

Mining Minerals, Transforming Territories: large-scale mining and territorial pluralism in the Ecuadorian Amazon

Abstract submission for the 'Extractive Imperative' international meeting.

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Large-scale mineral mining accounts for a considerable share of the recent trend towards neo-extractivism in Latin America, causing the so-called mining frontier to increasingly move into environments that, although known for its substantial reserves of metals, have remained untouched by the large-scale mining industry. One of such regions is the Amazon region, of which 21 is currently under concession to mining companies (RAISG 2012). This mining frontier expansion does not take place on 'empty lands', but into spaces generally inhabited and used by other actors such as agro-pastoral communities and indigenous peoples. Here, the territorial logics of large-scale mineral mining superimposes the existing, complex territorial dynamics, resulting in an up-swing of mining conflicts. Engaging with the literature on territoriality and Amazonian frontier struggles, I will approach mining operations and overlapping, competing territorial claims of state and community actors as territorializing projects that relate to particular cosmographies. The aim of this paper is to understand the competing cosmographies and territorializing projects at play around Ecuador's first large-scale mining project, El Mirador mining project in Zamora Chinchipe. By means of this case-study, I attempt to show how concepts of 'territorial valuation languages'², 'overlapping and 'territorial pluralism' could enhance an understanding of territory and territoriality in a way that fits current debates on extraction in Latin America. This paper present the preliminary results of a recent fieldwork period, which entailed semi-structured interviews with about 60 actors involved in the multi-scalar governance of Mirador and some (participatory) mapping of territorializing projects.

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² *Lenguajes de valorización acerca de la territorialidad* as originally coined by Maristella Svampa