

Paper Title: Politics Below the Surface: Sustainable Development or Mining Sacrifice Zones in Ecuador?

Abstract: Ecuador is attempting to build a state owned metals mining firm with the help of Chile. I will discuss preliminary results from dissertation research on changing land and subsurface rights in the Intag zone, the location of the first planned state mining project, which has been militarized as a consequence of the region's 20 year history of successful resistance to mining. This research draws on legal geography and political ecology to identify the legal and administrative changes that accompany contemporary geographies of subsurface land grabs, focusing on links between mundane practices (e.g., impact studies, mining law, easements) and overtly antagonistic practices (e.g., forced expulsion). I aim to connect everyday experiences of land and ownership to larger questions of state authority, practice, and discourse, taking land rights as a significant point of articulation of the state-territory-citizen apparatus. I will also discuss aspects of my solidarity work as a human rights observer in the Intag mining conflict, which points to the difficulty of active resistance in the context of "post-neoliberal" Ecuador, where activists confront the state directly as opposed to transnational corporations as under neoliberalism.

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Bio: Lindsay Shade is a PhD Candidate at the University of Kentucky Department of Geography. Her academic interests are in political ecology, legal geography and critical property theory, and collaborative activist research. Her dissertation research focuses on the accumulation and concentration of subsurface property rights in Appalachian West Virginia and the Ecuadorian Andes, where new extraction frontiers for fracking and open cast minerals mining have led to major shifts in land governance and access.