campesinos that occupy and claim unused agricultural land. Many people across Honduras have – some way or another – heard rumors that something did not go quite right in Valle de Siria. And lastly, there is a commonly felt sentiment that '*los grandes*' (the big ones, politicians) in Tegucigalpa have never cared for the well-being of the rural population: 'they do not respect us campesinos, nor in speech nor in writing', commented to me a campesino leader who began his own environmental committee to block the entry of a mining company. Another man expressed during a meeting: 'there is no development. Only deception'.

Honduras is a country characterized by structural violence (Cruz 2011), failed promises of development, as well as corruption of and neglect by the authorities (Honduras ranks 140 out of 177 in the perceived corruption index of Transparancy International). It is against this background that the collective memories of rural communities have been shaped. In this context, it is not surprising that the act of mobilisation is commonly framed by community leaders in terms of a 'defense of territory'. The defense of territory: defending the land and the resources it houses (water, forest, to a lesser extent the minerals), hence the defense of life itself, against 'an invasion' by mining companies (which it often quite literally is). Martyrs from the past, who died defending their land against land grabs of the past, are remembered. Speaking in front of his community, the president of a Patronato near Trujillo tells his community:

> 'I tell you let us fight. We fight with honor, and there are many martyrs as well. We have our antecedents like Morazán and Lempira, who died defending their land. We, let us do

---

[138] Nosotros desconocemos los tratos que están haciendo los de arriba. Lo hacen en Tegucigalpa pero los que viven en los territorios somos nosotros. (..) los dueños del territorio somos nosotros. Aunque allá están repartiendo el país como se reparte un pastel. ¡Tenemos un congreso nacional que se ha quedado a repartir los bienes!

the same. And if we cannot, we will put on the sandals as says the Scripture of Jesus and his Disciples, and we will leave for another [place], so that we are not contaminated'[139]

A number of members of the anti-mining movement have consciously stopped using the word *recursos naturales*, natural resources, in favor of the term *bienes naturales*, conceptually closer towards 'commons', or 'natural objects necessary for collective well-being'. The concept natural resource implies something that can be extracted, owned, and marketed. 'How much does your river cost? How much does your forest cost? How much does your soil cost? How much gold do you have, how much silver do you have?' asks Carmen - member of the MIGR - rhetorically in a community meeting. The anti-mining movement reasons from the position that a healthy environment, based on clean drinking water, nature and access to land for cultivation, is a basic human right and an indispensible requirement for people's well being. It is impossible to put a price on well-being, on human rights. Therefore, it is impossible to put a price on the bienes naturales that guarantee well-being: water, forest, and land.

Dr. Almendarez projects this view on the communities and argues we need to draw lessons from them:

> 'They [the indigenous; the campesinos] see the unity of the earth in a communitarian relation. In the idea of earth, of territory. Notice well, if we speak about the relation between society and nature, the indigenous, they say that there is a relation: a sacred relationship between the people of the communities and mother earth. That if they break this relation, comes death and disease. That is what it is: an ancestral knowledge of the environment (…) We have to analyse the relationship between society and nature: the problem is the separation in reality of society and nature'[140]

For one thing, as a leader of the anti-mining movement himself, Almendarez questions the conceptual separation in our constructed reality between society and nature, wherein 'nature' as an exploitable resource is subject to 'society'. Almendarez' position fits with the discourse of other anti-mining activists who give intrinsic (non-monetary) value to nature, who replace the concept of 'recursos naturales' by 'bienes naturales', and who argue that these bienes are inalienable requirements for human well-being. I argue that to an extent Almendarez' position is indeed valid for campesino and indigenous communities as well –with the side note that one has to be careful not to be deterministic: rural communities simply have a strong dependency of the bienes naturales for their livelihoods; and they are by no means homogeneous entities.

---

[139] Les digo que luchemos. Luchamos con honor, así como hay muchos mártires también, nosotros tenemos nuestros próceres como Morazán y Lempira, que murieron defendiendo su tierra. Nosotros, hagamos lo mismo. y si no podemos pues nos ponemos los sandalias como dice la Escritura de Jesús y sus discípulos, a vámonos para otro, para que no seamos contaminados

[140] 'Ellos ven la unidad de la tierra en una relación comunitaria. En la idea de tierra, en la idea del territorio...Fíjense bien, si plateamos de la relación entre sociedad y naturaleza, los indígenas, ellos dicen que hay una relación. Una relación sagrada entre la gente de las comunidades y la madre tierra. Que si se rompen esa relación, viene, prácticamente la muerte y la enfermedad. Esto es. El saber ancestral del ambiente - tenemos que analizar la relación sociedad naturaleza. El ambiente no está fuera de nosotros. El problema es la separación en la realidad de sociedad naturaleza'

To give a clear example of this issue, after Entre Mares opened its San Martín mine in Valle de Siria, water became a *scarcity* for the first time. By becoming scarce, and with the company willing to *buy* water, different landowners began commercialising the water that sprang from their land: water that previously had no monetary value and that was previously accessible to all. This same phenomenon has been observed by Sosa-Landeo in Peru (2012; 67), who rightly notices that mining entails 'the accumulation of goods that before were not seen as part of the market[141]'. The illustration underlines that 'balanced' society-nature relationships in rural communities are in no way inherent or pre-given as Almendarez suggests. The entry of a company with a different resource valuation system activates the economics of access and scarcity and may profoundly change these relations, providing incentives for self-interest over communal interest. Similarly, it is worthy to note that although indigenous peoples are commonly framed as 'living close to nature'(by foreigners as well as by the Honduran anti-mining movement itself), the case of San Francisco de Locomapa (Chapter 7) describes a deeply divided Tolupán tribe in which tribal leaders have taken punitive actions against the protestors. Indigenous people, campesinos, urban residents: internal differences exist within each group and positions are not fixed but subject to change. Their frames are based on real needs but are constructed nonetheless.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the lives and livelihoods of rural communities are tied with the presence, or absence, of water. When visiting a Pech[142] community and alarming it that a nearby rancher is negotiating with a mining company, the first reaction is disbelief:

> 'They cannot, for the reason that it is a forested area. It is an area where the water sources flow! What will we do when they accept this? It is impossible!'[143]

The community in question is well aware of its rights as an indigenous group. Indeed, no mining concession is given on Pech territory, whilst the affected water from the exploitation taking place upstream still flows through it. Water as a requirement for life – it is both symbolic and grounded in the reality of rural life. 'It will kill (…) like a lethal medicine of slow death. If they take away the water, it is like they take away our oxygen', as said by a campesino in a rural settlement not far from the Pech community.

Not only does this serve as a central argument of the anti-mining movement in rallying communities, it is also used by community members themselves to enforce unity against a mining company. Figuratively, it takes one person to sell his land to the mining company, for a hundred people to drink contaminated water. This fundamental problem of mining is strength of its opposition: it is used to rally nearby communities and to call upon compliance with the will of the majority. On a community level, the same argument is often heard when community members pressure their neighbors to stand united:

> 'Do not think of the money they are offering. Do not only think of the huge amount of money you will pull. Think of the people behind you. Your children, all who are close to the community. Because not only this community will be affected: the municipality in its totality will be affected. (..) Think, again I tell you, of the people that are behind. How

---

[141] 'L acumulación de bienes que antes no eran vistos como parte del mercado
[142] An indigenous nation living in rural communities across North-East Honduras
[143] No se puede por la razón de que es una zona boscosa. Es una zona donde fluyen las fuentes de agua. ¿Cómo vamos a hacer que se acepte esto? ¡Es imposible!

can we achieve this? Only by standing together, creating conscience from us to the others. The money is something that will end. But this vital liquid, the water that we all need, and then come the grand diseases. We have to be careful, to think, and may we want a better future for our country, and to say no to mining'.[144]

By framing resistance against mining as a defense of life itself, a strong moral plea is made to choose for the community instead of private gains (by accepting stipends or selling land).

If one municipality votes in favour of mining exploitation, municipalities downstream are endangered. Being a flowing substance, water passes the borders of private property, of municipalities, and of semi-autonomous indigenous territories, connecting all with the same possible fate. This is a powerful discursive tool of the anti-mining movement: water, necessary for life, flows through and connects different communities. Writing on mining conflicts in the Andes region, Budds & Hinojosa (2012) conclude that water often stands central in mining conflicts. Citing Swyngedouw (2004, 28), they quote that 'water is a 'hybrid' element that captures and incarnates processes that are at the same time material, discursive and symbolical' (51). This holds as much for Honduras as for the Andes region: water is an inalienable human need for both consumption and agricultural production, turning mining into a competitor for local agriculture, a threat to the campesino-livelihood, and a threat to the water supply of nearby settlements. Whilst purely territorial issues are of little interest of nearby or urban communities (Bebbington & Bebbingon 2010; 317), the symbolic value of water as the main requisite of life becomes a powerful discursive tool in the mobilisation of entire communities, both rural and urban, against mining. Without water acting as glue that connects communities together, this would have been much more complicated.

8.3 Threats to (Anti-Mining) Activism: Fear and Narco-Mining

Creating an Environment of Fear

In Honduras activism does not come without serious risks. Chapter 5 and 6 already mentioned that several leaders of the anti-mining movement faced intimidations and death threats. Unfortunately, this situation remains complicated as of now. First, as resistance against mining is increasingly focusing on mobilisations at the local level, local leaders now run greater risk: Patronato members, priests, and activists working on a community level. Second, the persecution of anti-mining activists in the past, the military coup of June 2009 and the hundreds of deaths in the months that followed, as well the continuing threat and use of violence against all kinds of (indigenous, environmental, human rights) activists have all contributed to a situation of sustained fear.

---

[144] No piensen en el dinero que están ofreciendo. No piense solamente en esta gran cantidad de dinero que va a arrancar. Piensen en un pueblo que está atrás. Sus hijos, y todos que están cerca de esta comunidad. Porque no solo va a ser afectada esta comunidad. Va a ser afectado el municipio en general. (…) piensen, nuevamente les digo, en las personas que están atrás. Como lo vamos a lograr? Solo estando unidos, haciendo conciencia los unos a los otros. El dinero es algo que se termina. Pero este liquido vital, el agua, que todos necesitamos, y después de esto vienen las grandes enfermedades. Nosotros entonces tenemos que tener cuidado, pensemos, y que queremos un futuro mejor para nuestro país. Y hay que decir no a la minería'

A noteworthy event that caused particular concern was the assassination of Globo TV's journalist and news anchor Anibál Barrow, famous for the national television program 'Anibál Barrow y nada más', on June 24th 2013. When driving home from work, Barrow was abducted by a group of armed men. He was tortured, set on fire, dismembered and beheaded. Two weeks after his disappearance, his remains were found in a ditch in a sugar cane field near the city of San Pedro Sula. Barrow's identity documents were present with the remains- a confirmation for the forensic investigators that the remains were his. Whatever the motivations for the assassination of Anibal Barrow, it cannot be seen as an 'ordinary' murder. The brutal way he was murdered suggest it was an act of terror: a symbolic use of violence meant to be visible, set an example, and instill fear. If it was, Barrow's assassination achieved its goal, as expressed by one anti-mining activist:

> 'Why did they kill Anibál? He was a man of the television, of the Resistencia. Why kill Anibál? To send a message to everyone. That is the perception that we have. For that reason we have lowered our tone'[145]

The 'official' rumour went round that Barrow's death was ordered by an organised crime organisation (most likely a drug cartel). However, in activist circles (including anti-mining) it is believed that he was murdered for his leftist political viewpoints and his critical attitude towards the sitting government, combined with his national fame. Some people expressed to me their belief that his death was ordered by a number of congressmen from the department of Cortéz, and they had reasons to believe that they themselves were mentioned as expedient future targets.

In March 2014, the military police intervened to clear a road blockade by the communities of El Níspero against the installment of an open pit iron-oxide mine. The event was followed by the brutal assassination of Rigoberto López Hernández in May 2014 as the most recent example of terror against anti-mining activists. Hernandez - member of the

Figure 15: Rigoberto López Hernández assasinated. Source: Rights Action

Movimiento Ambiental Santabarbarense and working in El Níspero - had his throat slit and tongue cut out before his remains were dumped in a public space, meant to be found[146].

Organised crime or government: in the perception of (anti-mining) activists, the dividing line between the two is often blurred. The Bajo Aguan region, characterized by aggressive expansion of the palm-oil industry, drug trafficking activities, violence, and militarization,

---

[145] ¿Por qué mataron a Anibal? Era un hombre de la televisión, de la Resistencia. ¿Por qué matar a Anibal? Para mandar un mensaje a todos. .. eso es la percepción que tenemos nosotros. Por esa razón nosotros hemos bajado el tono.
[146] http://rightsaction.org/action-content/brutal-public-murder-anti-mining-community-and-environmental-defender-honduras

stands as an example here. A recent development in this region is a strong Chinese and Korean interest in the extraction of iron-oxide, combined with preparations for the expansion of the port of Trujillo to facilitate the shipment of the ore towards Asia for refining. The visible militarization of Bajo Aguan is not perceived of as a response to the presence of armed criminal organisations and to the violence characterising the region (as is the government discourse), but as a means to protect business interests developing there: African palm, hydroelectric projects, and mining. This type of governance is defined by Garay-Salamanca & Salcedo-Albarán (2011, 179) as state capture, a form of systemic corruption in which individuals or private firms cooperate with the state in order to guarantee long-lasting (private) economic benefits, not in the benefit of social welfare of the population of Bajo Aguan; in this case by claiming and enclosing land via military occupation.

In fact, several of these state-prioritised projects themselves seem to be linked with organised crime. To give some examples, Wikileaks reports[147] intercepted from the US embassy in Tegucigalpa confirm a local public secret: the airstrips of Miguel Facusé, Honduras' foremost landowner and oligarch (Palm-oil industrialist), are used for drug trans-loading: the cocaine is brought in by airplanes and transferred onto ground transport. Similarly, in September 2013, a carbon mine near Tocoa was revealed to belong to Los Cachiros[148], a sizable Honduran drug cartel.

Mining has become a new source of tension in a region already hard hit by land conflicts between agribusiness and displaced campesinos. Anti-mining activists do work in the region but experience a constant threat, as told by one person:

> 'It is very difficult for us (...) facilitators of a process of opposition to mining to work in the region. We have to watch our step, to have a lot of caution, a lot of caution. To suddenly live in anonymity, not to make yourself very public, because the threat will always exist. It will always exist. The people who are in the mining companies will contract the powerful, dedicated to assassination, to threats. To pressure, persecuting people. So that the movements that arise will dissolve. Because of the threats to life, we can see deaths. The people who make agreements with groups of delinquents do not have conscience'[149]

A number of people have received direct threats, which they themselves link to the municipal government of Tocoa, laying at the heart of Bajo Aguan. Instead of making themselves known publicly, activists try to work by speaking to people from door to door. This change of strategy is partly a response to the threats they have received themselves, as well as to the general sense of lawlessness that defines the region.

---

[147] http://www.hondurasnews.com/wikileaks-cable-re-honduras-031904/

[148] This phenomenon has been documented before in Mexico and Colombia, with at least the Zeta cartel operating carbon mines in northern Mexico. See http://www.minesandcommunities.org/article.php?a=12022

[149] Es bien difícil para nosotros (…) facilitadores de un proceso de oposición a la minería trabajar en la región. Tenemos que cuidar nuestros pasos. Tener mucha cautela, mucha cautela. De repente vivir en lo anonimato, no se hace muy público, porque sí esa amenaza siempre va a existir. Va a existir……la gente que está en las compañías mineras va a contratar a los poderosos, dedicados al asesinato, a amenazas. A la presión, o eso a perseguir las personas. Para que los movimientos que se levanten, se vayan disolviendo. Por las amenazas por la vida, pueden ver muertes. Las personas que hacen contratos con grupos de delincuentes, no tienen conciencia'.

Narco-mining

Honduras serves as the most important drug trafficking node between Colombia and Mexico: most narcotics destined for the USA are trans-loaded in Honduras (UNODC 2012). Murder rates in Honduras are significantly higher than those of Mexico and Colombia combined (UNODC 2011). These facts reveal the weakness of the Honduran state and suggest that the phenomenon of state capture by illicit groups is very advanced in Honduras. Discussing the institutional penetration of criminal networks in local or national governance structures in Colombia and Mexico, Garay-Salamanca and Salcedo-Albarán (2011) define this (advanced) type of state capture as Co-opted State Reconfiguration:

> "The action of lawful and unlawful organisations, which through unlawful practices seek to systematically modify from inside the political regime and to influence the drafting, modification, interpretation, and application of the rules of the game and public policies. [These practices are undertaken with the purpose of] obtaining sustained benefits and ensuring that their interests are validated politically and legally, as well as gaining social legitimacy in the long run, although these interests do not follow the founding principle of social welfare"

This phenomenon is readily visible on the local level in Honduras as well, where transnational cartels or local drug lords are the *de facto* rulers of several rural territories, having penetrated local state institutions and businesses, includes mining companies. These companies appear to be lawful but have an unlawful background. This development marks a clear difference between the first (attempted) mining boom, and the current expansion of the mining industry.

One local activist has been denouncing the presence of *narcominería* (narco-mining) in the Bajo Aguan region. Aware of whom he was dealing with, he and a small delegation decided to inspect the open-pit carbon mine owned by Los Cachiros. Entry to the site was blocked by the mine's workers, who surrounded the group. As told:

Number of primary cocaine movements destined for, or interdicted in, Honduras and the Dominican Republic, 2000-2011

Figure 16 Source: UNODC 2012

> 'We encountered all the workers of the miners armed with similar arms and machetes. 'And you, where are you heading?' -To the mine. 'And what will you do there?' -To see. 'Better return, or the day of the devil comes'. (…) we took the decision to return, because with them there was a friend of ours who told afterwards that they were waiting for us to continue one kilometer more to assassinate us. It was the order of Javier Cachiro that nobody who enters was to exit alive'[150]

---

[150] Nos encontramos con todos los trabajadores de los mineros con semejantes armas y machetes: 'y ustedes, para donde van'. A la mina. 'y que van a hacer ahí?' Ver. 'Mejor regrésensele, sino pasa el día del
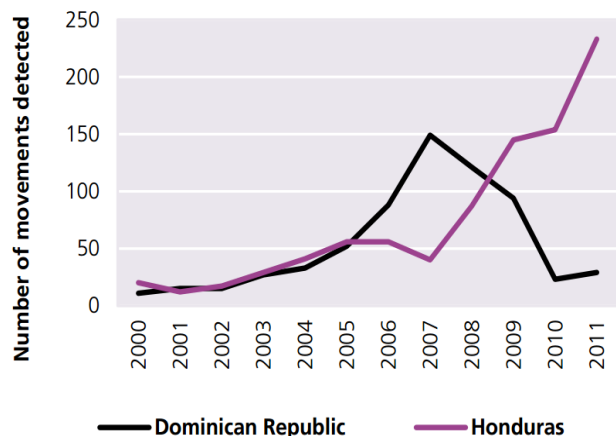
When interviewing INHGEOMIN's minister-director in October 20113, he admitted having heard rumors of narco-mining and argued that mining inevitably will not escape infiltration by drug money, but stressed it was not INHGEOMIN's task to investigate whether companies have ties to drug trafficking organisations. However, one month before the interview the rumor became fact already: in a coordinated action supported by the DEA[151] with intelligence and logistics, on the 25th of September 2013 *Operación Neptuno* was carried out, in which the Honduran government confiscated several companies belonging to the Los Cachiros cartel, totaling value of some 800 million US dollars[152]. The confiscated businesses include an African palm plantation, a cattle ranch, a zoo, a tourist centre, gas stations, and the carbon mine in Bajo Aguán where earlier the confrontation took place between the MIGR and armed mine workers. It is suspected that the confiscated companies do not represent more than 20% of legal assets of the criminal organisation: this suggests that total assets of the Cachiros intertwined with the formal economy may total represent a value of 4,000,000,000 US dollars. Narco-mining and the numerous assets revealed to be owned by Los Cachiros: it gives a glimpse towards the extent to which the criminal economy is intertwined with the formal economy of the country.

In Olancho, de MRIGR has also played a role in denouncing the presence of narco-minería. One activist has received serious threats for her work, and once locked herself up at home for two weeks being afraid to enter the street. Nevertheless, she saw it as a responsibility to keep on denouncing what she saw was taking place in her department:

> 'We continue with the theme although we know it is very dangerous because, we cannot die leaving the communities, without them knowing what is taking place (…) It is very hard, very heavy, but you have to go on. If I have to die then so be it. If God wants. End. Because if we do not speak, the stones will not speak for me. I have to speak. If have to tell the good and the bad'[153]

Other members of the Mesa in Olancho have also been intimidated, both by receiving threatening messages as well as physical intimidation by armed individuals. As a consequence, the Mesa decided not to enter the communities where alleged narco-miners have obtained mining concessions, fearing repercussions. Narco-mining has not only been reported in Bajo Aguan (department Colón) and Olancho: in Copán and El Corpus (department Choluteca) community members and activists alike speak of *narcominería* as well. Nevertheless, it is important to note that although it is perceived that narco-miners- given their illicit background- are more prone to use violence; threats are also directed towards activists confronting other companies. Although the direct source of threats issued is usually unknown, it appears to be a broadly used form of market protection against opposition of all kinds.

---

diablo'.Tomamos la decisión de regresar, porque entre de ellos mismos se manejo un compañero de nosotros, contó después que ellos estaban esperando de avanzábamos, un kilometro más, para asesinarnos. Era la orden del Javier Cachiro que nadie que iba a entrar ahí, iba a salir en vivo'.

[151] Drug Enforcement Administration (USA)

[152] http://www.elheraldo.hn/csp/mediapool/sites/ElHeraldo/Sucesos/story.csp?cid=623431&sid=293&fid=219

[153] 'Nosotros continuamos con el tema aunque sabemos que es muy peligroso porque, no nos podemos morir dejando las comunidades, sin que se dan cuenta de los que está pasando. (…) es muy dura, muy pesada, pero hay que seguir. Y si me toca morir así ya me tocó. Si lo quiere dios. Punto. Porque, porque si nosotros no hablamos, las piedras no van a hablar por mí. Yo tengo que hablar. Yo tengo que decir lo bueno y lo mal'

In community trainings, community members are told that violence has been used against anti-mining struggles. This serves both as legitimisation of the struggle and as a warning. It is reasoned that sometimes only mass mobilisation, in which the community stands united and no individuals stand out, can provide safety.

8.4 Conclusion

Mobilising communities against mining is seen as a race with the mining companies; who are advised by INHGEOMIN to cultivate support for their project before exploration begins. In this 'tug of war' for the support of the communities, the anti-mining movement has a number of advantages over mining companies: large-scale projects can often count on a great degree of distrust, whilst the anti-mining movement has local networks that facilitate access to the communities it tries to reach. Much of the literature on mining conflicts focuses on the question of access to (clean) water. However, in line with Coronel (2013) it is important to add that resistance to mining is also grounded in generalised fear of water contamination: not so much access, or the quantity of water, but the quality of water as suitable for human consumption is at stake here. For the affected communities, often already distrusting large scale 'development projects' the images of the health impacts on the residents of Valle de Siria stand as a striking example of what awaits them if their water sources are contaminated.

Whilst communities are threatened when their water sources are compromised, the anti-mining movement actively distances itself from what Budds & Hinojosa describe as a 'unidirectional movement from human to the environment': the assumption that humans only affect the environment. Anti-mining activists promote a circular vision instead: a clean environment, represented by the *bienes naturales* (water, forest, land) is a human right, and an inalienable necessity for human well being. Not intending to 'block development', they are engaged in the 'defense of life'. The ideological position of the anti-mining movement connects with the grounded everyday reality of rural communities' dependence of access to resources such as land and water, explaining the relative success of the movement in rallying their support against mining.

The success of the anti-mining movement is being limited by the threats faced by local activists. Little is written on violence by criminal organisations to citizens, academic literature focusing on violence taking place between criminal organisations or violence between states and criminal networks (Friman 2009). However, it stands to reason that violence is bad for business, especially when a company (or state actor) wants to appear legitimate. Nevertheless, state actors, legal firms and organised crime organisations alike appear to use (the threat of) violence as a means to further their interests, revealing a lack of rule of law (Cruz 2011) and lack of effective legal 'dispute resolution and enforcement mechanisms (Friman 2009, 286). However, although functioning regulatory mechanisms are absent, violence remains bad for business – even when purely illicit markets are considered (Friman 2009; Williams 2009; Snyder & Duran-Martínez 2009). In this light it makes sense that violence is only used on a selective, utilitarian basis, as a means of market protection. The reality confirms this line of thought: whilst many activists receive threats, only a limited number are actually targeted. A

constant sense of danger is maintained by issuing threats, and the occasional visible and brutal acts of violence. In accordance with Williams (2009; 324) I argue that such acts of violence serve to uphold the much-needed reputation of violence as a credible threat. Nevertheless, the threat and use of violence occurs often enough to be considered an integral part of functioning of the extractivist complex and the land claims it makes.

As the examples given in this chapter demonstrate, the Honduran state is not only subject to state capture by lawful firms, but by illicit economic powers as well. This type of corruption and the threat/use of violence seem to be mutually reinforcing each other. As a specific business, narco-mining may not only serve as a way to laundry drug money, or as a lucrative legal industry to expand towards; mining and drug trafficking both share the necessity of control of territory. The Honduran state has limited to no supervision in remote rural areas: a mining concession there gives a company de facto control over access to the area. It is not unthinkable that these legally acquired territories are also used for logistical purposes of the cocaine trade itself. All in all, it can be concluded that the prominent position of the drug cartels and the emergence of narco-mining a) reveals severe institutional weakness, and b) further corrodes the legitimacy and functioning of state institutions and companies alike in a vicious circle of corruption and violence. This development is a serious challenge for the anti-mining movement as well as other social movements in Honduras.

Chapter 9 – Conclusions

*answering the research question and placing
the results in a practical and theoretical perspective*

9.1 Introduction

This report is based on a six month research project in collaboration with Honduran NGO ASONOG and civil society platform MNIGR, in which I engaged in ethnographic research on opposition to mining across Honduras as it currently experiences an expansion of the mining industry. With the institutional framework on mining decided since April 2013, this research focuses predominantly on the frontier dynamics that affect the community level as then main stage of the Honduran mining conflict, by analysing the interface between anti-mining movement, community and extractive industry: a comparable approach as previous work such as by authors like Urkidi (2011), and Coronel (2013). The thesis not only gives a representation of the community level situation about the expansion of the extractive industry and acts of resistance, but also seeks to contribute to a wider political ecological discussion about how conflicts surrounding land control take shape by taking into account processes such as the role of (counter) frames, the criminalisation of protest, and the international dimension of extractivism and resistance.

Framing theory (Benford & Snow 2000) was the main analytical approach to social movements used during the course of this research; supplemented by insights of political opportunity structure (Rootes 1999) and resource mobilisation approaches; social scientific publications on mining impacts (e.g Acosta 2011, Canel et. al 2010, Bebbington & Valencia 2007); the broader field of political ecology (e.g. Watts & Peluso 2014, Peluso & Lund 2011, Boelens et. al 2010); and a holistic approach that includes an incorporation of the most relevant political and societal dynamics at play in Honduras (e.g. Cruz 2011; Irías & Sosa 2009). Field research involved document analysis; in depth interviews with a range of different actors (NGO and social movement representatives, community members, state and company representatives); as well as participant observation in community meetings and community training sessions.

In this final chapter, I will bring together the most relevant points from this thesis by providing an answer to the main research question:

> '*How do the Honduran anti-mining movement and the involved communities experience the extractive industry and how do they give shape to their response to it?*'

The answer to the research question is divided in three sections that subsequently describe the Honduran extractivist complex, the Honduran anti-mining movement, and the issue of the

public referendum as a promoted alternative to the consultation process. In the following discussion sub-chapter I go into a broader theoretical discussion on a number of issues that come to the fore: the global push of the resource frontier, the failure of international standards of the mining industry, the role of framing and violence in land claiming processes, and the 'push back' by the anti-mining movement in its effort to reach progressive social and institutional change. The chapter is concluded with a short reflection on the used theoretical framework, and a series of suggestions and recommendations for interested parties and further research.

9.2 Conclusion to the Research

The Extractivist Complex – a Push into the Resource Frontier

For the matter of this research, I have borrowed from the term 'resource complex' by Watts & Peluso (2014), and from the more widely used term 'extractivism' to describe the Honduran extractivist complex: a configuration of contingent institutional and political economic forces that permit and drive the expansion of the extractive industry into the Honduran 'resource frontier. In its core it consists of the alliance of the extractive industry and the state institutions that govern mining; but likewise the state security apparatus (police and military), mainstream media, organised crime organisations, and international treaties/standards also shape the extractivist complex. As in the discussion section I focus more in depth on the international side of the complex, this section focuses on the role of the Honduran state instead.

The first push into the resource frontier was made by the Honduran government's attempt to create a mineral export based national economy with the introduction of the 1998 Mining Law. The law got ratified after a single debate in congress shortly after hurricane Mitch devastated the country – true to Klein's (2013) definition of the 'shock doctrine' of using a disaster to push through legislation in favour of private actors at the cost of social welfare. It gave considerable rights to the mining industry at the cost of Honduran communities, including de facto ownership over conceded land and the right to expropriate communities by force. It also guaranteed unlimited access to water within and outside of the concession, established lax environmental standards, and a 2% export tax.

The attempted expansion of the mining industry was halted by the anti-mining movement. Both open-pit mining operations that commenced after the 1998 mining law encountered resistance by formal and informal civil society organisations that eventually merged into an organised anti-mining movement. In 2005, after a successful legal campaign 13 articles of the Mining Law were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court, rendering the regulatory framework on mining invalid and bringing a halt on the growth of the mining industry for the time being. In 2008, the San Martín mine by Goldcorp had to stop its operations. Continuing mobilisations and pressure by the ACD led president Zelaya to ban new open pit mining operations, and to order DEFOMIN - the state institute that promoted and regulated mining - to stop awarding new metallic mining concessions.

The second push into the resource frontier was set in motion following the military coup of June 2009 – the shock doctrine repeated. In the months following the coup negotiations with the mining industry intensified and new mining concessions were awarded. With support of the Canadian official development cooperation, a new draft law was created and negotiated with civil society actors over the course of late 2011 and 2012. Despite widespread opposition from different sectors of civil society the law passed congress and went into effect on April 23th 2013. DEFOMIN has been renamed INHGEOMIN, but still retains its double role of both promoting and regulating the industry. It now falls under the Presidency – partly a symbolic move to illustrate the importance given to mining as a prime strategic industry for the 'national development plan'. The country now counts approximately 900 mining concessions, representing an estimated 50% of its national territory.

The new mining law rectifies several issues of the former mining law. Royalties have risen to 6%; articles on mine closure are now included; specific regulation on artisanal mining is established; and importantly a mining project cannot proceed to the exploitation phase without prior consent granted by the local municipality by means of a public *consulta* (consultation). The new mining law also awards 1/3 of the royalties as security taxation meant for investments in the police and the armed forces. It still grants unlimited water rights to mining companies and does not prohibit cyanide leaching open pit operations. This new law is also tailored to facilitate the Honduran government's aspirations to become a recognised EITI member, which is perceived as a standard of good governance and as a tool for improving the negative image of mining. Another law that will affect the Honduran extractive industry model is the Law of Promotion of Development and Reconversion of Public Debt, which privatises 'idle assets' (unexploited natural resources) and mortgages them to foreign states and investors. This legal framework shows that Honduras does not fit with the trend of a growing number of Latin American states that base their development model on a statist approach to natural resource extraction (Hogenboom 2011). Instead, the current Honduran government's policies stem from a neo-liberal ideology that equalises far going privatisation combined with mineral based economic growth with development.

Discursive frames employed by the extractivist complex- notably via ANAMIMH's national video channel - are discourses of well paid jobs, promises of infrastructural development or social services, local partnerships, sustainable development, and representations of the mining industry as being 'the saviour of Honduras'. Opponents of the mining industry are framed as saboteurs of development instead. However, this discursive framework fails to convince a significant part of the population: a survey by CESPAD (2011) found that 90% of the Honduran population opposes open-pit mining.

When their discursive frame fails, it is not uncommon for proponents of the mining industry to resort to the threat (and later use) of violence (legal as well as illicit) to enforce mining projects. 'Legal' violence is carried out by the state security apparatus. The security taxation of the mining industry creates ties of interdependency between the mining industry and these institutions. The extent to which the security tax contributes to the partiality of the security apparatus is impossible to establish, but certain is that it forges an important tie. Additionally, where frames or bribes fail threats may be sent, and where threats fail violence may be used. These acts are made possible by the context of lawlessness in which the entailment of certain

state actors with organised crime becomes apparent. These criminal acts are counterproductive in the sense that they provide a legitimisation of the anti-mining struggle (not least by creating martyrs), but form serious threats to the work and the lives of activists and community members engaged in resistance against mining. The context of lawlessness also facilitates the involvement of drug cartels in the mining industry: drug cartels require legal businesses for both money laundering and the acquisition of territory – roles both filled by a mining concession.

The Anti-Mining Movement– a Push Back

The anti-mining movement came into being as a response to the impacts caused by the sudden push into the resource frontier – most notably the visible environmental and health impacts as well as human rights abuses in San Andrés and Valle de Siria. From its very beginning, resistance against the extractive industry has involved a wide range of activities, including lobbying activities; lawsuits; international denunciations of human rights abuses and environmental damage; and mobilisations. In the first government attempted 'mining boom' period, a legal campaign against the mining law resulted in 13 articles of the law being declared unconstitutional. This victory halted the growth of the extractive industry for the time being, and coincided with a political opening on the national level that allowed for more dialogue.

Led by Bishop Monseñor Santos and ASONOG director Francisco Machado the ACD - through a number of large scale mobilisations - managed to enforce considerable victories under the Zelaya administration, including a temporary ban on open-pit mining and a halt on new mining concessions. In the same period, continuing denunciations by the CAVS, supported by a range of international NGO's and researchers, brought to light the social, health, and environmental impacts caused by the mine, forcing the company to stop its operations in 2008. However, the ACD national success was made undone by the military coup, and the platform lost its influence due to both internal tensions and external threats directed at the movement's leaders.

The military coup and the establishment of a post-coup government with questionable legitimacy polarised civil society and politicised the debate on mining. The politicisation of the issue stems from a) the shock doctrine like manner in which the interim government cancelled all progress made by the anti-mining movement and began negotiations with the industry instead, and b) by the explicit stance of the post-coup nationalist government to promote the mining industry. As mentioned by Calderon et. al (1992) and Foweraker (2001) social movements usually position themselves in opposition or in a (more or less permanent) state of distrust to the state. This is certainly the case with the Honduran anti-mining movement: the positions taken are so explicitly opposite that neither party believes that consensus nor compromise is viable anymore – as is visible with the retreat of the CNRA (Coalición Nacional de Redes Ambientales, essentially the ACD's replacement) from negotiations on the new mining law. Nevertheless, although the central government is perceived of as complicit with the mining industry, the movement does try to engage in dialogue with municipal governments, sometimes with success. In any case, the anti-mining

movement frames its opposition to mining as a 'defense of life' in an attempt to present its stance as valid and important regardless of political affiliation.

The interpretative and discursive frames of the Honduran anti-mining movement have to be seen in their historic context. The environmentally devastating cyanide spills in Rio Lara, and importantly the lasting health impact of Goldcorp's operation in Valle de Siria, serve as strong examples for the anti-mining movement: the stereotypical mining company – Canadian, open-pit and cyanide leaching - takes away the country's resources at the cost of local communities and environment. Although united by the vision that this mining practice is a violation to community's right to a healthy environment and self-determination, the secondary motivations for anti-mining activism may differ. Other narratives - to a different degree present in the various organisations and platforms - include a strong environmentalist position, a response to human rights abuses and corruption, or reject of large-scale projects and promoting community based development instead (that may include community owned artisanal mining).

Svampa (2011, 4) identified four narratives generally used by anti-mining movements across Latin America: the protection of communal property; environmental justice in terms of sustainability and future generations; the *buen vivir* (good living) ideology originating in Ecuador; and ecological justice (the protection of species and eco-systems). In Honduras, the former two have dominance, whilst ecological justice does not play a significant role. However, the protection of communal resources and pleas for sustainability do imply a revalorisation of society to nature relations, like made explicit in buen vivir. A similar revalorisation is also made by anti-mining activists as they describe a healthy environment as a human right and a necessity for human well-being. Some have made this vision explicit as they have stopped using the term 'recursos naturales' (natural resources) in favour of 'bienes naturales' (natural goods) to describe water and forest, arguing that these requisites for human wellbeing cannot / should not be marketed or 'exploited', as suggested by the term natural resource.

Water is a necessity for life, and life is worth more than gold. This simple logic of what can be considered the movement's 'master frame' (Steinberg 1998) resonates with the lived experience of rural communities who depend of local water sources for their *campesino* (peasant) livelihood. Whilst a number of anti-mining actors seek to reshape society-nature relationships by holding that water and forest- as bienes naturales - are requisites for human wellbeing, for rural communities access to water and land are basic necessities for the continuation of their livelihoods. As water flows, the symbolic power of water goes beyond communities directly affected and reaches nearby communities and urban towns as well, explaining the movement's capacity to mobilise thousands of people in different settings.

This frame is supported by the role played by Valle de Siria, which stands symbol for a lasting *lucha* (struggle), as it continues to provide visible proof of both continuing community resistance and the grave health impacts caused by severe water contamination, forming a case of importance on a Central American level. The community opposed the mine from the very beginning and soon formed the CAVS, which became an increasingly professionalised platform of local leadership. Supported (inter)nationally, the CAVS succeeded in banning

Goldcorp but have to live with the consequences of Goldcorp's open-pit operation still. It blames the disease patterns found in the community to the water contamination caused by the company. Photos of ill people of Valle de Siria are shown in community meetings; members of the CAVS travel across Honduras and have established international connections; and community leaders are initiated into the anti-mining movement by visiting Valle de Siria and witnessing the impacts of open-pit mining first hand.

I argue that the movement's success in connecting with the communities can be attributed to a) its powerful discursive frame that connects with the lived reality of rural communities; and b) a generalised distrust across Honduras of the government and the large-scale projects it promotes. The frame of water as necessity for life, combined with the visible example of Valle de Siria, resonates with the very real dependence of these communities of their local water sources for production and consumption, The second reason stems from the collective memory of Honduran society about the role of the banana companies and other projects that altered the course of Honduran history, the context of lawlessness and impunity that influences daily life, as well as from the continuous efforts of civil society organisations in denouncing land grabs and other conflicts involving human rights violations. Communities engaged in an anti-mining struggle give meaning to their struggle as it being linked to their campesino identity, framing resistance in terms of a 'defense of territory' or a 'defense of patrimony'.

Not only are communities subjects of intervention by anti-mining organisations, but so are these organisations called upon by rural communities. This is related to the perception (and often fact) that an unsupported community cannot win an anti-mining struggle on its own. Anti-mining organisations (NGO's, environmental movements) act as bridges as they can often count on an (inter)national network, being able to scale up resistance by strategically translating 'defense of territory' into a 'defense of human (or particularly indigenous) rights'. The scale of resistance grows as the struggle continues: from the community level, to nearby organisations supporting the community, to the international community. Especially when a mining company is willing to go far to pursue its interests, scaling up resistance by involving (international actors (notably human rights organisations) may be the only way of preventing the installment of a mining company in a territory.

The Cabildo Abierto versus the Consulta

Whilst the Honduran Institute on Environmental Law (IDAMHO) began a lawsuit to convince the Supreme Court of the unconstitutionality of the new mining law, and as other opportunities at the national level are currently lacking, other organisations have changed strategy towards mobilising communities in 'defense of territory'. They visit communities with mining concessions to teach community leaders - notably Patronatos and Juntas de Agua - about the impacts of mining through workshops and organised visits to Valle de Siria; and about the legal rights of the community to reject a mining project via a public consulta (consultation).

However, instead of focusing on the legal consulta before the beginning of an exploitation phase of a mining project, anti-mining activists encourage communities to organise *cabildo*

abiertos (public referendums), through which municipal governments are pressured to declare the municipality free of mining. To the frustration of the national government this has proven to be an effective strategy: a growing number of over 20 municipalities have been declared free of mining. The crucial difference between the two is that the consulta takes place in the playing field of the extractivist complex, whilst the involved communities exercise more control and autonomy in the preventive referendum.

In short, there is room for considerable manipulation of the consulta. Additionally, consultas can be circumvented completely when communities are not aware of their right to one (see Case 2, Chapter 7). Assuming one is held, the mandatory consulta for the exploitation phase means that a considerable investment (time and money) in a mining project is made earlier during the exploration phase. This a) increases the stakes of the company with the risk of loss of investment in case of reject, and b) the exploitation phase starts several months to years after initial explorations, giving mining companies or other beneficiaries of mining exploitation a considerable time frame to convince –one way or another- host communities to accept the mining project.

Internal community divisions –caused or aggravated by the entry of both a mining company and opposing organisations –profoundly affect resistance to mining and may escalate to a fatal degree over the course of time. Mining conflicts are as much conflicts over meanings as conflicts over resources: whilst the anti-mining movement seeks to mobilise community members against mining, mining companies employ a counter-frame of development and prosperity. They may also offer to build roads, schools or health clinics, or promise well-paid jobs/hand out stipends to community leaders. Some community members may also look for other economic benefits by selling land or commercialising the water that springs from their land, fueling community conflicts over access to these resources.

A second notable element is the context of lawlessness and violence in which anti-mining activists and communities have to maneuver themselves when facing a mining company. When 'soft' measures (discursive frames, bribes) fail to convince a significant part of the population they make place for the threat or use of violence: be it repressive police action to dissolve protest (San Andrés mines, Chapter 5), or death threats directed at key opponents (see Case 3, Chapter 7). People taking an active role in the opposition movement are criminalised or persecuted by the state, are intimidated, shadowed, and receive death threats, have escaped assassination attempts, and have been murdered. Attempts to make the state respond by denouncing death threats, illegal police behaviour or other human rights violations, are commonly fruitless.

In its own playing field, paradoxically both the law and the lawlessness favour the extractivist complex, allowing land to be claimed and the resource frontier to be pushed. Land is acquired legally in the exploration phase of a mining project; and the growth of community divisions and/or the threat and use of violence by mining companies or state institutions working on their behalf create a situation in which the community itself becomes the arena of conflict. Even for a community that manages to resist despite these obstacles, the outcome of the consulta can only place a temporary halt of three years on the push of the frontier: it does not allow for a push back. The anti-mining movement is well aware of these issues, leading it to

increasingly focus on the mobilisation of communities *prior* to the first exploration activities and organising preventive referenda. It takes the issue *outside* of the playing field with rules set by the extractivist complex, creating another arena where instead the involved communities are empowered and where they reaffirm their own land claim and autonomy before the mining industry makes its entry into the territory. However, the legal strength of these declarations remains to be seen, as the mining law specifically states that 'no area can be declared permanently free of mining'.

9.3 Discussion

International Standards or Social Movements as Instruments of Change?

When acknowledging that a large part of Honduran Civil Society opposes mining as well as other resource extraction or large scale 'development' projects, and when acknowledging that these projects are often accompanied by human rights abuses, what does this tell about the feasibility and legitimacy of the neoliberal extractivist development model; and what does this tell about the world system as we know it today? Sosa and Zwarteveen (2011, 382), wrote that in this model of resource extraction

> 'it is private transnational capital that has grand influence in the regulation and decision making surrounding the distribution and use of natural resources like water and land. This grand influence in decision making is based on the sale, privatisation and individualisation of these resources aims for the wellbeing of investors and their capital at the most convenient costs, including the cost of harm to local populations'[154]

There exists no cruder form of possession by dispossession, or the accumulation of resources and capital at its most convenient costs: loss of land and water, contamination and disease, feelings of insecurity, and violence used to suppress protest. Military and police are employed as security guards of these projects, not as neutral institutions promoting the rule of law. Mining, logging, palm-oil plantations: they may indeed bring economic growth, but at the cost of the rural poor. As more land is grabbed, rural populations are forced to migrate or to become wage workers for products meant for export, in the long term affecting food prices and food sovereignty. This development model– which has proven to lack democratic legitimacy - shows the failure –or is it disinterest? - of the Honduran state to protect the interests of its citizens. Nevertheless, would be too narrow to put all the blame with the Honduran government.

Canadian official aid towards the creation of the new mining law: development cooperation or concealed self interest? Do transnational companies really uphold their 'Corporate Social Responsibility' standards when they create national subsidiaries or when they buy resources from national companies not constrained in their conduct by CSR standards, or when they rely on private security companies and state security institutions to 'clear the path' for them? EITI,

---

[154] 'son capitales privados transnacionales que tienen gran influencia en la regulación y la toma de decisiones acerca de la distribución y el uso de los recursos naturales como aguas y tierras. Esta gran influencia en la toma de decisiones basada en la mercantilización, privatización e individualización de los recursos busca el bienestar de los inversionistas y sus capitales a los costos más convenientes, incluso a costa del perjuicio de las poblaciones locales'

the Conflict Free Gold Standard, Mining Contribution Index, Corporate Social Responsibility as well as other standards and commitments have failed to turn the mining industry into a 'clean' business, let alone turn these projects into something beneficial for society.

Quite to the contrary, the contamination caused by Goldcorp's open pit operation is literally engraved on the bodies of the people of Valle de Siria. Second, writing on the role of violence as a means of claiming resources, Peluso & Lund (2011, 34) posed that 'extensive and destructive violence is likely when the resources are either in great abundance or have great economic or strategic value'. Honduras stands as a tragic example of how violence is repeatedly used to push through mining and other resource exploitation projects; be they aimed at exploiting gold, antimony, iron-oxide, palm-oil or water bodies. Repression not only forms part the business model employed by Honduran companies unconcerned with CSR standards, but is just as visible in the mines of Valle de Siria and San Andrés that are owned by the multinational companies who partake in the ICMM, adhere to self-invented CSR protocols, and receive stock market prizes for their 'sustainable' conduct. These TNC's indirectly and directly benefit from – and partake in - the repression of social protest (CIDSE 2011, 4).

To recite Catherine Coumans (2010, 45), it is *'increasingly a movement firmly controlled by the corporations whose abuses it was meant to restrain'*. The standards that in theory aim to prevent excesses have a counterproductive effect: evidence unfavourable for these projects is either disqualified as lacking scientific vigour (as in the case of Goldcorp rejecting the evidence of contamination) or falls outside of the standard's parameters (as goes with EITI, ignoring all dimensions but financial transparency). Ignored completely is the recognition of such projects as potential sources of social conflict, the influence of corruption in consultation processes, the partiality of the state, and non-technocratic counterarguments based on intangible values such as patrimony or sacredness.

An illustrious example is the anti-dam struggle of the indigenous platform COPINH, of whom a member was killed by the military during a manifestation in July 2013. The issue caused a minor debate in the Netherlands due to the FMO's (a development bank largely owned by the Dutch state) financial support of the dam project carried out by DESA. The FMO - having invested millions of Euros - defends the project, basing its argument on a) a discourse of development that unlike COPINH's argument is 'substantiated by facts'[155], and b) maintains that the results from the consultation process have shown that a majority of the population is in favour of the project. In turn, COPINH opposes the project for the sacred value it attributes to the river, and claims that the consultation process was fraudulent. The matter stands unresolved: the FMO continues to finance the project and has the support of the Dutch Minister of Foreign Trade and International Cooperation (Ploumen), who responded that

> 'I do not possess information to be able to confirm nor deny that the police, military and justice are at hand of DESA in the dam project in question (...) but so far, I have no

---

[155] http://www.fmo.nl/k/n114/news/view/15177/179/fmo-s-reaction-to-article-de-volkskrant.html

reason to doubt the carefulness that FMO exercises surrounding its investment decisions'[156]

COPINH will not retreat anymore (to do so would be felt as dishonouring its martyrs) and the Honduran state will continue to criminalise and repress this organisation in any way it sees fit in order to push through its planned dam project.

It is also important to consider structural global conditions that facilitate an aggressive push into the resource frontier. To provide an example from this research, at the time the indigenous activists of San Francisco de Locomapa were murdered, the antimony price was on its peak on the world market. (Violent) accumulation by dispossession remains one of the engines of resource and capital accumulation on which the modern world system is based. Western (post)industrial consumption societies and the emergent consumption societies across the world require a steady influx of natural resources (minerals, fossil fuels, wood, and food products) as well as growing returns of capital to keep their economies running and growing: 'the social metabolism' of these societies (Martínez-Alier, personal communication). Technological advancement alone (recycling, substitution, etc.) cannot keep the pace or is deemed too expensive, hence the 'resource frontier' is repeatedly pushed (Bunker 2003). Pushing the resource frontier by ongoing liberalisations then can be seen as a means to maintain a cheap and steady supply of natural resources. The abuses at the frontier that accompany this process – including environmental destruction and violence- are not merely the result of bad resource governance of a 'failing state', but are also outcomes of the unsustainable social metabolism of consumption societies that appear unable to make a turn.

Whilst international standards and treaties fail to serve their intended purpose under global conditions that require a return of capital investment and an influx of cheap resources, social movements have a key role to play in advocating and building progressive social change. In line with Yagenova (2010, 17) '*it is the social movements that through their repertoire of collective action construct critical thought and social practices that conceive alternative models*'. The Honduran anti-mining movement is very clear in its point: under the current conditions, the creation of prosperity through the extractivist 'development model' is unviable and illegitimate. Cyanide leaching open pit mining has proven to be hazardous, community consultations are affected by corruption, and community rights are disrespected. Despite the blunt repression of activism by the state, the Honduran anti-mining movement has found an effective method of bringing a halt to these resource extraction projects by calling upon the right to water and the right to self-determination by means of organising public referendums.

Bebbington & Valencia (2007) argued that social conflict is a necessary precursor to reaching progressive social and institutional change on mining. For the Honduran anti-mining movement - as an expression of social conflict between civil society and the extractivist complex – political opportunities were considerably larger before the military coup. If institutional progress is ever reached it will probably be on the long term, as dialogue is near impossible with the current government. The movement acts upon this impasse by bypassing

---

[156] Ik beschik niet over informatie om te kunnen bevestigen of te ontkennen dat politie, militairen en justitie in Honduras op de hand zijn van DESA in het stuwdamproject in kwestie...Maar tot dusverre heb ik geen reden om te twijfelen aan de zorgvuldigheid, die FMO betracht rondom haar investeringsbeslissingen.

the central government through community level mobilisations, but in response the state may increasingly try to push through its policies by repression – future developments will tell. It will be difficult for the movement to more successfully advocate institutional change whilst it is engaged in the (sometimes literal) 'defence of territory': accompanying community struggles and cabildos abiertos to keep the mining industry at bay, whilst enduring repression. Neighbouring El Salvador stands as comparison: as all extractive activities are suspended by government decree, the movement can spend its resources on advocating a total prohibition on metallic mining, as well as a law that guarantees the right to water, on a national level.

I argue that in the Honduran case, institutional change needs to be preceded by social change – which is slowly taking place. The end of the traditional two party system since November 2013 – although not yet translated into institutional reconfigurations –can be seen as a sign of increasing political awareness. Also, activists acknowledge that at large, communities are more aware of their human and civil rights as in the past. Social movements not only mobilise communities with the aim of claiming land rights or declaring municipalities free of mining: they are vehicles of empowerment of the partaking individuals and communities about their rights as Honduran citizens; and about their own capacity to engage collectively in 'politics on the ground' and advocate these rights. In this sense, mobilisations also represent the formation of solidarity (Melucci & Avitzer 2000) and the expression of autonomy (Zibechi 2003). As the gap between institutionalised practice and the needs of civil society continues to exist (or even grow) in Honduras, and as communities are increasingly aware of their rights, social movements and citizen mobilisations will have to play an increasingly important role in the foreseeable future.

Theoretical Considerations

In this research I predominantly used framing theory to analyse the interaction between the anti-mining movement and the communities it tries to mobilise in collective action. However, no theory on its own is ever sufficient to explain a movement's motives, actions, successes or obstacles. To understand the origin of a movement's discursive frame, one has to take into account the political and socio-economic history of the movement and the society it is situated in. To understand a movement's ability to engage in collective action, one needs to consider not only its collective action frames and other available resources (material, human and cultural), but also the political opportunity / constraint structure a movement is situated in, and the repertoire of counter-actions employed by the movement's opponents. Hence, whilst framing theory can be a useful tool for the analysis of social reality, it cannot be assumed to fully explain it – to come to a deeper understanding, several approaches have to be used in a complementary way to come closer to a holistic picture of the reality on the ground.

Framing theory has proven to be very effective in explaining the success of the anti-mining movement with the communities it is involved with: the movement's frame of resistance to mining as a defense of water and life connects very well with the lived reality of the communities. Whilst these two connecting frames allow for cooperative interaction, two opposite frames (between the extractive complex and the anti-mining movement) are a source of contestation. To bring framing back to its roots in discourse analysis, the struggle at the mining frontier is not only a struggle about resources, but also a struggle about truth. In a

Foucauldian sense truth is power (Foucault 1977): the anti-mining movement is powerful in the sense that its 'truth' resonates better with the experiences or lived realities of communities than the 'truth' as promoted by the extractivist complex, despite the considerable propaganda apparatus backing up the latter.

However, this issue also shows the limits of the approach. Discursive power can be considered soft or *normative power* (Sell 1996, Reimann 2006). Opponents of anti-mining activism lack may normative power vis-à-vis the anti-mining movement, but contrary to the movement have considerable hard or *repressive power* to their disposal. With repressive power, I refer to a series of visible measures that imply the threat or use of violence. A strict focus on frame analysis does not explain for the use of violence as it does not *convince* a target group, but instead *coerces* it by force to comply. Of course this is not to say that violence has no symbolic / discursive component (Williams 2009): it is not used excessively, but rather threatened with and used to send a message. Nevertheless, violence is the continuation of politics or business where dialogue or convincing fails: disciplining through punishment. Therefore, there is more at stake than a powerful discursive frame in explaining the success of a movement or countermovement: coercion by means of exercising hard, repressive power becomes a viable alternative to framing when actual credibility is lacking.

The countrywide roadblocks of the ACD or the manifestations at municipal levels can be seen in the same light: they are a manifestation of the anti-mining movement's 'hard' power when its discursive frame fails to convince the political establishment. To quote again one activist:

> It is the only way that is left for the people, is to manifest in the streets. (…) in some moments, the politicians only respond to force and to pressure'[157]

The use of force - be it roadblocks by the anti-mining movement or violence by the extractivist complex - results from an impasse due to a lack of possible compromise, and can be seen as an attempt to break through it. As such, mobilisation is an available resource when the use of a discursive frame –also as a resource – is insufficient in itself to achieve its goal. Similarly, as proponents of the mining industry fail to convincingly frame the anti-mining movement as criminal or as anti-development, they resort to terrorisation (threats, violence) of the movement instead: violence as a resource. These examples show how it is possible to integrate a framing approach with a broad view on the resource mobilisation approach to social movements: movements need convincing collective action frames to rally support and mobilise people into protests, which in turn are manifestations of the movements 'hard power', used to exercise influence where frames in themselves are insufficient to move closer to the movement's goal.

I have a number of remarks on the political opportunity structure (POS) approach in relation to the anti-mining movement. There are two interrelated points to consider: a) the assumption that a reformist position is more successful than an oppositional position, and b) the rigidity and layers of political opportunity structures. The history of the AC versus the ACD is one in which the platform with a more uncompromising standpoint gains more successes than the platform willing to negotiate its standpoint. This is contrary to the assumption that political

---

[157]Es la única manera que se queda el pueblo, es manifestar en las calles. en algunos momentos, los políticos solamente responden a través de la fuerza y a través de la presión.

opportunities are greater with easier-to-negotiate standpoints. The case of El Salvador, where the anti-mining movement has successfully pressured its government to suspend all metallic mining activities (a rigid standpoint), also supports this. One explanation is the ACD's and MNFMM's ability to widen their political opportunity structure through mass mobilisation – a display of the movement's 'hard' power. In turn, a powerful discursive framework such as the one provided (water is worth more than gold) is required to be able to mobilise in the first place. Second, the anti-mining movement's strategy of scaling up protest by involving global civil society allows it to take advantage of international political opportunity structures: it creates the opportunity to pressure both government and industry from another dimension. In post-coup Honduras - where dialogue with the national government is near impossible from the bottom-up - this will have to become a vital strategy to widen its political opportunities at a national level or at least to limit its political constraints (by denouncing human rights violations).

The role of violence -as used by the extractivist complex to claim land and repress opposition - brings me to another discussion. Activists and scholars alike commonly speak of the *criminalisation* of social movements in Latin America, including anti-mining movements (CIDSE 2011). The concept of criminalisation suggests a series of acts related to a legal reference point, including a) the framing of activists as criminals, b) legal accusations related to their activism, and c) legal punishments such as imprisonment. Of course, 'legal' has to be seen broadly, as accusations may be invented or imprisonment may take place without a legal process. These things also take place in Honduras but the term criminalisation does not cover the full extent of extralegal and illegal persecution of activists: be they part of the anti-mining movement, the peasant movement, the indigenous movement or the political opposition. Some activists, social communicators and community members alike report being shadowed by blinded cars; intimidated with machetes and firearms; receive death threats; and murders are left uninvestigated and with impunity. These acts of repression are undeniable criminal acts in themselves and are not being related to a legal context in any way. Therefore, to encompass the use of these actions, the term '*terrorisation*' of social movements seems more adequate.

Peluso & Lund's concept of 'territorialised power' (2011) is fitting with the extractivist complex as it employs a repertoire of strategies to claim land (mentioned by Peluso & Lund are enclosure, legalisation, territorialisation and violence). Indeed, these and related strategies (e.g criminalisation) are widely used in Honduras as a means to push into the resource frontier, illustrating the unequal power relations between the territorialised power and affected populations. Nevertheless, as this research has shown, as a hopeful last note to this thesis these affected populations have considerable agency of their own and are able to muster considerable support for their cause. Goldcorp's closed mine in Valle de Siria stands as an example of how power relations are not a constant and not necessarily as unequal as they seem from first sight: united communities that are empowered about their rights, accompanied by a wider movement with international connections, can be powerful agents confronting the 'hegemony' of the extractivist development model.

9.4 Suggestions and Recommendations

To the Honduran Anti-Mining Movement

- Strengthen internal alliances. The organisations bannered under the CNRA coordinate their actions internally, but could also involve organisations with an ethnic basis for example. Reuniting regularly allows for the movement to establish a joint path and allows for a more fluid flow of information.
- Try to involve other sectors, including churches and universities to gain a broader support base (e.g. university students, urban population) and more visibility.
- Make use of alternative media to create more visibility on an (inter)national level. MADJ already does this with success, publishing on social networks like Facebook or at the websites of international solidarity organisations. Another example could be taken from the MNFMM's internet page (www.esnominería.blogspot.sv)
- Strategically frame opposition to mining internationally to attract attention. A human rights discourse is already employed, but an additional discourse of ecological sustainability/biodiversity/ecosystems at risk may attract the support of international environmental NGO's, so far uninvolved.
- Continue with the work of mobilising the communities. Communities by law have the right to a consulta, the only article of the mining law that favors them. A community that accepts a mine should still be supported to strengthen its negotiation position vis-à-vis a mining company.
- Accompany communities in registering local sources of drinking water as well as local (communal) land titles.
- Denounce threats internationally (press and human right organisations): visibility gives a degree of protection.
- Try to establish contact with grassroots organisations in Gracias a Dios / la Misquitia, in light of the planned oil extraction activities.
- Promote and support communitarian alternatives to large-scale mining-based development.
- Take into account artisanal mining. The decision to decentralise the regulation of artisanal mining makes this activity sensitive to corruption: when a mining company is 'on good terms' with the municipal government, artisanal mining becomes an interesting option to avoid more rigid supervision and legislation. It bypasses environmental supervision by the national state, leaving it to municipal environmental units not trained or equipped to this task. It also bypasses controls by INHGEOMIN that check whether mining takes place in indigenous territories or natural parks. Last, although artisanal mining permits do not allow it, the lack of supervision allows for (illegal) artisanal mining with machinery.

To the International Community

- The human rights situation in Honduras is deplorable. Not all violence can be attributed to drug trafficking or youth gang activities, but state actors are implied as well. A number of indigenous, human rights, or environmental activists as well as social communicators live with perceived and real insecurity, having received serious threats. They are in need of

visibility and accompaniment by human rights watchdogs; and the Honduran government needs to be held responsible and pressured by NGO's and (EU/state) Foreign Policy institutes alike to protect its citizens and to investigate threats and assassinations left with impunity. I see no indications that the human rights situation in Honduras is improving.

- Honduras seeks admission to the EITI to improve the image of mining and to facilitate the growth of the extractive industry. An international standard of good (mineral) governance that does neither includes environmental nor human rights dimensions is only counterproductive as it makes these dimensions invisible- although they have a real impact on people's livelihoods and lives. For an international standard on good (mineral) governance to give an adequate representation of the reality on the ground, it needs to be inclusive towards other dimensions.

- CSR standards have proven to be insufficient as an accountability mechanism. Transnational companies effectively subcontract the use of violence to the state or private security companies; or obtain resources from national subsidiaries/counterparts not officially operating under a CSR regime. Accountability requires tracking the origin of resources as well as holding companies responsible for crimes committed abroad. There is a continuing role for international NGO's and courts in this activity.

- Similarly, in the context of 'the law of the strongest', without extensive supervision before and during a consulta / prior informed consent, the consulta cannot be relied upon to be representative and to give the green light for a project. First, falsification and bribes are known to take place. Second, the association of police, military and other armed groups as private security for mining and hydroelectric projects, often involved in the direct repression of anti-mining/dam activists by issuing threats, leaves little space for fair decision making.

To Transnational Mining Companies

- TNC's should refrain from using their influence on public officials and law-making processes in ways that hamper the democratic process or infringe the rights of local communities, leading to human rights abuses.

- They should also be aware of the background and current activities of their security personnel, in an effort to prevent that security companies with a record of human rights abuses are contracted and to prevent that individuals with a history or current tie with death squad activity or organised crime organisations are directly or indirectly on the company's payroll.

- Ensure that mining projects do not support or benefit from murder, land theft, or the criminalization and repression of social protest (see CIDSE 2011, 7).

- Refrain from using contested extraction methods (cyanide leaching) that generate considerable externalities on the local population and environment. Damages done to the local people should be compensated.

For further Research

- Oil has been found in La Misquitia (La Tribuna, 2012). The remote region is mostly inhabited by indigenous Misquito people, and is infamous for the drug trafficking activities taking place there. Meanwhile, the Honduran government promises to consult the local indigenous population on oil extraction. This situation makes for a relevant case study about the community consultation process and how this is takes its shape taking into account the interaction of these different actors.

- The research raised a number of questions: to what extent does organised crime have an impact on the state and social organisation? How can one explain the apparent paradox that although social movements sometimes have more political opportunities at the local level, the local institutions are also most visibly infiltrated by organised crime organisations?

- I can recommend an in depth- analysis of how national laws are created, interpreted and selectively used by law enforcers (police and military) and court to criminalise social protest; under what conditions illegal methods of persecution come more to the fore; and what are the coping strategies of human rights defenders and other activists?

- There are other theoretical approaches to the analysis of social movements. Similar investigations could be done that focus more strongly on identity, citizenship and the claiming of rights; whilst the interconnectedness of anti-mining movements region/continent/worldwide could very well be researched by employing actor-network theory. These approaches can be compared to see which (combination of) theory/ies best helps explain social reality.

- This research has hinted at the correlation between the fluctuation of resource prices on the world market and local socio-environmental conflict / conflicts due to the breakdown of patron-client relations, resulting from increased resource demands or capital flow problems of mining companies. A sizeable research project could map these conflicts and provide more insight into the scale of this relation.

Bibliography

Literature

Almendarez, J. (2004). Proyecto de Investigación sobre la Salud en el Valle de Siria. Presentación (*Conferencia de Prensa sobre Salud Valle de Siria*).

aMECATE CORTO. Octubre 2013. Explotación minera en centroamerica. El mismo Guión, diversos actores y muchas victimas. San Salvador, 20 de septiembre 2013. *aMECATE CORTO,* octubre de 2013

Acosta, A. (2011). Extractivismo y neoextractivismo: dos caras de la misma maldición. In: *Más allá del Desarrollo*, Quito.

Anderson, M. D., (2009). *Black and Indigenous: Garifuna Activism and Consumer Culture in Honduras*. University of Minnesota Press

Arts, B. and Buizer M. (2009). Forests, discourses, institutions. A discursive-institutional analysis of global forest governance. *Forest Policy and Economics,* Vol. 11: pp. 340-349.

Avila, J. La explotación minera, tan dura como la dictadura. *Envío, Revista del Equipo de Reflexión, Investigación y Comunicación*. Año 11, nr. 38, Junio 2013.

Barahona, M. (2005). *Honduras en el siglo xx. Una síntesis histórica*. Editorial Guaymuras, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Baud, M. (2010). Identity Politics and Indigenous Movements in Andean History. In: Boelens, R., Getches, D. & A. Guevara-Gil. (2010). *Out of the Mainstream: water rights, politics, and identity*.

Bebbington, A. & Valencia, L.H. Conclusiones: minería, neoliberalisación, y reterritorialización en el desarrollo rural. In: Bebbington, A. (ed). (2007). *Minería, movimientos sociales y respuestas campesinas: una ecología política de transformaciones territoriales.* Lima, IEP & CEPES.

Bebbington, A., Bebbington, D.H., Bury, J., Lingan, J., Muñoz, J.P., & M. Scurrah. (2007). Mining and Social Movements: Struggles Over Livelihood and Rural Territorial Development in the Andes. *World Development*, Vol. 36, No. 12, pp. 2888-2905.

Bebbington, A., Hinojosa, L., Bebbington, D.H., Burneo, M.L., & X. Warnaars. (2008). Contention and Ambiguity: Mining and the Possibilities of Development. *Development and Change*, 39 (6): 965-992.

Bebbington, A., Humphreys Bebbington, D., & Bury, J. (2010). Federating and Defending: Water, Territory and Extraction in the Andes. In: Boelens, R., Getches, D. & A. Guevara-Gil. (2010. *Out of the Mainstream: water rights, politics, and identity*

Bebbington, A. (2012). Extractive Industries, socio-environmental conflicts, and political economic transformations in Andean America. In:…

Benford, R.D, & Snow, D.A. (2000). Framing Processes and Social Movements: an Overview and Assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2000, 26: 611-39.

Bianchini, F. (2006). Estudio Técnico. Contaminación de agua en el área de explotación minera del proyecto San Martín, en el Valle de Siria y repercusiones sobre la salud humana.

Bianchini, F. (2007). Estudio Técnico. Calidad de agua en el área de explotación minera del proyecto San Martín, en el Valle de Siria y repercusiones sobre la salud humana.

Bleiwas, L. (2012). Estimated Water Requirements for Gold Heap-Leach Operations. *United States Geological Service (USGS)*, Open File Report 2012-1085.

Boelens, R., Bustamante, R., & T. Perreault (2010). Networking Strategies and Struggles for Water Control:From Water Wars to Mobiliations for Day-to-Day Water Rights Defence. In: Boelens, R., Getches, D. & A. Guevara-Gil. (2010). *Out of the Mainstream: water rights, politics, and identity*

Boussard, C. (2003). *Crafting Democracy: Civil Society in Post-Transition Honduras*. Department of Political Science, Lund University Sweden.

Bridge, G. (2004). Contested Terrain: Mining and the Environment. *Annual Review of Environmental Resources*, 2004, 29:205-259.

Budds, J., & Hinojosa, L. (2012). Las industrias extractivas y los paisajes hidricos en transición en los países andinos: análisis de la gobernanza de recursos y formación de territorios en Perú. In: (Isch L, E., Boelens, R., & F. Peña (2012). *Justicia Hídrica. Agua, injusticia y conflictos*, Lima, marzo de 2012.

Bunker, S.G. (2003). Matter, Space, Energy, and Political Economy: the Amazon in the World-System. *Journal of World-Systems research*, IX, Summer 2003, 219-258.

Burdick, J. (1995). Uniting theory and practice in the ethnography of social movements: notes toward a hopeful realism. *Dialectical Anthropology*, Vol. 20, pp. 361-385, 1995.

Calderón, F., Piscitellli, A. & J.L. Reyna. (1992). Social Movements: Actors, Theories, Expectations. In: Escobar, A., & Alvarez, S. (1992). *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America.* Westview Press, San Francisco & Oxford.

Canel, E., Idemudia, U., & L. North (2010). Rethinking Extractive Industry: Regulation, Dispossession, and Emerging Claims. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 30:1-2, 5-25.

Cárcamo, C. & Machado Leiva, F. (2004). Las Industrias Extractivas: un mal negocio para Honduras. ASONOG, published with support of Oxfam International and Christian Aid.

Caritas, (2002). La experiencia del Valle de Siria. Informe técnico, caritas arquidiocesana, Junio del 2012.

CCODP (2007). Mining for Justice: the struggle of Honduran Civil Society for Responsible Mining. A report on an MP's Fact-Finding Mission on Mining in Honduras. September 9-13, 2007.

Chapman, A. (1985). Masters of Animals: Oral Traditions of the Tolupan Indians, Honduras. Ethnohistory, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 360-375.

CIDSE, (2011). Criminalisation of Social Protest related to Extractive Industries in Latin America. Analysis and Recommendations, June 2011.

Collier, P. (2007). *The Bottom Billion. Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*. Oxford University Press.

Constitución de la Republica de Honduras, decreto numero 131, 11 de enero 1982.

Coronel, O. (2013). La desconfianza y el miedo: el caso del conflicto hídrico entre Hualla y la Southern Copper Corporation. In: Arroyo, A., & R. Boelens (2013). *Aguas robadas. Despojo hídrico y movilización social*. Quito, agosto 2013.

Coumans, C. (2010). Alternative Accountability Mechanisms and Mining: The Problems of Effective Impunity, Human Rights, and Agency. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 30: 1-2, 27-48.

Cruz, J.M., (2011). Criminal Violence and Democratization in Central America: The Survival of the Violent State. *Latin American Politics and Society*, 53:4.

Eriksen, T. H. (2004). *What is Anthropology?* Pluto Press, London.

Escobar, A., & Alvarez, S. (1992). *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America.* Westview Press, San Francisco & Oxford.

Escobar, A. (2008). *Territories of Difference: place, movements, life, risks*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Truth and Power.* In: Craig Calhoun et al. (2005). *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, pp. 201-209. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Foweraker, J. (2001). Grassroots Movements and Political Activism in Latin America: A Critical Comparison of Chile and Brazil. *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 839-865.

Foss, S.K. & Gill, A. (1987). Michel Foucault's Theory of Rhetoric as Epistemic. *The Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 51 (Fall 1987): pp. 384-401.

Friman, H.R (2009). Drug markets and the selective use of violence. *Crime, Law and Social Change* (2009). 52: 285-295).

Fujii, L.A. (2009). Interpreting truth and lies in stories of conflict and violence. (*publisher unknown)*.

Fulmer, A.M., Godoy, A.S., & P. Neff (2008). Indigenous Rights, Resistance, and the Law: Lessons from a Guatemalan Mine. *Latin American Politics and Society*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (Winter 2008), pp. 91-121.

Galeano, E. (1971). *Las Venas Abiertas de América Latina*. Catálogos, Buenos Aires Argentina.

Garay-Salamanca, L.J. & E. S. Salcdo-Albarán (2011). Institutional impact of criminal networks in Colombia and Mexico. *Crime, Law and Social Change* (2012) 57: 177-194

Gleditsch, K.S., & Ruggeri, A. Political opportunity structures, democracy, and civil war. (2007). *Draft   paper prepared for presentation at the 6th SGIR Pan-European International Relations   Conference*, Turin 12-15 September 2007.

Giddens. A. (1979). Agency, Structure*.* In: Craig Calhoun et al. (2005). *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, pp. 231-242. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research. The Qualitative Report, Vol.8 No.4 December 2003 597-607.

Gotham, K. (1999). Political Opportunity, Community Identity, and the Emergence of a Local Anti-Expressway Movement. *Social problems*, Vol. 46, No. 3, (Aug. 1999), pp. 332-345).

Guevara, L. (2013). Niños víctimas del conflicto minero. aMECATE CORTO. Octubre 2013.

Guevara, L. (2013). En Nueva Esperanza se respira lucha. aMECATE CORTO. Octubre   2013.

Jarvis, A. & Amezaga, J. (2009). Technical review of mine closure plan and mine closure implementation at Minerales Entre Mares San Martín mine, Honduras. A report prepared for Caritas (Honduras) / CAFOD International

Johnston, J.& Lefebvre, S. (2013). Honduras since the Coup: Economic and Social Outcomes. *Center   for Economic and Policy Research,* November 2013. Downloaded on March 22nd at: http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/Honduras-2013-11.pdf

Joker, W. M. (2004). *Changing Places: Environment, Development and Social Change in Rural Honduras.* Carolina Academic Press, Durham North Carolina.

Haarstad, H., & Floysand, A. (2006). Globalization and the power of rescaled narratives: A case of opposition to mining in Tambogrande, Peru. Department of Geography, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway.

Hale, C.R. (2001). What is Activist Research? *Social Science Research*, Vol. 2, no. 1-2, 2001.

Heldens, J. & Reysoo, F. 2005. De kunst van het interviewen. Reflecties op het interview met een guide*. Kwalon – tijdschrift voor kwalitatief onderzoek in Nederland*, vol 10, nr. 3, pp. 106-   121.

Hellmann, (1992). In: Escobar, A., & Alvarez, S. (1992). *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America.* Westview Press, San Francisco & Oxford.

Hernandez, P. (undated). Antecedentes de la Alianza Civica por la Democracia.

Herrera, F. (2013). *La mina San Martín en el Valle de Siria. Exploración, explotación y   cierre: impactos   y consecuencias. Informe ejecutivo*. IDAMHO, Gráficos Tegucigalpa.

Hinojosa, L. & J. Budds. (2013). Mecanismos de acceso y control del agua en el contexto minero del sur peruano. In: Arroyo, A., & R. Boelens (2013). *Aguas robadas. Despojo hídrico y movilización social*. Quito, agosto 2013.

Hogenboom, B. (2011). The return of the state and new extractivism: what about civil society? In: Cannon, B., & Kirby, P. (2012). *Civil Society in Left-led Latin America*.

International Council on Mining & Metals (2012). The role of mining in national economies: Mining's contribution to sustainable development. October 2012.

Irías, G. & Sosa, E. (2009)*. La crisis Hondureña: percepciones ciudadanas y perspectivas para la democratización.* Cespad, Tegucigalpa, Noviembre de 2009.

Klandermans, B. (1993). A Theoretical Framework for Comparisons of Social Movement Participation. *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 8, No.3, 1993.

Klein, N. (2013). De shock doctrine. De opkomst van het rampenkapitalisme. De Geus uitgevers, Breda, 5^e druk.

Kotschwar, B., Moran, T.H., & J. Muir. (2012). Chinese Investment in Latin American Resources: the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. *Peterson Institute for International Economics*, Working Paper 12-3.

Lichterman, P. (1998). What Do Movements Mean? The Value of Participant-Observation. *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1998.

Lincoln, Y.S. (2001).Reconsidering Rapport: Interviewing as Postmodern Inquiry Practice. (*Publisher unknown*)

LLambi, L. & E. Correa (2007). Nuevas ruralidades y viejos campesinados. Agenda para una nueva sociología rural Latinoamericana. *Cuadernos des. Rura*l, Bogotá, Colombia, 4 (59): 3761, julio-diciembre de 2007.

Mejía Guerra, J. A. (2013). Tolupanes: etnia más martirizada de Honduras. *aMECATE CORTO*. Octubre 2013.

Mejía Guerra, J. A. (2013). Dignidad y justicia para el pueblo tolupán. *MADJ*, San Pedro Sula, Honduras, 19 de septiembre 2013

Melucci, A. & Avritser, L. (2000). Complexity, cultural pluralism and democracy: collective action in the public space*. Social Science Information*, 39 (4): pp. 507-527).

Metz, B.E., (2010). Questions of Indigeneity and (Re)-Emergent Ch'orti' Maya of Honduras. *The   Journal   of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, Vol. 15, No.2, pp. 289-316.

Moreno, P.I. *Percepciones sobre la situación hondureño en el año 2013*. Equipo de Refección,   Investigación y Comunicación – Compañía de Jesús. El Progreso, Yoro, Honduras. Enero de 2014.

Oxfam America. (2012). *Minería de metales y desarrollo sostenible en CentroAmérica. Una valoración de costos y beneficios.*

Peluso, N.L., & Lund, C. (2011). New frontiers of land control: Introduction. Journal of Peasant Studies 38:4 667-681).

Perreault, T. (2013). ¿Despojo por acumulación? Minería, agua y justicia social en el Altiplano boliviano. In: Arroyo, A., & R. Boelens (2013). *Aguas robadas. Despojo hídrico y movilización social*. Quito, agosto 2013.

Reimann, K. D. (2006). A view from the Top: International Politics, Norms and the Worldwide Growth of NGO's. *International Studies Quarterly* 2006, 50. Pp. 45-67.

Rodriguez, J. (2007). *La Minería de Metales en Centroamérica: Dolor y Resistencia*. Oxfam América.

Roldan, C. F & Purvance, D. (2012). San Martín mine in Honduras – From Closure to Sustainability. *Goldcorp*

Rootes, C. A. (1999). Political Opportunity Structures: promise, problems and prospects. *La Lettre de la maison Française d'Oxford*, nr. 10, pp.75-97.

Sell, S. K. (1996). Structures, agents and institutions. Private corporate power and the globalization of intellectual property rights. Pp. 91-106.

Sluka, J. A. (1990). Participant Observation in Violent Social Contexts. *Human organisation*, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 114-125.

Sosa Landeo, M. (2012). La influencia de la gran minería en Cajamarca y Apurímac, Perú: acumulación por despojo y conflictos por el agua. In: (Isch L, E., Boelens, R., & F. Peña (2012). *agua, injusticia y conflictos*. Justicia Hídrica, Lima, marzo de 2012.

Sosa, M. & M. Zwarteveen (2011). Acumulación a través del despojo: el caso de la gran minería en Cajamarca, Perú. In: Boelens, R., Cremers, L., & M. Zwarteveen (2011). *Justicia hídrica: acumulación, conflicto y acción social*. Lima, septiembre de 2012

Snyder, R. & A. Duran-Martinez (2009). Does illegality breed violence? Drug trafficking and state-sponsored protection rackets. *Crime, Law & Social Change* (2009) 52: 253-273).

Steinberg, M.W. (1998). Tilting the Frame: Considerations on Collective Action Framing from a Discursive Turn. *Theory and Society*, Vol. 27. NO. 6 (Dec)., 1998), pp. 845-872).

Svampa, M. (2011). Extractivismo neo desarrollista y movimientos sociales: ¿Un giro eco-territorial hacia nuevas alternativas? *Fundación Rosa Luxemburgo*, marzo 2011.

Teijlingen, K. & Hogenboom, B. (2013, forthcoming). Debating 'Buen Vivir' at the mining frontier: the case of 'El Mirador' mining conflict in Ecuador.

Touraine, A. (1985). An introduction to the study of social movements. *Social Research*, Vol. 52, No. 4.

Touraine, A. (2004). On the Frontier of Social Movements. *Current Sociology*, 52: 717.

Urkidi, L. (2011). The Defence of Community in the Anti-Mining Movement of Guatemala. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol. 11, No. 4, October 2011, pp. 556-580.

USAID, (2011). *USAID country profile. Property Rights and Resource Governance*. Honduras. Downloaded on March 24th 2014 at: usaidlandtenure.net/Honduras

Van Der Haar, G. (2009). Searching for dialogue with the Zapatistas. Dilemmas of collaborative research in the ethnography of conflict. In: Almekinders, C., Beukema, L., & C. Tromp. (2009). *Research in Action. Theories and practices for innovation and social change.* Wageningen, Wageningen Academic Publishers.

Van Der Haar, G., Hilhorst, D., Heijmans, A. (2013). Interactive research and the construction of knowledge in conflict-affected settings. *Disasters*, 2013, 37 (S1): S20-S35

Van Maanen, J. (1988). *Tales of the Field: on Writing Ethnography*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London.

Watts, M. & Peluso, N. (2014). Resource Violence. In: Death, C. (editor). (2014). Critical Environmental Politics. Routledge.

Williams, P. (2009). Illicit Markets, weak states and violence: Iraq and Mexico. *Crime, Law and Social Change* (2009): 52: 323-336.

Yagenova, S.M.; García, E., García, R., & W. Santa Cruz. (2010). *los movimientos sociales y el Poder: concepciones, luchas y construcción de contrahegemonía.* FLACSO, Guatemala 2010.

Yoder, E.M., Nieto García, C.M., Perla Gimenez, M.A., Pérez Esquivel, A., Cortiñas, N., Scott, C., Houtard, F., Aguilar, F.J., Umaña, H., & F. Milla. *Report of the Commission of Truth. The voice of the greatest authority is that of the victims*. Tegucigalpa, April 2013.

Younger Freng, P. L. (2008). Report on a visit to San Martín Mine of Minerales EntreMares S.A., Honduras.

Zibechi, R. (2003). Los movimientos sociales latinoamericanos: tendencias y desafíos. *Observatorio Social de América Latina*. No. 9. (Jan. 2003). CLACSO, Buenos Aires.

Internet

Almendarez, J. (September 2011). Goldcorp (Entremares) and government of Honduras hide   information about systemic contaminants in children and adults. Health Tribunal, http://healthtribunal.org/resources/reports-2/, last accessed on January 24[th,] 2014.

Bird, A. Rights Action. Published July 5th 2011. Honduras: community leaders arrested on trumped up charges, for protecting forests from illegal loggers linked to Goldcorp Inc. http://myemail.constantcontact.com/HONDURAS---Arrest-of-Carlos-Amador---others---Linked-to-illegal-logging-and-gold-mining.html?soid=1103480765269&aid=zGddZ2iF1oQ, Accessed on June 29th, 2013

Comité por la Libre Expresión. (2003). Alerta: atentan contra periodista Santa Rosa de Copán. And: Alerta: asesinan periodista en Santa Rosa de Copán. http://www.clibrehonduras.com/main/content/germ%C3%A1n-antonio-rivas

Deutsch, R., Rights Action. Published february 7th 2013. No a la mina! Si a la vida! (a children's   mural   on mining in Honduras). http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnhZQfQgSBk, accessed on 24th of January 2014

Deutsch, R. (27th of June 2013). Cyanide Dreams: Ecotourism and Mega-Mining don't Mix in   Honduras. The Dominion, http://upsidedownworld.org/main/honduras-archives-46/4342-   cyanide-dreams-ecotourism-and-mega-mining-dont-mix-in-honduras, last accessed on July 1st 2013.

El Heraldo,24th of January 2014. Vigente "ley hipoteca" para reconversión de la deuda pública. http://www.elheraldo.hn/Secciones-Principales/Economia/Vigente-ley-   hipoteca-para-reconversion-de-la-deuda-publica Accessed on 17th of March 2014.

El Heraldo, 26th of September 2013. Viene Segunda Fase de Operación Neptuno. http://www.elheraldo.hn/csp/mediapool/sites/ElHeraldo/Sucesos/story.csp?cid=623431&sid=293&fid=219, last accessed on May 18th 2014.

El tiempo, 26th of July 2013. Activistas Europeos en Honduras denuncian ser victimas de amenazas de sicarios. http://www.tiempo.hn/portada/noticias/activistas-europeos-en-   honduras-denuncian-ser-victimas-de-amenazas-de-sicarios, last accessed on february 18th 2014

FMO, 6th of May 2014. FMO's reaction to Article de Volkskrant. http://www.fmo.nl/k/n114/news/view/15177/179/fmo-s-reaction-to-article-de-volkskrant.html, last accessed on May 17th 2014.

Goldcorp. San Martín: Overview and Operating Highlights. http://www.goldcorp.com/English/Unrivalled-Assets/Mines-and-Projects/Central-and-South- America/Operations/San-Martin/Overview-Operating-Highlights/default.aspx, last accessed on January 26th 2014.

GoldCorp. Responsible Mining. http://www.goldcorp.com/English/Responsible-Mining/Partnerships-and-Programs/Sustainable-Community-Investments/Education/default.aspx, last accessed on January 26th 2014.

Instituto de Derecho Ambiental de Honduras (IDAMHO). Published December 26th 2013. La mina de San Martín en el Valle de Siria. Un ejemplo de los impactos y consequencias de la minería en Honduras. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LeoBg41Ow-c, accessed on 24th of January 2014

La Prensa, 30th of April 2014. Diez mineras metálicas sacarán brillo a la economía de Honduras en 2014. http://www.laprensa.hn/economia/445301-98/diez-mineras-metalicas-sacaran-brillo-a-la-economia-de-honduras-en-2014, accessed on April 17th 2014

La Tribuna, 31st of December 2012. Honduras a las Puertas de Explotación Petrolera. http://www.latribuna.hn/2012/12/31/honduras-a-las-puertas-de-explotacion-petrolera/, accessed on April 17th 2014.

Leahy, S. (February 24th 2007). Protests Mount Against Mining Giant. http://www.minesandcommunities.org//article.php?a=4923, last accessed on July 1st 2013.

Jamasmie, C. (April 12th 2012). Lack of mining law costs Honduras US$3 billion. http://www.mining.com/lack-of-mining-law-cost-honduras-us3000-million/, last accessed on May 12th 2014.

Machado Leiva, F. (undated). Ambiente Ecologico. Comunidades del Departamento de Ocotepeque en Honduras exigen la Cancelación de Concesión Minera.http://www.ambiente-ecologico.com/ediciones/2004/088_01.2004/088_Opinion_FranciscoMachadoLeiva.php3, accessed on February 10th 2014

MADJ, 7th of June 2013. Comunicado MADJ: COMMUNITIES IN ATLÁNTIDA DEPARTMENT AT RISK OF DYING FROM THE GREED OF MINING COMPANIES AND THE CORRUPTION OF STATE OFFICIALS MADJ. http://madj.org/content/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=273:comun icado-madj&catid=56:rrnn&Itemid=117. Last accessed July 20th, 2013.

Mennonite Central Committee, (2010). San Andrés, Honduras. http://mccottawa.ca/miningjustice/casestudies/sanandres, accessed 06th of February 2014

Mesa Nacional Frente la Minería Metalica (El Salvador). (2011). Lider ambientalista contra minería es capturado por Policía hondureña. http://esnomineria.blogspot.com/2011/07/lider-ambientalista-contra-mineria-es.html. Accessed on June 29th, 2013.

Mining Watch Canada. (March 8th, 2013). Sisters of the Siria Valley, We Support Your Struggle for Justice and Health. http://www.miningwatch.ca/news/sisters-siria-valley-we-support-your- struggle-justice-and-health, last accessed on January 24th, 2014.

M4: Movimiento Mesoamericano contra el Modelo Extractivo Minero. Vídeo. Honduras: Martires de la Tierra. http://www.movimientom4.org/2013/07/video-honduras-martires-de-la-tierra/, last accessed on May 11th, 2014.

PROAH, (2013).Proyecto de minería en La Nueva Esperanza : Escalada alarmante deintimidaciones dirigidas a la comunidad, http://proah.wordpress.com/2013/06/20/proyecto-de-mineria-en-la- nueva-

esperanza-escalada-alarmante-de-intimidaciones-dirigidas-a-la-comunidad/, last accessed on July 6th, 2013

Rabchevsky, G.A. (1994). The Mineral Industry of Honduras. United States Geological Service, http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/country/1994/9514094.pdf, last accessed on May 12th 2014.

Semanario Fides. (14-02-2014) Minería en Honduras: Riesgos o Oportunidades? http://semanariofides.com/2014/02/14/mineria-en-   honduras-riesgos-u-oportunidades/

The World Bank, Data: Honduras (2014. http://data.worldbank.org/country/honduras, last accessed on March 23th 2014

Transparency International, http://www.transparency.org/cpi2013/results. Accessed on March 31th 2014.

UNESCO, (03-12-2003). Director-General Condems Assasination of Honduran Journalist Germán Antonio   Rivas. http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.phpURL_ID=13731&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=2 01.html

UNODC, (2012). UNODC homicide statistics 1995-2011. Downloaded on November 29th 2013 from https://www.unodc.org

UNODC, (2012). Cocaine from South America to the United States. Transnational Organised Crime in Central America and the Carribean. Downloaded on May 15th 2014 from http://www.unodc.org/documents/toc/Reports/TOCTASouthAmerica/English/TOCTA_CACaribb_cocaine_SAmerica_US.pdf

UN Data, Honduras. (2014). http://data.un.org/CountryProfile.aspx?crName=HONDURAS. Last accessed   on March 23th 2014

Van Der Borgh, C., & Terwindt, C. (2009). Making Claims, Negotiating Space. ICCO Alliance Netherlands, 2009.