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Mining Memory: Contention and Social Memory in a Oaxacan Territorial Defense Struggle

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Mining Memory: Contention and Social Memory in a Oaxacan Territorial Defense Struggle

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Abstract

Mining Memory: Contention and Social Memory in a Oaxacan Territorial Defense Struggle

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Faced with the profound social and ecological threats posed by extractivist projects such as large hydroelectric dams, wind farms, and mining operations, many indigenous communities and their allies in Mexico have articulated new forms of contentious politics into a broad territorial defense movement. This project explores the strategies of contention practiced by an anti-mining movement based in the Municipality of San José del Progreso in the southern state of Oaxaca. As a deeply-divided community that has suffered increased violence and conflict directly related to a Canadian-owned gold and silver mine operating in its vicinity, it presents a valuable case study in how strong social movements can still develop under conditions of disunity. This study combines ethnographic and archival research methods to uncover the deep historical roots of community division, and to develop a close analysis of the contentious strategies employed by the anti-mining movement. The historical record and local narratives show the central role that hacienda colonialism played in creating a salient geography of ethnic discrimination and division in the municipality whose effects can still be seen today. In

response to the ongoing processes of colonization and dispossession in San José del Progreso, a legacy of contention has defined and defended both *campesino* (peasant farmer) and indigenous claims to local territory. More than a series of instrumental strategies designed to expel the hacienda and later mine project, this politics of contention operates as a form of social memory to produce a hybrid form of indigenous/*campesino* identity linked to healthy land stewardship, an interconnectedness between the earth and human subjects, and a shared history of struggle. As a result, the anti-mining movement in San José del Progreso has shown success in converting its troubled past and checkered present into the foundations of a healthy social and ecological commons, independent of its failure to fully-unite the municipality or close down the mine project in the short-run.

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I. The Earth Under Our Nails

1. From Contention to Emancipation

Arriving late in the morning to at the Anti-Mining Forum in Magdalena Teitipac, I find the broad, paved plaza steadily filling with people. Several dozen mostly elderly men sit outside the plaza gate in the shade of a corner store, where they can observe participants come and go. They wear the handmade leather sandals, dress shirts, and wide-brimmed hats favored by local indigenous and peasant farmers. Many women are in the plaza, too, where they are occupied with last minute preparations. They wear bright embroidered aprons over handmade dresses typical of communities in the Central Valley of Oaxaca. There are also NGO staff, many of them friends and acquaintances I made during the period of fieldwork I am about to close, others are colleagues from my previous work in Oaxaca over the past several years. The late morning sun is bright overhead, and those who don't have appropriate headgear quickly find shelter under the large striped pavilion that has been erected over the many rows of folding chairs, or under the arcade of the two story town hall dominating the north and west faces of the plaza.

Young people from Magdalena staff the registration table near the entrance of the plaza, likely performing their *tequio* duties or serving as *topiles*- both types of traditional volunteer labor well-known in Oaxacan communities who retain customary systems of shared labor and governance. After registering, I am immediately invited to sit at a shaded table for a warm *atole* drink and a soup of tender corn and herbs, along with sturdy tortillas and roasted grasshoppers. Shortly after sitting to eat, I am joined by some of my closest collaborators in the field: several young leaders of the Coordinator of the United Peoples of the Ocotlán Valley (CPUVO, by its initials in Spanish) just arrived.

We have a brief conversation before rising to honor the repeated requests from event organizers to gather in the main pavilion for formal opening exercises. Before sitting, I make my way over to a photo exhibit being hung in the arcade, and am drafted to help hang the last of the large format photos of recent anti-mining demonstrations in Magdalena. They depict scenes from earlier in the summer, when residents of the town clashed with some of their elected leaders who supported exploratory drilling without the consent of residents. After refusing to change the exploration arrangement they authorized with the Oaxacan state government and the Plata Real mining company, two local commissioners were removed from power. The door to their office was locked and sealed with tape that day, conspicuous among the other doors facing the plaza, which were opened to the coming and going of local leaders and NGO representatives.

A few dozen community authorities from Magdalena Teitipac and other communities sit at the main table in front of the pavilion, where three *bastones de mando* (staffs of office) lie, ribbons in red white and green tied to each steel head glinting in the bright sunlight. There are garlands of oak leaves on the table, and hanging from the tent poles in the pavilion, as well. To one side, an improvised shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe bears an offering of candles, herbs, *mezcal*, fresh chilies, and several anti-mining signs. Near the front of the pavilion is a long table I saw at other forums that summer. It hosts several young NGO staffers and volunteers on laptops who will faithfully record comments from speakers and the audience during formal presentations and breakout groups. This record will be used to draw up a joint declaration against mining by the end of the day.

After the formal welcome and opening ceremony led by local community authorities, speakers address the mass of attendees and the residents of Teitipac in particular. NGO representatives start off, followed by presentations from community

leaders and local organizers. Speaking from significantly different experiences with repression and violence, the presenters are nevertheless unanimous in their opposition to mining, and emphasize community unity as a key to effective resistance. According to one NGO representative:

> "When Magdalena Teitipac, or when Capulalpam de Mendez, or when San José del Progreso defend their rights, they are defending a very important and deep idea that other comrades have spoken about: they are defending their autonomy, the autonomy to decide how we want to live, how we want to be, how we want to celebrate, how we want to speak, how we want to dress, how we want to plant crops. And this idea of territory, we have to defend it as the heart of our resistance, because it is from there that we are able to face this model of dispossession, the model we don't want. And so we aren't just going to fight against mining. Rather, we are going to defend the life of our territory."[1]

Speaking next are several authorities from the Oaxacan town of Capulalpam, widely regarded as a model for community-based anti-mining organizing. They are quick to offer the formula to their success story. It is a result of their hard-earned political and social unity, the experience they claim from over 200 years of mining, the strength of their traditions, and the importance of creating local economic alternatives to extractive industries. According to one speaker, their town relies on a

> "…type of organization based on obeying the command of a maximum authority, which is the assembly of citizens and commoners. That is where Capulalpam's strength lies. There is no division, there are no party lines—everything is in favor of what the assembly decides, and also in favor of our community."

The speaker following him continues in a similar vein:

> "The fact that the commissioner and the municipal president are here speaks a great deal about what community organizing must be like. Why? Because we have already heard today that these companies are betting on division. The companies always bet on dividing the community, bribing, separating, bringing things, giving things away, offering crumbs. In the case of Capulalpam, we're very clear on this point: the assembly of commoners, the assembly of men and women citizens decided to say yes to life, no to mining."

[1] All quotes translated from Spanish by the Author, unless otherwise noted.

The first speaker again:

> "We have brought this this type of organization down from our ancestors... before the arrival of the Spanish, Capulalpam already existed. It has a long history, and when the Spaniards came, the mineral exploitation came with them. We have nearly a 220 year history of mining exploitation, and so we can tell you and talk to you [and give] a detailed explanation of everything that it has brought us, in pollution and also in lives lost."

Another speaker continued:

> "Those of us who are here from Capulalpam, we are the sons of miners. Our fathers were miners, our mothers were miners' wives… our grandfathers and grandmothers were also miners. Our great grandparents, our great-great grandparents, and if we go back in time, we have an enormous amount of experience in mining work… We couldn't see the consequences 100 years ago, or 200 years ago. We began to see them about 50 years ago, the pollution, the devastation of the subsoil, the disappearance of aquifers, the contamination of streams, the pollution of rivers... They came and offered us a mineral exploitation project, an opportunity for employment, for creating hospitals, and several more promises that according to the company are part of progress. Over time in Capulalpam, we have learned that this is not progress."

After Capulalpam's leaders speak, the young organizers from CPUVO take their turn to address the crowd. I haven't seen their personal guard anywhere that day, but he is probably nearby. The fact that they have such state-provided precautionary measures is a sign of how different their struggle has been in comparison to that of Capulalpam and Magdalena. One of them is a young woman who suffers a debilitating gunshot injury she received during an ambush where one of her fellow organizers was murdered. She points to this difference as she opens her presentation:

> "I congratulate Capulalpam and Magdalena Teitipac for the unity they still have, because in the community of San José del Progreso, this unity does not exist. More than anything, this is because the municipal and ejido authorities didn't consult with the people. And so they benefitted personally, and sold out our town… Our struggle as a coordinator begins in 2009, once the Cuscatlán Mining Company had already set up shop…. The truth is it makes us angry because they know how to get into communities… right now we don't have an ejido commissioner, because of the bad actions and poor track record he had in the

> community. We have a president the people don't want. Now we are fighting so that the whole town will unite… if we don't unite ourselves, they will continue hurting us, and they will continue attacking us."

Another CPUVO speaker from Maguey Largo, a different town in the San José del Progreso Municipality, drives the point home, saying: "In our community, we haven't disintegrated yet." The next CPUVO speaker changes tack, calling on their agrarian past and the legacy of territorial struggle:

> "In the past it was productive land. There was an hacienda owner who manipulated the community… when the first representative government of the community was to be formed, the hacienda owner was the one who decided on the leaders…. Now that we have seen a bit of our own history, we know that the mine was there already, and that it was at its peak. And now that our *compañero* Tony has given us a little of this information, we realize there were claims made by the same *compañeros* who defended the town from mining. There were complaints with the state government over the abuses that the communities and ejido members suffered from mining…. In 1936 in San José and [the nearby community of] el Cuajilote, there were major killings. It's not just the case today… they were killed, they were persecuted, they were exiled."

The question CPUVO and its supporters face is how to use San José del Progreso's particular past and present reality to build a unified front. Will their efforts be enough to dislodge a mining company that has already processed over half a million tons of ore, and extracted more than 75 tons of silver and nearly one ton of gold in less than two years? According to Minera Cuscatlán, the Fortuna Mining subsidiary operating in San José del Progreso (hereafter shortened to San José), they may extract a total of 6 tons of gold and 650 tons of silver by 2019 (Chapman and Kelly 2013a). Even with a legacy of struggle and some intact traditions, do the organizers of CPUVO and their allies in the broader movement have the tools they need to win against the mine, especially if its community base has already disintegrated?

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As a microcosm of the movement at the time, the forum was a good example of how the territorial defense movement in Oaxaca builds toward a much broader aim of collective emancipation. It was a joint effort between two very different groups: rural indigenous and peasant communities most impacted by mining, and civil-society organizations based in Oaxaca and Mexico City that provide technical and logistical support. The forum was hosted by the Committee for the Defense and Territorial and Cultural Integrity of Magdalena Teitipac, a local community-based group that formed in the lead-up to recent confrontations there. This town convened 12 communities in similar straits, as well as NGOs making up the Oaxacan Collective in Defense of Territory (Flor y Canto, EDUCA, UNOSJO, Centro Prodh, Ser Mixe, and Tequio Juridico; hereafter shortened to *El Colectivo*).

The forum did not bring these actors together to take part in politics as usual, however. As said by the NGO representative that day,

> "…this idea of territory, we have to defend it as the heart of our resistance, because it is from there that we are able to face this model of dispossession, the model we don't want. And so we aren't just going to fight against mining. Rather, we are going to defend the life of our territory."

This "defense as the heart of resistance" is a simultaneous struggle *against* one thing and *for* another, or what I call the two dispositions of *contentious* politics. Contentious politics (Tarrow 1994; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001) is defined by a break with conventional institutional engagement such as voting, lobbying, and legal advocacy. For the territorial defense movement, this break or rupture is a natural outcome of the failure of capitalism to distribute resources fairly, and of the Mexican state's failure to respond to the demands of oppressed peoples. As it is often understood, these ruptures result in an overtly-oppositional politics. In this case, absent any real possibility of emancipation from the state or the market, the movement uses mobilization—marches,

occupations, and blockades—to make many of its demands. Yet I argue that the contentious politics of the territorial defense movement has another side to it. Along with *opposition*, it includes a more constructive, less-confrontational set of actions which I call *affirmative* politics. This includes the movement's efforts to construct new forms of civility and self-determination through forums, *encuentros* (encounters), and local indigenous practices making up the pillars of healthy community: collective labor, collective decision-making via assembly, and celebration.[2]

Behind these non-conventional actions is a definition of *territory* that requires both the land and the people living with it. For anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena, a politics supporting a radical connection between land and people is itself a form of contention in light of conventional Western politics and science. By assigning a degree of agency—and thus political subjectivity—to the land itself, and challenging the strict dichotomy between humans and nature, the territorial defense movement promotes a holistic politics and a materialism that cannot function within the state or the market (De la Cadena 2010: 342). Instead, this side of contentious politics affirms a healthy social *and* ecological commons.

Together, these oppositional and affirmative strategies draw the outlines of a contentious movement that operates outside of the state and beyond the market as regulators of political and material life. Instead, the movement declares the capacity of communities to "take action and to decide for and by themselves" (Gutiérrez 2012: 55).

[2] These pillars are often referred to as *Usos y Costumbres* (customs and habits) and increasingly as *Sistemas Normativos Internos* (Normative Internal Systems). It involves a wide array of practices, including assembly-based decision-making, unpaid collective labor known as *tequio* or *faena*, unpaid leadership roles known as *cargos*, and celebration customs. It is also a political and electoral system used by indigenous communities in Oaxaca instead of political parties: Municipal elections via *Usos y Costumbres* were officially recognized in the Oaxacan State Constitution in 1995, and are practiced in over 400 of the 570 municipalities that make up the state. Beyond contentious politics, the territorial defense movement employs conventional strategies in the form of legal action, but I argue that these are more instrumental in nature and do not characterize the movement or define its primary modes of action.

Taking action against resource extraction—as a process of domination and territorial dispossession by the state and transnational corporations—first establishes what the movement is *against*, what its "no" is. Affirmative practices clarify what it is *for*, what its "yes" is. For contentious movements, every articulation of opposition contains an implicit affirmation, such that the "no" opens a space for "yes." What takes place at the point of "yes," whether it creates new worlds or reinscribes old ones, is what makes the politics of movements differ from one another.

In the case of the territorial defense movement, the "no" and the "yes" do not lead back into conventional politics or to a revolutionary process where taking state power is the ultimate goal. Instead, I believe the combination of "no" and "yes" expresses what anthropologist Raquel Gutierrez calls a "growing and intermittent trajectory" from the political and economic margins (Gutiérrez 2012: 56). This dual strategy is an untested and at times contradictory route of emancipation for the territorial defense movement, a prefigurative model for politics, life, and economy beyond the state and after capitalism.

However, the different roles played by presenters that day expose an important tension in the territorial defense movement. As success story, Capulalpam spoke from a place of hard-earned wisdom from long experience in mining. Now, it enjoys political unity, the economic benefits from community-run industries and tourism, and even a special designation by the federal government as a *Pueblo Mágico* (Magical Town). San José, in contrast, could only represent itself as the negative case, as the route that Magdalena Teitipac should avoid. The poor situation in San José is undeniable: the CPUVO organizers live in a divided community where they are under constant personal threat. They have been attacked on numerous occasions, some have been jailed for months, and several have been killed in the conflict. Nevertheless, its foreign-owned silver and gold mine continues to operate, and has actually expanded production.

Unlike Capulalpam and Magdalena Teitipac, many rural communities grew out of migratory processes, and struggle to align under one cultural and political banner. Others have suffered historical redaction at the hands of colonial institutions—like the hacienda that once dominated San José, whose legacy is still written on the land and in its people today. All communities are heterogeneous, but some are so deeply divided that their social, cultural, and political institutions waver and violence threatens to ruin them entirely. San José may have land, but also an embattled social and ecological commons—what can emancipatory movements in such communities build themselves upon?

This question can be also be extended to a growing number of cases across the world. As acquaintance in Oaxaca told me, *la única tierra que muchos tenemos la llevamos bajo las uñas* (the only earth that many of us possess is what is under our fingernails). Without land and without social coherence, how are the proliferating subjects of globalization, mass migration, urbanization, and informality to build toward emancipation? Asked differently, is territory the only foundation for developing a commons, or are there other processes that can help communities come together as united historical, political, and territorial subjects?

These questions point to why the anti-mining movement San José merits greater study. This research project first asks which historical processes have dismembered the territory and the community of San José del Progreso, and where these marks can still be seen today. Rather than simple internal conflict, a more in-depth examination of San José reveals the workings of colonialism and capitalism as crucial forces in the production and reproduction of community divisions. These divisions can be observed within a geography of anti-indigenous/anti-*campesino* discrimination, and make it easier for outside actors to extract resources from the local territory. San José has hosted repeated efforts over time to oppose these divisions while simultaneously creating a healthy social

and ecological commons. The second question of this study asks how these strategies of contention—in its oppositional and affirmative dispositions—reach beyond instrumental goals to reveal even deeper implications of struggle. Currently faced with community divisions and violent repression, unable to stop the mine through direct opposition, the anti-mining movement uses this hybrid form of contentious politics to construct a shared identity and practice self-determination as a route toward emancipation.

2. SEEING TERRITORIAL CONTENTION THROUGH SOCIAL MEMORY

The town of Calpulalpam (located in the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca not far from where Mexico's first and only indigenous president, Benito Juarez, was born) has a 200 year history of mining reaching back to the end of the colonial period. In 2005, its communal assembly (many of whose members had been mine workers themselves) made an official decision to oppose further mining in their area. Within two years, they succeeded in their legal case to suspend the exploration and extraction of gold by the Continuum Mining Company at the nearby La Natividad site because of excessive water contamination. As shown by their participation in the forum, Capulalpam representatives speak of a unified community that has existed for centuries. This integrity was hard-won, faces a number of contradictions (e.g. its articulations with the state, its market in tourism, etc.), and must be actively maintained through the affirmative practices that make local agency and autonomy possible. Those practices include long-held indigenous cultural traditions such as assembly-based governance, *tequio* and *cargos*, which practices act as a form of historical memory linking the community to its precolonial past. As the anthropologist and local leader Salvador Aquino explains, narratives attached to the local landscape are used by elders, former miners, and community leaders as a

form of social memory and as evidence in their legal claim for territorial sovereignty (Aquino-Centeno 2009). It does not draw on a history of struggle, of oppositional politics, in this identity formation. Rather, the practices of social memory and the contents of shared recollection—its affirmative practices and territorial narratives, respectively—play key roles in constructing a unified and territory-based identity in Capulalpam. Its overt indigenous identity is highly visible to the state and other actors, which can pose a risk to Capulalpam's autonomy if this scrutiny leads to legal and discursive challenges to its authenticity. For a highly unified, rhetorically sophisticated, and historically-substantiated community like Capulalpam however, this risk appears manageable.

San José has a history of mining as old as that of Capulalpam, but is a contrasting case for a number of reasons. First, there is a large gold and silver mine operating in its territory. Minería Cuscatlán (a subsidiary of Fortuna Silver, Inc.) began construction of a multimillion dollar gold and silver mine and ore processing facility in San José in 2005, and started operations in 2011. In 2012, Fortuna extracted 55 tons of silver and half a ton of gold from its San José Mine (Chapman and Kelly 2013a); in 2013 those figures rose to 78 tons of silver and .6 tons of gold (Fortuna Silver Mines Inc. 2014a). Second, the current and prior municipal presidents support the mining project, and a great deal of confrontation and violence (including 4 murders, two of local anti-mining activists, and two of local authorities) has engulfed the town over the past 4 years. Third, while the general area of San José has been inhabited by different indigenous groups over time and there are even ancient ruins on the southern municipal border, the dominant historical narrative of San José recalls that residents arrived from elsewhere to work the fields and mines of the San José Lagarzona Hacienda. This hegemonic narrative casts San José as a heterogeneous municipality formed in a context of hacienda colonialism, obscuring any

historical narratives held by longtime residents or those who brought their memories with them from nearby towns. In other words, hacienda colonialism replaced indigenous and agrarian memories with its own arrangement, fragmenting the territory and those living upon it into a divided geography. The historical processes leading to this geographic and social dismemberment are important to understanding its current divisions and the movement's approach to emancipation.

As a contestation of the colonial ordering of San José, the anti-mining movement uses contentious practices to unify the community under a combined identity that acknowledges both its cultural heterogeneity and its history of struggle. Instead of a single indigenous identity like in Capulalpam, the movement in San José recognizes that its members can be both indigenous and *campesino* (peasant farmer). Movement members understand historical and present day land/territorial struggle as both class-based and anti-colonial, as *campesino* and indigenous routes to emancipation.[3] Claiming a joint indigenous/*campesino* subjectivity enacted through both contestation and affirmation, CPUVO and its members build an identity that does not rely on cultural homogeneity or even historical land tenure, but on its *naturaleza abigarrada* (checkered nature) and its social memory of struggle. As such, the movement does not declare a deep and unique connection to the land as part of its claim to territory. Instead, the territory belongs to them because they fought for it together, they care for it collectively, and they understand themselves to be interconnected with it.

[3] These two perspectives do not fit together neatly as to whether the earth is conceived as land or territory. While both identities give importance to the land as a source of sustenance and livelihood, they are based on substantially-different cosmologies. As I understand it, campesino subjectivity views natural resources as coming from a *tierra* (land) which can be owned, while indigenous ones understand it as *territorio* (territory). For indigenous movements in Latin America more generally, the concept of territory is not limited by concepts of legal land ownership or political sovereignty. Instead, it describes an inseparable connection between humans and the earth, with the earth possessing its own agency and subjecthood.

The territorial defense movement's complex and at times contradictory source of unity—one blending different forms of contention and distinct worldviews—turns out to be an organizing principle with broad relevance. Community-based social movements must form strategies and models for unity from what is available to them, for example, on their material conditions and collective memories of the past. Some towns may organize under an easily-defined set of shared practices and an undisturbed series of historical narratives, but this would be the exception. The movement in San José demonstrates that a strict form of unity based on cultural homogeneity and a special and ancient connection to territory are not necessary for territorial resistance to flourish.

As lived by its participants, the struggle to define San José as an indigenous/*campesino* community and not a colonized/industrial one is fought over political, cultural, and physical terrain. Each type of terrain contains a set of historical markers pointing to a shared past. Physical markers like the hacienda building, boundary walls, hillsides, and trees break up the physical terrain into a rich symbolic geography where historical events take on different meanings in the present. Traditional practices like feast days, collective labor, and even protest strategies act as a figurative terrain where community identity is built. Finally, the political terrain is hotly contested in electoral fights and confrontations with corrupt leaders, and actively constructed through dual-sovereignty efforts (Wood 2003). Historian Pierre Nora has called these physical and figurative spaces *lieux de memoire*, or sites of memory (Nora 1989). Such sites fill up the symbolic and material terrain of San José, and they are one basis for the construction of shared identity. The reinterpretation of these sites toward indigenous/*campesino* self-determination is the ongoing work of the movement in San José as a mnemonic community—a community that remembers together (Olick and Robbins 1998).

It its role as a form of meaning-making and subject-formation out of the past, I understand memory as a social, rather than individual phenomenon. Borrowing from sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' definition of collective memory, this research project defines social memory as both context and producer of individual memories, the social milieu where people "recall, recognize, and localize their memories" (Halbwachs 1992: 38). Memory is socialized through anti-mining movement practices such as every day storytelling, protest actions, and affirmative practices. These frameworks of memory are socialized in the form of historical narratives and embodied acts of commemoration, or what sociologist Paul Connerton refers to as *inscribing* and *incorporating* acts (Connerton 1989). This research project addresses both types of practices in the anti-mining movement of San José, which uses them in the production of a shared sense of identity, literally in word and deed.

The concept of dismemberment as part of the historical process of colonization is useful for understanding how community divisions come about. Many of the explanations I heard about divisions San José de Progreso are inadequate, usually placing the blame on local rivalries or worse, on recycled 19th century notions of indigenous barbarism or *campesino* crudeness. For writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, collective re-membering through language is an important strategy for repairing dismemberment (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 2009). More than just wordplay, I use this concept of memory to understand language as an important site of memory implicated in the anti-colonial struggle. CPUVO's interest in the rescue of the local indigenous language in San José is a potential linguistic strategy for recuperating local memory of indigenous/*campesino* life, of re-membering a dismembered collective body.

One danger of emphasizing social memory as an ongoing interpretive process is to risk "presentism," where interpretation of the past is stuck in current-day priorities and

perspectives. In the context of this project, for example, interviewees could remember the agrarian land struggle in the early 20th century in light of twenty-first century concepts of indigeneity. This type of "memory entrepreneurship" does not make the past infinitely malleable, however (Olick and Robbins 1998: 128). As some authors suggest, the materiality of history places limits on the interpretations we give to the past (Trouillot 1995; Gordon and Hale 2003). For example, CPUVO cannot claim all San José residents wanted to form an *ejido* out of hacienda lands, nor can the pro-mine side write indigenous *campesino*s out of San José's history. Calculating how close remembered accounts are to objective historical fact is less useful than understanding how the conflict over the many sites of memory involves CPUVO members in both sides of historicity—as active participants and interpreters of a limited array of significant sites, narratives, and practices. Thus, this project is focused on what historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls "how history works," as opposed to "what it is" (Trouillot 1995: 25). For ethnographer Elizabeth Wood and historian Alessandro Portelli, any deviation between memory and the written record does not represent a failure to record The Truth, but instead reveals values and beliefs, taking us beyond mere facts and into their meanings (Wood 2003: 50; Portelli 1990: 2). This project seeks out the meanings of memory and its purposes for the anti-mining movement, not the historical facts contained in memory *per se*.

3. ENGAGED METHODS

The field research experience was not a linear process where the end was visible from the outset. Actually, it is a challenge to identify a specific start and end point. Because I worked directly with some of participants for a number of years before the fieldwork phase, and expect to after, I am not able to separate the field as an often-

mystified place beyond the solid walls of academe from the predictable, everyday experience of being back home in the States. The subsequent section relates key insights in the transition from being a strict social movement participant to being a participant with a research agenda. Next, I describe the specific methodologies I chose and how they begin to answer the analytical, theoretical, and political considerations of this project.

From participant to researcher

From the end of 2009 until the end of 2011, I lived and worked in Oaxaca leading delegations for an international solidarity NGO. Focusing broadly on challenging U.S. regional hegemony and reducing the negative impacts of free market policies and military intervention, the NGO sends groups of US citizens to visit and exchange experiences with Mexican organizations and communities arrayed in similar oppositions. The organization locates itself within a transnational movement for peace, human rights, and political sovereignty, using U.S.-based activism to demand improvements in political and social conditions in Latin America. Over a two year stint, I worked directly with more than 40 different Mexican organizations and communities on a range of topics: migration, sustainable agriculture, free trade agreements, community autonomy, militarization, the drug war, and natural resource defense. In this time, I grew to appreciate the rich *coyuntura* (the conjunction, in Gramsci's terms) of development practices, rural poverty, migration, natural resource extraction, indigenous movements, and the neoliberal turn in the Mexican state. Our team and our partners shared the challenge of presenting a clear, yet comprehensive picture of these historical developments—one colleague would often describe Oaxaca as a shattered mirror of cultures, communities, and biomes, as a loose association of 570 separate municipalities governed by different norms and practices, or

as a society long trapped in the contradiction of vast natural wealth and wall-to-wall inequality.

The difficulty in describing the Oaxacan experience reflects the very real challenge of survival for marginalized people and their communities. Where can social movements apply pressure when immediate injustices are connected to so many interrelated problems? For example, migration often results from rural poverty, which in turn derives in large measure from free trade agreements and the state's abandonment of the small-scale agriculture. When, for example, several communities block the construction of a hydroelectric project or silver mine, they are subsequently overwhelmed by a U.S.-trained and militarized police force, criminalized by an authoritarian executive, and pilloried in the national for-profit press. Under this scenario, is it wiser to erect bigger barricades, enter the maze of state agencies and special courts to defend legal claims, boycott investor groups, or create new media organizations to contest conservative press monopolies? At what scale must rural communities respond? Would it make sense to prioritize local economic alternatives to the failing corn economy, or collective protest of macroeconomic policies? These scenarios are greatly oversimplified, but point to the crucial question of how Oaxacan social movements can best use their limited resources to take up against a shifting sea of troubles.

Over time I became aware of a crucial divide between the strategies of the U.S.-based NGO and the various movement actors from Oaxaca. In over 30 years of continuous work, the NGO has long prioritized changes in U.S. foreign policy, practicing a social change model based on citizen education for advocacy with state actors. Meanwhile, territorial autonomy and natural resource defense have evolved into central organizing principles of a number of social movements in Oaxaca. While it is not difficult to see the connection between the scales of regional trade policy and local

natural resource extraction in analytical terms, I found it increasingly challenging to reconcile the two strategies of international policy advocacy and local community organizing against international corporations and a repressive state.

It is understandable that an organization formed around a specific set of strategies (delegations, reporting, lobbying) would face institutional inertia in shifting to new working models, especially after over 3 decades of practice. There is, however, an uncomfortable alignment between the degree of intensity in its strategies, and the relatively comfortable position of its constituents in light of the mortal consequences of the injustices it works against. In focusing on US politics, was the organization cleaning its own house, or emphasizing strategies where it could play a larger role through efforts that were ultimately less accountable to local movements in Oaxaca? In other words, strategies are more than instruments; they can also point faithfully to our subject position even as they arise in response to specific problems. Conscious of this tension, a transnational politics of solidarity would orient itself toward reconciling different positionalities and access to resources across multiple scales, derive leadership from those most directly impacted, acknowledge the legacy of colonialism between the US and Mexico, and host multiple worldviews.

Ending my term with the NGO, I was left with a number of unanswered questions. One focuses on the "how" of building broad movements: how do strategy preferences illuminate our different relationships to social problems, and how do we reconcile the different entry points of actors involved in a loose transnational social justice movement? Another question is about the "what" of movement work, as in: what combinations of strategies are the most nimble, helping movement actors influence globalization at all of its scales, from transnational agreements to the immediate impacts of resource extraction in rural communities?

I returned to Oaxaca in January 2013 as a full-time student in search of a collaborative research project that might begin to address these questions. I arranged several meetings with friends, acquaintances, and former colleagues to discuss research ideas and the context of ongoing anti-extractivism organizing in Oaxaca. These conversations were the first step in a research process with two political aims. One aim was to use the research process as an opportunity to reflect on the advantages, pitfalls, and ultimate value of North-South transnational collaboration within the troubled history of colonialism. With the question of my own positionality as U.S.-based activist-turned-researcher consistently in mind, I hoped to use the research process as a space of dialogue around international solidarity even as it sought answers to more immediate social movement concerns. I hoped that working in a collaborative and self-aware fashion throughout the research process would help develop a useful model for transnational collaboration, an evolving and site-specific way of working that partially reconciled the different positions we occupied and the worldviews we held.

The second political aim was to produce useful knowledge about extractivism and social movements for those directly involved in territorial struggle. This led me directly to the topic of social memory as an important element in territorial defense movements. While discussing the different issues and strategies of the Oaxacan territorial defense movement, one colleague mentioned "historical memory." I quickly surmised that this topic would satisfy several of the political goals of my research. Practically speaking, the fields of social movements and extractivism are quite broad, and the topic of social memory is focused enough to design a single research project on. Also, discourse celebrating indigenous historical memory was gaining greater currency in Oaxacan territorial defense movements, but it is difficult to say what this evocative language

actually described. A research project could illuminate some of the ways historical memory is used in the territorial defense movement.

I returned over the summer of 2013 to conduct formal fieldwork for a period of two and a half months (from early June to the end of August.) My primary partnership was to be with EDUCA, an NGO I worked with previously, and who had agreed to host me over the summer. Shortly after arriving, I met with staff-members to decide which community I would approach, finalize my methods, and brainstorm different products the project would yield. In addition to an article I would publish in their quarterly magazine *El Topil*, we agreed to collaborate in creating independent radio programming, print materials, and possibly a workshop based on my findings. I would develop my research questions directly from discussions with community partners and in conversation with EDUCA staff.

Shortly after arriving in Oaxaca, I presented formal letters of introduction to community authorities in Capulalpam, whose resistance to new mining projects has been widely celebrated and extensively documented. Because Calpulalpam continues to be united in its opposition to further mining, I saw it as an ideal site to study how a community constructs political unity through historical memory. After some weeks of waiting for a response, I learned that its elder council decided not to accept any researchers "until further notice." While disappointed by this unexpected turn, I understood that there were a number of possible factors at play in this decision, including several that are worth mentioning as a reflection on the legacy of colonialism in the social sciences. In terms of project timing, I'd given local leadership relatively little time to get to know me before making a decision to allow me to conduct research in their town. Capulalpam was also in the middle of a transition in municipal leadership at the time, meaning local authorities had even less time than usual to meet, support, and monitor

outside researchers. The historical context of academic research in the area is also fraught, including the now-infamous *Mexico Indigena* project as well as allegations of more recent missteps by student researchers and journalists likely on the minds of local leaders.[4] For these reasons alone, the decision to postpone the activities of outside researchers would be prudent. Finally, while Capulalpam has succeeded in organizing a unified front against the re-opening of its mine, this success is by no means permanently guaranteed. Its self-representation as a culturally-homogenous indigenous community, its federal designation as a Pueblo Mágico (Magical Town), and local scholarship on social memory practices serve—to a greater or lesser extent—as strategies in a continued struggle to produce economic alternatives to mining, preserve its local cultural practices, and maintain political sovereignty. It is easy to imagine how an investigation into the construction of this unity via social memory practices could reveal internal inconsistencies and other contradictions that might weaken their case against Continuum Mining. Ultimately, a research project committed to political solidarity must expect and accept a range of possible expressions of local agency, including respectful rejection as in this case.

While waiting for a response from Capulalpam, I accompanied EDUCA staff at their office and community events. In that process, I was introduced to representatives of the *Coordinadora de Pueblos Unidos del Valle de Ocotlán* (Coordinator of the United Peoples of Ocotlán Valley, hereafter shortened to CPUVO) during one of their visits to the EDUCA office. This organization is made up of members from several communities in the San José area and led by young organizers from the town of San José del Progreso,

[4] *Mexico Indigena* was a US-military funded research project led by University of Kansas Geographer Peter Herlihy. It began in the Sierra Norte region at the end of 2005, and was exposed to controversy starting in 2008 when its funding source was revealed by local organizations. In addition, while visiting Capulalpam and in conversations with Oaxaca-based organizers, I heard of at least two cases of unethical research and journalistic practices by visitors to the town during the first part of 2013.

where the mine is located. The three organizers I met were enthusiastic about my project, and each shared an interest in knowing more about the history of land struggle from the perspectives of community elders. What began as a provisional agreement to gather a limited number of historical narratives from San José (as a comparison case) ended up becoming the core focus of my research project once I got word from Capulalpam.

Because the circumstances in San José are quite different than those in Capulalpam, the means of entering both communities and requesting permission for the project were very different. I requested permission to conduct research in Capulalpam directly from municipal authorities, and waited several weeks for their response. In order to do research in the town of San José, I had only to ask members of CPUVO, and was accepted on the spot. To do research in Maguey Largo, I was invited to present the project (along with my affiliations and credentials) at a town assembly. After several questions and some discussion, I was provided with a place to stay and an escort. In both San José and Maguey Largo, I was accompanied by locals and organizers at practically all times, pointing to the idea of consent as an ongoing process that is not resolved by collecting signatures at a specific moment.

Because of security concerns and stark divisions in San José, my colleagues at EDUCA and I agreed it was not advisable to approach the municipal leadership of the town to seek permission for the project. I did not want the research to endanger myself or my colleagues. Like other researchers working in volatile contexts,[5] I also did not expect CPUVO members to approve of, let alone facilitate, any interviews with the other side of the mining conflict.

[5] In her work in Nicolas Ruiz, a Zapatista-affiliated community in the state of Chiapas, Shannon Speed has noted that one of the many tensions of doing "critically-engaged research" in highly polarized sites is that of representing the other side of a conflict, especially when that side has resorted to violence, or enjoys the support of the state or other powerful actors (Speed 2006)

As both a reaction to legitimate security concerns and any risk of self-censorship structured into the project, my ultimate decision to avoid direct encounters with pro-mine community members reveals a methodological tension. How to avoid the error of misrepresenting, or omitting altogether, the perspectives of the pro-mining faction in San José? As an attempt to (partially) resolve the limitation of only interviewing and closely observing one side of the conflict, I decided to interview a diversity of actors within the movement itself (members of different communities in the San José Municipality and Oaxaca City-based NGO staff) and to gather other forms of evidence (including reports produced by Fortuna Silver and observations in the community) to avoid a total omission of pro-mining actors from the project. To gain a different perspective on historical processes, I would also compare archival sources and historical literature with the social memories of movement participants.

Beyond the practicalities of obtaining permission and the ethics of representation, this change in context would have profound analytical and methodological impacts on the project. In analytical terms, the primary research question changed to match the specific circumstances of San José: instead of asking how affirmative practices held a community together, I would ask which historical and cultural processes have fed the dismemberment of the community. As a second analytical concern, I wanted to describe the strategic response of CPUVO and other movement actors to those historical divisions. This second question rests on the assumption that the local anti-mining struggle is more than a simple conflict of interests between two opposed factions. On the surface, the conflict in San José is between two groups over resource use—one supporting and one opposing the mining of gold and silver in their territory—but to remain at this level of analysis risks oversimplifying the stakes of the conflict. The anti-mining group led by CPUVO conceives its struggle as one over how the San José community understands its

past and identifies itself today. Thus, the conflict is also over the formation of communal identity. Aihwa Ong calls this process *subjectification*, or "self-making and being-made" (Ong et al. 1996: 737). Rather than "being made" by colonial and capitalist institutions, the movement emphasizes its "self-making" through contentious politics, its expressions of "no" and "yes."

In asking what leads to division in San José, I purposefully cast the conflict in light of the colonization and the formation of indigenous/*campesino* subjects. Even though the anti-mining movement based in San José does not claim cultural homogeneity or continuous land possession over time, it still retains a shared identity based in past struggles and customs of indigenous and *campesino* life. This local identity is in part delimited by sharp insider/outsider boundaries, as hinted by the CPUVO leader speaking at the forum in Magdalena Teitipac: "Now we are fighting so that the whole town will unite… if we don't unite ourselves, they will continue hurting us, and they will continue attacking us." The mining company today, like the hacienda before it, is seen as a foreign outsider who exploits and harms those within the community. If this is true, then members of the anti-mine effort are not part of a simple internal conflict—even though it plays out locally—but in a battle against an externally-based actor using a divide-and-conquer strategy. Both historically and today, the recurring anti-colonial and class-based struggle is an attempt to prevent the hacienda/mine nexus from dismembering San José into a socially and geographically-discontinuous site primed for resource extraction.

In an attempt to answer the analytical questions posed above, I focused on ethnographic methods to ask, observe and—to the extent possible—share in the daily experience of division and struggle. The project is also a response to Sociologist Paul Connerton's call to bring diachronicity into ethnographic analysis (Connerton 1989). Instead of confining my questions about the motivations and actions of the movement to

the current *coyuntura*, I asked participants about local history and how they fit themselves into it. The anti-mining movement today is inspired by historical struggles; to avoid also being limited by its history, it must analyze its past within the current context, and vice-versa. This historical interest also led me to local archives, to put official documents in dialogue with my observations and participants' remembered accounts. The three forms of data gathering I chose (participant observation, interviews, and archival research) produce complementary evidence on San José's dismemberment and current anti-mining mobilization. In the following pages, I discuss engaged methodology as a reflexive approach to the ethics and political implications of field research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of specific methodologies I chose and some of the limitations of the research project.

Engaged Research Methods

The role of the intellectual as activist has been thoroughly discussed by scholars of a certain bent, resulting in a set of "engaged" research practices as reflexive investigative work. This thinking has made three important contributions to my project, which is simultaneously *about* activism and *for* activism: engaged methods challenge conventional ideas about the role of politics in research, understands knowledge production in inclusive terms, and offer an innovative perspective on the intersubjective nature of fieldwork (Hale 2001; Mora 2008; Leyva Solano, Burguete Cal y Mayor, and Speed 2008). As others have argued, I believe these methods not only make it possible to square the demands of rigorous social science research with the need for post-colonial critique and action, but also provide new insights and analytical tools that conventional research cannot.

First, engaged methods are transparent in their politics. For anthropologist Charles Hale, the methodology is rooted in a critique of Western imperialism found in conventional approaches to social science. As a politically-situated method, it focuses on understanding root causes of oppression, is done in cooperation with those most impacted by that oppression, and is ultimately used in collaboration to challenge inequality through power-building and transformative strategies (Hale 2001: 13). The first aim of this project was to elucidate root causes of community divisions in San José, specifically the oppressive role of hacienda colonialism. Moreover, I conceived the project in cooperation with social movement participants, who proposed the focus historical memory at the outset, and who participated in ongoing discussions and debates with me throughout the fieldwork and writing phases. Finally, this project offered a political commitment to support the power-building and transformative strategies already at play in the Oaxacan territorial defense movement. Ethnographic and archival methods were intended to offer additional insight into the advantages and possible tensions of those practices.

That my research partners already use these political strategies as an organized movement points to the second contribution of engaged research: it recognizes knowledge production from multiple sites and different epistemologies. Instead of using the anti-mining movement as a source of raw data to interpret on my own, I analyzed findings with the help of participants, and participated in reflexive conversations with several participants. With the help of these research partners, I used the lens of social memory to analyze forms of knowledge production, preservation, and pedagogy within the anti-mining movement. For example, protest strategies like blockades and occupation generate and record data on a range of issues, including direct insights about state-sanctioned violence and the habits and norms of courageous social activism. Affirmative strategies like storytelling, community forums, and communal celebrations also produce

and teach knowledge recorded in the mastery of local legends, organizing techniques, and the reclaimed cultural practices that sustain the social and ecological commons. Ethnographic methods are particularly attuned to illuminating the meanings of embodied practices that resist linguistic description. By paying special attention to unspoken forms of knowledge and memory, a deeper understanding of these community-based incorporated knowledges makes a contribution to our broader understanding of territorial defense and the formation of collective subjects.

Finally, engaged methods challenge conventional binaries separating researcher and subject. The method recognizes collaborative knowledge production as mutually constitutive of its participants (Mora 2008: 60), such that the researcher and research partner play different roles but are ultimately transformed in the process of developing insight. At this level of engagement, I was both researcher and temporary participant in the mnemonic community of San José. This immersion in the double hermeneutic (Giddens 1982) of social science inquiry was perhaps best illustrated when the CPUVO speaker mentioned my name during the Forum in Magdalena Teitipac, explaining how some of my research helped them to understand their experience with setbacks and violence in the context of the historical land reform struggle. This public naming of the researcher was an act of agency by the research participant, and an illustration of how a researcher's contribution to knowledge production is a form of substantial participation in the lives of the research subjects.

Another example of this mutual constitution as knowledge-producers arose when I was invited to the roof of the unfinished church in the center Maguey Largo to have a look around. After scrambling up the rattling scaffold and twine-bound wooden rails to the top, I stood unsteadily on the rough-mortared brick roof and could see for miles around in all directions. My guide was a member of the town government who enjoyed

telling stories, and we sat or wandered the unfinished surface for over an hour as he pointed out different spots and the stories he remembered about them. This experience challenged me to understand the physical terrain as container bursting with local stories and knowledge defining the community of Maguey Largo, to see it as *territory*. This territorial perspective viewed objects and practices I had little familiarity with: the agricultural cycles written in the surrounding fields, the stone markers and invisible borderlines spanning the hillsides around us, the structures that once sat where others now stand. Our different ways of seeing challenged me to be a researcher not only *of*, but *through* these local knowledges.

Figure 1. View southward from the church in Maguey Largo.

Photo credit: by author

The focus on social memory also blurred the lines between knowledge-producer and knowledge-object. As a constitutive component of individual and shared subjectivity, memory is hard to separate as the object of study from the researcher and research participants themselves. By studying the memory practices of a social movement, then, my research focused on a combined subject-object, the mnemonic social actor and the memory constituting that actor. Remembering as a community reinforces that community as subjective actor in historical time. When people told me stories about their collective past, they also told me who they were; when they performed rituals of protest or affirmative politics, they showed me who they wanted to be. This aspect of remembering is a key component to the community organizing process in San José, wherein community builds itself through remembering as a response to the divisions that collective forgetting makes possible. Such self-making through shared memory points to the deeper meaning of contentious politics, and offers a first clue as to why the movement is able to continue under such long odds.

Because I am a US-Citizen who has worked in support of land-defense movements in Oaxaca and against U.S.-led economic liberalization in Mexico, my project also faced some of the contradictions of engaged research. Like anyone participating in social movements over a period of time, I was interested in understanding which strategies work and which do not, and in having conversations about the transformative opportunities and productive contradictions of working across lines of salient difference (such as nationality, class, and culture). To the extent that engaged research can create those spaces of trust and honest dialogue, it is useful. But, academic publishing conventions are designed to make the knowledge shared in such spaces of

trust available in a broader arena where that same trust cannot be maintained. When researchers make subaltern insights as legible and widely-available as possible, they expose potentially sensitive information to almost anyone with an internet connection or library access. Ironically, the more insight an engaged researcher reveals in his or her analysis of the internal dynamics of subaltern social movements, the more harmful that revelation becomes. Disguising identities of interviewees, as I have done here, is a partial answer to the tension of exposing sensitive information through engaged research.

The other solution I struck upon after many conversations with my interlocutors is to retain key insights and particularly sensitive information for movement participants in our ongoing internal dialogue. Refusing to disseminate some of what may be the most interesting knowledge I have gathered with the anti-mining movement may appear self-righteous or even unprofessional, but I believe it is possible to understand this reasoning differently. More than an ethical question of revealing potentially-harmful details about the strategies of people living in dangerous situations (which for some readers, may be justification enough), my decision to withhold certain information is based on a more mundane idea about the usefulness of different kinds of information. One type of data is of most use to movement participants, and I gave it directly to them. Another type is valuable in a scholarly setting, and has made it into this document.

Because one aim of the project is to develop knowledge and insight in support of a social movement, a successful research design would reveal information of greatest use to movement participants. Indeed, those who authorized my research did so under the supposition that I would hold interviews and enter the state archives to gather and interpret historical information they did not already have on hand. Before leaving the field, I returned copies of recorded interviews to each interviewee, and left scanned copies of useful archival information with CPUVO and members of *El Colectivo*. After

completing the writing process, I plan to translate the written results and discuss forms of dissemination with research partners. Instead of revealing extensive details of historical memory or sensitive personal accounts, the scholarly proposal of this thesis is a meta-analysis on how social memory is conducted by social movement members. The two types of information gathered in this project, the *what* and the *how* of social memory in San José, are useful to different audiences. Insofar as the former serves an investigation of the latter, I have included it in this thesis.

Interviews and Participant Observation

There is great value in directly observing scenes at the edges of daily life and everyday social interactions. Social movements create spaces exceptional to the norm, producing new strategies that must be observed to be comprehended. For sociologist Harel Shapira, ethnography is "attuned to the study of practice," and one must literally be there to understand what people do and not just what they say (Shapira 2013: 4). Departing from Goffman's notion of "fateful action," I wished to use the ethnographic lens to highlight not only protests or speeches by movement leaders, but also the poignancy of broader social movement processes, of the preparations that help participants craft meaning and purpose irrespective of outcome (Shapira 2013: 159–160). Without being there, it would be too easy to say that San José movement members are rationally motivated by signs that they are winning against the mine, which do not often materialize. Instead, participant observation and interviews can offered clues to the potential of inscribing and incorporating practices of the anti-mining movement to build and preserve indigenous/*campesino* subjectivity.

The ethnographic portion of the project included both open-ended interviews and participant observation done in community, NGO offices, and movement events. Over the summer of 2013, I held a total of 18 interviews with social movement participants and residents of San José and the smaller nearby town of Maguey Largo. Fifteen interviewees were men ranging in age from mid-twenties to 90 years old, with the majority over 60 years in age. Five women participated in interviews, some as direct participants (always with one or more men present) while others occasionally chimed in to offer their thoughts or to rephrase one of my questions. Of these women, one was in her 20s and the rest were over 60 years in age. In all, only 6 of the interviews were done one-on-one, while the others were held with more than one interviewee at once or with one or more others present. The longest interview lasted just over 2 hours, and the shortest for 40 minutes. On average, each open-ended interview lasted about an hour, and all were recorded on a Zoom H1 recorder either operated by me or by a volunteer interview assistant. (See appendix for a list of interviews, recording times/dates, and locations.)

At first, I attempted to follow a list of interview questions I developed in advance, but found that it difficult to direct the conversations so closely. After several unsuccessful attempts to march through lists of questions, I developed a general set of topics I wanted to cover, and brought these up as opportunities presented themselves during each interview. Many of the San José interviewees that local organizers picked for me were most interested in talking about their opposition to the mine and its negative impacts. I attribute this tendency to several factors. First, the mine conflict is ongoing and particularly conspicuous in the municipal seat where these interviewees live. Also, the presence of CPUVO organizers at these interviews may have motivated them to talk about the mine conflict, even though these organizers explained at times that the interview was to be about the history of the municipality as they remembered it. I also

believe the current conflict has been an overriding interest of prior CPUVO invitees over the previous several years of conflict. According to the local organizers, I was also the first outside researcher interested in gathering oral accounts and legends of municipal history and life under the hacienda. Thus, interviewees may have struggled to overcome the assumption that I was only interested in hearing about the current conflict. In the case of impromptu interviews in San José and all the interviews in Maguey Largo, I noticed interviewees were less likely to emphasize the current conflict if I didn't bring it up.

In several of these cases, I noticed what Portelli calls "dual study," (Portelli 1990) wherein participants would ask me questions to discover my thinking and intentions. On several occasions, I was asked for my opinion on the mine before individuals would share their own ideas. Once in Maguey Largo, an elderly man with a wry smile said immediately after being introduced to me, "So the mine is pretty great, isn't it?" I responded carefully in these moments of testing, mentioning my *preocupación* (concern) over the negative social and environmental impacts of the new mine, and my interest in the story of the hacienda and land struggle which the research project was focused on.

In general, I tried to let interviewees order comments according to their own logic, intervening only lightly to ask for elaboration or suggesting topics to discuss. Because narrative was one form of memory being studied, I thought it important to let interview participants speak with as little intervention from the interviewer as possible. The orality of vernacular history means local narratives still bear the burden of memory in towns like San José, and the reported low literacy of the elderly interview participants promised to make their oral accounts even richer for this reason. According to Portelli, "oral narrators have within their culture certain aids to memory. Many stories are told over and over, or discussed with members of the community; formalized narrative, even meter, may help preserve a textual version of an event" (Portelli 1990: 52). In one

emblematic case of oral memory aids, one interviewee related parts of San José history in the form of verse.

I also conducted participant observation throughout my time in the field, where I took part in a number of meetings, events, meals, and downtime with NGO staff, local movement members, and other residents of the San José municipality. I recorded my observations in field notes and retyped them later that day or in the following weeks and months.

Due to safety concerns and advice from EDUCA and CPUVO, I did not spend time overnight in the town of San José, which is the seat of the municipality of the same name (see map below, and appendix for more detailed information on the municipality). Instead, I made day trips there on 5 separate occasions to hold interviews and record field observations. I also met with CPUVO organizers in Oaxaca City at different public events and in the office of EDUCA on numerous occasions. Due to their hectic and unpredictable schedule, these encounters were rarely planned in advance. Because of the sensitivity of the information they provided, I have omitted the names of all interviewees and research participants.

I was able to spend several days in Maguey Largo during the fieldwork period, and ultimately held half of all interviews there. While residents of Maguey Largo participate in CPUVO and the town itself is aligned against the mine, it is important to differentiate it from CPUVO, which is primarily led by residents of the town of San José del Progreso. Seated near the geographical center of both the municipal and *ejido* boundaries, Maguey Largo is the third-largest town in the immediate vicinity of the mine. Very few of its residents work for the mine, and instead the local economy is primarily based on subsistence farming and construction work done in the surrounding area. Unlike the municipal seat, where the political and cultural terrain is deeply divided, Maguey

Largo maintains strong traditional governance and cultural practices in the form of regular assemblies, feast days, *tequio* labor, and *cargos*. Like Capulalpam, residents of Maguey Largo express pride in their unity and strong traditional practices, and are widely-recognized in the area for the key role they played in the land reform struggle at the beginning of the 20th century. This legacy, while not disputed by residents of the town of San José, also points to some of the internal tensions in the anti-mining movement. For example, at one workshop convened by *El Colectivo* in 2010, a number of *ejido* members questioned why the town of San José became the seat of the *ejido* after the first distribution of communal lands in 1927, if it was mostly residents of Maguey Largo and the town of El Cuajilote who fought for it. Another example involves Maguey Largo's struggle to raise its political status from Police Agency to Municipal Agency in the latter half of the 1960's. In a pattern all-too-similar to their treatment by hacienda owners in the past, interviewees in Maguey Largo recalled how their leaders had to bypass San José and slip into Oaxaca City in the early morning hours. There, they would process the change in political status which gave them more autonomy and a higher proportion of municipal funds. In retaliation for their status change, one leader from Maguey Largo was caught and jailed by municipal authorities for a short period of time.

The broader community of memory includes the social movement in each of these towns, while there are important differences between how these communities remember past conflicts and define themselves within the greater whole. By conducting research in both Maguey Largo and the town of San José del Progreso, my intention was to observe and ask about a diversity of lived experiences, shared memories, and opinions of local history.

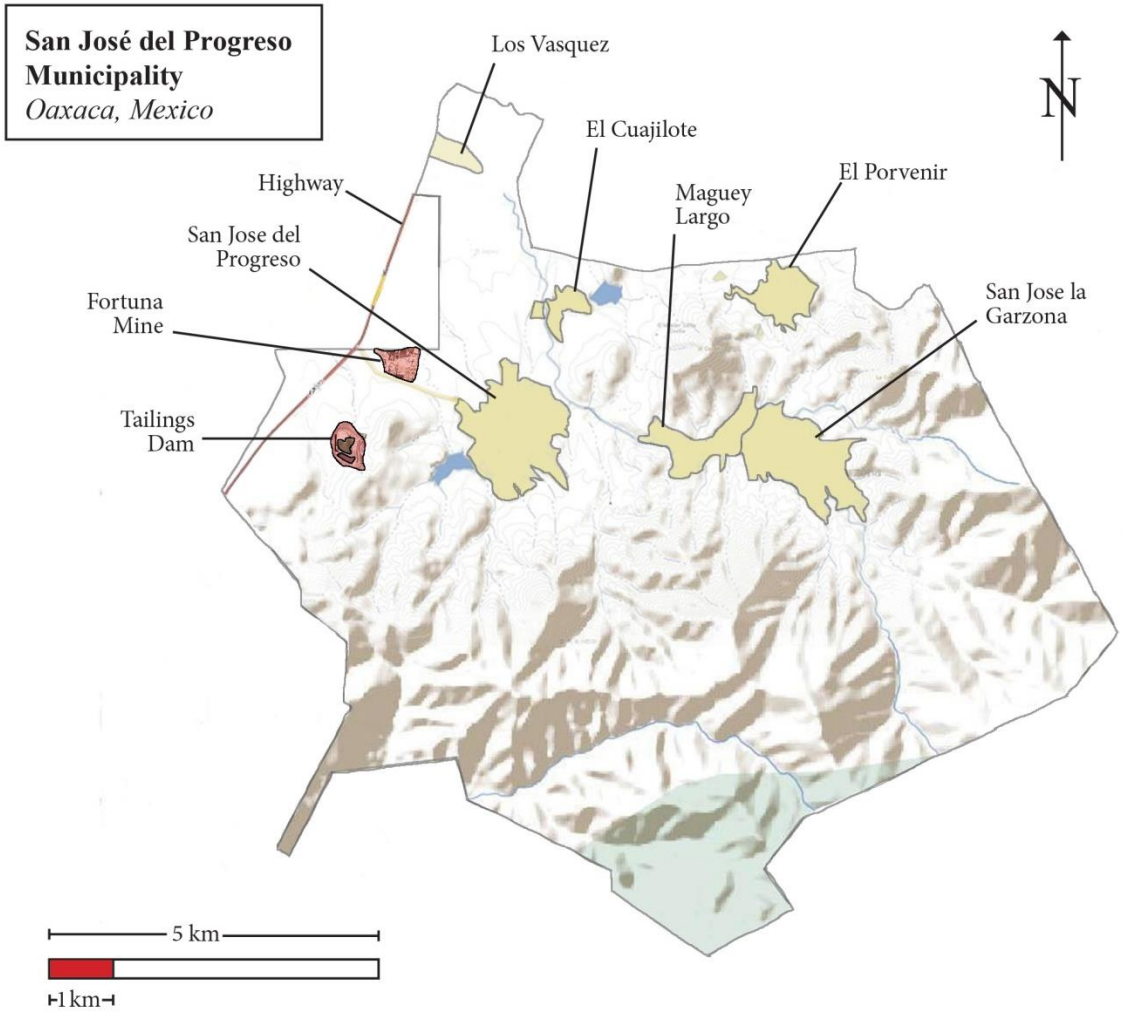

Figure 2. Map of San José del Progreso Municipality, including largest towns and important Fortuna Mine Sites.

Source: Map created by author with data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI, by its initials in Spanish) www.inegi.org.mx/geo/contenidos/mapadigital/, and Google Maps http://maps.google.com. Accessed on March 25, 2014.

Archival Sources

I visited The General Archives of the State of Oaxaca to review every document I could find on San José, ultimately photographing hundreds of pages of correspondence

and ephemera previously unseen by my collaborators. The portion of the Oaxacan State Archives relevant to the San José Municipality includes nearly 500 pages of letters and onionskin spangled with stamps and signatures in five separate chronological series (See appendix for a table of these series) consisting of formal complaints and legal declarations organized in the logic of post-revolutionary agrarian law.

The archive approach also involved a limited amount of off-site document review, including a copied set of *ejido* maps and a number-coded PROCEDE/FANAR map while visiting an organization belonging to *El Colectivo*. PROCEDE (*Programa de Certificacion de Derechos Ejidales y Titulacion de Solares*, Program for the Certification of Ejido Land Ownership Titles) was a federal program created in 1992 as part of changes to Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution, which legalized the privatization of communally-owned lands. FANAR (*Fondo de Apoyo para Nucleos Agrarios sin Regularizar,* Supporting Fund For Non-Regularized Agrarian Nucleuses) was created in 2007 after the PROCEDE program ended, with the aim of continuing the process of individual land titling. I later saw an example of the first *ejido* map while visiting with a farmer in the San José municipality, who had traveled to the archives in Mexico City for his copy.

The archival record is a colorful, if incomplete record of local agrarian issues dating back nearly 100 years, from which I was able to parse several stories of struggle against resource extraction and historical abuses of power. Some of these stories, like those of figures like Tereso Hernandez and Mr. Gattrell, pinged off of things said in the interviews where only a nickname or oblique reference was made to some historical event. Taken together, these historical documents point to a municipality that has suffered from periodic violent episodes connected to mining and land tenure. They do not include

direct references to cultural narratives, traditions, or other elements that might enrich them.

Archival evidence must be read carefully because of this narrowness and its potential biases. The archive is narrow because it is local life seen through an institutional lens, a legally-bounded reality of regulation and bureaucracy where the vernacular knowledges, concerns, and signatures of the many illiterate *campesino*s it presides over are transliterated into its own format and language. Conceived as legal evidence, a letter written to the governor by the hacienda owner, public official, or local municipal authorities would take on the priorities of adversarial positive law. The legal nature of many archival documents, while now well beyond statutory limitations, would at the time have made local narratives into a form of legal testimony.

Even when not legally-binding, the archive is necessarily biased toward reporting political transactions and grievances –it presents official agreements, changes in political office, and legal complaints very clearly, while the authors' intentions, back stories, and counter-narratives must be interpreted. This is where other evidence helps fill the gaps, however, and I found that in-depth interviews and participant observation provided insights where the official documents could not. For example, several interviewees said that their local history was mostly *tranquilo* (peaceful), punctuated by different violent periods. This conclusion could only be drawn from the archival record if one were to interpret the absence of recorded grievance as the positive presence of serenity. This absence amounts to a silencing, to use Trouillot's term, in "the moment of fact assembly" (Trouillot 1995: 26). An interpretation of the social memories and archival records, then, is to "best expose when power gets into the story," in an attempt to understand the "mentions and silences as active, dialectical counterparts of which history is the synthesis" (Trouillot 1995: 48).

The scattered and disorganized historical record of a small rural town held in State archives must also be understood as a representation of that state's interest in using local narratives in the political process of its own formation. As a repository of bureaucratic files and correspondence, the archive privileges accounts of the literate and those holding official positions- most of the letters it contains are penned by state agents, the hacienda owners or their representatives, and local elected officials. It is true that many town documents use the practice of typing names of those *campesino*s who could not sign for themselves (e.g. reports from *ejido* assemblies contained in Series XI and the agricultural census documents in Series XII), but this is the exception. These documents, especially the correspondence over legal issues, elucidate in considerable detail the perspectives and demands of those with sufficient human capital to write them and the social capital to make those voices heard.

The state archive is also a graveyard of past knowledge, where much of the information it contains is intentionally hidden from public view (Olick and Robbins 1998). As much archival information on San José follows the logic of agrarian law, is in written form, or is effectively scattered in several different sites, it is inaccessible to those most negatively affected by the ongoing divisions and resource extraction in San José. While the state archive does actively interpret and disseminate some of its records online and through community programs (e.g. local *bracero* histories, colonial era correspondence, etc.), much of the information it contains must wait to be unveiled and interpreted by third parties.

Due to fieldwork time constraints, the scattering and incompleteness of official records on San José, and lack of access to some records, I was unable to systematically review other primary sources that would have given a broader panorama of historical documentation of San José. By my accounting, relevant records on San José are kept in

six separate archives: The General Archives of the State of Oaxaca, the State Agrarian Archives, and San Pablo Academic and Cultural Center in Oaxaca City, the National General Archives of Mexico and the National Agrarian Archives in Mexico City, and in the San José Municipality itself. There is a notary archive held in a private collection (open for public viewing), at the San Pablo Academic and Cultural Center in Oaxaca City—it contains additional documentation of the passage of San José mine ownership from one owner to another throughout the 20th century. Newer documents are available in the State Agrarian Archive and in the National Archives in Mexico City. The State Agrarian Archives were being digitized and thus closed off from public viewing while I was in Oaxaca (plus, only current agrarian authorities have permission view recent documents related to their jurisdiction), and I was unable to make the trip to the National Archives due to time constraints. Finally, some official documents from San José are in the possession of the pro-mine municipal president, which effectively made them off-limits to me. A more complete archival review would be useful to a fuller accounting of the formation of the San José population and subsequent periods.

II. A Dismembered Territory

1. Entering a Divided Geography

I awake early and hurry across town to meet with a small Canadian delegation on its way to San José. Riding on the lurching city bus, I look southward where we would drive that day, toward a low brown haze that hung like a dingy curtain over the entrance to the Ocotlán Valley. A short time later we leave the crowded city, riding smoothly down the new *autopista* (freeway) into glowing green hills. Thirty minutes into the countryside, we pass through a saddle opening like a proscenium onto valleys dotted with rainy season scenes: *yuntas* (animal trains) drive slowly through rich black earth, farmers close behind plant seeds one handful at a time, closing the furrow with their sandaled feet. Small houses and church steeples are visible at regular intervals across the mottled green carpet of *robles*, *huamuches*, *laureles* and *huajes*.

Approaching the San José area, we pass entrances to other small towns: Santa Lucia, San Pedro Apostol, and Magdalena Ocotlán. Some entrances come with new pedestrian overpasses in grey concrete, the ones closer to San José tagged in hasty graffiti in red and black calling for an end to the Fortuna mine and jail for the current municipal president of San José.

The mine complex is visible before the town is; I see its large metal buildings and communication tower to the left of the highway as we near the entrance, then a steep dune of light gray mine tailings. Turning left into the town entrance brings us past the mine gate in short order: a wide opening in a tall chain-link enclosure topped in concertina wire, cars neatly arranged in its paved parking lot. Men walk around in hard hats, partly obscured by a series of green areas which block much of the industrial site

from view. The main road continues past a dirt soccer field, several houses and small *miscelanea* stores close in on either side, and an adobe wall bearing a mural with the name Alberto Mauro Sanchez in tall letters: an election sign for the municipal president, now nearly three years old.

We ride past the town elementary school where parents and children are milling or sitting by the entrance, and then come upon the original hacienda building directly in front of us. To the right sits an ancient and gnarled *higuerón* (fig tree). The tree itself is prominent in local legend—the hacienda owner used it to punish his farmhands, having them tied to the tree by their thumbs and whipped. Its oppressive role has taken new form lately: today a young man leans smirking in its shade, and we are later told he is there on behalf of the president to observe and report on the anti-mine activists and any visitors they have. The hacienda building is imposing and reminds me of the Alamo in San Antonio- two stories of pale adobe, heavy wooden doors and rounded cornice with the letters HSJ (Hacienda San José?) above the second story. To the left sits an open courtyard flanked by two arcades meeting in an "L" shape- one leads to a small chapel that was originally part of the Casco,[6] now wedged into the corner and relatively unremarkable from the street.

[6] The central hacienda building complex, originally housing the granary, administrative offices, chapel, store, and family home of the landowner.

Figure 3. Photo of Casco, which faces the main road entering town.

Photo credit: by author

The back of the courtyard holds the former *tienda de raya*, a type of company store where hacienda workers could purchase food and other items directly from the landowner, now the offices of CPUVO. A large paper-mache puppet of a skeleton dressed as a miner leans against one corner of the arcade by the CPUVO offices. Over the outside door and in a shrine inside are images of CPUVO martyrs: the first is Bernardo Mendez, killed in early 2012 during a confrontation between pro and anti-mine factions on the highway near the town. He had been mistaken for CPUVO leader Bernardo Vasquez Sanchez, who himself was killed two months later in an ambush that also resulted in serious injuries to two current CPUVO leaders. A large framed photograph of Bernardo Vasquez sits in a small alcove at the back of the office, his image surrounded

by vignettes of Subcomandante Marcos, Che Guevara, Benito Juarez, Jesus, Gandhi, Ricardo Flores Magón, and Emiliano Zapata.

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We entered the interviewee's house and yard through a chain-link gate, first passing an exterior wall bearing a pasted picture and small stencil portraits of the recently-murdered anti-mine leader. His large shady yard is of swept earth, scattered with implements, trees, small outbuildings and farm animals- like many rural homes in Oaxaca. His wife was at the house that morning, washing dishes and doing other chores with a daughter in law. Our host was expecting us, and shortly after we arrived came out in crisp new blue jeans, a loose button-down shirt, and beaten straw sombrero. He was stooped and thin, with a deeply wrinkled face, and wore huaraches over worn and gnarled feet thick with grey grit from his fields. We sat together on a porch under a framed sketch of the murdered leader and asked the old *campesino* about the nearby mine and the history of land struggle over intermittent interruptions from roosters, cats, the family phone, and the nearby sounds of hand-washing dishes.

> "I remember the mine, and that is why I don't go along with it. Because I see and I knew about and saw the *desperfectos* (flaws) that it had back then. And the mine wasn't the size it is now, with those wagons they use to take the metal out of the earth."

The flaws include the deadly personal consequences of mining. He remembers as a child cleaning his uncle's facemask when he came home from his job in the mine, removing *puños* (handfuls) of dirt that accumulated inside:

> "…this is what hurts you. And this was small machines that caused so much damage. And now the wagons and the smoke they produce, where does it go out?

> These young men who work there, those without any experience, get excited about the money but don't know the results."

By working in the mine, his uncle exchanged a prior campesino identity for one of an industrial laborer, from someone who produces from the land to one who extracts its minerals for a steady paycheck. His uncle eventually gave up his personal health in the exchange: later, he could not draw enough breath to work his plow, and died a couple of years after leaving the mine.

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There is a tacit geography of allegiances that divides the town of San José into pro and anti-mine sections. However well this geography is known to residents who negotiate those differences every day, it was only after several visits and one notable misstep that I began to see it myself. CPUVO members often use terms like safe/unsafe, good/bad to frame these divisions in terms of security and morality. The unsafe/bad area includes the entrance to the town and the areas immediately surrounding the mine, as well as the open hills directly to the south. I accidentally went deep into this pro-mine territory on my final trip to San José during fieldwork, when I accepted an invitation to an open hilltop known as the *coronilla* (crown) to hold an interview with a former anti-mine leader. I was riding a mototaxi up the winding and exposed hillside path when the CPUVO member responsible for my visit contacted me via text message. When I replied where I was going, he warned me in an increasingly-strident series of messages (as we dramatically passed in and out of signal areas) that the whole area *"está muy peligroso"* (is very dangerous), and that I should return immediately to the center of town. The interviewee did not share this opinion, and so we concluded the interview before proceeding with caution and without incident back into the anti-mine section of town. The safe/good area

includes the school and the main square, which are mostly controlled by anti-mine residents, anchored by the offices of CPUVO, the small chapel, the middle school, and a small weekend market.

Both sections are under constant surveillance: the "safe" section is watched from the edge of the ancient *higuerón* that sits near the front of the *Casco*. Meanwhile, anti-mine taxi drivers are said to keep an eye on the mine entrance and to monitor its daily activity for their side. As an ongoing visual incursion into opposed territories, these surveillances demonstrate the porous and contested status of the pro/anti-mine geography in the municipal seat.

The current conflict in San José is over the presence of a Canadian-owned gold and silver mine. But long before the arrival of Fortuna Silver, the San José Lagarzona Hacienda and its proprietors began a process of feudalization and industrialization at the expense of communal ownership and non-destructive modes of production. For Achille Mbembe, the occupation of colonialism "was a matter of seizing, delimiting, and asserting control over a physical geographical area—of writing on the ground a new set of social and spatial relations." (Mbembé and Meintjes 2003: 25) The connection between space and social relations forms the substrate of territory—in this case, the hacienda owners possessed both the land they were granted by the Spanish Crown and the lives and deaths of those living on it. As Mbembe writes, the colonial process busied itself with:

> "the production of boundaries and hierarchies, zones and enclaves; the subversion of existing property arrangements; the classification of people according to different categories; resource extraction; and… the manufacturing of a large reservoir of cultural imaginaries." (Mbembé and Meintjes 2003: 26)

As we will see below, hacienda ownership in San José was enforced through physical violence and the state legal system, and fought on similar terms. This ownership

was also enforced (and continues to be fought) in cultural terms, as well—the conferring or revocation of citizenship in the hacienda era had much to do with one's willingness to forego indigenous practices and worldviews in exchange for a laborer status (as sharecropper, field hand, or mine worker) and the faint promise of upward mobility through the labor system. In recent years, the struggle over the right to territory has translated neatly into a neo-colonialism of extractive mining, which plays out in analogous form across a discriminatory geography of ethnocentrism and labor exploitation.

2. THE HACIENDA'S LONG SHADOW

Mining has been a part of the area reaching back hundreds of years, and then as now, the great majority of the wealth it produced was concentrated in few hands. The San José Lagarzona Hacienda sat there, measuring over 3,000 hectares in size and including farming and mining operations. It was owned by the Mimiaga family, longtime members of the Oaxacan elite (Chasson 1990: 46).[7] According to J.R. Southworth, the author of a series of boosterish publications to promote mining in Mexico in the late years of the Porfiriato, the Mimiaga family also owned two more nearby haciendas, El Rosario at nearly 900 hectares and El Vergel, with over 30,000 hectares (Southworth 1910: 221; Cassidy 1986: 307). In a letter to the governor of Oaxaca dated May 12, 1924, Mariano Mimiaga writes he is the owner of another hacienda named El Capitan.[8] These lands produced corn, wheat, beans, and sugarcane, but in a previous edition of the same book Southworth also lists the "Mimiaga Hermanos" as an Ocotlán-based mining interest:

[7] A long notary file in the archive lists the transfer of hacienda title from Don Francisco Mimiaga to his son Manuel Maria Mimiaga y Camacho in 1875. (General Archives of the State of Oaxaca (hereafter GAO), Series X, File 28, 1924)
[8] GAO Series X, File 28, 1924

> "Ocotlan, Oaxaca. Are the owners of La Ilusion, Natividad, Trinidad, Esperanza, and other mines, located about half-way between Ejutla and Ocotlán. On the Natividad a depth of about 400 feet has been reached, exposing high values in gold. The owners will probably install modern machinery at an early date, in order to facilitate the more thorough exploitation of their various properties" (Southworth and Holms 1908: 154).

In his 1905 text titled Las Minas de Mexico, Southworth gives special mention to San José, calling it

> "a little mining town about ten miles from Ocotlán [which] also has some promising mines undergoing development, amongst them being La Corona—an extension of the celebrated old Spanish mine known as La Natividad del Valle" (Southworth 1905: 176).[9]

A majority of Oaxacan haciendas were relatively small in comparison to other regions of Mexico, and were predominantly agricultural and export-based. The Hacienda San José Lagarzona was one of a few that practiced simultaneous agricultural and industrial modes of production, and this is perhaps why they were able to survive the rampant indebtedness that struck other nearby haciendas in the late 19th century.[10] Under the feudal agricultural system, both male and female peons, woodcutters, and sharecroppers were given a place to stay and clothing to wear, and worked for meager pay. One interviewee put the daily wage at half an *almud* of dry corn (a little more than a kilo, depending on the type and age of the corn). *Aparceros* (sharecroppers) were required to pay the hacienda some portion of their harvest in exchange for land use. Both peons and *aparceros* were kept in debt through a credit system (the *tienda de raya*) which ensured they would not earn enough money to ever leave the hacienda. After the train system was completed in late 1800s, and highly favorable tax terms were created for

[9] One of the men listed in the Southworth book as co-owner of the Natividad Mine, C.A. Hamilton, was mentioned by one elderly interviewee as the owner of a nearby mine where his father worked.
[10] Their largest hacienda as of 1910, el Vergel, had been sold no fewer than four times between 1867 and 1907 (Cassidy 1986: 305)

miners under the regime of Oaxacan-born president Porfirio Diaz, the hacienda saw greater chance of profiting from its mineral wealth.

As with the nation as a whole, the Mexican revolution brought a series of rulers to Oaxaca in rapid succession, including governor José Inés Dávila, who named the state a free and sovereign republic in 1915. According to one author, this regime would honor the land prior claims of the landowning class (Ruiz Cervantes 1986, 77). This was not to last, however, and constitutionalist forces under Venustiano Carranza fought their way into Oaxaca's Central Valleys in 1916, winning a decisive battle against sovereign forces in sight of the San José Lagarzona Hacienda (Ruiz Cervantes 1986: 89). Some interviewees I spoke with remembered this battle took place, and identify the arrival of Carranza with the initiation of the land reform struggle. In short order, a number of San José Lagarzona's *aparceros* joined the *agrarista* (agrarian) faction of the new revolutionary government and began a 20-year battle for the creation of an *ejido* lasting from 1916 until 1936.

The state archive provides an extensive, but not exhaustive, accounting of this land struggle. A special envoy was sent by the Oaxacan governor in 1917 to investigate the *agraristas'* allegations of abuse on the part of the hacienda manager Adulfo Tamayo and his armed guards.[11] This detailed report was backed up by a series of requests made by the *agraristas* to the Oaxacan governor, and contested by letters from Manuel Maria Mimiaga y Camacho, then owner of the hacienda. Ultimately, the expropriation of the San José Lagarzona Hacienda is approved by the Mexican President, granting locals the category of "pueblo" with the formal name "El Progreso" in September of 1917. This

[11] Some of the weapons they carried may have been provided by the state government in 1912, when the hacienda owner Manuel Maria Mimiaga y Camacho requested them of then governor Montiel in part of a broad campaign against armed insurgents. (Sanchez Silva 1985: 212)

status was revoked late that same year due to an administrative dispute over the actual nature of the town.

In 1922, the Mimiaga family argued they had already divided up the hacienda among themselves in accordance to the provisions of Article 27 of the newly-minted Mexican Constitution.[12] In addition, the previous hacienda owner's widow and her two sons Manuel and Mariano filed a series of complaints against *agraristas* acting under the President of Autonomous Municipality of San José Lagarzona named Margarito Arango. According to them, he and other armed residents prevented their *aparceros* and *guardamontes* (hacienda guards) from harvesting and collecting the Mimiagas' share of crops. Arango sent a number of letters himself, including one to the governor dated July 28, 1924, where he notes the foundation of the Municipality in 1887. In that letter, he argues:

> "As it would be a tremendous aberration that all of a 'Free Municipality' were embedded in an 'hacienda' population, that due to its particular character in no way could harbor an institution of that nature; we appeal to you, Sir Governor so that that government over which you worthily preside, and as defender of the oppressed classes, could assist us in this case, giving us or decreeing the Political Category to our town…"[13]

Arango and his fellow *agraristas* would ultimately prevail, and the town was granted its first *ejido dotación* (allocation) measuring just over 1,500 hectares in 1927.

Another request to extend the *ejido* (*la primera ampliación*) was made in 1934, and granted in 1936. The expansion more than doubled total *ejido* lands, and incorporated all of the remaining hacienda territory, including the *Casco* itself. This redistribution was bitterly won and is widely remembered in a series of oral accounts detailing secret meetings, torture, double-crossings, and murder. Several older residents of Maguey Largo

[12] GAO, Series X, File 28, Record 18, 1924
[13] GAO, Series X, File 28, Record 18, 1924

and San José personally remember some of these men whose struggle for land continued well beyond the tragedies of 1936, fighting cattle rustlers, foreign miners, and other perceived outsiders for the safety and integrity of their land and communities.

The most legendary of these figures was a man from El Cuajilote named Tereso Hernandez. He is widely remembered as a fighter and courageous leader who won and distributed land to impoverished locals. Listed as a farm hand (*labrador*) in the official agricultural census from 1926, he went on to fight against the Hacienda owners and their administrator Joaquin Calderón in subsequent years, and is credited with several others for winning the second extension of *ejido* lands in 1936.

Yet, not everyone felt the same way about the land reform in the 1930's. As a number of my interviewees attested, those living closest to the big house (el *Casco*) and the mine site were less inclined to fight for their own land. One resident of San José related that in 1936, "They also lived through the situation we're having right now- there were some who worked [in the mine] who said they didn't want land." When another San José resident said the same thing several weeks later, I asked why people would not want free land. He replied that perhaps they were afraid the *hacendado* (hacienda owner) would return one day and punish those who went against him, or maybe they were already satisfied with their regular paychecks and were unwilling to take on the hard work of farming. According to one *tio* (the Spanish word for "uncle," used to refer to older men in many rural towns of Mexico), the administrator appointed by the Mimiaga family, Joaquin Calderón, influenced nearby residents' orientation to land reform:

> "He worked with the mine, and said, 'here we have enough with the mine, so why do you want the *ejido*?' … Many poor people believed him like they do nowadays, when they believe in lies and let themselves be fooled. And that's how they fooled people with the mine. 'If you're earning money each week, why would you want to work in the fields?'"

As the *ejido* process went forward, the divisions between those in support of land reform (indigenous *campesino*s) and those who sided with the hacienda (miners) began to resolve into a geography of allegiances that can still be seen today.

The Mimiaga family held onto some portion of their original mining interests well into the 20th century by passing management on to Joaquin Calderón. Described as a cacique by one *tío*, Calderón ran the town until 1945. He built a powerful patronage network in that time as well, acting as unquestionable municipal authority, as owner of a local *nixtamal* (hominy) mill, and *padrino* (godfather) to many local children. A 90 year old man I interviewed remembered Calderón personally. This *tío* used a popular form of poetry/song called *versos* to account for the persistence of the hacienda well after the *ejido* was formed. For him, it was as if the Mimiaga family (the two brothers Manuel and Mariano, and Mariano's son in law Jose) never left:

Don Manuel y Mariano	The two brothers,
y los dos eran hermanos	Misters Manuel and Mariano,
Como eran Americanos	because they were Americans,
Pateaban a los Mexicanos	they'd step on the Mexicano.
Don José siguió triunfando,	Don Jose kept on winning,
trabajó su mineral,	and worked his mineral find,
traía bailarines de Oaxaca,	he would bring dancers from Oaxaca
en la orilla de la mina allí venían a bailar.	To dance at the mouth of the mine.
Don José siguió triunfando,	Don Jose kept on winning,
también con mucho valor,	and was also quite brave.
en Oaxaca construyó un hotel,	He built a better hotel in Oaxaca
mejor que el gobernador.	than the one the governor made.

Even before Calderón closed the San José mine in 1945 (he sent the equipment and a number of the miners to work an unsuccessful claim in Chiapas), there were other mining interests in town. The "Platero" Mine was operated by the US-Born William Gattrell and his wife, which was also memorialized in the form of a verso:

La minita del Platero	The little Platero mine
está cerca de un cerrito,	is close to a big hill,
con su luz incandescente	has an incandescent light
y su bello molinito	and a lovely little mill.

Gattrell's impact on town life was the topic of great controversy in the early 1940's, as a series of official complaints to the state and federal government attest to his cruel and violent treatment of any local farmers' animals that happened on his mine property.[14] He was locally known, and still remembered today, by the ironic name of *el Chivo* (the goat). The municipality did not allow him to expand the lease on his mine, and the *campesino* who immortalized it in verse told me that Gattrell left shortly thereafter.

The series of foreign/outside owners was to continue, however. After Calderón turned over the property in 1945, a series of operators including at least one more US-born miner and the Oaxaca-owned MIOXA Company took over local mining production. The Fortuna Silver mine currently operating in San José fits better with the model developed and later perfected by Calderón: by crafting personal allegiances through employment, payouts, and social programs for mining families, they have been able to maintain a foothold in the town. A shift in current allegiances to the mine would require more than a revised cost-benefit calculus for mine workers and those who lend their land to it, however. The anti-mining movement must contest the deeper cultural impact of colonial practices, beginning with the idea that San José is a creation of the hacienda.

3. A COLONIZED HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

The type of jobs people hold, whether industrial or agricultural, demonstrate how the hacienda shaped the economic and social structures leading to opposing allegiances.

[14] GAO, Series X, File 31, Record 49, 1936

Occupations such as woodcutter, campesino, construction worker, and mine worker are some of the most significant economic activities I observed in the San José area. These job categories are largely practiced by men, but not exclusively. Women participate in woodcutting and farming to greater or lesser extent, but rarely if ever in mine or construction labor. Still, it would be analytically (if not politically) questionable to leave out the unrecognized economic activities most often practiced by women from this listing (tortilla making, farming, child rearing, etc.) According to the 2000 Census, just under 70% of men and 13% of women were "economically active" in the San José del Progreso Municipality, with 45% working in Agriculture, 38% in Construction, Mining, and Manufacturing, and 15% working in commerce (Instituto Nacional para el Federalismo y el Desarrollo Municipal 2013). These job categories were first established in the colonial period and have not altered significantly in terms of allegiances, or their relative social and cultural capital. This relative capital is a result of the broader ideologies of racial inferiorization and modernization inherent to colonialism and forming the basis of capitalist labor hierarchy. The categories established by the hacienda system still persist today.

Woodcutting was a major source of fuel in the hacienda and the mine itself, and today many residents continue to use traditional wood-fired ovens for daily cooking, especially in more rural areas of the municipality. Those who do not have time or access to cut their own wood in the nearby hillsides or on their own parcels will pay for a bundle from local *leñateros* (wootcutters). Always a grueling, solitary, and low-paid specialty, woodcutting (and the associated job of charcoal production) continues to be a low-prestige work category practiced mostly by individuals without their own land to farm. It has recently taken on additional negative meaning because of decreased water availability, which many blame on the over-exploitation of forested areas. Add to this the

high social value placed on modern modes of energy consumption, in this case the use of natural gas for cooking, and both those who cut and those who use firewood are seen as both rural and backwards. Those who rely on the job as a primary source of income are most often those living farthest out from the municipal center: most local *leñateros* live far up the valley in the indigenous town of La Garzona.[15] Thus, farther up the valley and away from the municipal seat with its highway access, mine, and natural gas service, the further back in time one is perceived to go, where people still cut and burn firewood, and many speak an indigenous language.

Campesino work (farming, fieldwork) is the most common labor activity I saw while researching in San José and its environs, even if it is seen as more than an economic activity by many of those who practice it. Being a *campesino* certainly increased in prestige once the *ejido*-process awarded land to hacienda fieldworkers nearly 90 years ago. As small-scale farmers, former sharecroppers and peons could then claim the economic and social windfall of property ownership, plus the political enfranchisement that came with *ejido* participation. Now however, small-parcel production made possible by land reform and subsidies in the 20th century is no longer economically viable. If anything, farming now has more value as a source of symbolic meaning: it is seen by anti-mine activists as more communal and environmentally sustainable than other jobs, as an important way to produce the commons necessary for a healthy relationship with territory.

There is evidence that the mining company and its supporters have taken an interest in eco-friendly projects. One Oaxaca-based interviewee attributed an *apego a la tierra* (attachment to the land) held by virtually everyone in San José; even those who

[15] Over 20% of La Garzona's residents speak an indigenous language, as compared to less than 5% in other towns belonging to the municipality ("Lista de Localidades En El Municipio de San José Del Progreso" 2014)

support the mine "have not abandoned their crops, and they make ecological toilets and use energy-saving stoves." Fortuna Silver has spent over a million dollars on its social responsibility ventures, including environmental projects that promise healthy resource stewardship. Between 2011 and 2012, it distributed over 500 eco-stoves, 100 dry toilets, and 50 water storage tanks were provided to number of pro-mining residents in the town of San José (Chapman and Kelly 2013a: 132). In response, CPUVO also obtained government funds to distribute storage tanks and eco-stoves, and helped to build dry toilets among its supporters. What makes pro-mine agriculture and environmentalism different than what is promoted by CPUVO and its supporters?

The pro-mining side may practice agriculture, but has shown an interest in operating under a system of private land ownership. The anti-mining movement conceives of traditional agricultural practices in collective terms, with shared management of a system of small plots. This system requires a functional *ejido* assembly to operate. While formalized through state-determined institutions like the *ejido*, this collective approach to land tenure goes back to before the colonial era. The enactment of PROCEDE/FANAR and legal concessions to the silver mine are hotly contested in part because they are direct attacks against this communal resource management. A number of *campesinos* on the anti-mine side refuse to have their land individually titled, because they understand it as an erosion of their hard-won land rights and holistic understanding of territory.

Anti-mine environmentalism is also in contrast with ecological efforts promoted by the mine and its supporters. Pro-mine actors believe the large mine can coexist with a healthy local environment, and promote shallow ecological efforts that only encompass individual households. The anti-mining movement understands the mine as antithetical to the preservation of a healthy territory—as both the land and the people living with it. It

promotes the eco-friendly stoves, toilets, and tanks as more of an economic benefit to local families than as the preferred form of natural resource defense. Its ecological perspective runs deeper, and is based on a *cosmovisión* (cosmology) where the land and the communities living from it form a single body. For example, access to healthy water is not as much an individual household concern as it is a serious issue facing the community as a whole. One active CPUVO member said more people would actually work in the fields if there were more access to water,

> "Water is more valuable than gold…. there are people who like and want to work in the fields. Water has been the problem. If we all had wells in our fields, we could all live from it [farming]. Lack of water is a problem in the community."

Another farmer said:

> "I don't understand why the government doesn't listen to us. This mining company here, what does the government say? That it's going to operate for 15 years. How deep will it go, how much water will it steal? Now it's stealing water, which is getting lower and lower [in our wells] and now we can't use it. It's contaminated now…. We're going to give it our best; we will join together in defense of the land which is what keeps us alive and gives us water. Because the earth is like a body, and when you stab it in the shoulder, it bleeds, and there is no more life."

For de la Cadena, indigenous/*campesinos* who hold this *cosmovisión* are concerned over a much more fundamental form of harm that the mine might wreak: "corporate mining ventures do not just encroach on peasant land and pollute the environment; they also destroy a socionatural world" (De la Cadena 2010: 355).

Construction work is the most industrial trade I found on the anti-mining side, particularly those living nearest the mine. As is typical for many small towns located near growing urban zones, scores of able-bodied men leave town daily for construction jobs in

Ocotlán and Oaxaca. I learned that construction[16] is one of the most reliable sources of relatively well-paid employment for men who are unwilling to work in the mine. Others see it as their only option because the only major industry in town is the mine. Two interviewees I spoke with referred to construction work as a type of orphaning from the local labor economy, implying that leaving town daily for paid work is a result not only of depressed economic conditions, but also of a type of banishment from the primary source of local work. Some anti-mine organizers also left Mexico altogether in search of construction jobs in the U.S., with several I spoke with considering another risky journey north as one of the few remaining options for earning good money. While construction work is seen as a more contemporary trade than woodcutting or farming, the exile of construction workers to nearby towns or the U.S. also fits into the geography of discrimination: the farther someone works from the center of municipal power, the less he or she participates in the economic benefits and the modernizing industrial mine project.

The last example I explore here is that of mine worker, an industrial identity first established in the time of the hacienda. It is obviously a highly-salient identifier of allegiance, as it very literally places you on one side of the conflict. In the past, many hacienda residents were required to work in the mine, but were also better remunerated for it. In 1912, workers in Oaxaca received from 25 to 50 centavos per day for farm labor wages and between 50 centavos and 1.25 pesos for a day of mine labor (Chasson 1990). Currently, a laborer will start out at $100 USD per week in the mine, which is far more

[16] This occupation is further subdivided into categories such as jornalero (day laborer) or albañil (mason), each with its own relative degree of prestige. These jobs appear to be held almost exclusively by men, with the only exception I heard being one young woman who was renowned for her ability to lug bags of concrete like the men do.

than the minimal earnings from working one's own land, but similar to what a trained mason earns in Oaxaca.[17]

Mine labor was always a key component of the ethnocentric colonial project. Then, as now, to be a miner is to take on a more European identity, and those who work there are more integrated into mestizo industrial institutions. They receive a regular paycheck, a job title, access to services (in principle) and more often live near the municipal center. In the teleology of modernization that forms part of capitalist (and classic Marxist) ideology, a job as paid industrial worker is more desirable, more human, than a rural indigenous one. *Campesino* job types were done farthest from the industrial center (the mine), and are now understood as rural, indigenous, and receding into a premodern past. According to Anibal Quijano, this inferiority assigned to indigenous workers was justified through a pervasive European dualism defining nonwhite bodies as closer to nature (Ennis and Quijano 2000: 552–555). To obtain a job in the mine was to become more human, *mestizo* (of mixed European and indigenous ancestry), cosmopolitan, and modern. It also brought greater risk of physical harm. The story of the *tio's* uncle illustrates this material and symbolic cost of mine employment. The mine first took the uncle's identity as indigenous campesino, and his body was eventually invaded by the dust it produced. This is the symbolic and physical death of an indigenous campesino, as significant in these terms as the far more publicized death of the anti-mine organizer enshrined on the *tio's* walls.

For Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, an ethnic shift offered through one's job is a type of "colonial-civilizing articulation," wherein indigenous people reject their original identity to behave in a more "civilized" manner (Rivera Cusicanqui 1993: 75). If woodcutting and

[17] Fortuna Silver does not include individual salaries in its regular financial reports. This estimate was provided by a pro-mine leader in an unpublished interview in July 2012, which was shown to me by CPUVO members.

farming are poorly paid and seen as part of an undesirable indigenous past, and construction work is a form of exile from the center of cultural and political power, a mine job became a way to earn a place among fellow *mestizos*. Beyond individual desires for upward social mobility (or mobility toward the center, according to the ethnocentric terrain), pro-mine representations of San José as a recently-formed industrial/hacienda town are part of this ethnocentric colonial project.

Opposition to the mine, as with opposition to the hacienda, is in large part an effort to develop an indigenous/*campesino* subjectivity in spite of the modernizing influences of colonial capitalism. Extractivism, in its historical and present-day form, is antithetical to a concept of the social and ecological commons built on collectivity and interconnection between people and the territory. Collective agricultural practices, then, are not only a traditional or alternative mode of production and social organization, but actually a type of organized resistance to material and symbolic dismemberment of the San José community. Because they are non-confrontational and practiced extensively among more and less-active members of the anti-mining faction, these everyday acts of resistance could be understood as *infrapolitics*, to use James C. Scott's term (Scott 1990: 200). When they herd cattle, cut and burn firewood, plow fields using animal power, hunt hares, and walk the boundaries of their collective land, indigenous *campesino*s quietly operate against the domination of the industrial center and the mine itself. In concert with more confrontational practices, these affirmative strategies both militate against pro-mining forces and provide the foundation of an indigenous/*campesino* identity.

4. MINING AS NEO-EXTRACTIVISM

Present-day territorial defense movements in Mexico operate within a historical context of exploitation and resistance, expressing what Perrault calls the "manifold frustrations on the part of a people with a long history of colonial and neocolonial exploitation, marginalization, and poverty" (Perrault 2008: 240). Several authors have centered on the impacts of neoliberal policies in Mexico by which the state and international private industry offer dual promises of economic prosperity and environmental sustainability through land privatization, resource extraction, and the introduction of new technologies (Style 2001; Martin 2005). The intersection between neoliberalism and the promise of Mexican economic development is perhaps best represented by large-scale "megaprojects" including dams, mines, airports, highways, and wind-power projects. In line with the emphasis on large-scale private development in Mexico, former Mexican President Vicente Fox introduced Plan Puebla-Panama (PPP, now named the Mesoamerican Integration and Development Project, or MIDP) in 2001 as a vast series of megaprojects stretching from southern Mexico all the way to Panama (Style 2001). The southern state of Oaxaca, traditionally marginalized in national politics and development schemes, is one of the sites chosen for these new economic projects due to its wealth in natural resources and biodiversity, but also as an attempt to quell frequent political unrest over inequality through economic projects (Martin 2005). In the cases of Capulalpam, Magdalena Teitipac, and San José del Progreso—to name only a few—little quelling has resulted to date.

Mining is big business in Mexico, which according to the Mexican Mining Chamber of Commerce was the #1 producer of silver in the world and #11 in gold ("Informe Anual" 2011). In 2011, gross profits from metal mining in Mexico alone exceeded $20 billion USD (with an investment of $5.6 billion USD in that time)

("Informe Anual" 2011). In terms of territory designated for mining, Mexico has granted over 26,000 concessions covering nearly 52 million hectares (~200,000 mi^2, a total area close to the size of Texas). This makes up ¼ of the entire territory of Mexico. In 2011, Oaxaca had 344 mining concessions covering nearly 8% of the state territory (Vélez Ascencio 2013).

The negative environmental and social impacts of mining are well documented. Some of the effects of gold and silver mining include persistent chemical contamination of soil and surface/ground water (cyanide, acid drainage, arsenic, copper, mercury, sulfur dioxide), erosion, habitat loss, aquifer "dewatering," and tailing dam failures leading to toxic flooding (Miranda et al. 2003: 7–9). Health impacts may include asthma, skin conditions, heavy metal poisoning, and some forms of cancer. Locals in San José also complain about the dust and loud and persistent noise generated by the mine's ore crusher. One interviewee said sometimes it was possible to write your name in the fine dust left on wild maguey plants from all the night milling.

5. THE SAN JOSÉ MINING PROJECT

According to the 2013 Technical Report produced by Fortuna Silver, mining in the immediate San José area began in the middle of the 19th century, and fell under the aegis of the local hacienda. During the lengthy presidency of Oaxacan-born Porfirio Diaz, a new mining law created in 1892 and substantial foreign investment led to an increase in gold and silver mining in the nearby Taviche district, but this came nearly to a halt during the Mexican Revolution. Small scale hand-tool mining continued under the hacienda manager until the 1940's, and then after that under different local operators. MIOXA (Minerales de Oaxaca S.A.) purchased rights to the mine in 1980, and Fortuna Silver

bought rights to the San José Project from the MIOXA company in 2006, in a joint purchase with Continuum Resources Ltd. In 2009, Fortuna acquired Continuum and became full owner of the San José project at that time. (Chapman and Kelly 2013a: 28)

The San José Mine facility is located on the western edge of town near the highway entrance, it sits on private property that has been conceded to Fortuna Silver by local property holders for varying lengths of time (but not less than 30 years). In the immediate San José Area, it also holds surface rights for the nearby tailings dam (see Figure 2 for locations of these sites). The mine is currently made up of 32 subterranean mineral concessions covering over 45,000 total hectares, a surface area nearly seven times the size of the entire San José Municipality extending well beyond to the east, south, and north into the Ocotlán, Taviche, and Ejutla districts (Chapman and Kelly 2013a: 21). The mine is subterranean, and is made up of a network of tunnels following different veins of silver and gold to a depth of several hundred meters.

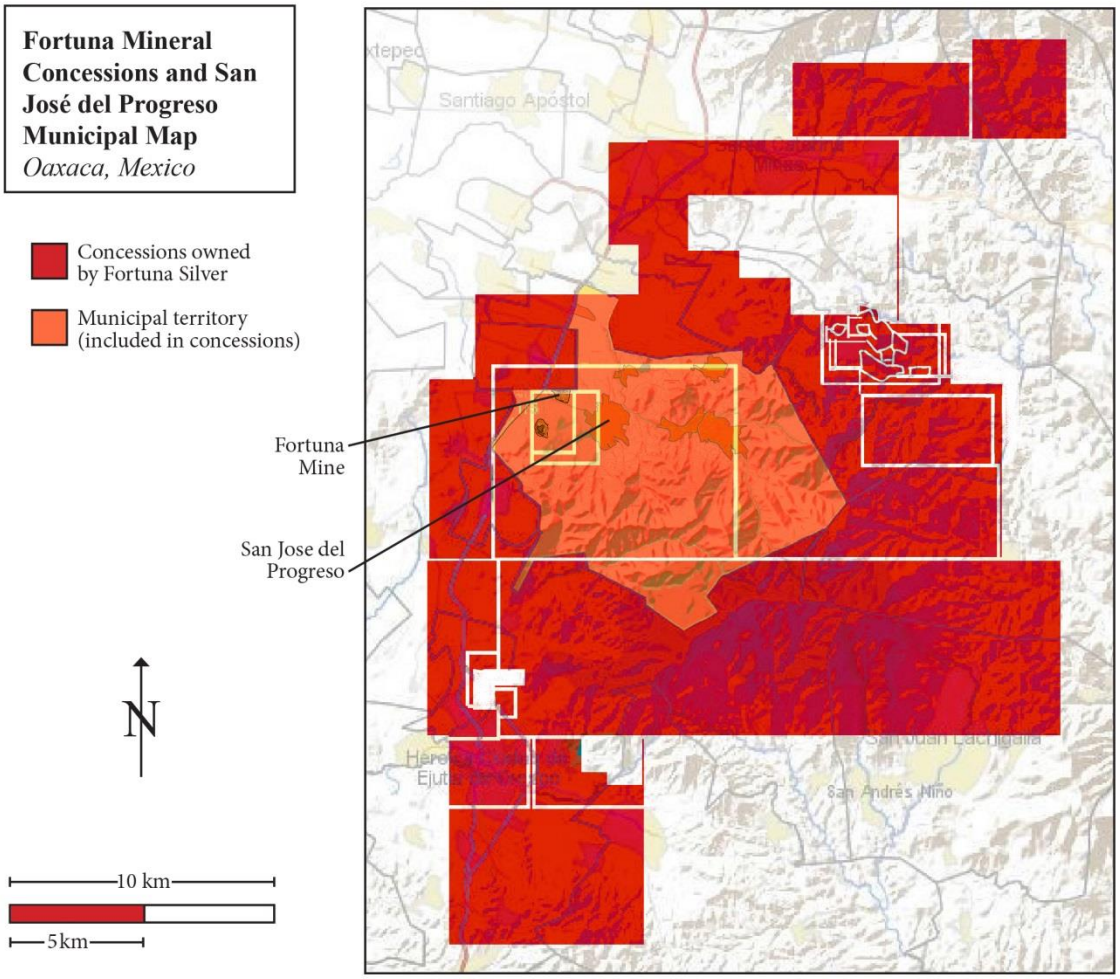

Figure 4. Map of San José del Progreso Municipality and Mineral Concessions owned by Fortuna Silver.

Source: Map created by author with data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico (INEGI, by its initials in Spanish) www.inegi.org.mx/geo/contenidos/mapadigital/, accessed on April 2, 2014, and (Chapman and Kelly 2013a).

Alberto Mauro Sanchez, the municipal president serving from 2010 until the end of November 2013, presides over one of two pro-mine factions. Because CPUVO controls the territory where the municipal building is located and has shuttered it in protest, he governed from his private home throughout his tenure, a property that also

houses Cuscatlán's local community relations offices. He also operates the roadside restaurant "La Esperanza," which is supported directly through mining company funds (Chapman and Kelly 2013a: 132). Cuscatlán has signed an annual agreement each year with the municipality to provide funds for infrastructure projects, according to company spokesperson Christina Pagano (Bacon 2014). According to Fortuna Silver, their Sustainable Development program has invested $1.3 million dollars in projects like the Healthy Home program which built 589 energy-saving stoves, 143 dry toilets, and 51 rainwater storage tanks (Chapman and Kelly 2013b: 138). Bernardo Vasquez, the deceased CPUVO leader, remarked in one interview that the stoves never worked properly in the first place, and many returned to cooking in their own stoves (Bacon 2014). In 2012, Fortuna paid 8 million pesos (in 2011, the figure was 7 million) directly to the Municipality of San José for infrastructure projects, although it is difficult to see what these projects might include, as most roads in town are heavily rutted and unpaved, and there was no visible construction taking place during any of my visits this summer. Fortuna also pays $2 million MXP annually to the Mexican federal government for subsoil rights (Ramirez 2013).

The mine has undergone consistent expansion since the beginning of production. Fortuna Silver enlarged its tailings pond in 2013 to accommodate increased production, increasing its total capacity to 2.1 million cubic meters and raising the dam height to 35.5 meters (116 feet) (Chapman and Kelly 2013a: 126). The facility currently uses a chemical flotation process to create an ore concentrate which is sent elsewhere for leaching and smelting, but has plans to build a leach plant in order to produce silver and gold bars on site (Chapman and Kelly 2013a: 135). After finalizing the purchase of the mineral concession surrounding the mine site, the company announced the discovery of a new high-grade strike several hundred meters north and beneath their current tunnel system.

According to its website, the company hopes to extract nearly 400 additional tons of silver and 2.3 tons of gold from this "Trinidad North" deposit (Fortuna Silver Mines Inc. 2014b).

Fortuna Silver also works directly with another pro-mine faction led by a local civil society organization, *San José Protegiendo Nuestros Derechos* (San José Protecting our Rights). It was founded by Servando Arango and 17 other associates shortly after the mine seizure that led to the creation of CPUVO, and is widely identified by CPUVO and *El Colectivo* as a *grupo de choque* (shock group) working on behalf of the mine. For example, a local priest who was kidnapped and beaten in the aftermath of the death of the former municipal president in 2010 blames the attack on members of this organization. According to Arango, the group exists to unite the community through dialogue with the mining company and state government, and to manage resources given by Fortuna Silver for community projects. In September of 2013, the association held a *Feria de la Tuna* (Cactus Fruit Fair) which was cosponsored by the state and federal governments and Cuscatlán Mining. Servando Arango won the election for municipal presidency at the end of 2013 and assumed power in January of 2014, in spite of protests by CPUVO which included an occupation of the offices of the Oaxacan state electoral tribunal.

6. THE OAXACAN TERRITORIAL DEFENSE MOVEMENT

Different social movement organizing forms are used in Oaxaca, and their titles tend to describe the principles under which they are organized[18]: *Asambleas* (Assemblies) and *colectivos* (collectives) tend to emphasize horizontal leadership structures and are linked to indigenous governance practices. *Coordinadoras* (Coordinators) come from the

[18] I am grateful to Miguel Angel Vasquez de la Rosa, a long-time organizer and co-founder of EDUCA, for helping me elaborate this list of the most significant organizing forms used in Oaxacan social movements.

mass organizing models popular in the 1970's and 1980's and have more fixed political goals and vision. *Redes* (Networks) are often called together by civil society organizations and are used in the discursive articulation of multiple organizing efforts under a common goal. *Consejos* (Councils) tend to be more formal, with spokespersons (known as *consejales* or *voceros*) chosen to represent different communities.

El Colectivo is made up of regional civil society organizations (Flor y Canto, EDUCA, UNOSJO, Centro Prodh, Ser Mixe, and Tequio Juridico) that provide organizing support and expertise to communities like San José. The Coordinator of the United Peoples of the Valley of Ocotlán (CPUVO) is a regional organization made up of members from several communities in the San José area, with offices and a majority of its membership based in the municipal seat of San José. The broader movement also includes community authorities whose elected leadership and committees participate as direct representatives of their communities. These associative forms in turn collaborate with broader territorial defense movement articulations, such as the Mexican Network of those Affected by Mining (REMA, by its initials in Spanish) and the Mesoamerican Movement Against the Extractive Mining Model (M4).

It is a truism of broad movements that it is easier to organize around what people don't want, to unify behind a clear "no." A strong example of the power of "no" is the case of the 2006 uprising in Oaxaca that formed under the umbrella of the Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca (APPO, by its initials in Spanish). The APPO encompassed an extensive range of actors and ideologies, cultures, and practices; what brought them all together was a singular demand for the destitution of the Oaxacan Governor, Ulises Ruiz Ortiz (known as URO). It was possible to express a collective "no" to URO from a diversity of political vantage points, and held the APPO together through months of occupation and repression. When it became clear that destitution was

not possible (fearing a potential precedent for accommodation and suffering a crisis of its own political legitimacy, the federal government would not seek his removal) and after a wave of overwhelming police repression, the APPO dissolved as a coherent political force.

Many organizations and communities involved in the Oaxacan territorial defense movement are former APPO members. Perhaps due in part to its experience in 2006, the territorial defense movement has demonstrated considerable sophistication regarding the challenges of plurality, and as a result of such spectacular failures of oppositional politics, has repeatedly expressed its position in both oppositional and affirmative terms: "Yes to life. No to mining" In a declaration dated January 21, 2013, the attendees of a regional *encuentro* against mining taking place in Capulalpam further articulated these two positions:

> "We have analyzed that we currently live under an economic and political model based on dispossession and the accelerated extraction of our communal minerals, water, forests, oil, air, gas, coal, and knowledge, all through the theft of our ancestral territories and the imposition of megaprojects… We Mesoamerican peoples fight against a transnational and hegemonic process that destroys our own social, economic, political, cultural, and territorial structures… We have the right to say NO to imposed development and to define our forms of economic, social, political, and cultural production."[19] ("Declaration of the Mesoamerican People's Encounter Yes to Life No to Mining" 2013)

This statement identifies a mode of production (extractivism) and a political and economic model (neoliberal capitalism) as the target of opposition, and self-determination as the affirmative position. The statement goes on to call for definitive halt to mining projects in Calpulalpam and San José, among a series of other broad demands.

[19] Over 480 individuals, 50 communities, 13 Mexican states, 80 organizations, and 12 countries participated in the Encuentro from January 17-20, 2013.

As stated above, the oppositional movement position is against neoliberalism and large-scale extractive industries, drawing a connection between the search for precious metals under the Spanish conquest and that being carried out today by new transnational agents. In fact, some territorial defense movement actors have made it a point to compare these two eras, concluding that at current extraction rates, an amount equal to all gold and silver mined in the colonial period is now produced in a just a few short years (Castro Soto 2013).

The newest manifestation of the external control of local resources is that of neo-extractivism, wherein the state and international private industry offer dual promises of economic prosperity and environmental sustainability through land privatization, resource extraction, and the introduction of new technologies (Style 2001; Martin 2005). Territorial defense movement activist Gustavo Castro Soto identifies the extractive model as a set of:

> "large-scale activities to obtain or separate natural elements, applying a price and an owner with the aim of the greatest possible profit, and that which avoids restitution, repair, mitigation, compensation, consultation, and information without assuming the costs of this extraction. It does not take environmental, ecological, cultural, political, social, economic, or local aspects into account" (Castro Soto 2013).

This ideology can be easily seen in a 2011 mining report produced by the Mexican government:

> "Today we must take advantage of the rise in metal prices, which will offer investment confidence and lead to the creation of new jobs in places that greatly need them, where no business goes… specialists, government, and private capital agree that the mining potential of the state can be considered as one of the most significant in the Mexican Republic" ("Panorama Minero Del Estado de Oaxaca" 2011).

For philosopher and activist Armando Bartra,

> "Transnational corporations are everywhere but don't belong anywhere, and because they are global they touch down in our communities. Sometimes they only buy and sell at an advantage, taking our labor from us, but other times they pillage and predate… and what they destroy is our land: the sites where we work and that we inhabit, the place of our memory and our dreams. And so we must defend the land" (Bartra 2013).

This critique of late capitalism inspires the direct action strategy in San José. Due to a lack of transparency around municipal government decisions, the mine purchase by Continuum/Fortuna in 2005 went unnoticed until construction had already begun. New construction at the mine site in early 2009 indicated to locals that the municipality-approved project was not actually a garbage dump as they were originally told by former president Amadeo Vasquez (Bacon 2014). Just prior to the CPUVO founding, former President Venancio Martinez called a formal assembly in early march of 2009 in order for local voters to approve the land titling and privatization under FANAR (presumably to make it easier to sign over additional surface rights to Fortuna).[20] When many refused, an altercation ensued wherein he fired his gun at the dissenting crowd. Nine days later, a number of locals and their supporters occupied the mine site in protest. This occupation lasted 3 months until it was dislodged through an operative involving over 1,200 federal and state police. CPUVO came into being after this police operation. Since that time, CPUVO and partners have organized other actions, including highway blockades, protests at the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City, and an occupation of the Oaxacan State Election Tribunal (see appendix for key dates of the mine conflict).

[20] It is difficult for private corporations to use natural resources belonging to social or communal property (in the form of an ejido or communal lands) because the local agrarian commissioner and the assembly of ejido members must meet to approve major land use changes. During the presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari beginning in 1988 and part of the overwhelming turn toward neoliberal policies in Mexico, changes to article 27 the national constitution allowed for the individual titling and sale of ejido lands. The measurement of individual plots and titling process began in the San José ejido in 1999, but has not been completed to date.

Because those holding formal political power in San José support the mine, one of CPUVO's major areas of work in 2010 and again in 2013 was an electoral strategy to win municipal power. It has yet to succeed in this strategy, but works on other fronts in the meantime. In lieu of formal government power, CPUVO has begun a dual sovereignty strategy (Wood 2003: 89), using the structure of the local *Usos y Costumbres* system to take over several town committees. In addition to this strategy, CPUVO has taken on governance roles and has claimed physical and symbolic territory in the town.

The affirmative position is expressed through a variety of strategies that combine contemporary social movement practices and traditional practices in a syncretic form of postcolonial politics. I break these strategies down into three main groupings: governance, forums/*encuentros*, and communal agricultural practices.

Novel uses for governance practices center on a reinterpretation of the traditional community assembly and organizing strategies by territorial defense movement actors. After visiting an international forum in Capulalpam, journalist Irmacema Gavilán observed that

> "assemblies are the space for participation and decision-making… more than the recovery of historical and community memory, the elders were able to raise consciousness around the importance of preserving cultural values and practices.… [assemblies are] unique and legitimate spaces for making decisions about the use of communal goods, the recovery of values, worldviews, and community relationships which determine the strength of a community and its broader organizing capacity." (Gavilán 2013)

CPUVO has fought to reinstate local assemblies and also uses a system of block captains (similar to *cargos* such as *sindico* and *topil*) to relay information to and from supporters. The community-centered logic behind these practices does not match well with statist and late capitalist ideology, which emphasizes bureaucracy, electoral and

parliamentary forms of democracy, secret ballots, individual liberties, and private ownership.

In January 2013, Calpulalpam hosted an international *encuentro* (encounter) to bring together nearly 500 people and 130 different organizations and communities united against mining. While the unifying theme of the *encuentro* could be most easily described as a contentious position ("no" to mining), a number of important affirmative practices took place there as well. For instance, local authorities and partner organizations organized 15 commissions dedicated to hosting *encuentro* visitors, based on the tradition of *tequio*. According to journalist Liam Barrington-Bush:

> "Locals were seen in the streets of Capulálpam de Méndez early each morning during the event, sweeping up dust and trash as part of their commitment to the community. As municipal president Juan Pérez Santiago explained: 'The work comes from the system of honorary positions, where there is no payment for providing service to your community... It doesn't create self-interest and it doesn't create economic self-interest. Our way of thinking, our ideology, the agency that we bring from our ancestors, is the care and conservation of our environment, our traditions and our customs'" (Barrington-Bush 2013).

More than just logistical support, these commissions are a demonstration of how traditional practices of mutual aid can be used to define movement spaces in more communitarian terms. Rather than a conference where many forms of support labor are contracted out or hidden from participants, the *encuentro* organizers promoted the ideas of mutual aid and hospitality. One visiting journalist wrote that participants "deeply explored collective methods through which they might generate or strengthen the community fabric in the face of state and corporate domination" (Estrello and Navarro Mina 2013). As an example of affirmative practice, the *encuentro* was used as an opportunity for constituents and beneficiaries to share experiences, as opposed to one-way information delivery from experts to participants.

Redefining communal agricultural practice is another important affirmative strategy used by the anti-mining movement. Alvaro Salgado, the Mexican public intellectual, has said the best way to protect territory is to use it, to literally eat it.[21] This emphasizes the non-economic material value of communal agriculture, part of what some have recently called the retreat to subsistence (Canby 2010): corn and beans plowed via *yunta* and grazing animals on the hillsides are in large part to be eaten, not sold. The territory that produces these agricultural goods for human consumption also produces the people themselves; this relationship is tied directly into the notion of *territory*—of healthy social and ecological commons—that defines the territorial defense project.

Whether this can also serve as a real economic alternative to wage labor and extractive production modes remains a practical challenge for the territorial defense movement. In order to recruit and retain supporters, organizers must propose productive alternatives. For example, Capulalpam runs several community-operated industries, including a small gravel mine, a sustainable sawmill, and ecotourism projects. San José has a longer history of agricultural production, and CPUVO has proposed waterworks to extend irrigation to more townspeople. If it cannot propose additional economic alternatives for the roughly 200 locals employed in the San José mine and hundreds more who travel for construction work, it will continue to be easy for companies like Fortuna Silver to promise extractivist forms of development at the cost of social, environmental, and physical health.

[21] This was part of his presentation at the First Encounter of Agrarian Authorities in Oaxaca on July 11, 2013

III. Territorial Defense as Re-membering

1. Historical Memory in Territorial Movements

"Memory is actually a very important factor in struggle… if one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism." –Michel Foucault[22]

On a hot summer afternoon in Oaxaca City, I sat down with a member of *El Colectivo* to ask his opinions about the role of memory in the anti-mining struggle. I was interested in hearing his opinion about why the term historical memory, which he introduced to me at the outset of my project, had gained so much popularity in the Oaxacan defense of territory movement, and what this new language invoked. To him, historical memory is the way in which communities understand present situations in light of their shared past, an analytical tool that is so prevalent in its daily use that it is rarely recognized as such:

> "[It's a] process built by subjects, by communities building and rebuilding it on a daily basis, often without realizing that they are enacting processes of reconstructing their historical memory… Each person has a way of interpreting and relating the social situations of his or her community, but the best part is when these people share with everyone else and they realize that there are many moments that connect them, and [together] they can discover the causes of immediate situations…. And this reconstruction is not just from the threat of megaprojects, but for the very life of the community, based on its own communal process. In all of the workshops I've been to, it is not called historical memory. The idea comes up of 'our elders tell us,' or 'our parents tell us that life was like a, b, c, d. We can't go to the river now, before we used gourds to drink with and now we use plastic.' They relate most practical problems of the neoliberal model with the past.

[22] Olick and Robbins 1998

When some residents of San José think about the new mine project, they associate it with earlier cases of exploitation under the hacienda and other outside actors. When they can no longer practice traditions because of changes in their community, they see this limitation as an affront to locally-led processes of cultural preservation and adaptation. When they take action, they remember and reenact similar strategies taken by their ancestors. My colleague went on to say:

> "There are elements of community, oral traditions, celebration, and the agrarian archive that greatly help them to understand where they come from, why they came, and why they are currently living in the territory… the more historical elements that communities and peoples have of their past, of the very immediate memory of communities with a history of 100, 200, 300, or even 500 years. These processes help them have the means to call an end to the claims of the state, of corporations, of all that could amount to an attack against the interests of the collective."

He also noted that, while past experiences can be a useful tool for understanding the present, collective memory is not sufficient on its own for analyzing problems communities face in the twenty-first century:

> "Globalization and neoliberalism are restructuring, and it was not the same thing to stop a corporation 50 years ago as it is with the ones that are so powerful today. It helps [communities] to remember that they won in the past, but the context is different now. Even painful experiences or successes can help [them] to make new decisions."

For my colleague, historical memory is one of many analytical tools social movements can use to understand and respond to the current *coyuntura*. It is a specific contribution of directly-impacted communities, who can draw strength and inspiration from their cultural continuity and/or legacy of struggle. It would seem that historical memory is also a constitutive force operating beyond the instrumental and the inspirational; in recollecting and reenacting a shared past, a social group becomes a subjective actor joined together by memory. As it establishes social memory practices, it

begins to work against its historical disruption and toward a new sense of unity grounded in a shared interest to understand the past.

When it comes to re-membering a community, I wondered if the practice of memory is more important than what is actually remembered. Thus, for shared memory to produce unity, it may not actually require agreement on the historical details or their interpretation. While a consolidated set of historical memories would enforce a unified narrative, it would also erase much of the nuance and contradiction that are inevitable aspects of memory. A fully consolidated memory is impossible to completely enforce, and my impression was that, when it came to memories of the land reform struggle, CPUVO leaders were not invested in crafting one. In fact, at least one leader suggested more than once to me that I travel to different communities in the municipality to hear different versions of the *ejido* struggle.

Different communities in San José remember the past differently. That they remember it together is key to the creation of an intact set of social memory practices where details of the past must be continually negotiated. This regard for the past, under the competing valences of memory consolidation and negotiation, is one way the movement in San José forms its indigenous/*campesino* identity, and operates against the dissolution and incivility produced through the hacienda/mine nexus.

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Over the past century, residents of San José were subordinated to violence and a colonizing geography that exploited their labor and cast indigenous/*campesino* life in a negative light. To combat the discrimination and violence of these "civilizing" acts, anti-mining residents of San José practice collective re-membering to locate themselves in a

lineage of local struggle. For sociologist Paul Connerton, "the production of more or less informally told narrative histories turns out to be a basic activity for the characterization of human actions. It is a feature of all communal memory." And while some authors have pointed to the importance of social memory of struggle in subaltern movements (Gordon and Hale 2003: 369–381), they restrict their definition of social memory to the historical counter-narratives that subaltern communities share. I argue that, in reenacting past struggles and local customs, movement participants remember in embodied ways as well. In the case of San José, both narratives and embodied memory practices play a crucial but often unstated role in motivating these movement actors in the face of grim odds.

As difficult as the present moment is, San José also has a long and textured history of struggle, where legendary figures fought and sometimes died to win land reform against powerful landowners and foreign interests. The degree of disunity in San José is not due to some demographic or historical accident. Instead, the structure of colonial land tenure—in the form of an hacienda—and ongoing interest in mineral resources have dismembered the town into a socially and geographically discontinuous site primed for resource extraction. For writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, this type of

> "colonizing presence sought to induce a historical amnesia on the colonized by mutilating the memory of the colonized; and where that failed, it dismembered it, and then tried to re-member it to the colonizer's memory" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 2009).

An important strategy for addressing the dismemberment of San José is through what wa Thiong'o calls collective re-membering. This perspective underlines the power of colonialism to overtake indigenous identity, and is optimistic about the possibility of using autochthonous practices and languages in a concerted process of post-colonial reconstruction.

Different ideological frameworks are socialized in the form of narratives and commemorative practices, as inscribing and incorporating acts. Inscribing acts include ways to store and retrieve information, and incorporating acts are immediate embodied actions that are not stored. For Paul Connerton, the former is classic memorization—as in the case language and alphabets—that may be socialized in the form of shared knowledge practices. The movement's use of local legends and the proposed revitalization of indigenous language count as inscribing acts. Incorporation is a mnemonics of the body contained in the physical habits and rituals that define social belonging. Collective rituals, protest, and dual sovereignty strategies are incorporating acts. Both types of memory reinforce each other to generate a sense of belonging and shared identity over time and in space.

Incorporated and inscribed recollection is also tied to specific sites whose materiality delimits the scope of memory construction. As a result, the anti-mining movement in San José must use available legends, practices, memories, and physical sites to build a sense of indigenous/*campesino* subjectivity. CPUVO has made important strides in claiming many of these literal and figurative sites of memory, while there are also others they have not yet claimed. As it works to accomplish the instrumental and self-making goals of organizing work, CPUVO and its allies must build upon its rich memory of contention and affirmation while also contending with past failures, internal inconsistencies, and intentional silences.

2. Opposition as Social Memory Practice

From March 16 to May 6, 2009, hundreds of local residents of San José and surrounding communities occupied the Fortuna Silver mine site, before being forcibly

dislodged by over 1,200 state and federal police. More violence erupted the following year, resulting in the death of the municipal president and his health counselor. During later elections, another pro-mine president won office. CPUVO representatives took over the municipal building in early 2011 to protest the election results, and kept the site shuttered through the beginning of 2014. The mine began operations in September of 2011, and violence and confrontation escalated, culminating in the shooting deaths of two CPUVO members and serious injury of several others. CPUVO and ally organizations mounted protests in Oaxaca and Mexico City, and again on the anniversary of Bernardo's death, where they were fired upon by gunmen loyal to the municipal president. After more unfavorable election results at the end of 2013, CPUVO members occupied the state election tribunal for one day in protest of electoral irregularities. These examples of conflict in San José point to an experience of territorial defense that is much more confrontational than that of communities like Capulalpam. In my reading, CPUVO's strategies (i.e. occupation of sites, marches, blockades) are more courageous to the extent that local authorities and outside actors are more violently oppressive. Historical violence and the courage that has risen to meet it define the character of opposition in San José, and contribute to the aspect of indigenous/*campesino* subjectivity that identifies itself with resistance. This history of struggle is remembered through narratives (inscribed) and through the action of protest itself (incorporated.)

San José del Progreso has a number of legendary figures in its ongoing story of struggle, frequently paired by movement members as pro-*campesino* heroes and pro-mine villains. The biggest hero of the historical land reform struggle in San José is undoubtedly Tereso Hernandez, often called "El Tereso." Anthropologist Ursula Hernandez asked local residents about the legend of Tereso early in 2013, and one member of CPUVO described him thus:

> "They say that that man, Tereso Hernandez, was very brave, and that he got a group together to fight for the land, that he had a lot of people on his side. They followed him, and he fought against the hacienda owner. They were afraid of Mr. Tereso; he was a strong and capable man, and sometimes I think, 'Isn't now like it was then, like when Mr. Tereso was here?" (Hernandez Rodriguez 2014: 55)

One interviewee in the town of San José related the memory of those difficult times to me:

> "It's very hard. There was a lot of killing, on their side and on ours, because of the *ejido*… some wanted the *ejido* and the people on Calderón's side didn't. He [Tereso] was revolutionary. He defended the *ejido*- they set traps many times to try and kill him, but they never could because the man was very smart… many people respect him because he was an upright man, and all of those people who die defending their rights have honor."

Tereso did not die fighting for the *ejido*, but several people close to him did. He visited the Oaxaca offices of the *Confederacion Mexicana Campesina* (The Mexican Peasant Famer Confederation) in June 1936 to give testimony about nighttime attack where his father, two brothers, and five others were killed, and where he almost lost his life. According to his testimony, the ambush came immediately after he convinced the state to call an assembly to elect new *ejido* officials. The report names eight locals as the responsible parties, with administrator Joaquin Calderón as the mastermind.[23] One month after the attack, on August 26th 1936, the second extension of *ejido* lands covering much of the remaining hacienda territory was granted. Tereso was named *ejido* commissioner beginning that same year.

Residents of Maguey Largo also tell how local heroes Vidal Porras and Leandro Luis fought for the *ejido*, working alongside Tereso in spite of alleged efforts by Joaquin Calderón to divide them. Their strategy was to meet in secret at a white stone marker to plan, and sneak into Oaxaca City to meet with lawyers and other officials to do the land

[23] GAO, Series X File 31, Record 49, 1936

change paperwork. In one story, three residents from Maguey Largo were seen leaving for Oaxaca and were later stopped by Calderón's *guardamontes* at a nearby crossroads. They were taken into town and hung by their thumbs from the *higuerón* in front of the hacienda building and tortured. Then they were then taken to a site nearby, strung up again, and made to wait until the following morning when they would be shot. A local farmer convinced their captors to let him bring *atole* and tortillas for their last meal, and while they were eating, a lawyer arrived with orders to free them and bring them to Oaxaca. They would eventually live through the second extension of the *ejido*, and are listed among the dozen *ejido* members who file a formal complaint against William Gattrell for his threatening behavior and penchant for shooting other peoples' livestock.[24]

The state archive contains files ranging from 1917 to 1936 relating different conflicts over land use, but earlier moments in the 20 year land reform process did not produce legendary characters like Tereso and Calderón in the local community of memory. For example, an envoy named Jose Pruñeda was sent by the governor of Oaxaca in 1917 to investigate alleged abuses by the prior administrator named Adulfo Tamayo. The representative thought the situation tense enough to bring two armed guards with him, and he would have brought more had his budget allowed it. Of Tamayo he wrote:

> "the innumerable complaints they have against him… give an exact idea that this man does not fulfill his position with the necessary tact. The individuals under his domain feel constantly harassed by him, and his procedures have led to an environment of hatred which, judged by his innumerable accusers, is perfectly justified."[25]

Still, Tamayo was never referenced by interviewees of any age, even though archival evidence points consistently to problems arising during his tenure. Joaquin Calderón is frequently mentioned and some of the oldest interviewees remember him

[24] GAO, Series X, File 31, Record 49, 1936
[25] GAO, Series X, File 28, Record 7, 1917

personally, just as some remember another disreputable figure: William Gattrell, or "el Chivo" as one person called him. The Mimiaga name is also widely remembered, along with the Santibañez family name (one of the surnames of the last owner), and Mr. Hamilton, the wealthy investor who owned the Natividad mine nearby.

The letters in Agrarian Series X (Justice), files 28 through 31 are organized by plaintiff, with several members of the Mimiaga family represented in this category. This series of formal complaints, bureaucratic ephemera, and responses from local authorities points to another forgotten legend who pressured the hacienda family and their administrators through a series of confrontations leading up to the first *ejido* allocation in 1927. According to a letter by Manuel Mimiaga in 1924, municipal president Margarito Arango had armed himself and 200 locals who were "the terror of the place," preventing sharecroppers from turning over the appropriate amount of farm products to the landowners. In a letter to the Governor dated December 1924, he writes:

> "On the eighth of this month, the President of the Civil Administration Board of the ex-Hacienda San José… Margarito Arango, is he who opposes and advises the people to not comply with their commitments regarding the conditions under which they received lands to plant."[26]

Mimiaga continues that when administrator Joaquin Calderón went to help local sharecroppers who wanted turn over the agreed-upon half of their crops to the landowners, Arango arrived with around 60 armed men to prevent them from doing so. In a letter to the governor's secretary in January, Margarito claims his efforts were "only so that justice could be done for those sharecroppers" who had the customary right to claim a higher portion of their harvest than that demanded by Mimiaga. In another letter sent three months later, he personally invited the governor to visit the municipality to see the

[26] GAO, Series X, File 28, Record 18, 1924

great need they had for *ejido* lands. Several months after that, Manuel Mimiaga sent another letter to the governor to report a meeting held by residents of the ex-Hacienda,

> "led by one of their agitators, in which they were encouraged to kill those working for the landowners…. My administrator does not wish to continue serving me, fearful that his neighbors will attempt to take his life."[27]

The attack never came to pass, and Calderón retained his position as local administrator and boss for the next 20 years. Margarito Arango and his second Juan Gopar were listed among deceased *ejido* members (*muertos*) in the 1935 agricultural census.[28]

Tereso Hernandez and Joaquin Calderón (as well as Vidal Porras and Leandro Luis) are actively remembered by movement members, while Arango and Tamayo remain forgotten. One simple explanation for this omission is a chronological one: some local residents are old enough to remember Tereso and Calderón, while Arango and Tamayo lived and made their mark in the land reform struggle some years previous to living memory. Regardless, CPUVO and its supporters could use archival sources to create a more extensive narrative of repression and contention in their community. As an inscribing practice, the recounting of these additional narratives would work in tandem with ongoing incorporating practices of contention: the narrative connection between past and present creates a sense of subjective permanence, of continuity in struggle as a community that has always retained an element of opposition to outside intervention.

Even if narratives do not contain references to all of the characters I found in the archive, the social memory of struggle is also actively practiced as an incorporated form of recollection. In their organizing meetings, numerous trips to Oaxaca City, and open confrontations, movement members reenact the actions of historical figures. San José has

[27] GAO, Series X, File 28, Record 18, 1924
[28] GAO, Series X, File 31, Record 49, 1936

produced proud fighters like the young CPUVO member I interviewed who regaled me with stories of his unarmed standoffs with local *pistoleros* (hired gunmen), with the municipal president, with regional police, and heavily-armed commandos at protests. According to one of his accounts, when he was detained with other CPUVO members after the death of a prior municipal president, the police said:

> "You have to say you did it, *cabron*, because if you don't, you're going to die and the others will go to jail."
>
> "Why, if I didn't do anything?"
>
> After saying they knew I was with CPUVO, they said they had orders from above to kill us, "so just confess that it was you because if you don't, we are going to disappear you and that will be it."
>
> "So, I told him a little aggressively, 'Well, disappear me, what do I have to lose? I'm not afraid.'"

Many of the most active members of the anti-mining effort have similar stories of confrontation, detention, and threats. In spite of the danger, some have continued to participate openly in anti-mine leadership. Others, such as the local priest who was also detained and severely beaten after the death of the municipal president, have stepped into less direct roles or have moved elsewhere.

In light of the violence against a number of CPUVO members, this boldness in anti-mining organizing points the role of protest in the self-making of indigenous/*campesino* subjects. When they confront the corrupt authorities, gunmen, and police forces, locals reenact past struggles and participate in an extensive legacy of resistance against colonialism. Certain narratives of struggle, like that of Tereso Hernandez or the men from Maguey Largo, form the substrate of inscribed knowledge that movement members use to interpret their current actions. As one CPUVO speaker said at the forum in Magdalena Teitipac,

> "And it's not just the case today and that's it. Some great and thinking individuals wanted to defeat mining back then, and just like what's happening with us today there were murders; they were persecuted, they were exiled."

Narrative of past struggle give historical weight to land occupations and marches, but an even more potent form of remembering—often unremarked—rests on how participants incorporate the knowledge and habits of resistence. Paul Connerton defines habit as "a knowledge and a remembering in the hands and in the body; and in the cultivation of habit it is our body which understands." (Connerton 1989) For example, confrontations with the police during the 2009 mine occupation translated onto the bodies of the protesters as a form of corporeal commonsense; they learned how to stand together, to overcome fear, and to temporarily defend their encampment against the thousands of police who arrived to dislodge them. The anti-mining residents in the town of San José often stand up to armed assailants and police with sticks, for which they have been nicknamed *garroteros* (batters). This pugnacious reputation is not denied by movement members, who cultivate a fighting spirit honed over years of struggle. Still, they also make a clear separation between their tactics and those of armed gunmen and police: unlike guns, sticks are nonlethal (and legal), are used by *campesino*s in their daily agricultural labor, and are also the symbolic tool *topiles* carry to maintain order (as is the *binza*, or braided crop that is also popular in the Ocotlán area).

A number of civil society organizations also support oppositional action, including protests, fact-finding missions, and vigils. A week after the murder of Bernardo Vasquez in March of 2012, the *Colectivo* and several other organizations helped CPUVO stage protests at the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City and at the Canadian Consulate in Oaxaca to denounce the involvement of Fortuna Silver in the attack. In November of that year, the *Colectivo* organized the Justice for San José Civilian Observation Mission. Held over the course of 3 days, it gathered testimony and observations used to later denounce

the violence and systematic human rights violations brought by local authorities against anti-mining organizers—as well as threats against the mission itself during its visit to the area. On the 1-year anniversary of the murder of Bernardo Vasquez, CPUVO, *El Colectivo*, and other individuals and organizations held a vigil and protest at the entrance of the mine facility. Armed gunmen arrive and fire over the heads of protesters.

Taken together, the range of oppositional actions is a form of embodied recollection, or communion, with past struggle. When the narratives of local heroes and villains are known and shared among movement members, these provide a historical context for the current anti-mining struggle and help those participants to understand their actions in the *longue durée* of both indigenous anti-colonialism and campesino class struggle. Protest actions also produce social memories as a form of embodied pedagogy, where together participants learn the skills and habits of opposition that make the struggle possible under such adversity.

3. DUAL SOVEREIGNTY AS SOCIAL MEMORY OF PLACE

In her close study of the development of insurgent consciousness among peasant farmers in El Salvador, ethnographer Elizabeth Wood uses the term dual sovereignty to describe the intermediate scenario of double government that can develop within oppositional episodes. In her case study, FMLN rebels did not possess official political power, but either replaced state authority or contested that authority in the areas they controlled (Wood 2003: 121). This left local peasants with a precarious choice as to which "government" they would approach for services, goods, or conflict arbitration. While San José is certainly not host to an insurgency, its anti-mining movement uses dual sovereignty strategies as an intermediate term between confrontational strategies and

more indirect affirmative practices. Of all the social movement strategies used in San José, this is perhaps the most overt and certainly the most successful to date, with CPUVO and its supporters now claiming a significant portion of the political and physical terrain within the the municipal seat.

As successful as this strategy has been in the political and industrial center of the municipality, some aspects of CPUVO governance do not reach beyond the town of San José. Instead, it must articulate shared power with individual governments in Maguey Largo, La Garzona, El Porvenir, and El Cuajilote. As it looks to win official political power through municipal elctions or the reconstitution of local assemblies, it is likely that CPUVO will need to operate through an equitable distribution of power with these locales, perhaps by dissolving itself into the pre-existing *Usos y Costumbres* system of government. As an intermediate point in the process of organizing consensus and building power, CPUVO and its supporters use key institutions and reinterpret sites in the ongoing formation of an indigenous/*campesino* community.

In spite of efforts on both sides of the conflict to consolidate political power, several governance institutions do not function in San José. For example, one strategy considered by CPUVO (and promoted by *El Colectivo*) is to rebuild the *ejido* commission and assembly regardless of who holds elected office in the municipality. This would create opportunities to leverage *ejido* jurisdiction over land use against resource agreements signed with local authorities and Mexican government agencies. Still, the *ejido* assembly has not met since 2009, and subsequent attempts by CPUVO and supporters to have the assembly reinstated by the Agrarian Bureau have not been successful. The position of *ejido* commissioner has also been vacant since 2010, for similar reasons: according to the Agrarian Bureau, the situation is too tense. These factors have left the *ejido* in a form of stasis allowing the mine to continue under the

subterranean mineral concessions it has purchased and surface use agreements signed with locals who have gained individual titles on their allotments of *ejido* property.

In addition to the nonexistent *ejido* assembly, the municipal assembly has also not functioned for a number of years. According to one CPUVO organizer, anti-mine locals boycotted an assembly called in early March of 2009 by then president Óscar Venancio Martínez. They accused him of manipulating the assembly process to allow the mine to begin construction, and to continue the individual land titling process under FANAR. A week later, several hundred locals occupied the mine and CPUVO was created. The municipal assembly has not met since. The municipal building was later shuttered by CPUVO in response to 2010 elections which brought pro-mine Amadeo Vasquez to power.

In the town of San José, the remaining political terrain been strongly divided into two factions. The *Usos y Costumbres* system establishes an array of committees and roles for local coordination and governance, some of which have been taken over or duplicated by CPUVO. For example, the parent committees for the elementary and middle school and the local church, water, and electricity committees were taken over by the anti-mining side shortly after the 2010 elections. CPUVO has also duplicated the work normally done by municipal authorities by, for instance, requesting project funds from individual congress members and state agencies, negotiating directly with the state elections board, and organizing block captains to pass information and receive input from San José residents. For one interviewee, "the Coordinator is like an authority for us… when people can't resolve their problems [with the authorities], they go to the Coordinator."

CPUVO and its allies have have also claimed elements of the physical terrain as a key aspect in its dual sovereignty strategy. First, a number of structures are used as

community message-boards. Both sides of the conflict use graffiti to send messages and mark specific territory as pro or anti-mine. For example, the direct threat made to Bernardo before his murder in 2012 remains on the spillway wall of the town retention pond (see image below).

Figure 5. Spillway wall with threat against Bernardo Vasquez.

"Your end has arrived Bernardo." The graffito also contains the word "dog" and "rat."
Photo credit: by author

The anti-mining movement has been much more active than the pro-mine side in making symbolic claims on territory. For example, pedestrian overpasses leading to San José del Progreso contain anti-mining messages. San José and Maguey Largo also boast several murals defending the anti-mine struggle as well as freedom from political repression (see images below).

Figure 6. Graffiti on highway overpass.

“March 15 will not be forgotten,” “Murdering Mine,” “Mine Rats,” “Get Out Cuscatlán and its Sellouts.” Photo credit: by author

Figure 7. Mural located in the center of San José.

"Yes to Life, No to Mining." Photo credit: by author

Figure 8. Mural on the former home of Bernardo Vasquez.

"If you love life; fight against the mine." Photo credit: by author

Figure 9. Mural in the center of Maguey Largo.

"How should they consult us," "1. In community assemblies 2. In our native tongue 3. In our medium of communication 4. In good faith," "Right to consultation and free prior and informed consent over the care and defense of water in favor of indigenous and

campesino peoples." "Peoples/Towns with Water, Peoples/Towns with Life!" "Remember, in the Ocotlán Valley there used to be swamps and wetlands. Water was free! Why do they sell it to us now? Well, now they don't see it as a natural resource, but as a commodity. We should regain our love and respect for our water!" Photo credit: by author

Converting the homes of CPUVO members, adobe walls, and municipal buildings into territorial symbols also operates directly on social memory. Historian Pierre Nora coined the term *lieux de memoire* to describe the figurative and material sites which are always open to resignification at the hands of social actors. This phenomenon is most easily seen in physical sites where significant events took place or are remembered, or where boundaries are kept (cemetaries, murals, stone markers, and old fig trees). Paul Connerton also invokes the importance of physical sites as referents for social memory:

> "we conserve our recollections by referring them to the material milieu that surrounds us. It is our social spaces – those which we occupy, which we frequently retrace with our steps, where we always have access, which at each moment we are capable of mentally reconstructing – that we must turn our attention, if our memories are to reappear. Our memories are located within the mental and material spaces of the group" (Connerton 1989).

Following from Nora and Connerton, the main hacienda building, known as the *Casco*, is *a lieu de memoire* par excellence. As historian Richard Flores describes the Alamo site in San Antonio, Texas, the *Casco* is a master symbol representing and reproducing the modernizing legacy of colonialism (Flores 2002). As an enduring symbol of mastery, the *Casco* acts as a monument to large-scale individual land ownership and a reordering of the territory according to industrial logic. These values and logics continue to exist in San José today, making the *Casco* a useful site for resignification. In response, CPUVO opened its office in a remodeled portion of the *Casco* that originally served as the *tienda de raya.* By placing its office in the same physical site where hacienda peons purchased dry goods at a steep markup, CPUVO has claimed it as a center of indigenous/*campesino* resistance.

For Nora, *lieux de memoire* also include the immaterial: he notes commemorations like official moments of silence and other remembrance rituals, as well as chronological systems like the French revolutionary calendar. For example, the 1 year commemoration and protest of the death of Bernardo Vasquez acted as a repository of incorporated social memory, a "site" where movement participants could gather on an annual basis. The liturgical calendar of annual feast days and the overlapping agricultural calendars (e.g. for different varieties of corn) are other examples of cyclical representations of the past and a form of incorporated memory that help to produce a shared sense of indigenous/*campesino* identity and a healthy sense of *territory*.

4. Cultural Narratives and Practices as Incorporated Social Memory

Affirmative cultural practices differ from the oppositional and dual sovereignty strategies listed above, in that they contribute to the production of indigenous/*campesino* subjectivity in non-adversarial terms. While it is true that some cultural institutions in the town of San José (including Day of the Dead rituals, patron saint festivities, and the Catholic chapels themselves) are organized separately by both sides of the conflict, these activities are not themselves oriented toward confrontation or the possession of political power. Instead, members of the anti-mining movement use cultural narratives to interpret their reality (as an inscribed analytics). They also use local customs as incorporated practices to invoke positive social relations and environmental stewardship.[29]

Unlike the historical narratives of struggle described above, cultural narratives in the form of local myths and anecdotes rely more on archetypes and symbolic elements to

[29] As a rule, the Oaxacan state archives do not make reference to cultural narratives or practices. The archives preference legal procedures and conflict narrations, and thus are a useful source of information on the history of opposition. The ethnographic methods of interview and participant observation stand in as the primary source of evidence in this section.

understand the agency of the land/environment as political subject. In an example from Capulalpam, Salvador Aquino Centeno uses local folklore to relate one of the essential reciprocalities of mining: whatever you take out, something must be put back.

> "In conversations with miners, I have identified stories of El Catrín [the Dude]. In the imaginary of indigenous workers, this was a character that represented the owner of the subsoil and its minerals. In boom times, it was El Catrín who allowed such high values of gold and silver to be produced; in exchange for the bonanza, he demanded lives" (Aquino-Centeno 2013).

Anthropologist Diane Nelson writes about a similar "enchantment of reality" in Guatemalan indigenous communities, where a *dueño* (owner) or some other malevolent force may demand a tribute of human heads in payment for gold (Nelson 2013). This use of legend is a clear example of an inscribing practice used in Capulalpam—its elements are systematically memorized and retold to provide a vernacular interpretation the cost of mining.[30]

Residents of Maguey Largo and the town San José also use legends to teach about the high cost of mining. One interviewee said "all of those mines have a *Compadre* that works there. You know who the *Compadre* is, right? Well, he's the Devil. The miner signs a contract with him." He went on to say that a large bridge can't be built and a mine will not produce without leaving a few dead behind as payment: "that's the Owner. If you don't give him people, he won't show you the gold. But if you give people, well then, lots of gold." The interviewee also mentioned a story of a golden bell that a farmer struck with his plow, but when he returned to look for the bell, it had disappeared. This was similar to another interviewee's story of a golden calf that appeared to workers deep

[30] As an illustration of the fluidity of inscribed memories, this legend has been reinterpreted in Capulalpam to serve the purposes of the anti-mining movement. According to Aquino, "after over 200 years of exploitation, the community of Calpulalpam collapsed El Catrín, owner of the darkness of the mine … in a dramatic fashion. I recently heard in Calpulalpam that the subsoil belongs to Saint Matthew, the patron saint of Calpulalpam, and not to El Catrín" (Aquino-Centeno 2013).

down in a mine shaft, but each time they tried to reach it, the shaft would cave in over it. This type of story grants a form of agency to the land itself, whether in the form of an owner/devil figure or the receding gold. This is not to say that locals in the San José area interpret their relationship to territory and extraction exclusively in terms of this territorial *cosmovisión*; indeed, for many these may just be old stories. Nevertheless, in their mere prevalence, these cultural narratives serve as potent reminders of the importance of cosmology in the territorial defense movement's politics of contention.

Local customs also serve as reminders of the benefits of healthy environmental stewardship. Mining activities can limit or dismantle the land-based customs of indigenous/*campesino* life. For example, one young man placed communal land use in positive moral terms, while gold mining bore signs of vice:

> "Personally, I like nature. In one place where they built the [tailings] dam we used to go and hunt rabbits every Holy Week. There were a lot of rabbits, and my parents and grandparents went every Holy Week. The whole town. I get to the top of the hill to see it now and it makes me sad to remember, because now it's fenced in. The dam is there now; they destroyed it all. To get gold out? I'd rather have my piece of land, and my slice of nature."

The communal practice of rabbit hunting is just one incorporated form of social memory. Another interviewee from Oaxaca who lived for some time near San José said,

> "They retain the [indigenous] tradition of political organizing, of how to grow food, how to cook, for day of the dead. They are very fulfilled by this tradition of the Dead, and the traditional procession. They said that for them, it represents the dead townspeople coming back to visit them."

As noted earlier, everyday collective rituals (farming, celebration, decision-making, service, and environmental stewardship) could also be described as *infrapolitics*. (Scott 1990: 200) These affirmative practices are a type of quiet resistance because they

reaffirm communal life as the basis of an indigenous/*campesino* identity which fundamentally rejects neo-extractivism.

5. INDIGENOUS LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION AS RE-MEMBERING

Perhaps because of historical racism towards indigenous identities or internalized colonialism systematized through hacienda practices, residents of the San José area rarely call themselves indigenous. This is reminiscent of how cultural studies scholar Luis Urrieta describes his home town in Michoacán:

> "Intergroup oppression, different degrees of internalized racism and self-hate, and socioeconomic differences do exist in small pueblos and this one is not an exception. To be "more Indian" was equated with being poor or darker, whereas to be "less Indian" or to be mestizo was equated with owning more land, being better off economically, and having lighter skin" (Urrieta 2013: 155).

As one form of resistance to this ethnic discrimination, language revitalization has been proposed by CPUVO leadership as a way to rebuild indigenous/*campesino* identity in spite of this cultural repression. For writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o,

> "Memory resides in language and is clarified by language… the imperialist west subjected the rest of the world to its memory through a vast naming system. It planted its memory on our landscape" (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o 2009).

A number of elderly residents in San José and Maguey Largo still speak Zapoteco, if reluctantly. The 90 year old *versador* related that in the time of his parents, many families farther up in the valley spoke only *idioma* (indigenous language), while others spoke only Spanish. Now he fears it has been lost, because he and others did not teach their children. Another *tio* made similar references to losing the language of his parents. One anti-mine leader spoke of her hopes to begin an educational program to rescue the language locally. Her use of the term *rescue*, and the *tío's* mention of lost language are indirect references to local indigenous roots.

One Oaxacan-based movement member was troubled by this unspoken indigeneity:

> "The problem with San José is there is no identity. They were formed from the mine belonging to the hacienda owners…The contracted people from all around to work in the mine, and people from all over live there. And that is why they don't have a backstory… they don't have an identity of a cultural past. They say, 'we're mestizos.'"

There are clear advantages to riding the identitarian fence, however. As indirect discourse, avoiding the indigenous label can protect locals from direct challenges to their authenticity, or conversely, from discrimination or political cooptation. Several anti-mine organizers have been killed in the struggle, condemned for the symbolic weight of their rhetoric as much as for the material threat they pose to the mine. Rather than adopt a coherent and legible claim of indigenous identity, local organizers and their supporters create a blended indigenous/*campesino* subjectivity.

The hacienda, the state, and now the Fortuna Mine have forced the indigenous and *campesino* subjectivities of San José to recede for many years, but contentious strategies have opened up an opportunity to synthesize natural resource struggle with the identitarian one.

IV. Conclusion

In their declaration dated August 17, 2013, the twelve communities and ten NGOs attending the Forum in Magdalena Teitipac announced:

> "Against this extractivist model, we define the weaving of our resistances as the strengthening of our community structures such as assemblies, community authorities, control of communal territory, and strengthening our historical memory. The time when the government represented absolute power is a thing of the past. A new relationship with the government is necessary, where indigenous peoples decide on the future of their territories…. We have the right to say NO to imposed development and to define our forms of economic, social, political, and cultural production" ("Declaration of the First Regional Forum on Mining and Its Impacts on Indigenous Communities" 2013)

Similar to the joint declaration produced at the January *encuentro* in Capulalpam, these statements neatly summarize the dual dispositions of opposition and affirmation making up the contentious politics in the territorial defense movement. The assembled communities and organizations declare "no" to state government dominance and to development that is imposed on them from outside actors. They also declare "yes" to their own community structures and to the right of self-determination.

If political domination is what these indigenous and *campesino* communities have come to expect from the state, then contention is a viable alternative to conventional politics. If neo-extractivism is a process of dispossession by transnational corporations under the watchful eye of that state, then oppositional strategies will target those corporations, as well as their host states and shareholders. True to the itinerary of emancipation, the endgame of anti-extractivist opposition is a definitive end to the capitalist mode of production as a form of neo-colonialism. Still, advancing on these radical principles does not preclude all use of natural resources. This is especially true considering the material needs of communities, which much be addressed through the process of developing alternatives to neo-extractivism. Assuming they retain the tenets of

their shared declaration, when communities decide to pursue resource extraction (for the purpose of material and economic survival, perhaps in the form of a gravel mine or sawmill as in the case of Capulalpam), it will be small-scale, community-led, ecologically sustainable, and done in recognition of the interconnectedness of humans and the land they live on. Instead of large-scale extraction, this community-based resource use would fall under what Eduardo Gudynas calls *indispensable extractivism*. Indispensable resource extraction would limit itself only to what was necessary for human wellbeing, conceived as an alternative to development that is "decoupled from economic growth" as a fundamental tenet of capitalism. (Gudynas 2011: 392–393)

What resolves from the "no" of the Oaxacan territorial defense movement is a refusal to be dominated by the State and by capitalism, or to adopt their priorities. As we have seen, this refusal is not only a discursive one—the movement goes beyond declarations to take frequent action in the form of protests, occupations, marches, and confrontations as opportunities present themselves. However, the oppositional aspect of anti-extractivism also opens a space for affirmative politics to complete the circle of emancipation. For writer John Holloway,

> "The No is backed by an other-doing. This is the dignity that can fill the cracks created by refusal. The original No then is not a closure, but an opening to a different activity, the threshold of a counter-world with a different logic and a different language" (Holloway 2010: 19)

For the broader Oaxacan territorial defense movement, "other-doing" takes the form of affirmative politics. The constructive processes enacted through forums, *encuentros*, and *usos y costumbres* are the building blocks of a hybrid form of civility based in indigenous traditions and western post-structuralism. In place of land title, surface rights, and subsoil concessions held by hacienda owners and foreign corporations, indigenous and *campesino* communities direct the use of their own resources on the basis

of collective wellbeing and a healthy relationship with territory. This relationship is founded on a type of commons, both social and ecological.

Taken together, the "no" and the "yes," the oppositional and affirmative dispositions gesture toward the process of emancipation described by Raquel Gutierrez:

> "not as a set of explicit and systematic objectives to achieve, but rather as a difficult, ambivalent, and often contradictory itinerary or path. This path involves the efforts of multiple groups, associations, bodies, and collectives… to confront and evade the political and economic subordination that emanates from the established order" (Gutiérrez 2012: 54).

This emancipation is not a utopian project that promises to resolve internal conflict under a single unanimous voice. In this sense, the experience of the anti-mining movement in San José is a helpful example for other communities involved in processes of emancipation. As a heterogeneous community struggling against its own dissolution under historical colonialism, it has been forced to acknowledge its *naturaleza abigarrada* (checkered nature). In claiming a complex indigenous/*campesino* identity, CPUVO and its members have happened upon a way to claim its territory and a sense of unity without the same advantages of communities like Capulalpam and Magdalena Teitipac. As political scientist Luis Tapia intoned,

> "it is necessary to create new material structures that allow us to have autonomy in the way we define ourselves, to live a multiple and changing identity, and also to think with autonomy about what is happening in the region and in the world" (Negri et al. 2008: 43)

San José has a long history of colonization which has attempted to convert its heterogeneity—something every community has—into a type of rootlessness. This symbolic destruction has in turn paved the way for physical destruction in the form of immoderate resource extraction. Locals have nonetheless fought to construct a meaningful identity out of their history of anti-colonial and class struggle. As a result, the

dismemberment of San José was never absolute; a number of communal traditions and territorial claims continue to be practiced, while sites like the *Casco*, municipal committees, the mine site, and indigenous languages can be resignified, retaken, and regenerated in the cause of emancipation. Meanwhile, San José's history of division is also one of repeated resistance, and movement members preserve their shared memory of struggle through oppositional practices today. These affirmative and oppositional practices are more than just acts; as a potent form of social memory, they are incorporated and inscribed in the shared identity of movement participants. This legacy of "yes" and "no" is foundation of an interpretive structure uniting the movement in San José even in its multiplicity—whether as farmers, *albañiles*, organizers, or *leñateros,* they are not exiled from communal life and political mobilization in defense of their community and territory.

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I was leaning against a short wall in the quiet plaza that morning, right across from the Casco and the shuttered municipal building. As I interviewed a young man who had lost his brother to the violence, I could see the mural that read "Yes to life, no to mining," and the closed doors of the old *tienda de raya*, now offices of CPUVO. I asked him why he supported the anti-mining movement:

> "Gold, silver, or whatever mineral, [it] isn't indispensable for human beings. It's not something you can eat. It's a benefit that maybe some rich person with a lot of money they don't know what to do with would invest it or store up. But [then] it's just for one person. I tell you I'm living here with my piece of land to plant. And I know that below it there's probably gold. I know my land is producing food to eat, and so I think I'll probably stick with my land…. We can get ahead here. We have land, and so we have what can sustain us."

The young man was clear about the difference he saw between the land he could use and look after, and the minerals he might find underneath it. Like the joint declarations, his short statement contains a "no" (to gold/silver) and a "yes" (to producing food on the land). He talked about taking his young children out to experience the beauty of *el campo* (the countryside) and to learn about traditional farming. It is a trickier proposition for a mine worker to take his or her children to learn about heavy machinery and subterranean tunnels hundreds of meters below the surface. The difference between farming and mining is a visceral one, and the young man's love of the countryside fits well with his understanding of the past and his hopes for his children in the future.

The view is bleak in San José, though. Fortuna Silver has invested millions of dollars in its state-of-the-art gold and silver mine, where it expects to extract nearly a billion dollars' worth of precious metal—775 tons of silver and 6.7 tons of gold, in their most recent estimate (Chapman and Kelly 2013b: 16). Every inch of the municipality—and then quite a bit more—is included in the subsoil concession that Fortuna has purchased, and each day the company pulls out an average of 1,800 pounds of rock from directly underneath the town. With the discovery of the Bonanza Vein, it plans to dig even deeper, hundreds of meters down, to extract gold and silver from the new strike.

Ongoing tensions, the constant threat of violence, and a lack of economic alternatives for locals leave little room for optimism. Yet again and again over time, contestation has risen to oppose attempts to dismember the people and the land they live on. Looking at the historical origins of San José's dismemberment and the repeated attempts to restore or redefine it along emancipatory lines, this research project offers one case study in the difficulty of changing the world using only the historical, social, material, and political tools that are available in a given place and time. It shows one set

of strategies designed to build power and resist domination, not to take power or counter it with a different form of domination.

Even with broader movement support, CPUVO has not succeeded in taking control of the municipal government, and it has not stopped the San José mine project from advancing. The lives of its main organizers remain in danger. Still, they have made important strides in rebuilding community in spite of historical and current-day processes of dismemberment. Social memory plays an important role by reminding movement participants that the desire to oppose domination is nothing new; their ancestors fought as they do now. Because memory helps to constitute those doing the remembering, it also plays a key role in establishing a shared identity as indigenous/*campesinos* united by resistance.

As San José movement members and their allies look ahead to months and years of continued struggle, they will invoke the shared memory of fighters like Tereso Hernandez, Vidal Porras, Leandro Luis, Bernardo Mendez, and Bernardo Vasquez. Together, they will remember how their own oppositional experiences manifested the courage and danger that their ongoing struggle shares with those times of legend. They will also practice farming, *tequio*, *cargos*, celebrations, and assemblies as they rebuild the structures that have helped other towns unite against mining. These recollections and memory practices assure that over time, CPUVO and its allies will either become strong enough to stop the mine or grow resilient enough to thrive beyond its negative social and ecological impacts.

Appendices

1. TIMELINE OF SAN JOSÉ DEL PROGRESO *EJIDO*[31]

November 4, 1916:	Residents of the San José Lagarzona Hacienda request granting of lands for creating an *ejido*.
August 30, 1917:	The Federal Executive cancels land grant because of lack of legal status. The process is halted until this status is obtained.
September 22, 1917:	Local government issues Decree 271 and establishes a township with the name Progreso out of the San José Lagarzona Hacienda and the legal status difficulty is remedied.
October 8, 1917:	Land grant is again requested from State Governor.
December 26, 1917:	Decree 271 is abolished and Decree 318 is issued, giving the population the category of Hacienda.
April 7, 1925:	The General Government Secretary informed that the San José La Garzona population bore the category of Congregation, and the land grant process is continued
March 31, 1922:	The local agrarian commission offers a proposal that the population be given 1,528 hectares, 15 areas, and 25 centiares.
May 11, 1925:	The Governor of the State of Oaxaca accepts the proposal made by the local agrarian commission.
November 17, 1926:	María Mimiaga de Santibañez, requests the land grant not be given to the peons, and instead she would donate 829 hectares to them. This proposal was rejected by the National Agrarian Commission for being against the interests of the petitioners.
December 15, 1926:	By decree on this date, the population named San José la Garzona was raised to township category with the name Progreso, published in the Official State Newspaper on January 1, 1927.

[31] Adapted from unpublished document titled *Agrarian Summary for the San Jose del Progreso Ejido*, Oaxacan Collective in Defense of Territory 2012.

March 31, 1927:	The town of San José la Garzona is granted 1,512 hectares of land by president Plutarco Elias Calles.
May 24, 1927:	The ranted land is officially turned over, with the corresponding finalized map.
August 30, 1934:	Residents of San José Progreso request an extension of the *ejido* from the state governor.
September 22, 1934:	The Combined Agrarian Commission published the initiation of this transaction in the Official State Newspaper.
March 30, 1936:	The state governor issued a ruling granting an extension of 2,500 hectares taking up the remaining land of the Hacienda de San José Lagarzona, property of María Mimiaga Santibañez.
August 26, 1936:	Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas grants the extension of 3,434-32 hectares to San José Progreso.
November 8, 1936:	The granted extension is officially turned over San José Progreso.

2. TIMELINE OF CURRENT MINE CONFLICT[32]

March 16, 2009: Mine entrance taken over by 250 citizens of the San José Municipality and Magdalena Ocotlán.

March 20, 2009: Federal police, national defense, and state police units begin an operation to remove 17 tons of explosives from the mine.

March 21, 2009: Then municipal president of San José, Óscar Venancio Martínez, uses a firearm to threaten the mobilization in front of the mining company site.

April 19, 2009: Communities protest on the Ocotlan-Ejutla highway, state government agrees to dialogue with CPUVO.

May 6, 2009: Approximately 1,200 federal and state police officers evict protesters. Several people are injured and 22 arrested during this operation.

April 5, 2010: Resignation of *ejido* commissioner.

May-Nov., 2010: *Ejido* members begin the process of naming a new *ejido* commissioner but the Agrarian Bureau does not allow the vote, arguing that the appropriate conditions do not exist for calling an *ejido* assembly.

June 19, 2010: Municipal President Óscar Venancio Martínez and Health Counselor Félix Misael Hernández are murdered during a confrontation in the municipal agency of El Cuajilote. Nine members of CPUVO are later arrested. The same day, a local priest active in the anti-mining effort is kidnapped, beaten, and held under the charge of "mastermind" of the murder.

July-Dec., 2010: Municipal electoral process in San José. CPUVO denounces violations during the process due to the involvement of the mining company in the elections.

January 1, 2011: After the elected municipal authorities from the pro-mining side assume office, members of the slate of candidates loyal to CPUVO occupy the municipal building and demand the nullification of the election results.

32 Justice for San Jose Report, Oaxacan Collective in Defense of Territory 2013

September, 2011: The Fortuna Silver Mines Company begins operations, processing an average quantity of 1000 tons of rock material per day.

January 18, 2012: There is a confrontation in the county seat of San José, where Bernardo Méndez Vásquez is mortally wounded and a young woman is wounded in the leg, by municipal police and other armed groups.

January 25, 2012: Members of CPUVO go to Mexico City to hold a protest in front of the Canadian embassy to denounce the violence generated by the mining project in the community.

March 15, 2012: At approximately 9:30 pm, Bernardo Vásquez Sánchez is murdered in an ambush in Santa Lucia Ocotlán, and two relatives traveling with him, both members of CPUVO, are injured.

March 21, 2012: CPUVO members and Mexican human rights organizations hold a protest in front of the Canadian embassy in Mexico City and at the Canadian Consulate in Oaxaca City to denounce the involvement of Fortuna Silver in the murders of human rights defenders.

June 16, 2012: Members of CPUVO are again attacked by members of the municipal government of San José.

October 22, 2012: A construction project to bring water from the Municipality of Ocotlán to mine facilities is begun in the municipality of Magdalena Ocotlán. This project is guarded by state police and the Auxiliary Banking, Industrial, and Commercial Police (PABIC, by its initials in Spanish). Nearly 140 people from San José and Magdalena Ocotlán (including the municipal president of Magdalena) arrive to demand permits for the construction project. Nevertheless, federal and state authorities give no answer and the project is completed that very day.

November, 2012: The Municipal President of San José, Alberto Mauro Sánchez Muñoz, threatens the brothers of Bernardo Vásquez Sánchez at the Santa Lucía crossroads of the Ocotlán-San José highway.

Nov. 19-21, 2012: The Justice for San José Civilian Observation Mission is held, later denouncing threats and harassment by municipal authorities during its activities.

March 15, 2013: In commemoration of the first anniversary of the murder of Bernardo Vásquez, CPUVO holds a symbolic protest in front of the mine facility. An armed group arrives and fires guns above the heads of

protesters. Judicial Police prevents this group from approaching CPUVO members and human rights observers present.

May 16, 2013: Death threats are found at the “la Zanja” site against C. Pedro Martínez and his family with the following messages: “YOU SHOULD HAVE NEVER TALKED BAD ABOUT THE PRESIDENT HE DOES NOT FORGIVE” “WE ARE WARNING YOU YOU OR YOUR FAMILY ARE NEXT AFTER BERNARDO.”

3. INTERVIEW AND ARCHIVE TABLES

Table 1. Table of Interviews

Interview Number	Interviewee Code	Length	Interview Date	Location
1	RR1	47 min	2-Jul	Oax
2	RR2	2 hrs 4 min	3-Jul	Oax
3	RR3	1 hr 34 min	6-Jul	SJP
4	RR4	1 hr	6-Jul	SJP
5	RR5	2 hrs 1 min	4-Aug	SJP
6	RR6.1	1 hr 6 min	4-Aug	ML
7	RR6.2	1 hr 19 min	5-Aug	ML
8	RR6.3	51 min	6-Aug	ML
9	RR7	1 hr 44 min	5-Aug	ML
10	RR8	44 min	5-Aug	ML
11	RR9	1 hr 32 min	7-Aug	ML
12	RR10	40 min	7-Aug	ML
13	RR11	55 min	8-Aug	ML
14	RR12	41 min	14-Aug	SJP
15	RR13	1 hr 36 min	14-Aug	SJP
16	RR14	41 min	14-Aug	SJP
17	RR15	1 hr 1 min	14-Aug	SJP
18	RR16	1 hr 48 min	15-Aug	ML

Project interviews listed by interviewee code, length of interview, date, and location. Each numbered code is assigned to a separate individual. All interviews were held during the summer of 2013. Oax = Oaxaca City. SJP = San José. ML = Maguey Largo

Table 2. Table of Archival Sources

List of all documents related to San José (formerly San José Lagarzona) found in the General Archives of the State of Oaxaca, by Series Number.

Series Number	File	Record	Pages	Year	Description
Series II (Administrative Files and Documents)	4	1	?	?	A bound sheaf of large-format paper listing all *ejido*s in Oaxaca and date of allocation (page 20 contains San José, Magdalena Ocotlán, and Lagarzona)
		16	17	1917	Report on an official visit to the Hacienda San José Lagarzona
		34	8	1918	List of communities in the state that have sought restoration or removal of *ejido*s
	5	15	2	1921	List of agrarian executive committees in different state municipalities
	6	5	16	1925	List of state towns that have received allocation, restoration, or extension of *ejido*s
	6	14	5	1923	List of towns that are in the process of requesting *ejido* lands
	7	7	44	1926	Record regarding surrender of town *ejido*
	11	12	13	1936	List of *ejido*s making up state *ejido* zones
	16	4	9	1939	List of existing *ejido*s in the state and number of beneficiaries
	33	4	7	1953	Notices related to the livestock census of the municipalities of Ocotlán
	41	1	321	1917-1966	List of *ejido*s in the State of Oaxaca
	42	1	36	1954-1964	Documentation of the submission of agrarian rights certification
Series IV (Problems Related to Water)	8	55	1	1963	*Ejido* members in this location requesting an inspection of a dam they are building
Series X (Justice)	28	5 (873)	70	1917	Related to the conflict over planting and harvesting corn

					between locals in San José Lagarzona
		6 (874)	7	1917	Municipal authority requests authorization to plant crops on the property of Mr. Mimiaga y Camacho
		7 (875)	55	1917	Difficulties between locals and administration of the Hacienda San José Lagarzona
		12 (880)	6	1922	Request to remove the Spaniard Manuel Romano due to abuses and injustices
		18 (886)	18	1924	Regarding the conflict between C Manuel Maria Mimiaga y Camacho and sharecroppers
		21 (889)	38	1924	Concepción de la Lanza, widow of Mimiaga, issues complaint against locals in San José Lagarzona due to abuses
	29	6 (896)	67	1925	Injunction requested Manuel Maria Mimiaga y Camacho against the actions of this state government commission
		7 (897)	50	1925	Regarding the injunction requested by Concepción de la Lanza, regarding allocation of *ejido*
	30	19 (922)	6	1928	Injunction requested by Luz Gomez de S Trapaga regarding *ejido* allocations
	30 (31)	1	12	1928	Regarding the injunction by Concepción de la Lanza, widow of Mimiaga, against the actions of the agrarian authority on the allocation of *ejido*s
	31	4 (931)	3	1929	Regarding the complaint against Juan Gopar, ex-president of CPA, who misused *ejido* funds
		49 (975)	2	1936	Residents of San José seek justice and clarification regarding the murder of several *ejido* members
Series XI (Agrarian	13	29	18	1923	Minutes taken for the election of

Organizing)		(2243)			members of the *ejido* administrative committee (Magdalena, Ocot.)
		36 (2250)	14	1929	Regarding the change of *ejido* authorities (San José)
		39 (2253)	4	1930	Regarding the election of executive committee members (La Garzona)
		45 (2259)	1	1935	Regarding conflicts arising between agitators and Agrarian Groups (Oaxaca)
		52 (2266)	2	1936	Regarding the first Conference of *Ejido* Partners (Oax)
Series XII (Archive of Towns)	1126	2 (3057)	1847	1922	Regarding the agrarian record of the town of Magdalena, Ocotlán
	1130	1 (3065)	215	1928-1937	Agrarian record of the town of San José Lagarzona
		2 (3066)	132	1933	Purging of the agrarian census and election of administrative committee (San José) with notebook and sketch

4. Demographic Information for San José del Progreso Municipality

San José is located on the southern edge of the Central Valley region of Oaxaca, in southern Mexico. It lies 30 miles south of Oaxaca City and just east of Federal Hwy. 175, at the western edge of the Labrador Mountain Range where a number of other mining communities sit.

San José is both municipality and *ejido*, acting as the official seat of both jurisdictions, one administrative and one agrarian. The overlap is not a neat one, and divisions over how they have been divided up, utilized, and subsequently governed are a central element in how residents understand both historical and current relationships of power within and among the communities that make them up. The town itself has approximately 2,500 inhabitants, while the municipality had a population of 6,579 in the 2010 census (INAFED, 2013). The municipality contains the following towns and settlements: La Garzona (~1,500 inhabitants), Maguey Largo (~750 inhabitants), El Porvenir (pop. ~450), El Cuajilote (pop. ~350), Rancho Los Vasquez (pop. ~260), Los Patino (~85), El Jaguey (~60), Camino a la Presa (~30), and Los Diaz (~30) ("Lista de Localidades En El Municipio de San José Del Progreso" 2014)

The *ejido* includes all of the above communities with the exception of La Garzona, which has its own *ejido*, albeit one much smaller in size and was involved in dispute over official boundaries between the two *ejido*s during the field research period

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