An UnderMined Society?

An Ethnographic Study of Social Division and Social Cohesion in Rural Guatemala

Hedda Bowles Sørhus

Master Thesis
Department of Social Anthropology

UNIVERSITY OF OSLO

Spring 2016
An UnderMined Society? An Ethnographic Study of Social Division and Social Cohesion in Rural Guatemala

http://www.duo.uio.no

Trykk: Reprosentralen, Universitetet i Oslo
Abstract

This thesis concerns local resistance caused by conflicting interests between the local population in San Rafael, a small community in Guatemala and the mining company, Tahoe Resources. In San Rafael, the majority are ladino (non-indigenous) peasants. Access to and control over clean water sources to maintain traditional agricultural livelihoods in the area, as well as local empowerment and the right to decide their own development, construct resistance among the inhabitants. This conflict is analyzed according to the locals’ perceptions of landscape and its inherent value which illuminates how they construct social relations accordingly, both between people, and between people and nature.

This thesis illustrates how local resistance attempts to disturb the current power balance between themselves and the mining company, as well as their perception of the government, transnational companies and, the alliances between the latter. This forms the locals’ perception of their place in the world in light of global forces and historical processes which have shaped contemporary Guatemala.

Increasing levels of violence, militarization, criminalization and social disruptions have affected the area since the arrival of the mine El Escobal. I explore how these factors can influence the locals’ livelihood, with regard to social relations, family and other networks, and the locals’ hopes and dreams for the future.

The resistance movements are part of an imagined community, permeating a translocational and global scale. This establishes and reinforces relations, but it also presents a paradox concerning perceptions of masculinity and motivation for resistance that is explored on a micro-level. The empirical data is based on six months’ fieldwork in Guatemala. I lived with a family and participated in their everyday lives and various anti-mining events. My participation in both domestic and public arenas allowed me to obtain a perspective of the situation that illustrates the fluidity of relations, boundaries, as well as power and resistance.
Acknowledgments

Both conducting my fieldwork and writing my thesis could not have been done with out the support and assistance from several important actors. I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to my academic supervisor, Anne-Kathrine Brun Norbye, for valuable insights and commentaries, which continuously inspired me to work harder. Mariel Aguilar-Støen and Anna Sveinsdóttir, thank you for aiding me, before, during and after finished fieldwork. Your help to establish contact in Guatemala made all the difference. I would like to thank my Guatemalan family, who took me in and shared their house and meals with me throughout my time in Guatemala. Being welcomed into a family and taken care of made an unfamiliar place feel like home for an outsider.

Thanks to all my informants who shared valuable information with me. Due to the anonymization process, my Guatemalan family and informants’ names are not mentioned but they are not forgotten. Your assistance, friendship and inspiration made the challenge of fieldwork fun and enlightening. Appreciations are given to all NGOs’ and individual actors I came in contact with. Last but not least, friends, fellow students, University of Oslo, and my Norwegian family; thank you for all your support and assistance. Your continued reading, commentary and insight, then reading again, is most appreciated.
### List of Figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>El Escobal Site Map</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>San Rafael with El Escobal in the background. Dry Season</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>San Rafael with El Escobal in the background. Wet Season</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Local boy climbing up dry riverbed.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Encuentro Continental</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Demonstration in the capital.</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................................. V

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................................... VII

LIST OF FIGURES: ................................................................................................................................... VIII

I INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................................... 1
  Theme and Research Questions............................................................................................................... 1
  My Field ................................................................................................................................................... 4
  Theoretical Approaches to Environmental Conflicts ............................................................................. 7
    Perceiving Landscape .......................................................................................................................... 7
    Access and Restriction – Roots of Environmental Conflicts ............................................................. 9
    Aspiring for the Future ......................................................................................................................... 10
    The Power to Resist ............................................................................................................................ 12
  Constructing Community ....................................................................................................................... 14
  Method – Cultivating Relations by Establishing Familiarity ................................................................ 16
    Ethical Concerns .................................................................................................................................. 19
    Gender in the Field ............................................................................................................................... 21
  Thesis Outline ........................................................................................................................................ 23

II LANDSCAPE: VISUALIZING SOCIETY ............................................................................................... 25
  The Place ................................................................................................................................................ 25
    Rural Zone .......................................................................................................................................... 29
    Topography ....................................................................................................................................... 30
    Climate .............................................................................................................................................. 31
    Demography ..................................................................................................................................... 32
  Agriculture .......................................................................................................................................... 32
    Workers and Owners ......................................................................................................................... 33
  The Church .......................................................................................................................................... 35
  Historical Context – Mine Your Own Business ..................................................................................... 37
    The Guatemalan Civil War – La Violencia ......................................................................................... 38

III WATER: CULTIVATING RESISTANCE .............................................................................................. 41
  Farming for the Future ........................................................................................................................... 43
  Perceptions of Time ............................................................................................................................... 45
  Landscapes of Resistance ..................................................................................................................... 46
  Nacimientos – Source of Life ............................................................................................................ 48
    Excavating and Processing Minerals ................................................................................................. 49
  Buying Compliance – Gift Giving ......................................................................................................... 52
  Tracing Water – A Fieldtrip with MadreSelva ..................................................................................... 52
  The Right to Choose .............................................................................................................................. 57
    Access to Information ......................................................................................................................... 57
    The Ability to Organize ....................................................................................................................... 58
    The Power to React ............................................................................................................................ 58
  Local Perceptions of the Need for Precious Metals ............................................................................. 60
  Concluding Remarks ............................................................................................................................ 63

IV POLITICS: ORGANIZING DEFIANCE ............................................................................................... 65
  Governing Territory, Controlling Resources ........................................................................................ 68
  Encuentro Continental .......................................................................................................................... 69
  Locations ............................................................................................................................................. 76
  Rural versus Urban ............................................................................................................................... 79
  Unification – Centered Forces .............................................................................................................. 81
  Localized Events within Globalized Settings ....................................................................................... 83
  Concluding Remarks ............................................................................................................................ 86
Figure 1. El Escobal Site Map (Tahoe Resources, 2014)
Introduction

“Peasant or urban dweller? The damage is equal. We’re talking about resources, but it’s not resources, it’s property.”1 “What things cost doesn’t matter. How much does a notebook cost? Not important. What’s important is what it means to you.” During an international anti-mining event, Raúl from the Guatemalan countryside highlights the sentimental and functional value certain substances have. According to my informants, the value of the soil cannot be measured in monetary terms. The value emerges from the soil’s ability to provide and sustain human life. “The earth is our mother, it has no price!”2

***

Theme and Research Questions

This thesis explores environmental and social consequences of large-scale mining in small-scale societies, pursuing different perspectives of social conflicts. Social conflicts caused by mining in agricultural landscape are connected to perceptions of landscape and nature, access to natural resources, as well as power and resistance. I present different challenges associated with the mining industry in the Guatemalan countryside, originating from incompatible interests. Disputes over territory and resources between local populations and mining companies cause conflicts of interest regarding access and control over local water sources. The locals are concerned with environmental degradation that may cause irreversible damage to the ecosystem of the area. I conducted my fieldwork in an agricultural area where the majority of the inhabitants are peasants. I utilize the term peasants rather than farmers to illustrate the degree of cultivation, and the socio-economic status of those residing in the area (Wolf, 1966). The term peasant is elaborated further on (chapter two).

Although I focus on a local conflict, it is useful to see this conflict in light of larger processes. This warrants a short introduction to globalization processes, to contextualize and construct a wide perspective which does my narrow focus

---

1 “Campesino o urbano? El daño es igual. Estamos hablando sobre recursos, pero no es recursos, es
2 “La tierra es madre, no tiene precio!”
justice. The terms globalization, boundaries, development and modernization are extensively explored subjects within anthropology (see Hylland Eriksen, 2008, 2010, Leys, 2005, Barth, 1999, Escobar, 1991, 1995, Mosse, 2005, Moore, 1999). Hylland Eriksen (2010) suggests that globalization has a dual effect, both shrinking and expanding the world simultaneously. Through constructing sets of common denominators as well as constructions of local uniqueness, the world is undergoing a dialectical negation. This has created an increasing awareness and demand for self-determination, local governance and power among smaller nations or marginalized peoples (Eriksen, 2010). Moore (1999) indicates that impositions of large-scale processes on small-scale societies underline the demand to explore local ethnography within a globalized world (see also Tsing, 2002). A rising demand for minerals has facilitated an expanding extractive industry (Kaya, 2001). This has created social, political and environmental challenges and aspirations amongst local populations in close proximity to such large-scale projects which have resulted in a widespread network of resistance movements.

I aim to demonstrate that environmental and social conflicts construct globalized resistance movements assisted by translocational networks. Moore argues that as globalization has constructed more culturally diverse places, there has been an increase in transnational and translocational relations in the process (1999:8). This indicates that as the boundaries become more fluid, the threshold for interaction becomes lower, establishing interaction across locations, thereby constructing translocational relations. The resistance movements function as a means to express disapproval of mining in rural residential areas. Other ethnographic fieldworks (Kirsch 2006, 2014, West, 2006) illustrate that opposition to the extractive industry is not a unique, but rather a widespread phenomenon that imposes strains on local society. Amongst the Yonggom people in Papua New Guinea (see Kirsch, 2006), the locals experienced environmental degradation, caused by the OK Tedi mine’s pollution. International acknowledgment of environmental degradation in mining areas (Kirsch, 2006), and a widespread network of resistance movements in other locations enables swift reaction. The reactions I explore encompass the emergence of resistance
movements and their mode of operation through analyzing the motivation behind the resistance, thus explaining its existence.

The purpose of this thesis is to account for local changes and perceptions of lived life on a local scale. However, considering that local processes are closely tied to global processes, there is a demand to obtain a wide perspective. West (2006) argues that the Gimi people from Papua New Guinea have, as a result of resource extraction where they reside, become transnational. West thereby sheds light on the interconnection between the local and global (see also Hylland Eriksen, 2010). Social and ecological life transpires in a transnational nature caused by the connections between transnational extractive companies and their mode of extraction occurring on the Gimi people’s territory. This connection has constructed a transnational nature, caused by international extraction on national soil (West, 2006).

In relation to global processes, perceptions of the locals’ own place in the world are formed. I attempt to illustrate that resistance against mining is constructed from different perceptions and attitudes towards landscape, and management. Some locals demand removal of the mine due to loss of water and deteriorating landscape, whilst others disapprove of the management and asymmetrical distribution of resources. Although much research aims to explore conflicts concerning resource control (West, 2006, Kirsch, 2006, 2014, Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch, 2015, Martinez-Alier, 2001, Yagenova, 2012, Zarsky and Stanley, 2011), in Guatemala, most research explores conflicts transpiring on indigenous territory (Aguilar-Støen, 2015). I conducted my fieldwork in Ladino territory (non-indigenous population) in the southeast of Guatemala. This area is referred to as the “Forgotten East” (Aguilar-Støen, 2012:28), as a result of the focus on conflicts in the northern highlands where the Mayan people reside. This has drawn attention from conflicts impacting the ladino population, thereby generating a knowledge gap. This highlights the importance and value of conducting long-term ethnographic fieldwork in the southeast, and facilitates a

---

3 The indigenous people Xinca also reside in the area, though not in my village and are therefore not accounted for.
wider perspective of the current social and environmental movements presently transpiring in Guatemala.

**My Field**

I conducted my fieldwork in San Rafael, a village in the southeast of Guatemala. San Rafael is located adjacent to the industrial silver mine *El Escobal*, owned by Canadian Tahoe Resources and operated by the subsidiary company Minera San Rafael (Tahoe Resources, 2014). In 2007, the discovery of a high-grade silver ore resulted in the construction of the industrial mine *El Escobal* in 2011 (CIEL, 2015). *El Escobal* is the third largest silver mine in the world. In 2014 the mine extracted 3,500 tons per day. The goal is to increase production rate to 4,500 tons per day. The *El Escobal* vein deposit is a mixture of silver, gold, lead and zinc (Tahoe Resources, 2014). An estimation of approximately 63% of the revenue of the mineral extraction is transferred out of the country back to the company, whilst 37% is redistributed through taxes, royalties, fees, salary and production costs in Guatemala (Laudeman and Montgomery, 2012).

Since the emergence of *El Escobal*, San Rafael and the surrounding areas have been divided into two opposing factions. Those in favor of the mine support the mine’s operation due to financial gain, with an increase in consumption and purchasing power that benefits stores and restaurants, and some locals gain employment, which, in turn, can strengthen the local economy. However, this can create social fragmentation according to who gains employment and thus constructs divisions in society. Those in opposition base their resistance on environmental claims and fear of a depleted ecosystem. Environmental hazards posed by mining can leave a depleted habitat with irreversible damages decreasing the possibility of agricultural livelihoods for future generations (Ålmås, 2016, personal communication). The local peasants rely on natural resources to make a living. They aim to maintain collective relations through a continuation of their social and cultural heritage manifested in the landscape.
“I refuse to leave this place because of the mine. My family is here, my place is here,” Mario tells me. Mario lives in a small society between San Rafael and the neighboring town Mataquesucintla with his family. He owns a vegetable store, but during the harvesting season he closes his shop and works in the coffee nurseries (viveros). These emotions of connections to the landscape were mentioned to me several times during my time in San Rafael. My informants have, through living in the area over generations, constructed both social and ecological relations (see Ingold, 2000) to their land. Therefore, they refuse to move to other parts of the country. They wish to proceed with their cultural traditions and livelihood in San Rafael.

Limitations imposed on local populations’ natural resources can create repercussions for the survival of different livelihoods (Kalland and Rønnow, 2001). Since the construction of the mine, there have been occurrences of pollution of water and soil, and several water sources (nacimientos) have gone dry due to the mine’s tunnel excavations in the area. In the center of the municipality of San Rafael there is running water, between five in the morning until noon. On occasion the water was cut off earlier in the day with no prior warning. Each household had a water basin which was filled every day in the morning. The smaller surrounding communities do not have running water and depend on the nacimientos that run from the hills for their daily water usage, both for irrigation and consumption. The environmental problem of access and contamination of water creates a foundation for opposition. I use this problem to explain the background for the conflict between the locals and the mining company.

Utilization and management of natural resources is therefore a source of conflict in San Rafael. Ecological distribution conflicts often arise from different standards of valuation, leading to conflicting interests concerning control and access of natural resources (Martinez-Alier, 2001). This standard of valuation can be distinguished between two concepts of value; exchange value– a common denominator of commodities that constructs a sense of worth in comparison with another, and use-value. This is, according to Ingold, the distinction that
constructs the framework from which we perceive the environment we inhabit (Ingold, 2000). The locals regard their territory according to *use-value*, through its farming capabilities, which necessitates water, whilst Tahoe Resources considers the territory according to *exchange-value*, through its ability to extract minerals for monetary exchange. Opposition based on environmental claims, can therefore be regarded as an expression of claims for governance and autonomy to gain control over the inherent value of the landscape as well as its resources.

Water has become an increasingly scarce resource. For some, water can be perceived as a commodity, for others, water is a part of nature (Stensrud, 2016). It can be argued that the different perceptions of water depend on people’s involvement with nature, as well as ecological, social and cultural connotations. As Stensrud (2016) observed in Peru, and as I have observed in Guatemala, water is *relational*. Stensrud writes, “water is not an abstract resource that can be separated from the relational world in which it partakes” (2016:93-4). This emphasizes the relations that are constructed between humans and nature in their coexistence and interaction. Through consubstantiality, land becomes landscape (see Ingold, 2000). This indicates a different standard of valuation according to *use-value* and *exchange-value*.

This different standard of valuation can be perceived as a result of increasing demands for minerals worldwide (Kaya, 2001). This has led to a trend in reshaping the countryside and attempt to modernize rural areas and stimulate development. Global demands thus create the foundation for rural development in the interest of global aspirations. This is why local processes should be explored within the context of global processes (Tsing, 2002). Wolf (1966) argues that an anthropological interest in rural populations has increased in recent years. The stage has moved from isolated communities to rural villages in relation to other societies. This illustrates interaction and communication, as well as an effect of globalization. Wolf (1966) and Tsing (2002) imply that it is not sufficient to explore a village alone, and emphasize the need to include outside forces and global processes. Following this perspective, I investigate local circumstances in relation to global processes, thus following West’s (2006)
assumption of the construction of transnational identities. Researching local responses to impacts of large-scale processes on communities is vital to comprehend the current experiences of disempowerment and emerging and merging identities. This can be perceived as a response to the changed conditions in the world we inhabit on a global scale (Moore, 1999).

**Theoretical Approaches to Environmental Conflicts**

Three aspects of social and environmental conflicts are discussed in this thesis: 1) access and control of local water supplies, 2) local governance and 3) social consequences associated with mining resistance. The circumstances unraveling in San Rafael and the surrounding area necessitate an introduction to different perspectives of local connections to the landscape in which the local population lives. This explains the environmental conflict caused by incompatible interests.

*Perceiving Landscape*

Landscape can have different meanings to different people. For Ingold (2000), landscape is a testimony of lived life, emphasizing the necessity to move beyond the concept of landscape as a neutral space of human beings’ passage of time. Landscape is thus both an ecological, as well as a cultural area in which human beings’ dwell (Ingold, 2000). Fischer (2012) argues that, from a scientific perspective, landscape is fashioned through physical interaction between humans and nature. Landscape is thus constructed. It does not simply exist; it is “human work on nature” (Fischer, 2012:322). Both Ingold’s and Fischer’s perspectives follow an interaction mode of engagement in the creation of landscape. This constructs and explains, the existence of landscape. However, Fischer argues that the meaning of landscape is both regarded as shaped by nature, following a subjective-aestheticized perspective of landscape and, cultural and particular connotation is constructed by physical engagement (Fischer, 2012). The latter, follows Ingold’s perception of landscape through human-nature interaction and emotional connotation. This perspective is henceforth utilized to explore local resistance rooted in both emotional attachment and active engagement through cultivation, thus transforming land,
into landscape. Ingold calls this “dwelling” (Ingold, 2000:5), which explains the practitioner position within the surroundings according to the context of active engagement. This perception of the landscape derives from the activities of engagement.

Perceptions of landscape should be explored in accordance with the concept of place. Basso (1996) suggests that senses of place are complex. Place is often taken for granted, and it is not until place is dispossessed, challenged or contested that one contemplates on this complexity. The local communities near the mine are currently undergoing such a sensation of dispossession. Thus, their perception of their landscape is contested and made more complex. When places are threatened, one realizes one’s own attachment to places (Basso, 1996). The effects of the mine’s presence has resulted in a new perception of the local’s life worlds, and caused an emerging form of resistance, as an answer to the threat of dispossession. Landscape is thus both the visual and the physical structures of hills, trees and water and, cognitive construction through social and historical interaction (Basso, 1996).

There are different perceptions of well-being across cultures through different modes of engagement (Fischer, 2014). For the locals’ in San Rafael well-being depends on the viability of the surrounding landscape. The surrounding landscape implies livelihood, family ties and preservation which, for them, represent a good life. For the mining company the landscape implies value rooted in extraction. Ingold’s perspective of dwelling thus creates a comprehension of the locals’ sentimental value ascribed to the landscape. This perspective enables an understanding of landscape as a persistent record of lived life that represents a chronicle of past generations dwelling in the area (Ingold, 2000). To ensure the continued practice of their livelihoods, and the viability of the landscape for future peasants, the locals struggle to remove the mining industry from the area.

By exploring the local population’s connection to their land, control and access to natural resources in the environment they inhabit represent more than just
persistence, they represent continuance. By interacting with the environment relations are formed - not only between human beings, but also between nature and human beings. Landscape is not simply land or nature, landscape is defined through its symbolic value, “it is the world as it is known to those who dwell therein” (Ingold, 2000:193).

Access and Restriction – Roots of Environmental Conflicts
Access to natural resources entails use and acquisition of resources and the benefits emerging from its utilization. Aguilar-Støen (2012) argues that access is negotiated through social relations and is fundamental to transform people’s livelihoods. Access thus becomes a key concept throughout this thesis and is divided between three aspects of access: 1) access to natural resources, 2) access to power through local governance and 3) access facilitated through social relations. However, where there is access, there is restriction. The dichotomous relationship between access and restriction can explain the incompatible interests between mining companies and local populations, considering that the desire to obtain access over natural resources restricts access for the other. Kirsch calls this “colliding ecologies” (2014:16). This occurs when two systems are competing for the same resources and one system dominates at the expense of the other. “Colliding ecologies” thus leads to environmental conflicts.

Environmental conflicts often arise through an attempt to conserve the landscape for local populations’ utilization and management. However, conservation of natural environments represents different meanings. There is a distinction between conservation where sustainable management is allowed, and the more protective manner of conservation where entire parts of nature are exempted from human utilization (Kalland and Rønnow, 2001). In this situation, conservation is not sought out as a means to allow the landscape to be left untouched following the protective manner of conservation. This diminishes agricultural livelihoods. The goal is sustainable governance and management of the natural resources. Sustainable management of natural resources that are renewable necessitate that the ecosystem is not depleted past the ability to renew itself (Kalland and Rønnow, 2001).
The challenge is to balance between the need to accommodate the present population without risking the requirements of future generations (Kalland and Rønnow, 2001). The locals described their engagement with the landscape as sustainable small-scale agriculture which does not deplete the soil’s resources. *El Escobal*, however, poses a larger threat through potential contamination and excess use of local water sources. According to Ulvevadet (2001), sustainable management depends on a sustainable culture. Ecological, economical and cultural sustainability needs to be taken into account for sustainable management of natural resources. Ecological sustainability concerns the appropriate management of the landscape, economical sustainability concerns the viability of the livelihood to provide for a family representing stability, and cultural sustainability concerns the preservation of the local culture (Ulvevadet, 2001). These three factors are relevant in relation to San Rafael. “This fight is for life, this fight is for the future. The soil is changing. It is affecting us that work with the soil. There is no exact future for our children”. This statement from one of the local peasants illustrates the demand to maintain the natural environment, and encompasses both current and future generations.

*Aspiring for the Future*

Fischer (2014) implies that aspiration and opportunity are some of the key qualities that characterize the good life where ties to “larger purposes” creates meaning (2014:7). I aim to illustrate how aspirations for the future are responsible for the current resistance movement. Although my informants in several ways felt powerless and disregarded, they still aspired for a better future. This facilitates possibilities for future generations, but also amongst the current generation. The resistance movement is a means to express your opinion and actively oppose mining, making it possible to achieve your aspirations. Fischer (2014) states that perhaps the good life is a constant pursuit for improvement, rather than a state to be obtained. This illustrates how aspirations for the future, are a constant pursuit connecting the present to the future.
Anthropological research has focused on the past to explain current society through origin and tradition (Persoon and Est, 2000). I include this aspiration for the future, as well as the concept of the past, to construct a perspective of the present that enables the reader to fully comprehend the source of conflict. My informants comprehend the present conflict dependent on the past, as well as through aspirations for the future. As a result of diminishing natural resources and habitual degradation, people all over the world experience social disruptions and an increasingly unpredictable future. This has formed a collective general will to shape a liveable future. (Hastrup, 2009). This conflict should therefore be studied within a globalized context as well as within a historical context.

Historical processes can illuminate and contextualize current actions and events (Farmer, 2004, see Green, 1999). Stepputat and Blom Hansen (2001) indicate that structures from colonial governance have influenced postcolonial nation-states. This facilitates a weak political environment which is advantageous for foreign interests. Although I find Ingold’s perception of the landscape and dwelling relevant, Ingold (2000) ignores historical events in the construction of the landscape. History is implied, but not utilized to explain the development of the current shape of the landscape. The current shape of Guatemalan society should be understood within a historical context, illustrated by Green (1999), who conducted fieldwork in the northern highlands of Guatemala. Green states, “awareness of historical context is vital because it underscores how processes of accommodation and collusion, as well as resistance, are integral to how power operates” (Green, 1999:37). History is thus included to explain the relations of power and resistance, between the Guatemalan State, transnational companies, and Guatemalan citizens. This explains the environmental landscape, and the political landscape. Solely describing the peasants’ activities and engagement with the landscape lacks a historical component. It does not encompass the magnitude, or the existence of social conflicts in Guatemala.

To preserve the environment for future utilization, the locals aspire to obtain political power. Politics can be regarded as the ability to influence power distribution and erode the balance of power, thus functioning as the vessel of
power (Weber, 2010). The legal framework that permits mining in Guatemala illuminates the relations between transnational companies and different Guatemalan governments over time (Solano, 2005). Alliances such as these are according to Kirsch (2014) favoring financial interests at the expense of local acknowledgement and consensus. Obtaining legal precedence through access to municipal governance is therefore the resistance movement’s solution strategy to thwart continued granting of exploration and exploitation licenses within municipal borders. This is elaborated in chapter four.

*The Power to Resist*

Power is the coercive force that enables the wielder to achieve goals when others, in principle, are against them (Weber, 2010). The conflict that permeates the society has resulted in resistance against this coercive force. According to Barbalet (1985), power entails a dualistic aspect of either compliance or resistance. Resistance is a form of expression that aspires to sway the outcome of power relations, by either limiting or accepting (1985). This notion of resistance is the starting point of social mobilization in San Rafael. By resisting rather than complying, the locals express their disapproval and refusal to submit to the interests of the government and Tahoe Resources.

The notions of compliance or resistance have created divisions between those that accept the circumstances and those that resist. Kirsch (2006) observed similar resistance against mining, amongst the Yonggom people. Although surveys had been conducted that acknowledged the probability of pollution, environmental degradation and landslides caused by the presence of the *OK Tedi* mine, local resistance was disregarded in favor of the government’s financial interests. This displays a power relation between the Papua New Guinean government and the mining company. Similar political and economic alliances are found in Guatemala (Solano, 2005). The common denominator that links these relations together is the mode of production that externalizes the costs of production on the local environment and populations’, thereby limiting the viability of local populations livelihoods.
Although laws and regulations exist to ensure local participation in environmental decision-making, in practice these regulations fall short in favor of the extractive economy (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch, 2015). “The right to consultation and information is directly connected. The village has a right to know, to decide,” Josef states. Josef is a representative from an NGO who works with several local populations that are impacted by mining. The locals are focused on local empowerment, which is, according to Fischer, “the ability to control one’s destiny” (2014:6) and one of the factors that encompasses well-being. The denial of the right to know and decide thus illustrates two aspects of power relations. The government’s bidding to favor financial interest over local consensus, and the government’s ability to do so. Therefore, the resistance movement aims to limit this ability to achieve goals when others in principle are against them, by obtaining legal precedence through municipal governance which could deny further granting of licenses to the extractive industry.

Wolf (1989) advocates that there are four different modes of power, according to different sets of relationships. The first is personal power in the shape of a person's capability or attributes, where the focus is the person's ability and endowment of power. The second mode of power is the ability to impose one's will on others based on interplay between actors and interpersonal relations. The third mode and the fourth mode are similar in some ways, but as the third mode of power is operating power and controlling settings within the circumstances, the fourth mode creates the settings it controls, rather than only controlling what is already created. Wolf names the third mode of power ‘organizational power’ based on the ability to control the settings, whilst the fourth mode of power he names ‘structural power’ in accordance to its power to structure the settings. The social settings are shaped in order to inhibit some outcomes, whilst facilitate others (Wolf, 1989). I utilize these four modes of power to illustrate the emergence and the mobilization strategies of the resistance movements. The resistance in San Rafael aspires to acquire organizational power and structural power through personal power. This
illustrates how different forms of power can be considered as overlapping and fluid and not mutually exclusive.

Resistance to power can be expressed in several forms and is therefore not necessarily synonymous with conflict (Barbalet, 1985). My informants stressed their notion of resistance as Resistencia Pacífica (peaceful resistance). Still, the circumstances are not without conflict. On April 27th 2013, a peaceful demonstration (manifestación pacífica) in front of the mine’s entrance resulted in a shooting by the private security forces of El Escobal. The bullets injured 6 local men and this incident is known as Caso Rotondo, named after the chief of private security Alberto Rotondo.4 The following May 2nd, the Guatemalan government called for a state of siege and approximately 3500 armed police and military men entered San Rafael. Violence has thus manifested itself in the area through criminalization, militarization, physical violence and fear. The government’s ability to utilize violence follows Weber’s (2010) perception of the state as proprietor of the only legitimate use of violence. Militarization of the area demonstrates this and a continued sensation of surveillance through constant patrols and checkpoints.

**Constructing Community**

Considering that environmental consequences extend over a vast geographic area, the presence of El Escobal has created social mobilization consisting of several communities across municipal borders. Although my focus is El Escobal, participation in resistance movements constructs relations between people that have never met. I interpret this construction of relations as part of an imagined community. Anderson (1991) perceives a community as imagined when there are no physical boundaries or borders creating a landscape of a community or institutional framework or formality. It is imagined because those that are part of the community will most likely never meet all its members. Still they are connected through their experiences, interests and mutual sense of communion (Anderson, 1991) which, in this situation is resistance to the mining industry. I interpret this emerging trend of resistance movements as an emerging formation

---

4 This culminated in a pending lawsuit against Tahoe Resources (Tahoe on trial).
of an imagined community that encompasses resistance movements worldwide, thereby constructing translocational and transnational relations and identities (see West, 2006, Moore, 1999). Green (1999) argues that identities are formed in relation to others. Thus, this formation of identities can be regarded as a result of peoples’ perceived threats to their territories (see Basso, 1996) which, generates an emerging identity of resistance. The formation of resistance identities and movements should therefore be viewed from a translocational perspective.

Words such as the resistance- and the opposition movement are utilized to describe those that oppose the mining industry in generalized terms. This categorization further emphasizes my perception of the resistance movement as an imagined community in describing social mobilization and cohesion amongst people that have never met. They are connected through translocational relations and are bound together by ideological causes. In the case of San Rafael, the ideological cause of preserving the environment connects people together. Politics is utilized as the means to accomplish this.

The challenges and conflicts surrounding El Escobal are not isolated. El Escobal, Marlin and Tambor are three mines located in Guatemala, owned by North-American companies. I introduce Marlin and Tambor due to the relations forged between different resistance movements, associated with similar conflicts in different locations. This illustrates the degree of translocational networks. The Marlin mine in the northern highlands has been in operation since December 2005. The proximity to several indigenous communities has created conflict and discontent rooted in environmental claims (Zarsky and Stanley, 2011). Close to the capital the Tambor Mine is located between the two municipalities San José de Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc. There, a social resistance movement known as La Puya has emerged as a result of the spiraling circumstances impacting the dynamics of the local communities (Pedersen, 2014). The Marlin mine has been in operation the longest. Those residing close to El Escobal and Tambor fear the consequences of long-term mining in their areas based on their knowledge concerning the environmental degradation caused by the Marlin mine. Information concerning social consequences, associated with participation in the
resistance, is disseminated through the imagined community. This produces
social divisions amongst those that resist as well.

**Method – Cultivating relations by establishing familiarity**
The hallmark of Social Anthropology is acquiring knowledge through personal
experience and long-term immersion in the field (Okely, 2012). The value of
qualitative research is illustrated through the depth of empirical knowledge and
insight obtained by high levels of trust between researcher and informant.
Through physical presence in the field, the researcher is able to gather and
contest data simultaneously in order to ensure validity. Okely (2001)
emphasizes the importance of long-term immersion in the field as a method to
overcome the obstacles which limit the anthropologist to looking, rather than
seeing. “To look at the landscape as detached outsider risks not seeing it as lived,
worked and sensed by its inhabitants” (Okely, 2001:104). This highlights the
importance of living with and amongst the informants.

The spring semester of 2015, I conducted a 6-month fieldwork from January 7th
to July 14th, where I spent most of my time living with a family in San Rafael.
Following a seminar at the University of Oslo concerning the social conflicts
associated with the extractive industry in Guatemala, I decided on doing
fieldwork there. I addressed different players with Guatemalan affiliations who
inspired my choice of location and, I was assisted with establishing contact with
informants before departure.

In my pre-fieldwork outline, I explored the possibility of living in several of the
nearby communities and, upon arrival, I was told by my informants that I should
extend my research as the conflict I was there to study crossed community lines.
Frøystad (2003) and Barth (1999) advocate that it is important to follow your
informant’s movements across societies and see past the boundaries limited by
community lines. By tracking connections, relations and other networks, one
follows the cultural process of exchange and sharing (see also Marcus, 1998). I
was offered a place to stay with a family in San Rafael and although I accepted, I
still kept the option open to move at later convenience. However, the strong
position of the family I lived with facilitated access to different arenas of participation, both formal and informal. Thus, I decided to stay with my family in San Rafael. Still, I argue that this decision allowed me to gain a more thorough perception of the unraveling circumstances in San Rafael and the nearby area.

Although I had a permanent base in San Rafael I was still able to visit informants from other communities. As this thesis will illustrate, my data accumulation was not limited by geographic boundaries even though I lived in one location. I achieved access to a vast network of local, national and international players through introductions and participation in different arenas, thus enabling me to explore circumstances not limited to one community.

For every new acquaintance, I presented myself as a master student in Social Anthropology from Oslo. I aimed to study how Tahoe Resources and the construction of El Escobal affected local society in San Rafael. I found it beneficial that I mentioned which family I lived with as it immediately gained me acceptance. For example, I had been told that I should talk to the priest of the Catholic Church in San Rafael. Before my first meeting with the priest Linda, the mother in my house, told me to *name-drop* their names in order to receive admission to the priest’s office. “When you meet him, tell him you live here. Mention our names,” she said. When I walked towards the office door, the priest met me in the doorway, blocking the entrance. With a stern facial expression and tone of voice he asked me “who are you?” Bewildered by this blunt approach I introduced my research topic and myself. I did as Linda had told me to do and *name-dropped* their names, stating that I had been recommended to speak to him by them. His facial expression instantly changed into a smile and moved away from the door into his office, gesticulating with his hand that I could enter.

Many of the locals are suspicious of newcomers. I was told that the mining company had sent people to “infiltrate” the community to gain knowledge of the resistance movement, emphasizing my need for an introduction. Otherwise my presence could be seen as infiltration. People in opposition to the extractive industry were more vulnerable to governmental punishment. One evening as I
was eating lunch with my family the phone rang and the son answered. Linda asked him who it was and he answered that he did not know the caller but they were calling for Juan, the father. Her facial expression changed from curiosity to sternness. “Never tell people you don’t know who asks for Juan where he is, or when he’s coming here, never!” This illustrates the level of paranoia and Juan changed his phone number several times during my stay.

People would, in general, not answer their phone if they did not know the number. After trying to phone a contact repeatedly, another of my contacts rang him and told him to answer when my number called. He answered my call instantly after this. My ability to contact people was sometimes challenged by the fact that they repetitively changed their phone numbers and email addresses. “People are paranoid here,” I was told. Those affiliated with the resistance movement perceived themselves as constantly under surveillance or under investigation. Therefore they constantly changed their numbers to stay one step ahead of the authorities.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I gave my informants room to maneuver the conversation in the direction they liked, as I had not yet decided on which perspective to pursue. At the end of my fieldwork I attempted to steer the conversations with more structured questions to cover the basis of my research. The collected data consists of both formal and half-structured talks, empirical information gathered from casual conversations and field trips, and of course, observations. Questions are according to Madden (2010) the engine of the interview, highlighting the importance of the structure and formation of questions. I thus postponed conducting formal interviews until the end of my fieldwork to acquire relations of trust between the interviewees and myself. I conducted structured interviews with a tape recorder, and three video interviews. My field notes were written in several different notebooks depending on size and situation. I used a small pocketbook to scribble observations, key moments and words so I could write them up at a later point. I also had a larger notebook for more formal conversations. Taking notes openly was not a problem and pleased my informants, as they desired to share their information. During
one conversation, my pen was out of ink and my informant hastily searched for another before continuing our conversation. At the end of the day, I wrote the day’s notes on my computer, elaborating on the day’s events without time pressure. I read the local newspapers and received papers, articles, and emails from the people that I was in contact with. People would present this to me, as they thought it was important for me to know.

I have participated in several local, national and international events hosted by different organizations in different locations in Guatemala. When my informants participated in these events, they would invite me along. These events ranged in size from several hundred participants, to only a handful. Location varied between Mataquesquintla, San Rafael and Guatemala City. Depending on the size of the events, the accumulated data varies, as large arenas limit intimacy and closeness and small arenas allow small groupings to have closed conversations. The events were hosted by different NGO’s such as CALAS, MadreSelva, RightsAction, CUC, Alba Movimientos. I was also in contact with different representatives from NISGUA, UDEFEGUA (See Appendix 1) and the Catholic Church. I went to two different book launches in Guatemala City, one at FLACSO (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales), and the other at a café in Zona 1 which people from the same network often frequented.

*Ethical Concerns*

The role of the anthropologist whilst in the field warrants discussion. Okely (2012) implies that the role of the researcher can, on occasion, become clouded when confronted with challenges that could possibly limit the objectivity and integrity of one’s work. This study is related to social conflicts where people involved in resistance movements desire their situation to be acknowledged on an international scale. This desire amongst my informants thus created a challenge to maintain a balance between intervening and observing (see Okely, 2012). On several occasions, I experienced some pressure considering my position as an outside researcher. During events and through personal communication I was asked if I could conduct interviews proclaiming that I was there in solidarity with the locals. After the arrest of a man in the resistance, an
informant called me and asked me to reach out to international players and spread the word of his arrest. After further reflection on the matter, to what degree could I participate, without intervening? This is the paradox of participant observation. At what point do you switch from solely observing into participating? Moore (1999) wonders if the role of the anthropologist is science, or a moral project. The boundary between collecting data as an observer and intervening through active engagement can become blurred, thus necessitating a demand for reflection on one’s role and position in the field. This balancing act (Okely, 2012) colored my existence throughout my entire fieldwork and I resolved it through switching roles of observing and participating, to the degree that I was able. On most occasions my informants accepted my reservations, but on one occasion I was not presented with this option. During an international event, different participants from different countries shared their experiences with the crowd on stage. As I was the only Norwegian in the crowd every eye turned to me as Noruega was shouted through the speakers. I could have stayed seated ignoring the attention and waited for the moment to pass, but what kind of message would I send to my informants if I refused to participate? This incident marked my transferal from solely observing, into active participation.

Concerning the safety of my informants, I am presented with a dilemma of how I can utilize my empirical observations without compromising the data, or revealing intimate information. I could simplify the process and anonymize the place and company. This would conceal my informants’ identity in the process. I explored this possibility in the beginning, but my informants were clear that they wanted acknowledgment. After conducting a video interview with Mario, a male informant, he asked if the tapes could be sent to Channel 4, a Guatemalan television channel and perhaps be aired. Befuddled by this request I asked if this could be dangerous for him. This tape contained sensitive information and a clear stance from Mario’s point of view with regard of the authorities, the mining company and the extractive industry in general. “What more can they do? They know who I am. I’ve already been arrested and accused of criminal charges multiple times” he said, pointing his finger to emphasize his point. “When I was lying in the hospital with a broken leg unable to move, I had several police
guards making sure that I could not escape,” he answered me whilst waving his hand as if it was nothing and laughing at the irony of him running from the police with a broken leg. My informants emphasized that my thesis could not worsen their situation. Whatever the consequences, they were willing to forgo much as they perceived their resistance to be tied to “a larger purpose” which, according to Fischer (2014:7) creates meaning in everyday life.

Still, I present my informants’ using pseudonyms. The reason I anonymize is not due to their political and environmental stance. I anonymize due to the level of intimate knowledge concerning social repercussions in the families of those I became acquainted with. At times, the words of one family are presented through the story of another in order to anonymize. The data concerning the family is the cornerstone of my comprehension concerning the circumstances creating conflicts in San Rafael and the surrounding area. This enables me to present most of my findings without compromising either the data or disclosing my informants. Official political individuals will not be anonymized as their political stance, job and role in the community is official knowledge available to anyone. Dr. Hugo Loy, the Mayor of Mataquescuintla and Roberto Pivaral, the mayoral candidate in San Rafael opposing the mine are examples of this.

Throughout this thesis, quotes and sayings from my informants are written both in Spanish and in English. The Spanish quotes are presented in the footnotes and my own English translation in the text for the sake of the reader. Direct translation can, in some instances cloud the meaning behind statements and words, containing different cultural connotations according to cultural reference (Hanks, 2014). However, some quotes and sayings are only presented in English. This is because I have translated them directly during the conversation, as it was more efficient at the time. Words the locals use to describe different objects or situations I present in both Spanish and in English.

*Gender in the Field*

Whilst conducting ethnographic fieldwork the researcher can experience certain gender barriers, depending on the society or groupings (Madden, 2010). Weiner
(1988) experienced during her fieldwork a difference of access based on gender on the Trobriand Islands, approximately half a century after Malinowski (1922). Although much time had passed, Weiner's discoveries were not connected to change enabled by the passing of time. Weiner discovered how she attained different access to the field due to her gender and was introduced to aspects of the society from which Malinowski was denied. She was granted access to memorial rituals, as these rituals were limited solely to females, thus excluding Malinowski on the principle of his gender. I had a somewhat similar experience as Weiner as I realized how much my gender, not only facilitated and limited access, but produced settings of formality and informality between my informants and myself.

Although I achieved access to both genders, my gender influenced my data and method for acquiring it. Encounters with male informants were under more formal settings, whilst encounters with female informants were more casual. I participated to a larger degree to chores solely conducted by the women in the household. Rather than sitting in a café, participating in an event or walking privately, the informal settings of the kitchen enabled a casual atmosphere where I experienced being one of them. Goffman discusses the appearance of a façade, a “front-stage” (1992:31) that facilitates an expected form of behavior. According to the expectations of the front-stage, collective roles are assigned, fulfilling a certain role. I advocate that the role of being a male oppositionist is exercised through a façade, thus controlling the mode of interaction and sharing information. In addition to “front-stage”, there is a “back-stage” where emotions that are not permitted or excluded in the front-stage, have room for expression without the limitations assigned to a certain role (Goffman, 1992). This distinction illustrates the difference between male oppositionists enacting their role on front-stage and their female family members who were not directly affiliated with the resistance movement, enacting their roles back-stage where there is room to remove the mask and express repressed emotions.

Due to the lack of a front-stage role in my dealings with the women, the data I accumulated here was more of a sentimental value, concerning family challenges,
social aspects of criminalization and emotions. The males preferred to tell their stories during our meetings, answered my questions in a more formal manner, withholding sentimentality and emphasizing environmental aspects originating from the conflict, thus enacting their role. The women talked more freely to me as if I was their friend, whilst the males behaved according to my role as a researcher. I was thus ascribed a front- and back-stage role as well. The distinction between how male informants and female informants treated me was therefore colored by their and my gender in addition to the enactment of roles. Some time passed before I discovered this. It was not before another foreign male activist and researcher spent time with the same informants that I discovered how he and I accessed different types of data (cf. chapter five).

**Thesis Outline**

This thesis consists of five chapters, followed by an afterword. *Chapter One* introduces the field, theme and research questions, presenting an analytical framework to create a perspective of the ongoing situation. *Chapter Two* presents San Rafael Las Flores and the agricultural surrounding area with the mine *El Escobal*. To contextualize the local conflict, a short summary of Guatemalan history and mining laws follows. The empirical chapters that follow illustrate some of the reasons *why* there is resistance (cf. *chapter three*), *how* they resist (cf. *chapter four*) and, some *consequences* of resistance (cf. *chapter five*). *Chapter Three* addresses access and contamination of water sources in the area. Local livelihoods depend on water sources to nurture a sustainable agricultural future. Water has become a scarce resource because of the mine’s excess usage. *Chapter Four* concerns local governance, where I address the different mobilization strategies, possibilities and obstacles the resistance movement encounters. In *Chapter Five* I discuss one of the repercussions participation in resistance movements creates; criminalization. This chapter explores different perspectives of risk and reward, where I focus on gendered roles and relations as the foundation for disputes amongst and within families.
Figure: 2. Dry Season

Figure: 3. Wet Season
II Landscape: Visualizing Society

An ethnographic description of San Rafael and the surrounding areas enables the reader to imagine in what manner the landscape has nurtured society and laid the framework on which the society functions. The following descriptions of the landscape describe how I, the outsider, perceive the landscape. However, I aim to illustrate the way locals perceive their landscape as well. Okely states that there are different forms of “visualism” (2001:101), distinguishing locals from outsiders in their perception of the landscape. How one perceives the landscape conditions on one’s interaction with the landscape. There is an interconnection between observation and physical knowledge obtained through participant observation. This facilitates a more detailed view and insight into the locals’ perception of their environment (Okely, 2001).

The Place

Guatemala is located in Central America bordering to Mexico and Belize in the north, and El Salvador and Honduras in the south, with coastlines to both the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean. The official language in Guatemala is Spanish, but there are also 23 indigenous languages (variations of Mayan, Xinca and Garifuna) (Regieringen, 2015). The Guatemalan landscape varies in altitude from the colder highlands in the north where the indigenous Maya population resides, and the lower parts of the country where a more tropical climate dominates, mostly populated by Ladinos (non-indigenous population). This variation in altitude enables different forms of cultivation of vegetables and fruits across the country. The volcanic soil is rich in minerals facilitating optimal conditions for agriculture illustrated by the wide range of agricultural production across the country. However, the volcanic soil also facilitates good conditions for mineral extraction illustrated by the many mineral mines in Guatemala.

The municipality San Rafael Las Flores is located in a green valley southeast in Guatemala. High hills on both sides, with ridges of varying height create waves in the landscape. In the middle of the valley a paved road passes San Rafael, the
main village and municipality seat, on one side, and the mine *El Escobal* on the other. San Rafael is located in the Santa Rosa Department, close to the border of the Jalapa department. I arrived in San Rafael at the end of January, and even though the landscape was affected by the dry season, I perceived the landscape as green. “Wait until the rain season, the fields become so green and beautiful” Linda, the mother in the house I lived in, told me. When the rain season initiated, the landscape blossomed and the rainfall nurtured the land. The rain changes the scenery and increases cultivation. The peasants thus welcome the rain, because of the declining levels of subterranean water.

*El Escobal* is a large grey industrial plant of 100 hectares at the foot of the hills (Tahoe Resources, 2014). A fence surrounds the entire plant. There are armed security stands guard at different places. On the west side of the mine there is a small bunker where several armed guards have a view over the inside as well as the outside area. One day a friend of mine and I went walking along the dirt road parallel to the mine. On the other side of the road were greenhouses. As we were walking, my friend started to take pictures, which provoked one of the security guards and he waved his gun at us shouting that we needed to leave.

Strong yellow lights light up the industrial plant at nighttime. From afar it looks like just another village. The family I lived with and I drove late one evening back to San Rafael from the capital. The unevenness of the hills gave us a good view of the valley at daytime. At nighttime the lights from different hamlets are scattered around in small clusters. Both San Rafael and *El Escobal* shine brightly, but in different colors. The lights in San Rafael are not as bright, but the size of the two places is the same.

Enclosing the road on both sides are cultivated fields, greenhouses, grazing fields for cattle and bush forest. Some fields are covered in netting, protecting the crop from both dust and insects. The peasants cultivate even on steep hills. The cultivation of coffee, tomato and corn make up the largest fields. After passing the entrance to San Rafael the paved road continues higher up towards the municipality of Mataquesquintla six kilometers from San Rafael, in the Jalapa
department, before the road reaches the peak of the hills. Mataquesquintla is larger and more commercial than San Rafael, containing more stores and a supermarket. In San Rafael there are only small family owned stores. Mataquesquintla lies upon the hill and the streets are steep. The municipality Mataquesquintla encompasses large green areas surrounding the urban zone, called Colis by the locals. The buildings are larger in Colis than in San Rafael, and can be characterized more as apartments rather than single houses lined wall to wall. Colis looks urban with two-story houses or more buildings. People, cars and buses, fill the streets, giving the town an impression of being busy as opposed to the tranquility in San Rafael. Coffee plantations, grazing fields and other green areas surround the town. The landscape is marked by agriculture as a way of life. Similar to San Rafael, proximity to the mine creates obstacles for the viability of the peasants’ livelihood. A resistance movement with aid from the Mayor’s office has emerged as a response to ensure sustainable management of the areas’ natural resources. This resistance differs from the resistance in San Rafael and is explored and analyzed in chapter four.

The winding road continues up the hills reaching lower temperatures, cold winds and rising levels of humidity as the clouds envelope the peaks. I once visited the family father Juan in the town Jalapa, which is the largest town and is approximately one hour by bus from San Rafael. The ride was uncomfortable and cold, and the small bus drove so fast that my stomach clenched as the bus speedily continued through the turns. Juan works in Jalapa during the week and comes home to the house on weekends. His work allows him to take time off when needed, which was fortunate considering he continuously had to travel to the capital for his trial. Juan is an environmental activist who openly opposes the mine. He was accused of threatening an employee of the mine and the months before the trial date he needed to sign in every twenty days at the legal office in San Rafael, rather than await his trial in prison. The topic of criminalization and Juan’s trial is elaborated in chapter five.

The municipality San Rafael Las Flores consists of a main village (casco urbano) and 16 smaller hamlets called aldeas by the locals. There are two paved roads
entering the village and two main roads in San Rafael, both one-way streets going in opposite directions parallel to each other. There is a clear distinction between different houses in San Rafael. The majority of the houses are one-story houses. The houses vary in deterioration and need of renovation. Others are large, two-story houses, constructed in colonial architecture. The houses are positioned wall to wall directly lining the street or sidewalk. The houses, both the large expensive ones and the smaller ones, are built next to each other, making no pattern of socio-economic status in the village. However, the farther away from the center you move the more rural the area becomes with dirt roads and more deteriorated houses. There are, however, some exceptions. When I first arrived I thought the larger modern houses were built with money the families received from the mine, but I was wrong. Juan told me that the money used to build these houses came from remittances from the USA, and not the mine. Those houses belong to families that already were wealthy, independent of the mine. Almost everybody I came in contact with in San Rafael have family members that had migrated to the USA (see Aguilar-Støen, 2012).

There are, however, some areas that are clearly distinctive from others. Apartment complexes creating enclaves had been raised over the last years to house the workers who had migrated to the area. There are two enclaves - one outside of San Rafael across the road from the mine’s entrance. The other enclave is close to the center of San Rafael. Both enclaves are sealed off by gate entrance and the apartments have satellite antennas.

Old and new houses are constructed in colonial style, varying in ornaments and simple design, except those in the enclaves that are more modernistic and simpler in fashion. Inside the houses there is usually a compound, used as either garden or outside seating area. The houses are designed and constructed with separate rooms which all have an entrance to an outside area. In the center of San Rafael there is a large white church visible from far away with its tall towers. Behind the church, the municipal office and police station is located. There are usually police cars parked outside and armed police officers present.
Rural Zone

The municipality of San Rafael Las Flores consists of 16 aldeas, ranging from 1 km to 16 km in distance from San Rafael. Most of the aldeas are infrastructural inferior to the urban zone and those that reside there come from poorer conditions and simpler housing. I was told that it is more dangerous in these areas and I was discouraged from walking there alone. This is where people with bad intentions (ladrones) roamed I was repeatedly told. In one of the aldeas closest to San Rafael lives Maria, the girl that helps Linda. Maria’s household consists of 10 siblings, which is usual for the families residing in aldeas. Maria keeps half of the earnings for herself and gives the rest to her mother. During harvesting season, her mother takes her out of school to work the fields to increase the family’s income rather than attend school. This is normal amongst the poorest residents in the area. The difference of socioeconomic status in the area necessitates additional income when the opportunity arises, and many share Maria’s situation.

In the urban zone I never noticed any noise from the mine as there is too much background noise from passing cars, shouting vendors, cars with loud speakers shouting political propaganda or selling products, and children playing, dogs barking and shrieking poultry. However, once you leave the center of San Rafael there is less commotion and noise, revealing a constant hum. There is a large green meadow surrounded by fences approximately 150 meters from the house I lived in. The territory is uneven and separated by fences and bushes, creating smaller fields and some larger ones. Nearest the urban zone the grass meadow is flat, making it optimal for football practice, and local boys often play there. It was here I heard the hum from the mine for the first time. Those residing closest to the mine had several times spoken about the constant noise that disturbed their sleep, but I had never heard it myself until now. “God created 24 hours a day. He gave us the nights so we can sleep. The mine doesn’t sleep. It operates through the night. The noise disturbs my sleep.” A local woman from an aldea directly adjacent to the mine’s fences talked about the tremors in the earth and cracks in people’s homes. “I fight for my children, but also for those that are not yet born.” This explains further why many from the rural zones, in comparison to the urban
zone, oppose the project. In addition to decreased water supplies, the atmosphere is eroded and disturbed by the constant hum.

Animal life in the area consists mostly of domesticated animals. Making homemade cheese, sour cream and requésón (unpasteurized cheese) is common, and some families have a cow or goat for the purpose of providing milk for dairy products. Several families, including my family, have horses, though only for adornment (solo para adorno). It is my impression that the society’s influence of cowboy tradition makes ownership of horses prestigious, but this was never confirmed.

The cockroaches in the house would hastily creep into the dark corners of the bathroom when you enter. Still you know they are there and you can see the moving shadows from their feelers on the wall. I would often stomp with my feet a little to keep them from closing in while I was in the bathroom. The mosquito and fly population explodes in the rain season. During all meals at that time you had to use one hand to wave over your plate trying to keep the flies away from your meal. My family also kept hens, chickens and roosters in the garden. Some hens are kept for eggs and others were killed for food. In the garden next door, the family had geese and more poultry creating a constant racket.

**Topography**

The urban zone of San Rafael is approximately 1330 meters above sea level, but the entire municipality ranges between 900 to 1400 MSL (Municipality of San Rafael Las Flores, 2016a). In the lowest part of the valley most areas were cleared either for housing, grazing fields for cattle or horses, or cultivation. Higher in the hills nature was left more untouched allowing wild forest to grow. The area varied between tropical and pine forest. The dirt roads showed signs of previous rain seasons, leaving deep ruts in the road, burrowed by the running water that had forced itself through the landscape. When it first rained in San Rafael, the climate changed in seconds. Rivers ran were there usually were roads,
swallowing everything in their path. The hard rains would not last long, but the aftermath bore its mark on the environment long after the rain ceased.

**Climate**

The climate is divided into the rain season from May to November, and the dry season from November to May. In the dry season the ground is dry and the dust transported by the wind irritates the eyes. Clouds of dust were visible, moving around like twisters, concealing everything in their path. In January-February, harsh winds are common, creating a constant roar. As the winds cease after a couple of months other sounds emerge, previously concealed by the roaring wind. Every night like clockwork I heard the rooster flap its wings outside of my bedroom window, and I knew the sound of the roosters crow would follow. Approximately one month before the end of the dry season, one week of pouring rain occurred every year. “Now it will rain every day the next week, then it won’t rain again until the rain season” Linda told me. Unluckily, this was the week a new roof of the house I lived in was under construction. Buckets and tupperware were placed all over the house to catch most, but not all of the rainfall. There are holes in the floors all over the house from previous rainfalls, connecting the house to the dirt and allowing insects and rodents free pass. At night I would listen to a scratching sound that I thought were the street cats climbing on the roof as they often did. It turned out to be a rat somewhere in the house. Linda set out poisonous food that eventually killed the rat and it lay somewhere under the floorboards decaying, creating a foul smell that lasted for weeks.

The average temperature ranges between 15 to 25 degrees annually. April and May are the hottest months of the year, feeling, much hotter than 25 degrees. This makes the cooling rains a welcoming alteration of the environment. The peasants look forward to the rain season every year because of the water shortage. Usually in June/July there is a small period called the canícula where the rain ceases. This year the canícula came early, causing concern for the local peasants as the rain season had been delayed decreasing their water supply.
Demography

The municipality of San Rafael Las Flores consists of approximately 3500 inhabitants, whereas 99.6% of the residents are Ladinos (Tahoe Resources, 2014). As a result of the mine, migrant workers have settled in the area and live in newly constructed apartment complexes. During the construction phase of the industrial plant, locals were employed for construction work. After the operational phase of the mine started, educated workers who were not from the area replaced the construction workers. Therefore, the rise of employment has not strengthened the local economy sufficiently through employment, as the majority of those that are employed by the mine are not locals. There are, however, other financial benefits such as financial aid to local schools. There are two establishments in the casco urbano where those working for the mining company frequently dine. Those opposing the mine would therefore never set foot in these establishments, reinforcing the divide in the society.

The men of this area are inspired by the North American Cowboy style. White-rimmed cowboy hats, cowboy boots, jeans and shirt is the style amongst several of the older men, and many men wear machetes in their leather belts. Wearing a machete for a man here is almost synonymous with a woman carrying a purse. The younger generation dresses differently however. Their style is more consistent with popular trends of Western Europe and North America although they are not the latest fashion. In this part of Guatemala the style differs from the northern highlands where the traditional woven blouse (huipil) and woven cloth with strong colors is worn. In the south the large white-rimmed cowboy hats dominate. When attending gatherings in the capital I easily observed the difference amongst the people from different regions of the country.

Agriculture

My informants emphasized that Guatemala is not an industrial country but an agricultural country. This pervades the locals’ perception of the past, the present and the future. The mine’s presence represents a potential diminished ecosystem that challenges the viability of the locals’ livelihood. In the southeast region,
agriculture is small-scale, ranging from small fields for subsistence or local sales, to larger fields cultivating only one type of vegetable or fruit. In addition to the coffee plantations, tomato- and cornfields, onion, chili, cauliflower, oranges, broccoli, avocado, macadamia nuts and beans are cultivated. Few fields are cleared especially for bananas or plantains. Often these trees are scattered randomly, growing in solitude or in small clusters. There are large hen farms mostly for meat, and agricultural nurseries scattered around the nearby communities. Besides the larger cultivated fields, several of the local inhabitants cultivate in small scale in their own back yards. Single fruit trees and small patches of farmed soil are often planted if possible, and some keep chickens and hens for meat and eggs and bees for honey.

Closer to the coast and lower in altitude, the temperatures are higher. There, pineapple, mango and other tropical fruits that necessitate higher temperatures are dominant. Higher in altitude where the temperature is lower, potatoes, corn and other fruits and vegetables that can withstand harsher climates grow. The produce is either sold in Guatemala City, in Zona 4, where the large fruit and vegetable market is, or exported internationally, or sold at local markets in the area. Ironically, the local fruit and vegetable store in San Rafael where my family buy all their greens travels twice a week to the fruit market in Guatemala City to buy produce for the store.

Workers and Owners
All of this is relevant to an examination of class which is “a group of persons who relate in similar ways to the economic system” (Wallerstein, 1991:188). Class is divided through access and exclusion of rights and privileges in society. This illustrates people’s place in the economic system. In San Rafael, different perspectives of landscape can be understood according to class affiliation and livelihood. This is a distinguishing factor between peasants and farmers. Peasants are, according to Wolf (1966), acknowledged as rural cultivators, who cultivate in small scale for subsistence and local markets. They are not agricultural entrepreneurs, where agriculture is regarded as a business
enterprise, rather than a way of life. The peasants’ dependency on fertile soil and sufficiently clean water sources thereby explains their reason for resistance against the mine. It is, however, necessary to view both peasants and farmers as heterogeneous groups, with different attitudes and aspirations (Kearney, 1996). This post-peasant perspective positions rural peasants within a globalized and urbanized context, thus including historical factors and transnational aspects as well as peasants’ diverse activities and hopes for the future. This contextualization is relevant to comprehend the local and different peasants’ perception of their place in the world, as well as their reactions to large-scale and local processes. Following Kearney, I focus on variation amongst my informants, rather than perceiving them as a generalized group. I aim to illustrate different perspectives, attitudes and variation amongst the locals, not solely amongst peasants.

A peasant’s cultivation of the land is not part of a business arrangement; it is perceived as a livelihood. This creates a division between those that produce through manual labor and provide for a household, and those that administrate and receive surplus as a part of a business arrangement (Wolf, 1966). Most peasants in San Rafael do not own the land but are employed by others. There is a difference between those that work the land, and those that own the land (Weber, 2010). Although I previously have stated that the peasants are small-scale cultivators, there are some large coffee and tomato fields in the area. However, rich families own these fields, and they hire local peasants to cultivate and harvest the fields. This reinforces the divide in the society between landowners and peasants, and illustrates how these two groups of people relate to and value their environment.

Landowners perceive the land according to exchange-value and the ability to accumulate profit. The landowners’ and consumers’ perception of landscape can be explained with the landowners’ passive interaction with the landscape (Okely, 2001). Through active interaction with the landscape (see Ingold, 2000), peasants perceive the land through function and use-value. In San Rafael the majority of those working the land belong to the poorest class. They depend
more on the sustainability of the landscape, and thus ascribe the landscape with value rooted in sustenance and endurance. The peasants are more vulnerable should the soil be ruined, since they come from poorer backgrounds. Those belonging to the same class encounter and live under the same conditions, as a part of a collective destiny. The difference of employment can add to the explanation of different priorities, regarding the state of the environment. As Stensrud (2013) indicates, a peasant is more vulnerable should the harvest be diminished due to, for example, drought than a large agricultural company. The difference of employment thus establishes different grounds for resistance.

Political divisions in post-colonial countries are often a result of ‘subgroups’. More explicitly, political groups, factions, and social groups, often emerge from ‘subgroups’, for example ethnicity. This is a determining factor related to position in the job market, job allocation, etc. (Wallerstein, 1991). This is similar to the working relations, the social groupings and the alliances, both political and social, in San Rafael and the surroundings. This can be seen both in traditional working relations between the landowners and those that work the soil, and in the domestic sphere. The upper and, to some degree, the middle class, employ people from the lower class for domestic chores, such as child rearing, washing, ironing, gardening, construction work and harvesting. It appears as if ‘subgroups’ and class association determine job allocation and residency. Those employed in the domestic sphere are usually women from the aldeas from poor backgrounds.

The Church
Both the Evangelical Church and the Catholic Church have congregations in San Rafael. In the urban zone the large white Catholic Church is the main church, but there are several other churches. There is at least one church in each aldea, and sometimes several representing both the Evangelical and the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church has played a vital part in aiding the resistance over the years. My informants would emphasize that it is the Catholic Church and not the Evangelical Church that stands by their side in the conflict that has separated the community. “We haven’t received one bit of help from the Evangelic Church”.

The Catholic Church is utilized as a physical arena for gatherings and hosting seminars, events, and lectures by different NGOs, in collaboration with the local community. I often sat for hours in the church, waiting for the pastor. Often other members of the community came by and this location became a valuable place to accumulate data under informal settings. This underlines the strong ties between the resistance and the Catholic Church. The church was one of the organizers in the attempt to organize a local referendum where locals could vote upon the mining matter, and the church as location has been and still is the center where those that oppose the mine hold meetings and gather.

The role the Catholic Church plays in the resistance movement in San Rafael is not unique in these the circumstances. During the Civil War (1960-1996) the Catholic Church revitalized itself and re-awakened as a modern Catholicism that engaged in matters on the communal level. As an answer to the unstable circumstances, the Catholic Church became involved in local politics, representing the local community and became a pillar in communal socioeconomic development. In the towns where the Catholic movement took root, the church allied itself with young potential leaders of the community, breaking the ties with the traditional hegemonic relations with town elites. These new relations aimed to educate and organize local governance and develop a new institutional framework, on which the society could function (Stepputat, 2001). The Catholic Church in San Rafael has, to my knowledge, not aimed to develop a new institutional framework. Still, the role the church has played is of no less importance and functions as a pillar for the society. Most importantly, through the churches’ collaboration with the resistance movement, those that are in opposition to the mine gain access to more than just a physical place to congregate. The Catholic Church is closely connected to the municipal office in Mataquescuintla, which opposes mining. The church also has close ties to those that aspire to gain political power in San Rafael through the mayoral election in the fall 2015.
Historical Context – Mine your own Business

Guatemala is a post-colonial as well as a post-war country, and is currently undergoing the aftermath of a 36 year-long Civil War (McAllister and Nelson, 2013). These two aspects have shaped the evolution of the Guatemalan State, thereby laying the framework for how the government relates to its citizens, as well as how the Guatemalans relate to the government. Solano (2005) argues that the Guatemalan state proceeds with colonial structures of racial inequality and power relations after nearly two centuries of independence. The neo-liberal economic model from the 1990s did not meet the expectations of bringing the Guatemalan economy out of the dark ages. The continued practice of few men in control of vast resources reinforced relations of inequality making the rich richer and the poor poorer (Solano, 2005).

Nelson and McAllister (2013) state that the violence demonstrated in the Civil War originates from the colonial era. The social structures imposed by the cross and crown laid the framework for the existing social structures of social inequality and racial labor extraction, which still permeate contemporary Guatemala (2013, see also Stepputat and Blom Hansen, 2001). After the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996 the government opened up the Guatemalan market for foreign interests. Lowering taxes and royalties ensured foreign direct investments (FDI), rather than ensuring equality and peace (McAllister and Nelson, 2013). “The Peace Treaty from 1996 hasn’t helped us, it has helped the oligarchy”, Sebastian states, affirming Nelson and McCallister’s thoughts of how the Peace Treaty opened the Guatemalan market up for international influences. “Guatemala is a fiscal paradise! The companies don’t pay taxes”.5 The enabling of natural resource extraction in the hands of foreigners can be regarded as the fourth wave of colonialism in Guatemala (Pedersen, 2014).

In the 1990s new legislation (La Ley de Minería) was created to attract foreign investors to reactivate the economy after the Civil War. The royalties were lowered from 6 % to 1 %, and taxes were lowered from 53 % to 31 % (Donis &

5 “Guatemala es un paraíso fiscal! Las empresas no pagan impuestos.”
Castillo, 2012, Solano, 2005). This law does not guarantee local participation and consultation (Aguilar-Støen, 2015), and 1 % royalty is divided into 0.5 % to the state and 0.5 % to the affected community. The law favors transnational companies and does not assure the protection of the environment through sustainable management, or development benefitting the local community (Donis & Castillo, 2012). A change in a variety of laws and regulations gave foreign investments room to grow (low taxation) and made Guatemala a fiscal paradise for foreign investors (Morales et.al, 2014). The lack of consultation and minimal payoff to promote community development generates disapproval amongst many locals in San Rafael. Paint jobs, plaques, and backpacks, are not sufficient according to one of the local teachers. What the local schools need are school materials, writing utensils, and notebooks, which there is a shortage of.

*The Guatemalan Civil War – La Violencia*

The Civil War in Guatemala started in 1960 and officially ended with the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996. The Civil War was the result of social conflicts culminating into armed confrontations between the military and the guerillas. The conflict was rooted in ethnic differences and political exclusion as well as the perceived injustice upon certain factions of society imposed by the state. These differences led to a 36 year-long civil war (Pedersen, 2014). The culture of fear that permeates the contemporary Guatemalan society originates from the violent history of terror and violence. During the war, more than 50,000 disappeared, their fait unknown to their families, and 200,000 died (Pedersen, 2014).

“The Civil War did not affect us in the same way as in the north”, Juan told me. The violent confrontations between civilians, the guerilla and the military occurred in the northern highlands, and not the southern lowlands. Still, the Civil War represents the action of the state and governments over the last half-century and this is the root of conflict. It does not matter which government or which public official was responsible for the actions that suppressed the majority of the Guatemalans. “They are all the same shit,” Juan said, when talking about the upcoming presidential elections. The presidential elections have lost many of
its constituents through decades of mismanagement. Several of my informants told me that they were not going to vote in the presidential elections. Local elections were considered of great importance and I emphasize this fact in chapter four and five.

Although the presence of El Escobal is part of the conflict, it represents only a small part of the challenge. Social relations are constantly constructed on local, national and international scales and continuously renegotiated due to the influence that links these scales together. This forges social relations between people, and between people and nature (West, 2006). From a wider perspective, opposition to the extractive industry necessitates a comprehension of local, national and international flows of supply and demand. From the top, international interests follow the demands on the global market. This international impact facilitates economic and political alliances between transnational corporations and national governments. Pedersen (2014) argues that post-conflict countries such as Guatemala are easy targets due to the fragility of the state institution, leaving them vulnerable for transnational influences and decision-making processes, thereby affirming Stepputat and Blom Hansen’s (2001) perception of ‘weak’ states.

Through describing an environmental landscape of politics this chapter has created a base of knowledge enabling the reader to comprehend the culmination of conflict in the area. A brief introduction to the country’s history creates a framework that fosters a political landscape where there is room for improvement according to my informants. It is clear that the locals aspire to a good life in the future. There is a continued competition for local water between the locals and the mining company. The next chapter digs deeper into the environmental landscape and the conditions it cultivates amongst local inhabitants.
Figure: 4. Local boy climbing up a dry riverbed.
III Water: Cultivating Resistance

“It is important with water that starts in these mountains,”6 Pablo tells me. Pablo is an environmental activist in his fifties who, for several years, has opposed the mining industry. Pablo was unemployed at the time I met him, but previously he worked for the municipality office in the sports department in San Rafael. Now, different organizations hire him on occasion as a consultant, often associated with the social conflict in the area. “Without the nourishment from the soil, we cannot live”7 he tells me. “The government wants the riches of minerals, the people want the riches from nature. It is important to have a balance with nature (equilibrio).”

***

Within anthropological literature, five themes have been central regarding water: 1) the elemental nature of water, 2) valuation, 3) distribution, 4) governance and 5) politics (Orlove and Caton, 2009). These five themes are also central in this thesis. The elemental nature of water symbolizes life and continuance of livelihoods. The value of water illustrates the root of the conflict. Distribution conflicts arise through the different standards of valuation (see Martinez Alier, 2001) as well as utilization purposes, thereby producing a demand for local governance and control. Governance is closely connected to politics. Considering that politics is the ability to influence distribution (Weber, 2010), politics controls access. These themes should be explored in relation to one another to grasp a wider understanding.

Access to clean water is still an issue that is fought for globally (see West, 2006, Kirsch, 2006, Poupeau, 2006, Hastrup, 2009). The aim of this chapter is to reveal the complexity of access and governance to local water sources, caused by incompatible interests between the local community and Tahoe Resources. Water is not only a source of life, but in this case also a source of conflict. Mining

---

6 "Es importante con agua que nace aqui"
7 "Sin los alimentos de tierra, no podemos vivir"
companies rarely compensate for their presence and utilization of natural resources, such as water, in the areas they operate (Kirsch, 2014). Access to water is vital to ensure the continued practice of local peasants’ livelihood, and a stable income. A continuation of their livelihoods represents financial stability which is usually one of the factors that determines a person’s degree of well-being (Fischer, 2014). The extractive industry competes with the local population for access and control of local water sources, however for a different use and application. Stensrud (2013) made similar observations in Peru where; “water, which is “born” in their territories, flows down to the coast, where others use it as an economic resource” (2013:36). This is comparable to Pablo’s statement concerning the importance of water that starts (nace) in these mountains which illustrates the relation between the local people according to functional value (use-value), as well as an economic resource (exchange-value). “The peasantry are afraid of losing their source of life in agriculture,” an informant stated, pointing to the peasants’ dependency on water. Although the purpose of the mine is to extract minerals, the process demands large amounts of water and thereby decreases the local water supply indirectly, as a result of the extraction process. Martinez-Alier (2001) argues that resource conflicts arise when ecological distribution is unequal between those differently empowered. In light of this argument, this chapter focuses on rising conflicts over ecological distribution. These conflicts illuminate the different standards of valuation of natural resources that create conflicting and overlapping desires of control and governance.

When I first traveled to San Rafael, environmental, political and social factors influenced my immediate impression of the landscape. In this agricultural landscape, the military presence and anti-mining propaganda created a presence of social unrest. There was a military garrison outside of Casillas, a town halfway between San Rafael and the capital, and armed military patrollers. Before I left for San Rafael my language teacher told me that the political agenda of the current government was an increase in police and military presence to fight petty crime and ensure safety and security. She did not think that the increased

*"El campesino tiene miedo a perder la fuente de vida de agricultura"*
presence of arms was the solution to the high level of crime in Guatemala (*no es la solución*). The anti-mining propaganda was as follows:

"Water and life is worth more than silver and gold. If you are intelligent don’t extract it" and "more than 98 % say no to mining".

These signs were placed at the entry and exit of most towns, including San Rafael. The posters symbolize opposition to mining as well as a community of resistance. This illustrates a changing landscape, constructed through human imposition and interaction (see Fischer, 2012). I was repeatedly told stories of how the area had changed from tranquility (*tranquilo*) to a more complicated state (*muy complicado*). New conditions for life can lead to fear and uncertainty concerning disrupted perceptions of place (see Basso, 1996). The disruptions caused by a potentially diminished future livelihood can explain why those affiliated with the resistance movement constantly changed their contact information and attempted to conceal their whereabouts. The military presence created a constant sensation of surveillance, which is not an unusual governmental tactic. This was also a strategy during the Guatemalan Civil War (Green, 1999).

**Farming for the Future**

The locals aspire to continue traditional farming in the area. Although tradition is often associated with historical continuity, many anthropologists have illustrated that cultures are constantly changing. For this reason, tradition can appear as continuity over time (Norbye, 2013, see also Green, 1999). This does, however, not imply that the peasants disapprove of change and innovation. It indicates instead a hope to preserve local traditions and livelihood through conserving the landscape by sustainable management.

---

9 "El agua y la vida valen mas que la plata y el oro, eres inteligente no te engañen" and "más que 98 % dice que no a la minería"
The resistance is based on environmental claims. Farming is the way of life and source of income for the majority of people in the San Rafael area. When asking my informants the reason for their opposition, they consistently answered the future of the environment, their family and their children. They wanted the same stability and tranquility for their children, as they had experienced when they were young. The emergence of large-scale industrial projects puts this harmonious vision for future generations at risk. They aimed to ensure the continuance of San Rafael and the surroundings as an agricultural area, not an industrial area.

My informants described San Rafael as a peaceful environment, beautifully situated in the middle of a green valley with optimal conditions for agriculture. Such visual perceptions of the landscape were shared by many, and illustrate their cognitive construction of the landscape through social interaction (see Basso, 1996). Previously, everybody knew and greeted each other on the street. This romantic and utopic image presented the pre-mining San Rafael that was disrupted by the construction of El Escobal. The wife of a man with strong ties to the resistance told me that when they got married several years earlier, they discussed living in San Rafael, or in her natal town. Her husband advocated that San Rafael was a beautiful village, peaceful (muy tranquilo) and that they should move there, so they did. Now, her husband was facing criminal charges and was currently in prison awaiting his trial. Both people in favor of and opposing El Escobal told me “this is political,” pointing to his oppositionist stance as the actual reason for his arrest. “So much for that,” she sighed, expressing her resignation with her tone of voice.

Places can be regarded as reminders of the past (Basso, 1996). The nostalgic connotations to the pre-mining San Rafael illustrate connections to the area. These connections are based on the soil’s ability to provide for a family through cash income and subsistence cultivation, but it also holds a heritage aspect. “This is where I grew up. I don’t have a girlfriend right now, but one day I want to marry and have kids. I want them to grow up here in the same manner as I did.”

Antonio 21 years old, still bore the marks of the bullet that had pierced his face
two years ago, in the violent confrontations in front of the mine's entrance, at the hands of the private security guards (Caso Rotondo). He used to be a mechanic but one of the bullets had grazed his nostrils creating chronic respiration difficulties, limiting his abilities for work. Antonio has perhaps come to realize his attachment to the area, as a result of disruptions concerning his future there and his continued engagement. Place is as much part of people, as people are part of place (see Basso, 1996). This is continuously reinforced through active engagement with the landscape. Mario, another informant asked me rhetorically, “What are we protecting? We are protecting the water, our soil, and the environment. Without water we cannot live; without soil we cannot work. Here human rights exist, but only in writing, only the words.”

When the perception of place becomes disturbed, as in San Rafael, the locals become preoccupied with the future (see Basso, 1996). Through ascribing emotional and nostalgic value to the landscape, a continuance of tradition represents a persevering society. Although, external influences and innovative measures to increase production have been taken (machinery, pesticide, irrigation techniques), peasants regard their mode of farming as traditional. Their mode of reproducing tradition through their livelihoods, reconstructs cultural practice to accommodate the new environment. Representations from the past thus create aspirations for the future.

**Perceptions of Time**

Perceptions of time can explain in which manner one interacts with the environment. Evans-Pritchard (1940), discusses the Sudanese Nuers’ perspective of temporal time, illustrating how the Nuers follow cyclical perceptions of time according to the two different seasons of the year - rain and drought. Their activities are conducted according to these two seasons, where abundant and insufficient water sources constructs different conditions for the Nuers’ social structure and interaction with their landscape and cattle (Evans-Pritchard, 1940). Likewise, the alteration of the environment between wet and dry season produces different conditions for life amongst the local peasants in
San Rafael, through increasing and decreasing opportunities for irrigation, and various activities. Cyclical perceptions of time can be understood through temporal activities, such as milking cows, planting and harvesting (Evans-Pritchard, 1940, Persoon and Est, 2000). Mario owns a fruit- and vegetable store. During the harvesting season he closes his shop to work the fields, thereby employing a cyclical perception of time as a framework for his activities, which are based on season. During the harvesting season, activities change, but not only for the peasants as I illustrated with Maria, in chapter two.

Cyclical perceptions of time through activities facilitated by the environment, constructs a framework within which society operates and functions. Simultaneously, linear perceptions of time (past- present- future) affected their motivation for opposition, through aspirations for the future. Linear time perceptions are often utilized to explain “future-oriented notions” (Persoon and Est, 2000:8). Through employing linear perception of time, a comprehension of the resistance movement’s motivations can be understood based on aspirations for the future, and the locals’ notion of a good life. The locals’ objective to maintain a viable environment for future generations can be comprehended through a linear perception of time, which enables future activities, simultaneously with cyclical perception of time, which dominates their current activities. Through utilizing both cyclical- and linear perceptions of time, I illustrate how cyclical perceptions of time govern the present moment, whilst linear perceptions of time govern the future.

**Landscapes of Resistance**

Pedersen (2014:188) argues that the “pro-mining climate in Guatemala” has created a birth of “landscapes of resistance” as a counterpart to the facilitation for foreign investments on national soil. Through participation in resistance movements, strong relations amongst fellow comrades are established through similar aspirations for the future, thus creating a new culture of resistance. This aspiration for the future originates from similar backgrounds, livelihoods and financial interests. The resistance opposing the *Tambor* mine is called La Puya.
The name represents a physical place that before March 2\textsuperscript{nd} 2012 was part of a beloved landscape for many locals, whilst for the mining company was a dirt road intersection. This landscape thus symbolized two different landscapes according to people’s interests and activities. Through valuing different aspects of the landscape differently, conflicting interests of utilization and claims for the landscape arise. The name La Puya emerged through a physical blockade cutting off the mine’s trucks from entering the mine. The land transformed into a landscape symbolizing the La Puya resistance (Pedersen, 2014).

Alejandro, a male informant in his forties local to San Rafael, told me that the local environment was undergoing irreversible changes. As I aim to illustrate throughout this thesis, the locals partake in an emerging culture of resistance based on the principle of preserving society, through conserving the environment. Douglas (1996) implies that perceptions of nature are recognized according to which culture one belongs to. This supports Alejandro’s statement concerning fear of irreversible changes. The context concerns incompatible interests that lead to colliding ecologies (see Kirsch, 2014). Therefore, the resistance movement aims to prevent depletion of the area’s natural resources before the environment has undergone irreversible change. Alejandro perceives nature based on the knowledge he has obtained through being part of an imagined community. This motivates him, and others, to resist.

I perceive Alejandro as partaking in two cultures that exist parallel to each other, simultaneously as they are intertwined. The first culture is constructed through livelihood, encompassing those with similar positions within an economic system, much like class (see Wallerstein, 1991). Class interests follow one’s position in the market and also construct one’s financial interests accordingly (Weber, 2010). This cultures survival depends on the environment. The second culture is the culture of resistance, which I elaborate further on. In short, this culture encompasses people with similar experiences, aspirations and perceptions of their position in the world, and is not limited by geographic location. Douglas states, “each vision of nature derives from a distinctive vision of society” (1996:90). This can explain Alejandro’s opposition considering his
“vision of society” derives from agricultural livelihoods. Thus, a continued society entails a continued livelihood, through an enduring landscape, and vice versa. The landscape is therefore perceived according to the society's function and structure. Ingold (2000) states that as meanings are ascribed to landscape, landscape is infused with inherent connotation, representing a testimony of life and dwelling. This does not contradict my perception of Ingold’s neglect of history in the construction of places. Ingold acknowledges that history sits in place, but is more interested in synchronic knowledge. I understand Alejandro’s, and others’, perception of the landscape as including both historical factors (diachronic) and, temporal activities (synchronic), in the cognitive construction of the society’s structure and function.

The emergence of resistance movements illustrates how meaningful areas lead to cohesion, as a result of disruptions and dislocation (see Basso, 1996). This correlates with Kirsch’s (2006) description of the Yonggom’s close connection to their land which was challenged by the emergence of the OK Tedi mine. Through practicing different forms of magic, the Yonggom people develop an understanding of human environment relations (oecology, see Evans-Pritchard, 1940) creating totemic relationships based on descent and connections to the landscape. A perception of human nature interaction affects management of sustainable resources in a sustainable manner (Kirsch, 2006). In Guatemala, through actively constructing a landscape that represents opposition, the La Puya resistance gives appropriate meaning and value to the landscape through physical endurance and persistence.

**Nacimientos – Source of Life**

Pablo and I were hiking up the hills behind San Rafael on the other side of the valley from where El Escobal lies. I asked him how access to water affects the peasants in the area, “Where does the water the peasants use to irrigate their

---

10 *Oecology* also indicates an economic aspect intertwined in the human environmental relations. The relations are constructed through engagement with the landscape and utilization of resources. The mode of engagement (livelihood) thus introduces an economic aspect through providing. Oecological relations extend beyond mere social and ecological relations (see Ingold, 2000) and include economic relations as well (Evans-Pritchard, 1940).
fields come from?” “They come from the nacimientos. During the dry season, the farmer relies on water that starts (nace) from the hills. They don’t have running water. During the rain season it’s not a problem, but during the drought they depend on these rivers. On this side of San Rafael there’s still a lot of water, but on the other side,” Pablo points to the hills on the other side of the valley where El Escobal lies, “several nacimientos have gone dry.”

Apart from contamination of water sources, the largest consequence of the mine’s presence according to a representative from MadreSelva, a Guatemalan NGO concerned with environmental issues, is the loss of natural water sources in the hills. San Rafael does not have sufficient water sources to meet the needs of both the locals and the mine. Below is a short introduction that explains the utilization of water for extracting and processing minerals. As many locals claimed, many nacimientos have gone dry year round, caused by tunnel excavations in the hills and extraction process (la mina saca el agua).

**Excavating and Processing Minerals**

During the process of extracting minerals from the ore, cyanide (Cn) is utilized to separate mineral particles from the ore. This process is called a cyanide wash. The new fracture surface of the rock undergoes a chemical reaction (oxidation), due to the exposure of oxygen and water. The cyanide washing of minerals requires vast amounts of water (Ålmås, 2016, personal communication). According to the Feasibility Study of El Escobal, all water used for processing and operation comes from domestic water wells (Tahoe Resources, 2014). This process can explain why some nacimientos have gone dry year round.

In general, there are two types of rivers; those that are seasonally controlled by surface water supply, such as rain, melting of snow, and lakes, and those that are supplemented with water from underground water. The rivers receiving water from underground water sources run year round, independent of the rain season (Ålmås, 2016, personal communication). A challenge occurs, however, as some of these rivers have gone dry, reducing the water supply for the local population. The tunnel excavations drained off or sealed the ground water, affecting the free
running rivers on the surface negatively. On a fieldtrip, one of my informants explained to me that the water levels of Laguna Ayarza actually had risen over the last years pointing to tree trunks that now were partially under water. This supports the belief that the tunnel excavation is disturbing the subterranean natural water flow. The Laguna Ayarza is located near San Rafael, in a volcanic crater with lush hills surrounding the lake.

In addition to decreased water supplies, the locals were concerned about contamination. Long-term exposure can create chronic effects on the environment. Episodes of pollution resulting in short-term contamination, should have no lasting effect on the environment; rather it is chronic leakage that creates problems (Ålmås, 2016, personal communication). Douglas (1996) presents four different perceptions of nature; 1) nature is robust, 2) nature is unpredictable, 3) nature is robust, but only within limits, and 4) nature is fragile and pollution can be lethal (1996:87). I utilize perception 3) and 4) to explain local objectives of preserving the environment, while utilizing it. Although these two perceptions in one way contradict the other (robust versus fragile), combined they can be regarded as complementing each other. The perception that nature is robust, but only within limits indicates nature’s limitations and vulnerability to pollution, and links nature with fragility. This combined perspective gives a motivation for resistance. The goal is to limit pollution within the environments capacity of renewal, thereby eliminating the potential hazard of irreversible damage. This can also be regarded as a form of reciprocity between nature and humans. Ingold states that social relations are a sub-set of ecological relations. “Ways of acting in the environment are also ways of perceiving it” (2000:9). The peasants have attributed emotional value to the soil, due to the soils ability to provide and sustain life. The soil provides for them; therefore they must protect the soil. This is done through mobilizing resistance.

It is during the initial construction phase that the probability of affecting the surrounding environment increases and the environment is most vulnerable to irreversible damage. This is an environmentally unstable phase where the landscape is opened, causing erosion and transport of potentially harmful
During construction, episodes of arsenic (As) exposure can occur (Älmås, 2016, personal communication) which can affect your health. In April 2015 the General Manager (Gerente General) Carlos Roberto Morales Monzón of Tahoe Resources was incarcerated. His imprisonment was based on accusations of industrial contamination of the water, during the construction phase of El Escobal (Mining Press 2015, Rights Action, 2015). One of the objectives of the resistance has been to create awareness of the environmental consequences of mining. Monzón’s incarceration gave a sensation of accomplishment amongst those opposing and motivated a continued struggle.

"The problem is that we don’t have any laws covering the topic of water. Industrial contamination is possible because there are no laws and reforms ensuring water usage and quality.” (Quote from an informant).

The Guatemalan newspaper La Hora writes that there are no laws protecting the water supplies in Guatemala. In ten years the amount of pollution can be decreased considerable, if the government authorize a “water law” (ley de aguas). La Hora reports that at least 40 % of the country’s water resources are contaminated according to the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MARN). A push for new legislation concerning the protection of water sources has existed the last 50 years, but has never reached passage (La Hora, 2016).

In addition to a petition for protective water laws, there is a demand for dialogue between Tahoe Resources and the nearby communities, especially those downstream or connected to the same water sources. “The company has never approached the locals,”11 Fernanda claims. Fernanda is a woman in her thirties from a community close to San Rafael. As her community lies on the other side of the valley and higher in the hills, her community is not yet impacted to the same degree as San Rafael, but another license for exploitation has been granted to Tahoe Resources. Fernanda and others in her community hope to shut down the operations before they initiate, reducing the risk of contamination and loss of water sources. Fernanda’s resistance can be explained by her desire to preserve

---

11 “La empresa nunca ha llegado a socializarse”
the environment for future use, by preventing irreversible effects, rather than repairing it (see Douglas, 1996). Although the past has influenced the present, the present influences the future. Following this perspective, the locals incorporate the future in their strategy and perception of the current situation.

**Buying Compliance – Gift Giving**

One day, Fernanda’s daughter had returned home from school with a new backpack, given to her by the mine. “They are offering us gifts,” Fernanda told me, referring to the mining company’s strategy of collecting signatures through gift giving. Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch (2015) has made similar observations. With frustration in her voice, Fernanda said that when her daughter came home with the backpack, she had returned directly to the school refusing the gift. “The mine says that they are helping local education, I can manage without this backpack!” she said.

According to Mauss (1995), giving gifts entails three obligations: 1) obligation to give, 2) to receive, and 3) to reciprocate. This indicates that gift giving represents a commitment to reciprocate (Mauss, 1995). The receiver is thus indebted to the giver. Accepting gifts from the mining company symbolizes acceptance and agreement (*de acuerdo*), henceforth allowing the mining company to proceed. Fernanda, however, does not agree, nor does she accept. She eliminates her duty to reciprocate by refusing the gift and thereby erases her obligation to reciprocate. This can be considered as a form of resistance and illustrates her attempt to unveil the hidden meaning behind the mining company’s gift giving. The refusal to accept a gift can be considered as a refusal to enter into an alliance (Mauss, 1995). Fernanda and many others have, therefore refused to accept gifts from the mining company. Access to water is more important than gifts.

**Tracing Water – A Fieldtrip with MadreSelva.**

Rivers and *nacimientos* are communal property. Hence, the claim to access and control of water sources lies in the hands of the municipality. This reinforces the demand for local governance. The following paragraph describes a fieldtrip with MadreSelva in the hills. The aim of this empirical description is to highlight the
challenge the mine poses and shed light on environmental, social and financial aspects of the conflict.

We drove up in the hills on a steep dirt road next to the mine, and parked at the end of a coffee plantation. The purpose of the trip was to visit the different nacimientos in the hills to assess their condition. There were two representatives from MadreSelva - Pablo, and a local man and his son to guide us. Slowly we hiked up the hills into the dry woods. The trails were narrow and steep, often on the ridges of the hills. Below were steep fields of cut corn. As we were walking higher the trails became increasingly hazardous. Branches and thorns ripped skin or cloth as we pushed through the woods. We were often down on all four burrowing through the thickets. This was the old trail to an artisanal mine Mina Mercedes in the hills, and the trail was still used by the locals to tend the nearby fields and cattle.

In some areas the trees were cut down. “Why do they cut down the trees?” one of the representatives from MadreSelva sighed. “Don’t they know that without trees there is no water,” referring to the landscapes drainage and decreased ability to irrigate itself when it rains. Deforestation can increase erosion and decreases the soil’s ability to store water (Stensrud, 2013). A man we had encountered working in the fields responded and said that they need food; this is their livelihood and they had to cut down trees to clear out terrain for fields. This illustrates one way peasants interact with nature. By cutting down the trees the peasants also disturb the natural flora and fauna, creating deterioration in the environment rather than leaving it untouched. This demonstrates how the perception of the environment can be distinguished between the value of conservation and of function. The peasants’ perception of the environment correlates with the sustainable approach to resource management; to not exploit the ecosystem’s resources past the ecosystem’s ability to renew itself, rather than the protective manner of conservation, where areas are exempted from human interaction and engagement (Kalland and Rønnow, 2001).
The peasants have a *use-value* perspective, which does not override sustainable management according to themselves, in comparison with the presence of El Escobal. Although both perceive the environment according to function and ability to produce, the ability to produce is perceived differently dependent on the different standards of valuation. Ingold (2000) emphasizes a connection between making a living, which in this case is farming, and how people relate to their environment. Although the peasants also disturb the balance of the landscape through cutting down trees, their engagement with the landscape is still small-scale and therefore more sustainable than, for example, mining according to the locals.

Ecological relations between organisms in the environment and cultural life are made through a symbiotic relationship that is projected through interaction with the environment (Ingold, 2000). The ideological perception of living in harmony with mother earth (*madre tierra*) therefore warrants contestation. The peasants do, in fact, affect nature through the use and cultivation of the soils resources, though on a much smaller scale than the extractive industry. I argue that the peasants aim to utilize the renewable resources through function (agriculture), without exceeding the environment's sustainability. Therefore, it is not a question of *if* the peasants affect nature. It is a question of the level of disturbance, thereby distinguishing small-scale agriculture from large-scale industrial projects. This follows Douglas's (1996) fourth categorization of nature as fragile. The locals acknowledge the natures fragility through engaging with nature in a sustainable manner.

We visited four *nacimientos*; two of them are dry year-round at the present moment, independent of the rain season. One of the rivers that originated from a *nacimiento* was completely dry (Figure 4). The utilization of local water for cyanide wash and sealing subterranean rivers has left this wide river dry. The riverbed was approximately two meters wide at the widest. We tried to hike up the riverbed, but some areas were so treacherous and steep that we hung unto branches on the side and assisted each other so none of us would fall.
After visiting the *nacimientos* to assess their condition, and finding them either dry, or greatly reduced, we trekked down the hill and drove back to Mataquesquintla for lunch. By the main street entering the town we passed armed military men standing with approximately 50 meters space between each officer on both sides of the street. I asked what was happening; I had several times observed this when taking the bus between Mataquesquintla and San Rafael. “They are controlling, in order to stop trafficking of narcotics and fight terrorism,” Pablo told me. “You see, we have a lot of that going around here, Bin Laden and me are best friends,” he added sarcastically. This illustrates the feeling many of the locals experience due to the government’s criminalization, military presence and, surveillance and persecution of those active in the resistance.

After lunch we drove up in the hills on the other side of the mine. We were going to a wake (*oración*) for a man who was shot the previous week at the bus station by a passing car. Although I was told that the police were investigating the murder, the popular version credited his death to his opposition to the mine. The deceased was considered an environmental activist in the area.

There is a form of financial solidarity, established by social solidarity, facilitated through participating in resistance movements. Being part of the resistance movement in addition to similar class affiliations (see Wallerstein, 1991), produces solidarity. A donation was made to assist the family as the provider of the family had been murdered. Financial donations to express solidarity are usual, and assisted families within the same network. Being part of a resistance movement presented certain dangers, as illustrated above, but it also forms ties of solidarity which creates a sense of safety amongst fellow participants.

After the wake we drove to a friend’s house in the same *aldea*. He was facing criminal charges, accused of threatening the female teacher at the local school. She was in favor of the mine and accused him of threatening her due to her stance. He sent his kids to school in San Rafael, even though the local school was located 100 meters from his house. He stated that the teacher was giving unequal attention to the children at the school, discriminating against the
children of parents opposed to the mine. He said that he was afraid of just walking in the streets. If he, by chance, met her in the streets she could accuse him of looking at her wrongly. This demonstrates how uncertainty and suspicions can influence the local society when environmental conflicts arise. When parents take their children out of school because of their teacher's affiliation or support to the mining company, it is a symbolic act and a strong message against the mining activity. It is one way in which the resistance against the mining industry in the area takes form. Although the mine states that they are assisting and promoting local education, there are examples of the opposite. Linda, a teacher at another school told me that she had to switch schools a couple of years earlier. She had questioned the fact that the teachers were required to undergo different courses and re-educate themselves according to the mine's preferred administration. They were after all receiving funding from the mine. Linda had opposed this, and was therefore forced to change jobs.

At the end of a long day we arrived back in San Rafael, and Pablo, received an envelope with payment for his consultation services. Previously he was employed in the municipality office in San Rafael. When the current mayor was inaugurated 3 years ago he lost his job. "There was not enough money left in the budget," he told me. He was hoping he could get his job back if the new administration after the election opposed the mine, implying that perhaps it was not an issue of budget cuttings.

Both Linda and Pablo’s experiences with the job market are closely connected to the mining company. Their dismissal from their previous jobs could imply that the mine was demonstrating its power to remove people who did not agree or accept their values. This can be seen as a mode of undermining the resistance. Pablo worked at the municipal office, and Linda worked at a local school, both were employed below governmental branches. Thus, the relations between Tahoe Resources and the government, or the current municipal administration at that time are revealed. This illustrates perhaps how far the company is willing to go to ensure its financial interests.
The right to choose

The involvement of local populations in matters concerning political and environmental issues is relevant in an anthropological analysis. This highlights their ability to take part in global forces where they previously have been excluded (Kirsch, 2006). Solution strategies are formed out of their own limitations and possibilities. This illustrates the local communities’ social resilience and perseverance to maintain local livelihoods, traditions and the environment these factors derive from. Social resilience is the amount of distress a society can be exposed to, undergo and still be able to maintain the society’s character as it was before (Hastrup (2009). This is a process that illustrates the society’s ability to adapt within local prospects of “dwelling” (see Ingold, 2000), and demonstrates flexibility simultaneously as societal rigidness as they clutch onto the society's basic principle and mode of life. In San Rafael, three factors are important to accomplish good resistance: to inform, organize and react.

Access to Information

The lack of informed knowledge decreases the locals’ ability to make knowledgeable decisions. Information/knowledge is freely distributed. However, this information is flawed, deceptive and in some cases difficult to obtain several locals complained. The information that is easily accessible is the information published by the mining company. This was also visible in newspapers, posters, and the walls of schools. The schools were painted white with blue details, which were the colors of Minera San Rafael. There were also different slogans on the walls that highlighted out the aid the school received from the mine. Thus the school became a symbol of El Escobal.

The dissemination of information also requires participation. A few months after our field-trip, MadreSelva hosted a seminar in the Catholic Church to present their findings from our and other field-trips they had conducted over several years. The purpose was to inform the public of the consequences of the mines presence in the area. Arsenic (As), sulfur (S), lead (Pb) and aluminum (Al) were detected in the water sources. Pamphlets with the results of the study were
distributed to those attending, and large stacks were handed out to people from different communities so they could pass them along to people that did not attend the meeting. We were approximately 40 attendants. Pablo pointed out that few of the participants were from the urban zone of San Rafael. Most were from the aldeas or from Mataquesquintla. “This is the problem,” he told me, pointing out the problem of representation in San Rafael (cf. chapter four).

My informants told me that the reason many did not oppose the project, is that they did not know exactly how the mine affects the landscape. Therefore they favored the mine due to the economic benefits the mine could generate. This was why MadreSelva handed out pamphlets to people from each community, so that the people would receive information of the rising level of toxins in their water sources. Thus, handing out these pamphlets is a form of resistance. It was an attempt to add to and contradict the pre-existing information circulated by the mine. This can be understood as an attempt to impede the one-sided information currently distributed to the community. MadreSelva aimed to reveal the actual environmental effects that many were unfamiliar with.

The Ability to Organize

The ability to mobilize and organize was something my informants aspired to achieve. They wondered how the company claimed it had a social license to operate, when they were not allowed to organize public referendums where those influenced by mining operations could express their opinion. In other communities, local referendums were held and a close majority voted against mining operations. A local referendum had been in the organizational phase in San Rafael, but the military state of siege stopped it in 2013. San Rafael has not been able to organize one since. The main obstacle then became one of leadership (tema de liderazgo) and organization.

The Power to React

Reaction necessitates participation. Participation is a way to illustrate your engagement in a matter and to demonstrate your will. Participation is a
discourse where locals can engage and promote local development based on their own premises, through either social change or stasis (Eversole, 2012). The locals yearned to be in charge of their own reality by the formal process of voting on the premises of their own future, thereby inspiring a change from below. This indicates an aspiration for local empowerment. Formal processes such as local referendums create a legal framework of expression, either inhibiting or allowing operations to proceed. Mataquescuintla, for instance, has successfully halted the granting of licenses within municipality borders.

The lack of empowerment in San Rafael creates conflict. The loss of habitual natural resources is a global phenomenon that creates awareness of an increasingly unpredictable future amongst those affected (Hastrup, 2009). It is this vulnerability and unpredictability that mobilizes the local population. Future generations pay the price for the choices the present generation makes. Securing the future of the environment is synonymous with securing the future for one’s family. To achieve this, control over the area is necessary.

The local’s own perspective of the power relations between Tahoe Resources, the State and themselves, laid the groundwork for how they wished to remedy the situation. The aim was to organize and create a base of information accessible to everyone. The problem of misrepresentation was one of the main obstacles the locals wanted to resolve, as local newspapers often painted a different picture than the locals. I read several new and old newspapers, as the family I lived with had saved different articles over the years. The information presented in the newspapers presented pictures of Tahoe Resources as a major contributor to the local society. Those opposing Tahoe Resources characterized this as misrepresentations, since a signature was required to receive these materials. The locals claimed that these signatures were misused and reused, as the signatures proclaimed they were informed, and agreed (de acuerdo) to mining operations in the area. I asked how this could happen, wondering if people did not read the papers before they signed. They told me that the paper where they should write their signature consisted of several pages. The information was on the first page, the signature on the last page. That means that
the page with the signature could be used for other purposes. Even though I never witnessed this process, if true, this displays a mode of manipulation conducted by the mining company. The locals could be manipulated to support mining operations in the area without their knowledge. This correlates to Weber's (2010) perception of power through the ability to impose one's goals, when others in principle are against them. In addition to a display of power abuse and manipulation, this illustrates a level of skepticism in the community. I had been told numerous times that people were paranoid (their description). This suspiciousness also created obstacles in my attempt to contact the locals.

Local perceptions of the need for precious metals
To a varying degree, people all over the world, in some way or the other, utilize modern technology (Kaya, 2001), including the people from San Rafael. The families I encountered during my fieldwork all had phones; many had several cellphones at their personal disposal, and most were smartphones. They were well aware of the connection between mineral extraction and the production of cellphones, cars and television sets. With this in mind, they still opposed the extractive industry. Some might say this displays hypocrisy, but on the other hand this is just an example of life’s ambivalences and contradictions. From one perspective, this can be regarded as a “not in my back yard” (NIMBY) approach - a self-serving community reaction that opposes different modes of land utilization, supported by local beliefs of negative environmental impacts (Wexler, 1996). This could be seen as people’s reluctance to pay the price for technological innovation, simultaneously as they reap the rewards.

An informant told me, “The mining industry in itself is not a bad concept. It gives (allows the production of) cars, and telephones, but chemical mining is bad. It is too close to the people”. He understood the demand for mineral extraction. It was the extraction process, unequal distribution of benefits and proximity to communities he opposed. If the mine was located farther from human societies it would be better, he concurred. Lucinda, a woman in her forties living in San Rafael told me that mining in itself is not a bad concept. She understood that it
could create benefits for society. The problem was that the local community was not able to reap the benefits of the economic extraction enabled by mining. “It is the management of the resources that is wrong”. This is an example of contested perceptions of landscape. Whilst some prioritize the state of the environment to ensure its inherent value, others prioritize the benefits extraction of minerals produces, and therefore resist because of the asymmetrical distribution of goods. This underlines how landscape is perceived according to interaction, and correlates with Ingold’s (2000) assessment that there is a connection between making a living and how people relate to their environment.

Several smaller communities are directly adjacent to the mines fences, in addition to cultivated fields. This created obstacles due to the uncertain knowledge associated with pollution from the mine. “When we try to sell our produce at the markets in Guatemala City people don’t want to buy it. They claim it is polluted because of the mine,” one of my informants told me. “I have a little girl. If I don’t do it for myself, I do it for her. There’s less water. What are we to do? Here we sow coffee, onion, and chili. When the mine pollutes it falls down on our fields. Nobody wants to eat polluted food, dirty food. The mine is too close; it should be at least 70 kilometers away.”

If 70 kilometers is a sufficient distance, why do they not move? This can be answered through ascribing emotional attachment to the soil, as well as a nostalgic remembrance of the pre-mining San Rafael, and an aspiration to revert to that stage. Kirsch (2006) and West (2006) in Papua New Guinea, and Pedersen (2014) and Zarsky and Stanley (2011) in Guatemala, illustrate how people have been dislocated and displaced. Forced displacement has not improved the situation and is neither a viable, nor a desirable option for the locals. The citing distance between communities and industrial plants as a possible solution, does not battle the real issue.

The optimal vision of the future is dependent on maintaining the current state of the environment, to ensure the forthcoming generations’ viability. Stensrud (2016) states that when faced with potential future water crisis, people respond
differently according to how they engage with their environment. This leads to different political strategies. As previously stated, the locals affect the environment as well, but on a smaller scale. I interpret their environmentalism as a quest for representation and participation, and to some degree, local governance. Following these statements, perhaps it is not only mining in itself they oppose, but what the extractive industry represents: a missing voice in the decision making process. Through construction and initiating mining operations without local consensus, the locals can feel muted and powerless. This has generated resistance, which can be perceived as the locals’ political strategy. In itself, resistance can be regarded as a form of power, which allows the locals to express their disapproval and claim for local governance. The real issue can, therefore, be perceived from the locals’ point of view as being imposed with large-scale operations, without the right to choose. This does not diminish the importance of environmentalism; it only seeks to highlight the locals’ demand for autonomy as a result of fear for an unstable future.

The concern for the soil’s viability in the future motivates the locals. The facility was constructed with the purpose to ensure sufficient reclamation techniques. This was to ensure a low disturbance footprint to reverse the environment to its previous state in the highest degree possible and encourage vegetation (Tahoe Resources, 2014). Although this appears a viable solution, time will tell if Tahoe Resources uphold their plan. The locals, however, are skeptical because of their experience with another smaller mine in the area. Between Mataquescuintla and San Rafael the artisanal small-scale mine Mina Mercedes is located. When Mercedes was shut down, no prerequisites to hinder further contamination were set into motion. The mine was just operationally closed, not physically, and the mine continued to leak acid further contaminating the area, a representative from MadreSelva told me. This is one of the concerns amongst the locals. The scale of operation is significantly different and El Escobal is technologically superior to Mina Mercedes. Still, how Tahoe Resources will proceed with closure plans causes concern.
Concluding Remarks

Through illustrating opposing demands for access and control over local water sources, this chapter has explained how water can cultivate resistance based on resource conflicts. These incompatible interests derive from the area’s agricultural preponderance. There are different modes of interacting with the environment. This has generated different ways of viewing the.

The situation currently unraveling in the area, testifies to the establishment of social and ecological relations between people and between people and nature (see Ingold, 2000). As Basso (1996) has argued, place is as much part of people, as people are part of place. My informants’ connection to the soil and desire to manage their own resources are manifested and continuously demonstrated in their attempts to resist mining in their beloved landscape and home. Following Pedersen's (2014) statement concerning an emergence of “landscapes of resistance”, I proceed in the next chapter to further expand the concept into a culture of resistance, emerging on a translocational scale. I also explore the importance of local governance and how municipal power can enable or, undermine resistance.
Figure 5. *Encuentro Continental*, March 2015. Image shows participants listening to testimonies of those affected by the extractive industry. *El Escobal* in the background.

Figure 6. *Encuentro Continental*. Demonstration in the capital
IV Politics: Organizing Defiance

“Casillas, are you here?” the crowd raised their arms and cheered in response when their community was called out, “Mataquescuintla, are you here? San Juan Bosco, are you here? Nueva Santa Rosa, are you here?” This was repeated several times during the march in the capital against the extractive industry. After some time I realized that all the surrounding communities to El Escobal were called out, except San Rafael. I asked José, one of my informants why San Rafael’s name was not called out. He answered me, “they are here. They are just not represented. This is one of the problems.”

***

This chapter discusses the difference in the level of involvement between two neighboring municipalities close to El Escobal; San Rafael Las Flores and Mataquescuintla. The aim is to illustrate local perceptions of the lack of a missing voice in decision-making processes and ways to remedy this. As previously asserted, claims for local governance and empowerment are some of the effects of globalization and the extractive industry’s growth worldwide (see Hylland Eriksen, 2010, Kirsch, 2014). Demands for empowerment are, according to Martinez-Alier (2001), an instigator behind social conflicts affiliated with resource distribution. Support from the local political administrations is fundamental to obtaining political advantage to ensure local governance over the natural resources in the area. Poupeau (2006) argues that there is a disproportionate distribution of resources, generating global concern caused by unequal water access. Dismissing that conflicts arising from unequal distribution are tied to growing populations relative to limited natural resources, Poupeau advocates that these conflicts are a result of capitalistic policies. Water can thereby be regarded as an economic good that can be controlled through access or limitation. Water thus becomes linked to politics (Poupeau, 2006, see also Orlove and Caton, 2009). In chapter three, I demonstrated the importance of

---

12 “Casillas, presente?”
nacimientos for the locals. Stensrud (2013) states that cultivation dependent on rain is becoming increasingly difficult in light of global warming and delayed rain seasons. This emphasizes the need to control the nacimientos. Thus, the environmental aspect explains why the locals resist the mine’s operation, whereas politics explains the mode of resistance.

After the military state of siege in 2013, the mayor of San Rafael appeared publicly in support of the government’s military presence in San Rafael. Through this public affiliation with the mining company, many locals felt betrayed by their local administration. Luca, a man in his late forties was one of the victims from the Caso Rotondo incident (cf. chapter one). Luca thanks God for the strength to overcome this incident and says, “We continue the fight, but it’s not easy. I’ve talked to the local police. They tell me they don’t understand why we bother to fight. It won’t lead to anything, and the harder we fight, the harder they fight back” referring to the mining company. With sad indignation, Luca continues his testimony stating that the soil will become ruined for future generations. Alejandro interjects. Alejandro is a representative from the Catholic Church in San Rafael. Alejandro states that the church has been a vital part of the environmental struggle that started in 2012. “Guatemala has natural riches; it is necessary to protect them. Here there is oppression, discrimination and more.” Alejandro emphasizes that he is tired of the government’s role in this matter. “The government should support its people, but supports international corporations instead.” Luca nods his head in agreement and says, “Rights are denied to the people, and granted to the company.”

Alejandro and Luca stated this during an event hosted in the Catholic Church in collaboration with the Canadian NGO Rights Action. Twenty students from a Canadian university were on a field excursion, traveling around Guatemala and learning about different social conflicts from those that have experienced them. Juan has, through several years of active participation in the resistance movement, attained access to a broad network of international players. Although

---

13 “Guatemala tiene riquezas naturales, es necesario protegerlo. Hay opresión, discriminación y más”
this gathering continued in his house, Juan did not make an appearance. “Juan could not join us today. He's in the capital, consulting with his lawyer and preparing for his upcoming trial,” the representative from Rights Action told the gathering.

In San Rafael, the foundation for sociality lies in shared livelihoods and perceptions of landscape. Perceptions of the locals’ life worlds are threatened by the imposition of El Escobal, eroding social life and causing social disruptions (see Hastrup, 2009). This has led to a mutual involvement amongst local peasants and environmental activists. Through the continued presence of El Escobal and the threat it represents to the environment, an imagined community has emerged (see Anderson, 1991). I aim to illustrate the extent of this imagined community, through exploring its birth on a local level, and pursuing its movement from a translocational perspective.

“You are not even from here,” a representative from Tahoe Resources had told Cecilia on a previous occasion. Cecilia is a woman from another municipality than Mataquesquintla and San Rafael Las Flores. The representative had indicated to her that she had no business involving herself in the demand for local consultations, as she was not a local. Cecilia had answered, “Yes, I am not from San Rafael, but I live close by. This affects me as well, and my place;” emphasizing how environmental effects are neither limited nor contained within municipality boundaries. Ingold (2000) suggests that boundaries are not a condition for the composition of the landscape. Boundaries are created according to relations between humans. Hence, the boundaries created by municipality borders, which according to Tahoe Resources limits consultation rights, the locals regard as irrelevant considering that water, air and dust are transported and dispersed outside of these boundaries. The point Cecilia tries to make, illustrates the importance of viewing environmental conflicts from a translocational point of view, emphasizing the magnitude of environmental impacts.
Governing territory, controlling resources

The mode of controlling resources by governing municipality territory, distinguishes Mataquescuintla from San Rafael when it comes to the resistance movement’s ability to mobilize. Through local referendums, the municipality of Mataquescuintla has acquired legal precedence over Tahoe Resources. This indicates a form of structural power (Wolf, 1989) where the municipality administration, in accordance with the local resistance, is able to structure the settings in which access and control over local resources are subjected to their control. This has stopped the further granting of licenses of exploration and exploitation. The municipal office has achieved what Lewellen calls “true governance” (2003:4), which is control of territory and property within the boundaries of the municipality. Globalization has, according to Hastrup (2009), constructed new boundaries enabled by a disproportionate development of capital, trade, and surveillance. This has caused protective zones, and extractive zones. National boundaries are of less importance, as areas are appropriated boundaries according to their extraction abilities to produce profit. Licenses for exploration and exploitation are examples of this. Granting of such licenses allows the owner to control, extract and exploit the resources within the area they control. Tahoe Resources has gained access to an area of 100 hectares (Tahoe Resources, 2014), and seeks to expand: 23 other licenses have been granted in the area (Aguilar-Støen, 2015). This is why local governance is important, to thwart further granting of licenses and extraction enclaves.

Mataquescuintla conducted the only referendum where the entire municipality was united (vinculancia). In 2012 the municipality office in Mataquescuintla hosted an official referendum. An informant from the municipality office of Mataquescuintla told me that, with roughly 12 000 inhabitants, 98,42 % voted against the mining industry. This number was displayed on different posters along the road to demonstrate the unification and opposition in Mataquescuintla. Also, Mataquescuintla is the name of both the municipality, and the town (casco urbano), but most locals call the town Colis. However, the fact that the name Mataquescuintla was used rather than Colis, demonstrates the unification of the entire municipality, and not only the town. Neither the name San Rafael Las
Flores (municipality) or San Rafael (village/casco urbano) was represented in the same manner.

I was told that Mataquesquintla’s unification is a unique stance in Guatemala. Usually, in communities close to mining operations, societal division emerges between residents that oppose and those that favor mining. This is the case in San Rafael, but not in Mataquesquintla. Not only is the unification of the municipality’s inhabitants rare, it is difficult to achieve. This illustrates the importance of local politics. Without the support of the political administration, this unification would not be able to come about. “Many communities were excluded from the process of local consultations, they were not able to vote against or in favor,” José told me. There is a rising demand to be included in decision-making processes concerning development on the communal level. Exclusion from pre-consultation causes disputes, due to the mining companies’ lack of adequate consultation (Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch, 2015). Following Barbalet’s (1985) perspective of resistance as a form of expression, the municipal office functions as the means to mobilize, to express resistance, and voice opinion. During my participation in a four-day international event located in Mataquesquintla, I discovered the difference in representation and ability to mobilize based on institutional power between San Rafael and Mataquesquintla. Below follows an empirical description of my observations during these days. The following paragraphs illustrate the absent representation from San Rafael parallel with the strong support from the municipal office of Mataquesquintla.

**Encuentro Continental**

The participants gathered at dusk in Colis. It was the last day of the *Encuentro Continental*, an international anti-mining event. ALBA Movimientos, an international NGO working with social conflicts and movements across the continent, hosted the *Encuentro Continental*, in collaboration with the municipality office in Mataquesquintla. Several old American school buses (*Camionetas*) were lined up in front of the park. The international delegates were in one bus, and the Guatemalan participants were in the other buses. There were
so many buses that, on the road to the capital, there was a parade of buses. More buses joined our parade from different communities on our way towards the capital where we were going to demonstrate against the extractive industry (Figure 6). In the capital we created a long line and were told that the international delegates were to lead the march up front. Banners, speakers, noise-making toys and homemade posters gave a clear message that this parade opposed the mining industry.

There was a marked divide in clothing making it easy to distinguish between the different groups of people from all over the country based on dressing. There were several different organizations present distinguished by different organization flags. The Santa Rosa and Jalapa department was represented by, men in cowboy hats, boots, and shirts. The indigenous people from the highlands wore traditional clothing, with woven fabrics in strong and beautiful colors.

The clothing highlighted the different identities of the participants. It illustrates an extended network and the magnitude of the resistance movement, and collaboration between different organizations, communities and ethnicities; both ladinos and indigenous. Representation from nearby communities was demonstrated through community flags and speakers. Throughout the entire march, community names were called out to declare their participation. Being part of a resistance movement has little effect if they are not represented through active participation. Mere presence is not sufficient. The lack of representation from San Rafael during the march was visible and audible, as there were no signs of their presence, neither visible nor audible, in comparison to other communities.

I now understood why I had been recommended to live in Mataquesquintla rather than San Rafael. Although San Rafael previously had been the center of the struggle, this was no longer the current situation. Although many opposed mining in San Rafael, those opposing were not organized on a community level, as in Mataquesquintla. The reason for this decline in representation and active mobilization can be explained by two factors: the lack of municipal support in
San Rafael, and the Caso Rotondo incident following the military state of siege (cf. chapter one). This made many of those actively opposing the mine, increasingly aware of the consequences involvement in the resistance created. The resistance decreased (se cayó). The sense of collective mobilization disappeared, leaving a power vacuum benefitting Tahoe Resources. As the unification of the resistance movement declined, the previous collectivity dispersed, allowing the resistance to wither rather than prosper. Those that remained were now in diminished numbers and without formal organization.14 The lack of representation and physical mobilization from San Rafael gives the impression that there is no mining resistance there. However, this only seeks to illustrate how the municipal administration and the government have undermined the resistance in San Rafael. Public and official gatherings such as this demonstration, disclose little of the covert, or less visible representation. There is resistance against mining in San Rafael, but the resistance is challenged by the lack of representation and formal organization.

“It isn’t easy when our own government is against us” Magdalena says.
Magdalena is a woman in her thirties, living in a rural community outside of Colis. During the military state of siege, Magdalena was accused of causing the death of two police officers. One day, her neighbor came running to her house, shouting that the police were nearby, looking for her. Swiftly she put on her running shoes and ran into the woods. Fortunately, Magdalena was a marathon runner. She ran all the way to the capital, approximately 70 kilometers away. There she hid in a monastery and cut her hair short to change her appearance. She knew she could not return until the police dropped the charges. Pictures of her face and posters were placed around, on buses and walls in her community. Money was offered as a reward to those that could reveal her whereabouts. Magdalena received free legal aid from the same firm representing Juan in his

14 The plaintiffs from the Caso Rotondo incident are appealing to the Canadian courts rather than the Guatemalan courts in hopes of a fair trial, as trust in the government and the judicial system is virtually non-existent (Tahoe on Trial u.d.). This follows the trend of social movements that has occurred in recent years where individuals or social movements seek justice through international human rights law. This has evolved out of distrust to national courts’, and failure to impose responsibility (Sieder, 2001).
trial. After seven months in hiding she returned after a judge in Jalapa dropped the charges, as there was no evidence to support the allegations.

The first time I visited Magdalena in her home she told me this story and showed me all of her medals and trophies from previous marathons. She had previously told me “when you see where I come from, you'll understand why I fight”. This could imply that Magdalena looked upon her homestead and surrounding landscape according to its subjective-aesthetic features. This does not imply that Magdalena dismisses perspectives of landscape according to active engagement (see Ingold, 2000, Fischer, 2012), considering that this was one of the motivational factors for resistance. It simply indicates a dual perspective, encompassing both the functional value of the soil, as well as its esthetics. Magdalena's house was on top of a steep cliff. Below, goats and cows grazed in different enclosures, and hens and chickens roamed around freely. Wherever you turned, the green landscape displayed cultivated fields, wild forest, grazing fields and colorful flowers. This was an aesthetic landscape with traditional agricultural activity.

When Magdalena fled her home to evade her capture, other members of her community took care of her sister. Her sister was in need of constant attention due to mental illness. Felipé, a man from another community got dengue fever and was not able to work. Then, neighbors, friends and family took care of him and his family financially as Felipé was not able provide for his family during his illness. The principle of solidarity stands strong amongst Guatemalans, at least those with similar backgrounds and association through the resistance movement. Social alliances such as these are not uncommon (see Wallerstein, 1991) and are, in this circumstance, related to social class. This supports the interpretation of the resistance movement as an imagined community, where people are morally committed through mutual sense of community and social cohesion. The principle of solidarity extends across community lines and those affiliated with the resistance offer their assistance even without strong associations.
In the aftermath of the state of siege, two military garrisons remain, one in Casillas (on the road to Guatemala City from San Rafael) and one in Mataquesquintla, leaving San Rafael in the middle. The constant patrolling and occasional checkpoints along the road in the area create a sense of surveillance and military presence amongst the locals. The threat of action can be as fearsome as actual force itself. A display of access to military forces can be sufficient to demotivate resistance (Lewellen, 2003). Confirming what my Spanish teacher had told me in Antigua, José tells me “the government prioritizes security rather than, health and education. Water is a basic human right that many here don’t have access to.” According to Poupeau’s (2006), water can be considered as an economic good controlled by the state. Thus, the unequal distribution of local water supplies in favor of the mine creates local disapproval and distrust of the government’s ability to provide for its citizens. This leads to an increasing demand for local governance to gain control over resources within municipality lines.

The use of force during the state of siege can be considered as a failure of the state’s responsibility to provide security (Lewellen, 2003), due to the fact that the military invasion inspired fear, more than a sense of security. However, the military presence in Guatemala has resulted in a dualistic effect, undermining, simultaneously as it inspires. “Whatever the cost,”15 “my voice cannot be muted” and “as long as I draw breath” are some of the quotes from informants associated with different conflicts in different regions of Guatemala, displaying their determination to push through. However, a female activist who had experienced losses in her family due to her resistance role in her community, indicated that even though it is only their physical body participating, the body of the entire family is affected. This fear aspect is elaborated on in chapter five.

The distinguishing factor between San Rafael and Mataquesquintla is access to municipal power. The locals in both communities discussed the falls upcoming presidential and municipal elections with me. Winning the election creates possibilities for the resistance movement; they are one step closer to control of

15 “Cueste que lo cueste”
their area's resources. This is a process, however, not something that can be achieved swiftly. Gaining municipal power would improve the current situation immensely, and give the resistance advantages over the mining company that could prove valuable in the long run. There were large campaign posters on lampposts and buildings, and there were cars driving around with loudspeakers constantly campaigning for different candidates. One of the candidates for Mayor in San Rafael was a close friend of the family I lived with. He was the candidate who opposed the mine and a part of the solution strategy to achieve legal political power, thus pursuing the same approach to restrict access to resources within municipality lines, which Mataquescuintla pursued. Considering that I was an outsider and not familiar with the importance of local politics, I was more interested in the presidential elections. The political situation unraveling in the media was currently unveiling the high level of corruption within the governmental administration. My inquires were soon stopped as everyone I spoke to dismissed the topic quickly, whilst claiming that presidential elections were of no importance.

“They are all the same shit,” Juan told me, referring to the presidential candidates. Juan told me that the more money politicians appropriated for their political campaigning, the more compromises they needed to make if they were to win the elections (*mas dinero, mas compromisos*). Juan emphasized the relations between transnational companies, national elites and politicians to illustrate the economic agenda veiled behind the financial support for political campaigns. Alliances between elites and politicians are not a new phenomenon, but now the spiraling circumstances revealed the level of corruption that transpired internally in the branches of the Guatemalan government. The current government administration was under heavy inspection at the time of my fieldwork. Several ministers and even the vice-president had to leave office due to corruption charges. For every name removed from office, a new name came under scrutiny.

Still, I wondered why the local elections overshadowed presidential elections. This can be answered through a lack of faith in the government as an institution,
and not just the present government. Years of mismanagement and the perpetration of violence within Guatemalan society (see Green, 1999, McAllister and Nelson, 2013, Solano, 2005, Stepputat, 2001, Sieder, 2001), has constructed a perception of the government as the puppet of transnational interests. This follows the global trend of evolving social movements and mobilization amongst marginalized parts of societies (Hylland Eriksen, 2010). The circumstances in San Rafael are an example of one of several conflicts of large-scale globalized processes, impacting small-scale society which inspire resistance. This explains the local election's importance. The locals believed that governmental interests would always be parallel with the interests of transnational companies. As implied by Hylland Eriksen (2010), the nation-state could appear as too big to achieve a sensation of community, and too small to battle the larger issues. This indicates a political and social distance between the municipality administration and the governmental administration, and an even larger distance between local populations and the government. It is the local impression that the government will continue to favor transnational interests, rather than local demands. This underlines the demand for local governance. Achieving local governance could bridge the political and social distance between different levels of governmental administrations, as well as gain control of municipal territory.

Through local referendums the resistance believed that they could obtain legal precedence over the mining company. “Will you vote in the elections?” I asked Antonio, one of the victims of the Caso Rotondo incident. “The presidential? No, why bother. But I am voting for Roberto in the local elections” he answered. The time to declare their candidacy was nearing, and the talk of the town the last weeks were the upcoming local elections. “Roberto has a lot of support, but Leonel (the Mayor at that time), has a lot of money” Linda told me. Other informants expressed the same opinion of the circumstances. The role money played in politics was often emphasized to illuminate strong relations between political power, and money.
Locations

Access to a physical location to organize and mobilize, is a contributing factor that also explains the differing forms of social mobilization between Mataquesquintla and San Rafael. In Mataquesquintla, events were held in communal locations. The Encuentro Continental was held in the municipal hall, and the participants were accommodated on communal property. In San Rafael, the municipal hall is not accessible for the resistance. The official administrations opposition to the resistance and support of the mining company explains this. Therefore, the meetings and seminars are conducted in three different private locations: 1) the Catholic Church, 2) a private grass field in front of the mine, and 3) the house I lived in during my fieldwork.

The Catholic Church has been one of the main supporters of the resistance in the conflict between the resistance and Tahoe Resources. The Catholic Church functions as more than a physical location, the church also represents a congregation. According to Durkheim (1995), a church is a moral community. The physical church sets the frameworks where the community is able to participate and express itself (Durkheim, 1995). The church in San Rafael becomes a location of expression, symbolizing resistance. The church also functions as a shelter in troubled times. For example, during the military state of siege, Juan, the family father sought refuge in the church mere hours before police officers and military officials entered his house, claiming that they were searching for narcotics and weapons. When nothing was found, they moved on. Linda told me that they would never keep weapons and narcotics in their house, “Our children live here!” Several of those associated with the resistance movement had their houses searched and invaded. This could indicate that the police and military used their search for these items as an unfounded pretext to enter the homes of known resistance participants. The government legitimized the military presence as a means to fight organized crime, and this was their method of doing it. This illustrates different ways of perceiving activists, where depending on the perspective, people can be labeled as both a criminal, as well as a victim (cf. chapter five). Juan hid in the church for 22 days under the protection of the Catholic Pastor, and was not able to talk or visit his family. He saw the
need to stay hidden in the church until he and his family were sure that there was not an arrest order with his name on it as well. The local priest in San Rafael, as well as others had been trying to facilitate local referendums before this incident. It was after this that the initial streams of criminalization began. Those organizing the referendums in San Rafael were now identified on paper, as their signatures and names were on the organization papers. The Catholic Church has become the symbol of resistance. This supports Stepputat’s (2001) perception of the Catholic Church as an ally of the community, supporting local governance and breaking previous hegemonic ties with elites, during the Guatemalan Civil War (Stepputat, 2001).

The second location is a private grass field in front of the mine (Figure 5). This field is where those shot during the Caso Rotondo incident in 2013, were camping during the demonstration. The owner of the property has allowed the resistance to operate there during demonstrations and gatherings. During the Encuentro Continental a public speaking event was hosted on this field. On this occasion, local, national and international people shared their experiences. The international delegates shared experiences of displacement, violence, criminalization and persecution. On one of the previous days of this event, a ceremony for those that had been killed, disappeared, kidnapped and tortured because of their opposition was conducted. In this way, the people keep the fallen within the present. This day was a continuation of this ceremony only now the tales of those that had survived were heard. Local, national and international experiences were shared on this field.

This field symbolizes mining resistance. A physical landscape of resistance has been constructed through interaction between humans and nature (see Ingold, 2000, Fischer, 2012). Blood has literally been spilled there. The violent history of the area has manifested itself in the landscape and this is where Ingold’s perception of landscape, following his focus on synchronous knowledge, comes up short. This field now holds a historical component, symbolizing a past event, which is continuously relived through gatherings such as these. Ingold (2000) focuses on the construction of landscape through active engagement and
practical activities, such as cultivation. However, although I focus on this as well, these activities are not sufficient to thoroughly describe the emergence of landscapes of resistance, considering that the historic event constructs the foundation for the current events. The landscape is within a historical framework that facilitates continued engagement. This emphasizes the importance of incorporating history as an explanatory factor to describe current perceptions of landscape.

The third location was the house I lived in during my fieldwork. There, people gathered for official luncheons hosted by different NGOs in collaboration with the Catholic Church, usually following an event in the church. For instance, the luncheon hosted by Canadian RightsAction was held in this house. CALAS, a Guatemalan NGO, also hosted several luncheons there. Usually the luncheons were hosted for foreign delegations to disseminate information of the areas social conflict, but on some occasions, events were hosted solely for the benefit of the locals as a means to disseminate information, organize and discuss future strategies of resistance. This illustrated the strong position amongst the resistance the family father Juan held, as well as his network of affiliations with different NGOs.

Through these actions, perhaps the house can be considered as a *multivocal* symbol (Turner, 1969). The house symbolizes different things, for different people, based on different reference and social experience. For Linda, this house previously represented a home, a place for her family and, although this was not the case at the present moment (cf. chapter five), the house would normally symbolize security. However, through utilizing this house as a location where those opposing can gather, the house now also symbolizes resistance, which exposes the house to insecurity. Although high brick and cement walls enclosed the property, there were discussions of setting up security cameras as well, as Linda did not feel entirely safe there anymore. The house symbolizes both security and insecurity. This multivocality, depends on situations and viewpoint. Linda desires the house to revert to its previous stage, symbolizing only a home, rather than a location for resistance. This would eliminate the house's
multivocality, which Linda perceives as setting her family at risk. This is elaborated in chapter five.

**Rural versus Urban**

Throughout my time in San Rafael I participated in numerous events hosted in the Catholic Church in San Rafael. After some time, those participating became familiar persons and it was often the same persons who appeared, both in Mataquesquintla and in the capital during larger events. Several of the people participating were from San Rafael, but mostly they were from the aldeas and colonias. Participants from the urban zone of San Rafael were minimal. This was visible at the MadreSelva event in the Catholic Church (cf. chapter three), where the majority of the participants were from the more rural areas or other communities where access to local water sources are more pressing. Therefore, I was befuddled by the low attendance at this event, where an assessment of the condition of local water sources was discussed. However, It can be understood in the light of agricultural needs. Those from the outskirts of San Rafael were more in contact with nature and the majority were peasants, whilst in the urban zone, the majority were employed in different occupations. Ingold suggests that relations among people are ecological relations, as they are grounded in the interaction between living organisms such as plants, animals and humans existing in one single world (Ingold, 2000). The social relations I seek to explore can be explained as ecological relations through the peasants’ interaction with the environment they inhabit. The fact that the participation level is higher amongst those that reside more rurally can be explained by their mode of interaction with their environment through their livelihood (see also Stensrud, 2013). A peasant’s livelihood is more vulnerable to environmental degradation. Livelihoods that do not depend on the viability of the soil (teachers, bankers, bus drivers), are therefore less vulnerable should the soil be ruined.

The Mayor of Mataquesquintla stated during a private meeting that the farther away from the center you reside, the greater the needs are. No matter how small the center, if the living conditions are bad in the urban zone, it is worse in the
outskirts. His statement correlates with my observations. The general living standards were higher, the infrastructure was superior, and the economic backgrounds were stronger in the urban zone. The standard of the surroundings in which you dwell can affect how people relate to their environment, thus shaping how they struggle to uphold it. This explains why rural residents outnumber urban residents in the resistance movement in San Rafael. However, in Mataquescuintla, both the municipality’s urban and rural residents are united, as opposed to San Rafael.

Social divisions have emerged in San Rafael, both between those that are in favor of El Escobal and those that oppose. However, there is also a divide between those that oppose which can be explained through the level and mode of interaction with the landscape (see Ingold, 2000). A woman working at a local beauty parlor in San Rafael told me that the problem is not the mine in itself; it is how it is operated (está manejado). “There are so few advantages. If the mine had contributed with a new library, a new healthcare center and health offers it would be ok...[...]. The problem isn’t here. The problem is the government and the laws. The laws need to be changed. We are too small to have any form of impact. We don’t organize or protest,” she said. “There have been some demonstrations and protests” I said, “Yes” she answered, “but it isn't enough, or big enough. We are too small to have any weight; the change must happen out there, on a national level.” I asked her about the elections. She only shook her head whilst stating, “I don’t believe in change.”

This local woman addresses the issue of political advantages. Her statement that “we are too small to have any weight” illustrates her perception of limitation institutionalized in the society and supports the claim of local governance, which could deny the further granting of licenses. This can indicate a NIMBY16 attitude (see Wexler, 1996) and demonstrates a contested landscape of resistance. Mining has long been promoted as stimulating development (Kirsch, 2014, Solano, 2005). However, the pursuit of this development causes disputes, as none agree upon the correct approach to achieve this. Setting environmentalism

---

16 Not in my back yard
aside, the mines mode of operation and disproportionate distribution of benefits infuriate several locals. It appears as if some of those currently opposing would perhaps be more favorably inclined towards the mining operations, if the benefits were more evenly distributed. This does not, however, represent the majority of those that oppose, but aims to illustrate a difference of opinions and social divisions in the community, also amongst those that oppose the mine.

**Unification – Centered Forces**

I was told that unification and centered leadership was the reason for the success in Mataquesquintla. San Rafael was, however, still struggling to achieve the same unification. “It is a problem when there are many candidates for such a small area”, Sebastian tells me. Sebastian is young, in his early twenties. Before the military state of siege, he was part of a formal resistance organization in San Rafael. Now he works in Mataquesquintla, and participates in the resistance movement there. Our conversation is about the upcoming local elections for mayor. “When so many are running for election, the support is dispersed. People representing the same causes with the same ideology lose support and votes, because people vote for different candidates, so the chances of winning are smaller”. “How many candidates are there in San Rafael?” I asked. “Seven,” he answered, “ but here in Colis (Mataquesquintla) it’s different. It’s more united (es mas unida)”. Another man, Mario tells me “Here in Colis there are many collaborating, there is solidarity.”\(^{17}\) This indicates that solidarity amongst local residents is both the prerequisite for unification, as well as the reward.

One formal leader has accomplished this unification, thus inspiring his constituents to follow his lead (see Weber, 2010, *charismatic leadership*). Three days before the Encuentro Continental a man had approached Dr. Hugo Loy, the mayor of Mataquesquintla, asking him about the event Mario informs me. “To be a public person officially opposed to the mine is dangerous here, and hosting this event can create repercussions. Still he does it, he takes a stand,” Mario states. Loy tells me later that he has received much political resistance to his stance, and

\(^{17}\) “Aqui en Colis, hay un montón de colaboradores; hay solidaridad”
much external pressure, but he will not bow down to pressure. “The state is supposed to help, to support […] when we object, they answer by reprimanding us. Jalapa, Colis, Nueva Santa Rosa – haven’t signed and accepted the royalties from the mine. We manage fine without the financial aid to spur development. They are violating our autonomy, our rights to choose.”

The right to choose (derecho a decidir) is important, not only for Loy, Mario, Sebastian and others I have talked to. The ability to conduct informed decisions is amongst the highest priorities. As previously stated, environmental claims are often linked to mandates of autonomy and governance. In order to accomplish legal precedence, advantage is needed, and this advantage can be executed through access to power. Although this area is mainly ladino territory, and the ILO Convention no. 169 encompasses indigenous and tribal people, the principle is equally relevant regarding the right to choose. According to article 15.2 “consultation should take place[…]…prior to exploration or exploitation of subsurface resources” (International Labour Organization, u.d.). This area is not encompassed in the ILO convention. This has perhaps contributed to the areas’ being referred to as the “Forgotten East” (Aguilar-Støen, 2012:28).

The involvement of local populations in decision-making processes regarding the economic, social and cultural development of the area and themselves, necessitates prior information, the ability and framework to participate, and consultations to institutionalize their decisions according to the ILO convention (see Appendix 2). Mataquescuintla as a unique example, according to my informants, has successfully managed to accomplish this. The tool enabling this unification (vinculancia) is power through administrative legal power. The resistance in San Rafael aspires to achieve this form of power, in order to be able to structure the settings (see Wolf, 1989, structural power), following the example and success of Mataquescuintla. This they aim to do through personal power (see Wolf, 1989). In San Rafael, there is no official leader similar to Loy as the Mayor in San Rafael is in favor of the mine. There is, however, a political candidate, Roberto Pivaral, campaigning for the upcoming elections in the fall.
2015. Roberto is attributed with the same charismatic qualities as Loy, amassing local support to further the claim of local governance.

**Localized Events within Globalized Settings**

During the *Encuentro Continental* the focus was globalized. A few months after the *Encuentro Continental*, Sebastian and I were at a café in Mataquescuintla drinking coffee. He asked me what I thought of the event. I answered that I thought the event “perhaps was a bit too international”. He nodded his head and said that the event was supposed to be a forum for exchange, and to establish relations with others who shared similar experiences in relation to the extractive industry. “I was hoping to learn more about San Rafael and the situation here,” I told him. What I did not realize at that moment was that I needed to see San Rafael and the unfolding situation there, in light of other similar circumstances on a much larger scale. Sebastian’s brother, Javier had once told me “If we don’t protect San Rafael, we don’t protect the planet.” This statement can be seen in light of networks and alliances between fellow oppositionists, as an instigator for participation, as well as local perceptions of globalization and its effects. One of the international delegates participating in the Encuentro Continental was a young Brazilian man. “We need to nationalize the movements. Brazil is a large country. What happens in one part of the country is not known by the other part of the country. We need to create an international network (*red internacional*) so we can unite and work together.”

Foucault argues that relations of power extend beyond the limits of the ‘State’; therefore the analysis of such power relations must extend beyond national borders (1980:122). Numerous anthropologists have emphasized the necessity to explore local processes within a globalized context. In this instance, relations exist between the State, and transnational companies. People living in rural areas, are affected by multi-scaled political and economic processes (West, 2006). This necessitates a focus on multi-scaled relations to obtain a fuller

---

18 “*Si no cuidamos San Rafael, no cuidamos la planeta*”
comprehension of transnational processes that affect local populations. I have aimed to explore how these relations’ influence local populations.

This perspective necessitates acknowledgment of the relativism of boundaries and supports an extension of relations (imagined community), to answer to these translocational power relations. The La Puya resistance is constructed in relation to the mining company, simultaneously as La Puya is connected to resistance movements opposing the Marlin and El Escobal mines. Tsing (2002) argues that places are constructed through connections between different places. In light of this argument I advocate that so are movements. The resistance movements are constructed in accordance with each other and, are reinforced and connected through similar causes and shared experience.

Portraying San Rafael as an untouched landscape where the locals live in harmony with nature, with a low disturbance footprint and closed off to the outside world would be a wrongful image. In fact, it is the local’s perception of their place in the midst of global processes that constructs their attachment to the landscape. Large-scale processes imposed by globalization, impacts social relations on a local level, and it is important to see these two processes as intertwined, rather than mutually exclusive. New identities and cultures emerge from advancement in trans-localization, illustrated by the network of people merging through landscapes of resistance in different localizations. This can be understood as a process of an emerging community where people and communities are connected through a mutual commitment, and not by physical interaction. My experience from the Encuentro Continental was that people gathered from different countries to exchange experiences. Through this process of exchanging experiences, relations were forged between fellow participants, and formed a mutual committed feeling of fellowship (see Anderson, 1991). The framework for these relations was already constructed through an imagined community. This process of sharing has constructed a culture of resistance manifested on a global level, which expresses itself on a local level, and crosses the lines of ethnicity, gender, age, tradition, nationality and geographic location.
This *red internacional* the young Brazilian man had spoken of, already existed, evidenced by the level of international delegates from different parts of the globe participating in the Encuentro Continental. The challenge was to react, to retaliate, and to articulate viable mobilization with actual advantages. The matter of unification that Mataquesquintla had accomplished was requested on a larger scale. Rather than projecting mining as a model for development and modernity, as promoted by the Guatemalan government (Pedersen, 2014), Mataquesquintla was promoted as the standard for shutting down this supposed form of development. First stop, San Rafael Las Flores.
**Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has presented the difference between two municipalities’ resistance movements. Access or restriction to administrative power establishes possibilities or challenges concerning social mobilization. I have illustrated that there is a rising demand for acknowledgment and autonomy amongst local populations in close proximity to mining operations. The *Encuentro Continental* which I attended was a forum for exchange of information, but most importantly an arena where social relations were established. It has been my aim to demonstrate the magnitude and the extent of resistance movements which emerge on a translocational scale. The relations forged through experiences such as these have established a new form of community, present worldwide, and manifested on both local and global levels. People are increasingly connected through imagined communities, and united through shared experience and aspirations for the future. The ability to mobilize in Mataquescuinlta is the result of formal leadership, and the resistance in San Rafael aspires to achieve the same by electing Roberto as mayor in the fall election. This is, however, challenged when Roberto is arrested. The next chapter explores how experience with criminalization, both directly or indirectly through family members, create different perceptions of risk and reward within different families.
**V Criminalization: Suppressing Opposition**

“This is their strategy,” Isabella stated. “The opposition is criminalized. Everyone's affected by this.” By “everyone,” Isabella includes the entire family and not solely the active participants in the resistance movement. By enveloping the entire family as collateral damage, Isabella illuminates potential social repercussions caused by resisting the extractive industry. Another elder from San Rafael, Marisol, shares her experience with criminalization. Her two sons have, for several years, dedicated much energy to the resistance movement. The last months have been affected by her eldest son's criminalization. When I met Marisol in the church one of the times I was waiting for an audience with the priest, I asked her about her eldest son's trial. “He tells me that everything is fine, but he doesn’t always tell me everything, he only tells me it will be ok,” she answered. “Yes, Juan does the same with Linda” I replied. “He doesn’t want her to worry and tries to downplay the situation to remove stress.”

***

This chapter illustrates how participation in resistance movements affects everyday life, and challenges family relations. Association and participation in politics and organizations can create certain “dangers” for those involved (Stepputat, 2001:304). This leads to differences of opinion concerning risk and reward within families.

People opposing the mining industry have experienced being removed. Some people affiliated with the mining resistance have lost their jobs or felt pressured to resign (cf. chapter three). However, there is another mode of removing resistance: criminalization. Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch (2015) state that criminalization of environmental activists appears to be a countrywide strategy pursued by the government and the mining companies to silence mining resistance in Guatemala. This chapter presents some of the social effects of criminalization. Experience with criminalization can diminish resistance and
motivate retraction or, it can motivate further opposition. This establishes a divide between those directly and, those indirectly tied to the resistance. Sentiments confronting this experience are expressed differently according to social position, gender and roles.

This chapter explores two different criminalization cases - Roberto, the mayoral candidate, and Juan, the father in the house I which I lived. One repercussion of criminalization concerns the family. Most of the local men who opposed the mine did so to ensure a stable future, giving equal weight in the matter to both the viability of the environment and their families’. Their struggle for the environment was thus done on behalf of others. However, the aspiration for a secure and stable future is affected by the uncertainty caused by involvement in resistance movements. This presents a paradox that I aim to explore. The chapter proceeds with the political and social consequences criminalization can impose. The last section shows some of the social consequences of criminalization.

The establishment of relations is grounded in the locals’ position in an environment through experience and interaction with each other (Ingold, 2000). A changing social environment manufactured by emerging resistance movements thus establishes a new reality. Through terms of function, Ingold distinguishes between a ‘reality of’ – the physical world observed by a neutral observer, and ‘reality for’ – the world constituted in relation to its inhabitants (2000:193). Following this perspective, the ‘reality for’ creates a landscape of resistance, through the purpose of conservation. Roberto’s position in San Rafael is facilitated through his political and environmental stance, fashioning his social relations accordingly. The empirical example below illustrates how Roberto’s position becomes contested and reinforced simultaneously, through the mode of interaction with the social environment. The importance of solidarity between friends, family, neighbors, and co-oppositionists maintains and constructs new relations of affiliation, further structuring the concept of the culture of resistance introduced in chapter four.
Roberto’s arrest

I hear commotion in the living room. Linda walks into my room, saying that Roberto has been arrested. I walk into the living room and see Linda and Roberto’s wife, Camilia, with her adolescent daughter. They are distressed, and Linda tries to phone different people. Roberto was accused of stealing a grey pick-up truck from a man working for the mine, they tell me, and that he had been taken to the local police station in San Rafael. After some minutes of conferring, Camila and her daughter leave for the police station. Linda continuously calls people to spread the news. Over a course of time the garden gate becomes a revolving door of people coming and going, and the phone line is constantly busy.

Every phone call generates a new number to call and the information spreads like wildfire. I ask Linda if we should go to the station. It is only a couple minutes away, and we could keep his wife company. Linda tells me that it is dangerous. “They are there, watching and keeping track of who shows up in support of Roberto.” Groups of people were gathered outside the station in support of Roberto; however, Linda did not want to show our presence. “This is how they gather intelligence of the mining resistance, by taking your picture and mapping associations within the mining resistance,” she continues. I ask who they are. “The miners (los mineros),” she tells me. The phone rings again, after Linda hangs up she says to me that Roberto was now accused of ordering an assassination.

November the preceding year, a 19-year-old boy had been arrested, tried and found guilty for the murder of a man. The boy was imprisoned at El Boquerón, the regional male prison in Santa Rosa. Now, Roberto was accused of ordering this murder. The deceased was affiliated with another political party than Roberto and this was used as motive for ordering the assassination. Whether the pick-up was stolen or not was not mentioned again. The locals understood the ulterior motive of Roberto’s arrest due to his position amongst the resistance, as well as his candidacy for mayor. The candidates needed to declare their candidacy in only a few weeks. They reasoned his arrest as a display of power.
from the government and Tahoe Resources, and exemplified the ability to suppress resistance.

The phone rang again, Roberto has been sent to El Boquerón. Camila had not been presented with arrest papers at the time of his arrest, which I was told was a breach of procedure, but usual. The judge ordering his arrest was Patricia Carol Flores. Flores has experience with several cases and conflicts in this area, between the local opposition and Tahoe Resource. Flores is also the judge responsible for the military state of siege in 2013 where she ordered and signed 19 arrest orders. Some weeks after Roberto’s arrest, Flores was investigated for corruption, money laundering, illicit gain and other related offences (International Justice Monitor, 2015). Many of the locals considered Roberto to be a strong mayoral candidate. Roberto had much support within the resistance, considering that his potential victory would provide San Rafael with a political administration opposing El Escobal. According to the locals, even amongst a few that favored the mine, Roberto had been arrested based on unfounded accusations.

“Éste es una injusticia, sí éste es político”
“This is an injustice, yes this is political” (quote from one of the villagers regarding Roberto’s arrest)

Roberto’s arrest generates a distressed ambiance. Linda is very concerned, not only for Roberto, but for her husband Juan as well. She is calling Juan to tell him to be careful. Linda expresses a fear that this will happen to Juan as well, again. Juan has had different charges filed against him over the last couple of years, and is currently under investigation. In his current trial, Juan was accused of threatening (delito de amenazas) a man working in management for Tahoe Resources at the El Escobal mine. The plaintiff stated that Juan had approached him at an alumni party for previous graduates of the university where Juan had received his degree. There he stated that Juan had threatened him on his life because of his employment at Tahoe Resources. This is elaborated further on.
Aspects of Criminalization

The similarities of the government’s and transnational company’s strategies against social protests illustrate the extent of, not only social conflicts in general, but also how this cooperation tackles the demands of social movements in Guatemala. I refer to transnational companies, rather than singling out Tahoe Resources, due to the wide spread use of this strategy on a national level.

Confronting social protesters often involves legal actions against individual community members (Støen and Bull, unpublished). For example, the man (plaintiff) currently accusing Juan of threats is an employee of Tahoe Resources. This is not the first time Juan has been legally charged by Tahoe Resources’ employees, and he is not alone in experiencing this approach of confronting social protesters in the area. In addition, one of the plaintiff’s lawyers is also a Tahoe Resources full-time employee. This is the lawyer that represented Tahoe Resources in the water contamination investigation. The day before Juan’s first hearing, Juan and I discussed the arrest of the General Manager of Tahoe Resources for industrial contamination. “Tomorrow you will meet the lawyer who is defending the General Manager. It is the same lawyer who works for the man accusing me of threats,” Juan told me. This correlates with Støen and Bull’s (unpublished) implication, that legal charges are utilized as a strategy to thwart the resistance and, illustrates direct ties between criminalization of local activists and Tahoe Resources.

In pursuit of development through mining, transnational companies and Guatemalan governments have legitimized their approach to silence the resistance through criminalization and the physical use of force (Pedersen, 2014). Although the concept of resistance is not synonymous with conflict (Barbalet, 1985), in circumstances such as these, conflict permeates the resistance. In addition to criminalization, many experience suppression caused by intimidation. Roberto’s arrest can be divided into two different aspects of power and resistance. The first aspect concerns Roberto’s political position in the area as a mayoral candidate opposing El Escobal. Many locals agreed that his arrest was the result of a political scheme. If Roberto won the election, the entire
balance of power between Tahoe Resources and the local population, could shift in favor of the resistance and Tahoe Resources could lose their current control over local water utilization. Although this would improve the situation, the removal of an already existing industrial plant would be difficult, and the locals were aware of this fact. The aim was therefore to deny the further granting of licenses, or accomplish retraction of already granted licenses, in order to prevent environmental degradation, rather than repairing, or even worse, let the environment be exposed to irreversible damage. Although more licenses have been granted in the area (Aguilar-Støen, 2015), the construction of industrial plants had not yet been initiated. This provides possibilities for the locals.

The second aspect of criminalization illustrates how Roberto’s position in the community is perhaps perceived as a threat by Tahoe Resources. This displays a dynamic of power and resistance, and how the opposing sides strive to undermine the other.

As a continuing practice from the Civil War, those opposing the extractive industry in Guatemala are labeled as an “internal enemy” and those opposing can be perceived as a threat to the political, social and economic elites (Støen and Bull, unpublished). However, assigning the label criminal to a person can construct a dualistic perception. From another viewpoint, the image of the criminal can be described as an innocent victim or rebel, portrayed as society’s scapegoat, through criminalization. This image derives from the evolution of a naïve and archaic ideology framing the criminal/victim as the young wolf of future revolutions (Foucault, 1980:130). From this perspective, Roberto can be regarded as either a criminal or a victim. The arrest of Roberto is one of several cases of criminalization in the area, with ties to mining resistance.

Roberto’s arrest illustrates the public (political) and domestic (family) consequences of opposing the mining industry. The public aspect is presented

---

19 This happened in San Juan Bosco, a nearby aldea, as the license had a faulty ESIA (Environmental and Social Impact Assessment). The locals celebrated with fireworks.
20 As the court in most cases has no evidence to support the presented allegations, most are released or acquitted in due time.
through his arrest by the state. The domestic aspect is demonstrated by Camila's distress concerning her husband's arrest, but most strongly by Linda. Linda's reaction to this situation was colored by her pre-existing sentiments opposing her husband's involvement in the resistance. Before the construction of El Escobal, Linda actively opposed the mine. However, when licenses for exploration and exploitation were granted, Linda came to terms with the situation knowing the effects participation in resistance movements generate. Linda has acquired this knowledge through her translocational network of association and admission to an imagined community. The expectations, the consequences, the use of resources and energy, and time-consuming dedication affect family life. This provided incentive to withdraw her opposition and acknowledge Tahoe Resources' license to operate. Tahoe Resources ability to impose their will on others when they, in principle, are against them illustrates the current power dynamics in the community (see Weber, 2010).

On the eve of Roberto's arrest, old sentiments of fear and anger resurface in Linda as she paces back and forth, while calling Juan. The dial tone continues to ring as Juan fails to answer his phone repeatedly. This does not reassure Linda, and while she paces, she mumbles sternly that he needs to withdraw his participation from the resistance (no involucrarse). Linda tells me that he needs to think of his family and not the environment as noble as it is, revealing their difference of priorities. His choices affect the entire family and they receive the consequences. In light of Fischer's (2014) characterization of commitment to a purpose as the source for the good life, this indicates a different set of values and aspirations. Perhaps Juan experiences a sensation of accomplishment and superiority, connected to his participation in a meaningful project. After all, it goes beyond narrow self-interest and pursues a larger cause (see Fischer, 2014). Linda, however, has a different perspective of a good life. This illustrates how Linda and Juan, value various aspects of life differently. Juan values committing to a larger cause, thereby building a meaningful life through struggling for the environment, whilst Linda values family life, security, and stability, which are in one perspective, the same goals as Juan's, but with different methods of achievement. All of these aspects are endangered through participation and,
even their house has become a *multivocal* symbol (cf. chapter four), symbolizing both security and insecurity.

Linda illustrates how the repercussions of Juan's position as an oppositionist affect their lives differently. "He was not here" Linda says with force in her voice, "he was not here when the police and military was crowding the streets and eight of them entered the house searching for him." Juan had left hours earlier and was hiding in the Catholic Church. The police have no jurisdiction in the Catholic Church, Juan told me on another occasion, and the police could not enter and search for him there. Støen and Bull (unpublished) claim that the Catholic Church has been portrayed as the root of social conflicts in circumstances such as these and given a role as an active agent against the extractive industry. This could also be perceived as a form of establishing the church as an “internal enemy” (Støen and Bull, unpublished, see Foucault, 1980). However, I agree with Støen and Bull, in asserting that this is a wrongful image. Based on my own observations, the role of the Catholic Church in San Rafael was a passive support role rather than an active instigative role. Many have sought shelter in the Church in situations similar to Juan's in 2013. As I discussed in chapter four, it is known that the Catholic Church supports local empowerment on a communal level.

The consequences of affiliation with the resistance affect Juan as well as his family. However, Juan has made a conscious choice to be a part of the resistance, unlike his family who are involved due to Juan’s opposition, and not their own. Fischer (2014) states that in the pursuit and effort of realizing ambitions, independent of success rate, a sensation of accomplishment is attained, thereby establishing meaning for the participant. Adding to the mutual sense of achievement, I interpret the principle of solidarity and the construction of strong relations amongst fellow participants as a tempting incentive to participate.

Roberto's political relations in the public sphere are intertwined with his social relations in the domestic sphere. Roberto is both a politician and, a family man. His family experiences the consequences of his participation as a result of his
public position, thereby eliminating a boundary between these two spheres. In these instances, even though the nuclear family takes no part in the resistance, they are entangled in the potential repercussions caused by indirect involvement. This affirms what I previously had been told: that the body of the entire family is affected, and not only the physical body of the participant.

I have indicated that fear of a loved one surpasses the fear for oneself and, the fear of repercussions can be a powerful motivator to retreat (see Lewellen, 2003). Moore (1994) implies that the threat of violence can be regarded as a means of social control. This indicates that fear of violence or repercussions can be sufficient motivation to retract resistance. In the highlands among Mayan families, the Civil War eroded social relations. The war reshaped communities, creating division and established fear and distrust between community members and families. The civil patrollers and military commissioners were often local men in charge of surveillance. This created a state of fear amongst the locals; not knowing whom to trust creates divides amongst and, between families. (Green, 1999). Similar patterns of reformed social relations appear in San Rafael, and this illustrates how the effects of violence can establish new conditions for life.

The locals continuously experience the threat of force through the military garrisons and military patrollers and checkpoints. However, what I found most intriguing from my informants’ retellings of past events, was that those directly affected through arrests or physical violence, were not the ones most influenced by fear. Those indirectly affected, through the arrest of another family member were the ones most influenced by fear, demotivating further resistance. Therefore, fear caused by previous experiences can be perceived as a means to obtain social control, which affects pre-existing social relations and social structures in society. The display of force utilized by the government during the Civil War in general, and, during the military state of siege in particular, has accomplished a continued state of fear amongst many of those directly or indirectly affected, where they are continuously faced with past events. This is one of the reasons why exploring conflicts such as this, necessitates historical comprehension in addition to synchronic knowledge. Roberto’s arrest did not
only establish fear within his family; fear resurfaced amongst the entire resistance movement. Roberto’s arrest could be an isolated event, or, it could be the start of another wave of arrest orders, giving the resistance movement flashbacks to the military state of siege. The following days after the arrest testified to a reawakened state of mobilization.

A few days after Roberto’s arrest, Juan and a male friend of the family arrive in the late evening from Jalapa. As they enter the house, Juan announces that they will leave again shortly. I ask where they are going, and the family friend says they are going to another local mans’ house that could be in the same situation as Roberto. I ask Juan if I could join them. Hesitantly, he answers yes. As I get into the car, Linda joins us.

We soon arrive at a house. I did not know who lived there, nor was I given the chance to learn. As we get out of the car to enter the house, Linda hastily climbs into the drivers’ seat and says “Hedda, get in, get in” while gesticulating that I should get in the car rapidly. Stressed by the situation I hastily seat myself in the seat behind the driver, thinking there is insufficient time to go around the car. I perceived the situation as time sensitive because of their erratic behavior. Linda drives swiftly, racing through the streets. We stop outside a large gate. Linda knocks on the gate and a woman I do not know opens. Several other females are present, including Camila, and I then realize we are at Roberto’s house. This is one of the occasions I experienced my female gender as forming the settings of my participation. I was limited to the female gathering of the evening, and denied access to the male gathering. Although my access to the female gathering provided valuable insights to the women’s perception of the circumstances, I still wonder what I could have learned if I had gained access to the male gathering.

Inside the gate is an open garage next to a one-story house. In front of the house is a lawn next to a brick layered area that leads to the open garage with enough room for two cars to park. Linda, Camila, myself, and five other women unfamiliar to me were present. Divided into two groups Linda and I first talk to two of them close to the garden gate. In hushed voices as if we were afraid of
being overheard and bending our heads together as if we were sharing a secret, I listened to their conversation. The timing and the potential problems complicating Roberto’s mayoral candidacy was the topic, and they all agreed upon the political aspect of Roberto’s arrest. He will now have problems running for office. However, Roberto has a lot of support and lawyers willing to help, so he could pull through they agreed.

Five of the women leave and there is only Linda, Camila and myself left at the house. We walk further into the property, into the open garage and seat ourselves on some sofas. Although we are farther away from the garden gate we continue to whisper. Linda looks at the gate where the other women had just left, and asks Camila if she trusts all the women who had been present. Two of the women are sisters-in-law of the man currently accusing Juan of threats in his current trial, implying with her words that they could be here for another reason than solidarity. The divide caused by the mine becomes illuminated by Linda’s skepticism towards these women. When we are about to leave, Linda leans over to Camila saying that Lucas, a close friend of both their families, and four others, will drop by between six and seven in the morning to discuss the strategy for Roberto’s release. She must not tell anyone they are coming. When Lucas knocks on the gate she must ask who it is before she opens the gate. Only if Lucas answers must she open.

**Strangers on the streets**

Employment for Tahoe Resources has brought a migration of workers to San Rafael. There are now “strangers on the street”, in contrast to the pre-mining San Rafael where everybody knew and trusted each other. As demonstrated above, old members of society were also skeptical towards each other, as a result of the social division. Different individuals warned me that I needed to take care when walking in the streets. I could be perceived as a Tahoe Resources’ employee considering the fact that many of their employees are foreigners, or as a researcher or activist, writing about the potential horrors transpiring in the area. Both those in favor or opposed could potentially hurt me. “We are kind of racist in that regard,” Pablo said, as we were hiking in the hills surrounding San Rafael.
This correlates with Green’s (1999) account of civil surveillance, where rifts in social relations caused societal divisions. This resulted in fear and a high level of distrust in the northern highlands and the same skepticism is visible in San Rafael. Even families that had lived there for many generations were skeptical, not only of newcomers, but also of neighbors, friends and, even family.

***

One of the aspects of criminalization and violence inflicted upon activists in the area was their loss of income, either through imprisonment, through fleeing rather than being imprisoned, or, through injuries on the body decreasing their ability to work. For example Antonio (cf. chapter three) could not continue as a car mechanic due to his respiration difficulties from the bullet during the Caso Rotondo incident. Lucas, the family friend mentioned above, also had to flee during the military state of siege. Linda told me that a few days earlier, she, Juan, and their children had eaten in a McDonalds restaurant in the capital. Suddenly, a picture of Lucas was displayed on the television sets inside the restaurant, where a government minister blamed Lucas for the social upheaval in San Rafael.  

After Lucas’s picture was displayed on national television, Lucas was forced to flee, to escape prison. This happened twenty-two days after his first-born son was born. Lucas was on the run for seven months, living in different parts of Guatemala, before he could return to his wife and son.

Lucas cultivates tomatoes, chili and coffee, but tells me that being in the resistance movement presents financial difficulties and obstacles regarding employment. For example, during his seven months of fleeing, he could not earn money to provide for his family. “I had faith in my country, I worked for my country,” now Lucas emphasizes that he feels betrayed.

The first eight days were the hardest. I couldn’t talk to my family. I only called my mother on Mother’s Day in May. After that I talked to my family once a month, but

---

21 Now, this minister has been forced from office because of corruption charges. This pleased many of my informants.
22 “Yo tenía fe en mi país, trabajé por mi país”
I could not meet them and see them or my baby. There were moments when I cried. There were financial losses, I couldn’t work. It was hard coming back without money. I had doubts. I didn’t want to work. I started working six months later.

Being able to provide for one’s own family is nearly synonymous with being a man in Guatemala. “The man always pays” Sebastian told me every time I tried to pay for our coffee during different encounters. There was more to being a man than sex; being a man was also a status. To be a man holds a number of sociological expectations of how he should be and act and how he display his role front-stage and back-stage with his family (see Goffman, 1992). Losing the ability to provide for one’s family can therefore contribute to some of the strains some men shared in their reintegration into society, upon return from prison, hospitals or hiding places.

As for Roberto, he was acquitted after spending almost two weeks imprisoned at El Boquerón. I had interviewed Mario earlier in the evening the day Roberto was released. He told me that they were driving down to El Boquerón at nightfall to celebrate his release at midnight, and I asked if I could come. A parade of nearly 20 cars, microbuses and pick-up trucks joined. Some of the pick-up trucks contained up to 14 people that I could count. When we arrived back at Roberto’s house there was a large bonfire in the street outside of his compound. The extensive celebration created an ecstatic atmosphere. Roberto thanked God and his family for the strength to overcome this in his thank-you speech, also proclaiming that there would be a political event following a mass (misa) in the church the next day inviting everyone to join. Most political candidates hosted their events in the concrete communal park in the center, but Roberto collaborated with the church, reinforcing the ties between the Catholic Church and the resistance.

Criminalization – Institutional Power

As we have seen, criminalization was the strategy that was exercised by institutional power to silence the resistance. Juan’s trial started April 16th, the week before Roberto was arrested and continued every other week until June 3rd. Linda accompanied Juan to every hearing, except one, due to the family dog’s
illness. Linda was familiar with everyone present in support of Juan during the hearings, except different international representatives from different organizations such as AcoGuate, Human Rights Watch (HRW) (see Appendix 1), and different freelance journalists. Having representatives from AcoGuate and HRW functioned as an insurance should anything occur during demonstrations, seminars, referendums, hearings and other events where local populations opposed governmental impositions, such as mining. Representatives were present at request. This indicates how local resistance movements perceive the police and government, since they feel the need to have international delegates overseeing the situation.

With some variation, the people present during the trials were always part of this translocational network. This made me wonder why it was safe to show up at Juan's court dates in support, but not at the police station when Roberto was arrested, when Linda had told me to stay clear of the area. What was the difference making one occasion safe, and the other unsafe? I realized after some time, that it was not the occasion in itself, it was the people I was with. Had Juan or any other male oppositionists been present the night of Roberto's arrest, I doubt they would have stayed clear of the police station, but Linda, though already tied to the resistance through her husband, would not willingly incriminate herself.

***

Juan's experience with criminalization illuminates the direct ties between his position in the resistance and Tahoe Resources. This I will illustrate by describing the events of his trial and explore some of the social implications. At each of Juan's hearings, the small courtroom was filled with people standing in solidarity with Juan. The plaintiff, however, was solely accompanied by his lawyers and there were no family members or friends of his present. Below is a presentation of three of the different hearings in Juan's trial.
Court Day 1.
His eyes flicker as they scan the room. His hands are placed restlessly on his thighs while he is seated next to a desk. In his dark suit and combed hair he looks professional, but his appearance bears the mark of distress and he appears not comfortable with the situation. Three other men approach the desk. They look more at ease with the situation as they sport and casually seat themselves next to him. I then realize that the man I thought was one of the plaintiff’s lawyers is the plaintiff himself. Slowly the room fills up with people. Most of them are familiar to me as they are friends of the family and are either from San Rafael or nearby areas. After an hour and a half, the judge calls for an intermission. One of the men representing the firm defending Juan asks different people in the room if they could give up their seats after the intermission. Others in solidarity with Juan are waiting outside, as the courtroom does not have the capacity to seat all those that showed up for the hearing.

Court Day 3.
One of Juan’s previous criminalization charges resurfaced. The previous accusations filed against him were based on an affidavit where 18 women working for Tahoe Resources at that time, accused him of harassment and threats (femicidio) allegedly due to their choice of workplace. It was Juan’s lawyer, Hugo, who had summoned two of the women who had signed this affidavit several years earlier. Both of their testimonies during the cross-examinations had similar answers, even though only the woman in the witness stand was present during each of the cross-examinations. The other woman waited outside. Hugo asked the same questions to both of them. He asked if she (they) knew this man. They both answered that they knew of him, but did not know him personally. Hugo continued and asked if they were friends or enemies. “Neither,” they answered. Finally Hugo asked about the affidavit they had signed accusing him of personal harassment. They answered that they knew they signed a paper accusing someone, but they had no personal ties or relation to the person in question. I find it puzzling that these women signed a paper accusing a
man of personal threats, when they never had met him personally. This is the point Hugo aimed to make.

Court Day 5. Last day of Court
The lawyers from both sides and the district attorney (DA) all present their closing arguments. The DA discusses Minera San Rafael and questions the relevance for this case. Minera San Rafael has been given much attention during each of the hearings. The plaintiff’s lawyer puts a large stack of papers on his desk. The papers are all previous accusations against Juan and are meant to present an example of his character. To threaten a person’s life is a threat to his future, his family and should be taken seriously the plaintiff’s lawyer states. He also discusses the validity of the testimony of the two women from the femicidio case and how their fear of the accused made them bear false witness during this trial. Then, Hugo is given the stand. He discusses the motive behind this case drawing a parallel between Juan’s environmentalist stance and the legal accusation. The object is to shift the focus from the alleged threats against the plaintiff, to the fact that this case is a strategy utilized by the mining company to criminalize activists, in order to pacify or cultivate fear amongst the resistance. By making an example of Juan, the aim is to discourage further resistance. Hugo discusses some of the inconsistencies in the plaintiff’s arguments, where they had mixed up the dates of the alumni party, where the alleged threats had been made, and where the plaintiff had gone to university. This would not make the plaintiff eligible for an alumni party considering that he had not studied at that university. Later, both the plaintiff and the accused are given the chance to represent themselves one last time before the intermission, followed by the verdict. The plaintiff starts with a retelling of his life before the alleged threats, how peaceful it had been. Moving on he highlights other conflicts between Juan and other community members, emphasizing that this is not an isolated case. Finally, he mentions the fact that there were Swedish and Norwegian representatives present during the hearings. The firm representing Juan receives financial aid from Norway. The plaintiff states that Norway and Sweden have sent representatives to court to oversee the finances and lay the groundwork for
future financial donations. I was the only Norwegian present at the hearings, except Court Day 1 when there was another Norwegian girl from HRW present. The Swede was a representative from AcoGuate. Neither of us was present to conduct fiscal investigation.

These three hearings demonstrate various aspects. First, there is a correlation with the accusations against Juan, in correspondence to his environmental stance and ties to the mining company. It also illustrates the continued strategy of the mining company to silence resistance, illustrating the recurrence of Juan’s experience with criminal charges associated with Tahoe Resources. The fact that the lawyer representing the plaintiff was the same that represented Tahoe Resources in the industrial contamination case (cf. chapter three) reveals the relations between Tahoe Resources, the plaintiff and Juan. The continued presence of co-oppositionists demonstrates a strong network and solidarity relations. This reinforces the perception of an imagined community and translocational network.

The hearings allowed me to reflect on the difference between male and female approaches and perspectives of resistance movements. The majority of the Guatemalans appearing in solidarity during Juan’s trial were mostly male. This does not mean that females are excluded from participation in opposition movements. I understand the male domination during the hearings as an illustration of the male gendered dominance of the network he was a part of, thereby excluding women from this event based on affiliation, and not on gender as a principle.23 Also, it is important to note that these observations are based on a small percentage of resistance movements in general, and I came across many active female resistance participants with the same perceptions and approach to battle the extractive industry as the males. However, there are females that do not make a conscious choice to be a part of a resistance movement, but are involved indirectly through family members. I previously had been preoccupied

23 Støen and Bull (unpublished: 11) state that female participation and organization has increased since the Peace Process in the 1990’s, especially participation in movements opposing the extractive industry in Guatemala.
with the resistance movement in general; the motivation for their resistance (chapter three), how they resisted (chapter four), and the consequences of resistance, i.e. criminalization, which is the focus of this chapter. I had therefore not reflected on gender and how indirectly involvement affected the family on a micro-level. I had been preoccupied with exploring consequences on a communal level. Thus, I shifted my attention and focused on a gendered division, both within and outside of the resistance.

**Gendered Opposition –To Participate, Or not to Participate**

Even though Linda was familiar with most of those present during the hearings, she appeared uncomfortable each time. Still, there was something more than just nervousness. Small comments, and what I perceived as disapproval of the situation, demonstrated her thinly veiled opinion of the matter. “After the trial” she said, “after the trial he needs to back out.” Linda was sick of her and the family’s involuntarily involvement in the matter. “I have told him time after time, he shouldn’t involve himself (no involucrase).” Even so, at every trial except one, she was there. I understand this behavior as a result of her ‘front-stage’ role as a wife and mother. The principle of solidarity is strong in the community, and although Linda at times did not condone her husband’s behavior, she did not leave his side.

The impact of violence on people’s lives can be diverse according to culture, gender and experience (Green, 1999). Green illustrates how the choices of Mayan widows from the Civil War, were influenced by how violence had marked their lives on a daily basis. The widows’ memories of both structural and political violence and the loss of their husbands facilitated the framework from which they conducted their choices and enacted their roles in a post-war society. Linda’s role is facilitated through her female gender and experience caused by her husband’s criminalization. Her choices are thus affected by her perception of violence, and how it has affected their family’s life. This illuminates Linda’s and Juan’s different perception of the situation, thereby influencing their choice to be, or not to be, part of a resistance movement.
As I have mentioned earlier, the social divisions in San Rafael caused by the mine’s presence have changed the conditions for social relations, even within families. One family in particular, demonstrates how previously strong relations can become contested. The mother of the family was drawn between her sons, due to their opposing affiliations with either Tahoe Resources, or the resistance. The family consists of three siblings, whereas two of the brothers are directly affiliated with Tahoe Resources, whilst the other brother opposes the mine. Brother number one, Julio, owns a restaurant where those working for the mine frequently dine. I do not know, based on my own observations exactly which type of clientele ate there, but I was told that this was a restaurant where “the miners” went i.e. those employed by the mine. The prices were too high for the other locals. The family I lived with during my fieldwork would never set foot in there because of the conflict and divide between those in favor and those opposed, therefore, I did not either.24 Brother number two Emilio, was an electrician. He was hired in the beginning faze of the construction of the industrial park. These two brothers are in favor of the mine. They both gained financially indirectly through the restaurant, and directly through hired work. The third brother Gustavo, considers himself an environmentalist, and does not approve of the extractive industry’s operations in the area. The conflict between Emilio and Julio, and Gustavo, has created a divide in the family, leaving the mother in the middle.

One evening I was eating dinner with the environmentalist brother Gustavo and his wife. Suddenly Gustavo rises abruptly from the table scraping the chair across the wooden floor. He gets in the car and leaves, without saying a word. I did not understand what had just happened and stared blankly at his wife. She told me that he left. “Left, what do you mean? Where did he go and why did he leave?” I asked. “He is angry, he is angry with me because I allow our children to see their grandmother (his mother). He does not want to allow his mother to be

---

24 My reluctance to enter this restaurant was based on my role and position in the community. I had learned that people were suspicious of outsiders and it was necessary for me to reinforce my position amongst the resistance. This I could not achieve if I became acquainted with those that favored the mine. I could then be perceived as a spy, from both sides.
around our children, but I will not refuse my children time with their
grandmother,” she answered. There is a long history of conflict between Gustavo
and his brothers, and their mother is left in the middle of a rock and a hard place.
Gustavo disapproves of his mother spending time with his children due to this
conflict, as he perceives her refusal to choose sides, is not choosing his side. This
conflict dividing this family is neither confrontational, nor violent. It is simply a
cold passive relation with no contact between the brothers, colored by the
brothers’ difference of opinion.

Contradicting Roles – The Paradox of Masculinity
Moore (1994: 55) states, “Individuals are multiply constituted subjects, and they
can, and do, take up multiple subject positions.” This indicates that some roles
may contradict others. Conflicting roles are thereby established and the two
male roles I explore are the male provider, and the male protector. This view
explains why men advocate their resistance participation as fighting for their
families’, simultaneously as their families may become compromised in the
process. This I have illustrated through numerous examples. The statement
below illustrates how the men I know, are aware of how their role as
oppositionist compromises their families’, but still pursue recognition for their
participation. “You know, my brother has been victimized through violence and
criminalization, but nothing has happened to me. I kind of wish it did”, Stefán
told me. “What about your wife?” I asked. “She agrees (esta de acuerdo),” he
answered, “she knows the importance of this.” The official violence and
criminalization give a kind of local prestige to the affected men. This implies that
when a man becomes criminalized because of opposition to the mine, he is
regarded as a significant figure in the resistance. In San Rafael, this indicates that
he is a “real man.”

Being part of a resistance movement presents a paradox where masculinity is
established simultaneously as it is challenged. This manifests itself during the
process of reintegration into society where men have experienced difficulty with
providing for their families. This is one of the factors that constitutes a man, as
Sebastian had told me on another occasion. Their inability to provide for their families becomes visible as they battle the trauma of criminalization and violence, simultaneously as they attempt to maintain their strong ‘front-stage’ role as a male provider.

Moore (1994) emphasizes that gender is both lived and constructed. From this perspective, masculinity can be perceived through actions. In this case I perceive the actions as a process of transformation through experiencing hardship. This process can explain Stefán’s motivations. Moore illustrates how men aspire to become a *hombre parrandero* (1994:68), which is status that creates and reinforces strong relations amongst men, as well as admission to an economic network. Wade (1994:152) writes that “the successful man is a man who manages the relationship between the role of being a husband/father and, the *hombre parrandero.*” Hence, I have aimed to illustrate how males in resistance movements perhaps construct masculinity by enacting gender roles as *hombres parranderos*, which, in their case, challenges the role as a provider. Therefore, there is a need to balance the two roles and this illustrates the challenge many male oppositionists face. By performing masculinity through enacting a role as a family father (provider) and, an environmental activist (protector), these roles complement and contradict each other simultaneously.
Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed local responses to and perceptions of criminalization, and explored social and political aspects of consequences to mining resistance. I have demonstrated that participation in a resistance movement can challenge and transform family relations. The diverse roles of the domestic and public sphere overlap. This is illustrated through Roberto and Juan's families’ experience with criminalization that can be tied directly to their position in society as part of the resistance. This constructs a paradox where contradictive roles (provider versus protector) occur.

Remembrance of violent events in the past has established fear amongst many locals. Some fear irreversible damage to the area, which has led to continued resistance. Others fear for their families and, this has led to compliance and acceptance of the situation rather than resistance. The balance between risk and reward is manifested in different priorities.
Conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been to illustrate the complexity of social conflicts and demonstrate how globalization and large-scale projects affect local communities and create resistance. A perceived threat to peoples’ habitats forms new conditions for life (Basso, 1996) and the case of San Rafael constructs social division as well as social cohesion, through resistance movements. This also explains the trend of environmentalism emerging on a global scale and illustrates a collective will to preserve the environment (Hastrup, 2009).

I have illustrated how local populations in proximity to mines have established resistance movements due to incompatible interests. In general, social conflicts arising from “colliding ecologies” (see Kirsch, 2014) are often a result of claims for local empowerment and governance. In particular, I have focused on the conflict emerging in San Rafael in disagreement with Tahoe Resources and the El Escobal mine concerning control and access to local water sources. Water has thus cultivated resistance in San Rafael. As we have seen, the struggle to preserve the environment is done on behalf of others. Although I have emphasized the importance of viable soil and water for the continuation of agricultural livelihoods, the environmental aspect transcends the peasantry, and encompasses other factions of the community as well. I argue that, although important, environmentalism is superseded by the claim for local governance and the right to make decisions concerning one’s own future and life which, according to Fischer (2014), is one of the factors that establishes meaning and represents a good life.

I have made clear the difference between landscape and land by utilizing Ingold’s (2000) perspective of “dwelling”, and how the locals have transformed the landscape through active engagement encompassing social and ecological relations. The environment is thus more than an ecological landscape; it is also a landscape of resistance symbolizing ecological continuance as well as social life. This transformation has established social relations between the people, and
between people and nature (see Basso, 1996, Ingold, 2000, Fischer, 2012). I have emphasized the importance of history in the creation of landscape. The Guatemalan Civil War and the continued cooperation between Guatemalan governments and transnational companies have shaped how the government relates to its citizens, but most importantly how the citizens relate to the government. This has constructed an increasing demand for local governance and autonomy amongst marginalized parts of society.

I have presented certain challenges the resistance movement in San Rafael have encountered in contrast to Mataquesquinla. The importance of local governance was illustrated through the unification and success in stopping the further granting of licenses within municipality lines in Mataquesquinla. The distrust of the Guatemalan government as an institution has generated a necessity for local empowerment. This emphasizes the will to elect local leaders, that represent local values, rather than being governed from a distance, where values and interests are different. This also illustrates how local politics, organizes defiance.

Although I explored a local conflict, the translocational relations created an imagined community, between different resistance movements in different locations. I argue that similar experiences with environmental conflicts, aspirations and prerequisites for life, as well as livelihood and social background, establish an informal network, which is practiced on a local level, but manifested on a global level. This network crosses local, regional and international boundaries and thereby establishes translocational relations and social cohesion.

Also, I have revealed how participation in resistance movements constructs a paradox for some of the male participants. I explored the concept of males’ contradicting roles (provider and protector) and their perceptions of masculinity to cast an overview of the social and environmental conflicts in the area that permeates multiple scales of relations and interaction. The criminalization of those that oppose the mine influences social relations, both between and within families. This affects and reveals different perceptions of what the locals consider a good life. For some, the good life entails pursuing meaningful projects,
such as protection of the environment, whilst for others; the good life symbolizes stability and security. This has generated social divisions. In this way, criminalization suppresses opposition differently according to values. Although ensuring the future for the family is often utilized as a motivation for opposition, the families are exposed to certain risks through indirect involvement, thus constructing a paradox.

As I have stated, much Guatemalan research explores Mayan life, which leaves the ladino population a less studied population. The area’s referral to as the “Forgotten East” (Aguilar-Støen, 2012:28) has created a need to investigate social life of the ladino population in the southeast as well. As I have demonstrated, the magnitude of social conflicts crosses community lines and forges relations and networks based on mutual commitment and similar experiences, rather than ethnicity and location. It is important to explore these conflicts in relation to each other, and not solely as isolated circumstances.
Afterword

Court Day 5 – The verdict
Silence fills the room as the judge enters. We seat ourselves and await the verdict of Juan’s trial. “We are all equal according to the law,”25 the judge shouts, pointing his finger to the crowd. With force in his voice, the judge states that he is sick of violence. Linda looks at me, takes my notebook and writes “Yes, they will sentence him to three years.”26 The judge continues his verdict statement ascribing validity to those that witnessed on the plaintiff’s behalf, whilst dismissing the testimonies of those that witnessed on Juan’s behalf. Juan’s lawyer's face, Hugo, is colored with disbelief. It looks like he cannot believe what he is hearing, hastily taking notes. “We have a crime, threats!”27 the judge continues. Linda looks at me again and nods her head with a sad expression on her face. Juan is sentenced to the minimum penalty of 6 months incarceration. When we leave the courtroom, the atmosphere is surprisingly good. Juan and Hugo discuss the possibilities of appeal and do not seem weighted down by the verdict. Linda, however, is laden with resignation and apathy.

***

The empirical example presented above presents the verdict of Juan’s trial, where I was present. Months later, in September 2015, Juan sent me an email stating that, in his appeal, he had been cleared of all charges, though he doubted this would be his last experience with criminalization. Also in September, Roberto was elected mayor in the municipality of San Rafael Las Flores, and Loy was re-elected in Mataquescuintla. The locals that were against the mine were ecstatic. Roberto and Loy were inaugurated in January 2016. In March, after two months in office, Roberto filed a petition against the extraction license for the mining project Las Lijeras within his municipality, located between San Rafael and Casillas (Municipality San Rafael Las Flores, 2016b).

25 “Todos somos iguales antes la ley”
26 “Sí, lo van a sentenciar con 3 años”
27 “Tenemos un delito, amenazas!”
This illustrates a change in the power balance. Until now, those that opposed the mine have complained of the lack of support from their municipal administration, which has decreased their ability to mobilize, organize and react. After the inauguration, with a municipal administration that opposes the mine, the local resistance in San Rafael has political advantages, which enables them to quell future projects at the source, as they attempt to do with the Las Lijeras project.

This indicates a transforming political landscape. The circumstances have changed in favor of the local resistances’ mobilization. Thus, as the framework from which the conflict derived has changed, a new reality is established, necessitating a need for further research. Although the resistance movement has achieved local governance, following the example of Mataquescuintla, time will tell if this is a viable option that presents the resistance with lasting political advantages. There are no universal strategies that guarantee success in one place, based on the success of another.
Appendix 1

**CALAS** – Centro de Acción Legal – Ambiental y Social de Guatemala
Guatemalan NGO. Legal firm that offers legal services to Guatemalans.
http://www.calas.org.gt/

**MadreSelva** - Madre Selva – Colectivo Ecologista
Guatemalan NGO. Works with biological issues in Guatemala.
http://madreselva.org.gt/

**RightsAction**
Canadian NGO. “We fund community struggles, write articles and reports, coordinate speaking tours, accompany threatened activists, identify and pressure agencies responsible, etc.”
http://www.rightsaction.org/

**CUC** – Comité de Unidad Campesina
Guatemalan NGO. Struggles for improved salaries, opposes militarization and discrimination of indigenous communities. Rural based indigenous and popular struggles organization.
http://www.cuc.org.gt/es/

**Alba Movimientos** – Articulación Continental de los Movimientos Sociales Hacia el ALBA. Promotes continental integration. Anti-imperialist, anti-neoliberal and anti-patriarchal organization. Social movement that fights for equality, freedom and emancipation.
http://www.albamovimientos.org/

**NISGUA** – Network of People in Solidarity with Guatemala
American NGO, Oakland, California. Works with people in Guatemala in grassroots global struggles for justice, human dignity and respect for the Earth.
http://nisgua.org/

**UDEFEGUA** –
Guatemalan NGO. Offers services for human rights activists in Guatemala and in the Central America region.
http://udefegua.org/

**AcoGuate** - Non-governmental organization. International accompaniment representatives can be present during trials, demonstrations, and referendums. Representatives are present to oversee events and report if anything unethical occurs, or if there is a breach of human rights.
www.acoguate.org

**HRW** - Human Rights Watch. Non-governmental organization. International accompaniment representatives can be present during trials, demonstrations, and referendums. Representatives are present to oversee events and report if anything unethical occurs, or if there is a breach of human rights.
www.hrw.org
Appendix 2

Article 7.1

“The peoples concerned shall have the right to decide their own priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use, and to exercise control, to the extent possible, over their own economic, social and cultural development. In addition, they shall participate in the formulation, implementation of plans and programs for national and regional development which may affect them directly.”

International Labor Organization
(www.ilo.org)
Bibliography


---

**Internet Sources**

CIEL (2015, February 7th) Norway Divests from Tahoe. Retrieved 10.03.16

ILO (u.d.) Indigenous Peoples: Consultations and Participation. Retrieved 05.04.16

International Justice Monitor (2015, May 4th) Impeachment Request Filed Against Judge Carol Patricia Flores. Retrieved 08.10.15


Mining Press (2015, April 15th) Guatemala Encarcela a Gerente de Tahoe por Contaminación. Retrieved 08.02.16

A. Municipality San Rafael Las Flores (u.d.) Retrieved 15.04.16

Regjeringen (2015, August 4th) Guatemala – Reiseinformasjon. Retrieved 08.01.16
https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/utenrikssaker/reiseinformasjon/velg-land/reiseinfo_guatemala/id2428566/

Rights Action (2015, April 16th) Tahoe Resources (Goldcorp Inc.) Guatemalan Manager Detained on Charges of Criminal Contamination. Retrieved 08.02.16
http://rightsaction.org/action-content/tahoe-resources-goldcorp-inc-guatemalan-manager-detained-charges-criminal

Tahoe on Trial (u.d.) Retrieved 15.04.15
https://tahoeontrial.net/

http://www.tahoeresources.com/operations/escobal-mine/

Personal Communication

Ålmås, Å. R. (2016, February 24th)
Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)
Specialization in biogeochemistry in soils