

Introduction: Struggles over Mining and Territory in Latin America.

Ann-Kathrin Volmer (BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY, GERMANY)

Anna Preiser (UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA, AUSTRIA)

Tyanif Rico Rodríguez (BIELEFELD UNIVERSITY, GERMANY)

The nexus between extractivist activities, mining conflicts and territory has become increasingly visible and discussed both in social movements and local struggles as well as in academic debates, especially in Latin America (Göbel y Ulloa 15). Considering the role and impact of mining as well as the emerging field of research, this special issue sets out to show and analyze the specificities of current struggles in the mining sector and territorial tensions that have been created in Latin America, and develop and change alongside institutional settings and current dynamics of global demand and discourses.

Latin American countries are marked by extractivism which we understand as an economic and development project linked to the appropriation, overexploitation, and extraction of large volumes of natural resources such as minerals, hydrocarbons or agricultural products in order to generate a valuation of these in the global market (Bebbington 23; Gudynas 188). Extractive dynamics and the deepening of development agendas based on extractivism are a sign of the lack of governmental determination facing the socio-environmental conflicts that mining generates. In the region, the struggles for the territory and the resistance of collective actors are related to the defense of life and socio-environmental relations, as well as the definition of mechanisms and institutional agendas to resist exploitation.

Mining as a key element of extractivism is an inherent part of capitalism and the global world market. It has a long history across Latin America and marks countries, their societies, and natural conditions to different degrees. The quest for precious metals and its material value was a propelling force for colonial interest and exploitation starting in the 15th century. It came along with a forceful appropriation of

land, its resources as well as the workforce to extract precious metals enriching the colonizers (Alimonda11-12)

Also nowadays, various countries have committed their economy and development model to the export of metals. Mining and its consequences are manifold. They influence institutional developments, economic orientations, mark dominant discourses about development and bring about profound environmental and territorial changes often leading to conflict. By the invasion of space, the arrival of new social actors changes hierarchies and previous social, economic and power relations. Thereby, living conditions of people are influenced. Also, economic benefits have been distributed unequally, with local populations often at a disadvantage.

On the one hand, some attempts have been made to improve the situation of communities in sites of extraction by environmental and redistribution policies or the implementation of *consulta previa*. On the other hand, territories across the subcontinent have been threatened by an expanding mining frontier, and mining conflicts and struggles on local, regional and global levels have been increasing. These conflicts often go along with negotiation processes between stakeholders that deal with different perspectives on *territorio*. This notion of *territorio* as expressed in Spanish language refers to a space for life and cultural identity, product of struggles and experiences from Latin America, as evidenced by López Sandoval et al. (45). We use this concept to mark a difference from the definition of territory regarding a bounded space related to national sovereignty. [1] *Territorio* goes beyond a physical-geographical space as it is constructed by socio-natural relations influenced by relations of power, composed of material as well as symbolic, cultural, spiritual,

social, political, and identity-marking resources. Despite the dominant discourse, *territorio* cannot be understood as apolitical or static. Rather, it is dynamic and in constant construction and is marked by constant tensions. Territory is in dispute, negotiated and contested on different scales, and can only be grasped and analyzed in its specific context. The characteristics of *territorio* are contingent and its meaning, conditions and claims are changing (Devine et al. 6). Different practices of territorial construction overlap, merge, get into conflict and/or are superimposed by force, caused by necessity or due to cultural changes. Through the analysis of the construction of *territorio*, the heterogeneity of stakeholder groups becomes visible. Therefore, *territorio* has become a concept which marks the positioning of different actors as well as an analysis of social and political dynamics (Svampa 39) and might make visible political strategies about the appropriation of nature, influenced by power relations. Nevertheless, struggles for territory are not only political, but also epistemic as territories are further connected to knowledge and knowledge is embedded in territories (Porto-Goncalves and 71).

This edition joins contributions addressing particular cases of territory-related struggles in Latin American countries including social and political dynamics related with the extraction of mineral resources. The cases focus on dynamics in different countries, tackling aspects such as institutional developments, discourses, its impact on struggles over territories, and the social construction of *territorio*. It also highlights how social movements contest, appropriate, refuse or engage with stakeholders in different contextualized conflicts over mining and territory.

The distance of the notion of *territorio* between institutional and local uses makes the conflicts between State institutions and local communities evident and substantial. Defining development strategies based on extractive agendas, or value creation based on the idea of nature as a resource, is a problematic issue, as evidenced by the contribution by Tyanif Rico and Ann-Kathrin Volmer that opens this volume. The authors analyze the multiple meanings of territory in the context of mining. Based on empirical research in the departments of Cauca

and Nariño in the Macizo region of Colombia - officially declared an eco-region, and at the same time strategic for extractivist development. The article illustrates how the institutional understanding of territory contradicts the peasant organization conceptions. The economist, dualistic understanding of the government in which nature is exploited in the form of mining and ecosystem services conflates with an understanding as a complex living space that is constructed and reproduced on a daily basis. From the perspective of peasant organizations, the authors highlight central dimensions of *territorio*: multiplicity, the identity process and the construction of political subjects as well as its political use in the struggle for the right to recognition of the peasantry.

Javier Lastra-Bravo proposes a discussion on two opposing phenomena: on the one hand, the advance of neo-extractivism in Latin American territories providing a general overview about debates on extractivism and the Anthropocene and, on the other hand, the increase of social movements linked to the defense of resources, territory, cultural heritage and common goods. For this purpose, the article focuses on analyzing the empirical case of the Dominga Mining Project in Chile, with special emphasis on the socio-territorial conflict that has been generated there. The text evaluates the perspectives of the different local and institutional actors in the dispute over territory and the defense of natural resources using discourse analysis and ethnography to focus on the inter-community conflict generated by the project.

The main point of Quincy Stemmler's article is to analyze how the institutional framework of a country affects the socio-environmental conflicts around mining in resource rich countries. His analysis is based on a comparison between Peru and Colombia, which are both resource rich and affected by resource conflicts. Starting with the conflict potentials and strategies of the state and non-state actors as well mining-firms he analyses the political-participatory, the politico-economic and the ecological dimension on the local and national level. His objective is to criticize the approach perceiving natural resources and rent-seeking behavior as given objectivities in mining conflicts by focusing on

the role of institutional settings in those conflicts.

In her contribution, Jimena Pesquero Bordón focuses on the processes of contentious action in rejection of mega-mining in Argentina from 2019-2021 and the transformations of the actor dynamics around state mining policy. In this context, the article shows how the conflicts are product of a new stage in the cycle of social conflict over environmental issues. The author highlights diverse and complex civil-social and political-institutional strategies, which range from the citizen resistance with repertoires of convergent struggle to the provincial government' and transnational corporations' actions. The latter are based on a technocratic vision of society-nature articulations that clash with aspects of the current environmental legal system in Argentina, generating multiple tensions.

Under the term green extractivism, the edition also critically discusses the current climate crisis with respect to the role of energy transition metals, such as lithium, copper, and silver. Referring to an expanding greening imperial mode of life, Lorena Olarte, Anna Preiser, and Nina Schlosser contribute to this emerging field of research by analyzing the renewed discourses along with an institutionalization of green(ing) extractivisms and resulting eco-territorial conflicts in Chile, Mexico, and Peru. They show how mining, sustainability, and climate protection are presented as compatible in the dominant discourse backed by institutions. At the same time, they point out multiple eco-territorial tensions, specifically at the local level in the Salar de Atacama in Chile, in Mexico's Sierra Norte de Puebla region and the Tambo Valley in Peru, and argue that green extractivisms reproduce and legitimize structures of exploitation, dependency, and power asymmetries.

Alfredo Ledesma and Imayna Caceres include videos and drawings in their multimedia essay, exploring other ways of knowledge production and outreach mechanisms. Both provide examples of how artistic practices and performances are auto-ethnographic methods to feel-think the more-than-human and ontological conflicts surrounding mining activities. Alfredo Ledesma addresses imaginaries of nature-human-relationships that have persisted in Peru as alternative horizons to the dominant system in

his scenic performances of human-non-human hybrids. Imayna Caceres approaches an intuitive intersection of ecologic and planetary concerns, drawing works as an alternative method for knowledge production. The resulting drawings show ancient beliefs about the relationships of life, water, mountain, wind, and other important elements of Andean cosmivision. Both artistic practices can contribute to make sense of the ongoing conflicts over mining and territory from alternative perspectives and to open up new imaginaries.

Through case studies, this issue provides interdisciplinary perspectives on the struggles over mining and territorio in Latin America. The articles approach different conceptions of territory, institutional practices, and contentious relations with multiple stakeholders, providing a common ground of the facets of understanding socio-environmental conflicts. The experiences and cases present approaches for a more profound and critical understanding of the situated effects of global dynamics.

Endnotes

[1] For further reference, see McCall et al. 2021.

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Authors' biographies

Ann-Kathrin Volmer is a geographer from Bonn University and earned a Master of Sciences in Environmental studies from both, the Technical University of Cologne, Germany and the Autonomous University of San Luís Potosí, Mexico, respectively. Currently she works as a scientific assistant at Bielefeld University and forms part of the Management of the Maria Sybilla Merian Center of Advanced Latin-American Studies (CALAS) in Guadalajara, Mexico. She also is a doctoral candidate in Political Geography. Her research project analyzes socio-ecological conflicts about water and gold in the Colombian Massif in South-Western Colombia.

Anna Preiser is university assistant (Prae-Doc) at the Department of Political Science at the University of Vienna, Austria. Her PhD project focuses - from the perspective of political economy and political ecology - on socio-ecological conflicts and environmental politics in Peruvian mining sector. She studied International Development (University of Vienna) and International Business Administration (WU Vienna), and has done various research stays in Peru as an exchange student (Universidad del Pacifico), as a visiting researcher (Universidad

Católica del Perú) and for field research. She is grateful for having received a CALAS fellowship "tandem transatlántico" (Sept. 2019-Feb 2020), which also served as a financial support for her research stay in Peru in 2022.

Tyanif Rico Rodríguez is a postdoctoral researcher at the Center for Advanced Latin American Studies - CALAS at the University of Bielefeld. She is a sociologist from the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana and she has a Master's in Social Sciences with a mention in Rural Studies from the Colegio de Michoacán, also and a Master's in Agrarian Social Studies from the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO – Argentina). She holds a doctorate with honors in Geography from the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Her areas of knowledge are framed within the Environmental Humanities as a perspective to make modern approaches to the society-nature relationship more complex. The author is particularly interested in community and peasant strategies for territorial planning from care, political ontology and socio-environmental conflicts, qualitative methodologies and ethnographic research perspectives. Currently, her research focuses on community territorial care strategies and notions of value that configure more than human relationships in coffee production contexts in Mexico and Colombia.