Types of resistance and collective forced negotiation in mining

Aleida Azamar Alonso

Abstract: This article analyzes resistance and negotiation processes between different sectors of the population of Mazapil, Zacatecas, and the management of the Peñasquito mining company. This analysis is done through an assessment made from the perspective of environmental privatization and resistance movements to this type of activity. The research included a qualitative methodology with an ethnographic approach that was carried out in rural and marginalized areas, where the presence of the State is weak, and the population lacks adequate mechanisms and tools for negotiations in equitable conditions. The results indicate that most of the interviewees are in favor of negotiation, although the type of relation among them tend toward conflict over the control of available resources.

Keywords: environmental rurality, extractivism, Mazapil, social dispossession, territorial appropriation

The mining industry is key to modern economic and productive systems. Most of the products and goods currently used by humans possess at least one component derived from this extractive industry. However, the processes whereby this activity is carried out generate multiple negative socioenvironmental consequences affecting mainly the most economically vulnerable population. In Latin America, this topic has been widely analyzed by multiple experts. These experts have highlighted that mining companies possess a vast economic and political power that hinders fair negotiation processes to limit the risks to affected populations. In Mexico, this issue has become relevant because of the great number of clashes among communities and companies due to the imposition of mining projects that are not fairly consulted with people in the communities where such projects are carried out.
The objective of this article was to carry out an analysis of the process of resistance and negotiation existing in the community of Mazapil, Zacatecas in Mexico toward the Peñasquito mining project. The main interest is to discuss the negotiation dynamic among the inhabitants and the company. The research question asks: What are the elements and factors that have allowed the Peñasquito mining project to remain active despite the rejection that exists among some social groups in the community?

The article adopted a methodology based on the case analysis and passive observations that were possible through several visits to the community where personal interviews were conducted and complemented with field notes. Additionally, a mapping of the actors involved was designed to observe in a clear form the interrelations, conflicts, influence, and cooperation.

The results of this research indicate the existence of multiple dimensions in the conflicts and negotiation processes that occur in this particular case, where one of the elements that stands out most among the majority of those interviewed is the improvement of local living conditions despite the inherent risks existing in mining practices. Only one of the interviewees mentioned the need to return to a traditional way of life.

The conclusions highlight the negative view that the community in general has of authorities, even rejecting their intervention and mistrusting them. On the other hand, the State seems to be biased in favor of the company, indicating a collaborative position because the company allegedly provides financial support to authorities. Beyond conflict, there is a process of forced negotiation due to historical marginalization in the conflict zone. Strikes and collective actions are tools used to enforce previous agreements or to improve existing ones between the community and the company, without these actions being imbued by an ecological perspective but from a survival position.

The forced negotiation mentioned in this article refers to a situation in which those involved in the mining sector are actively or passively influenced to accept work or living conditions created by circumstances they do not control, such as poverty and marginalization. Moreover, companies often use these pressure points to threaten workers and inhabitants into accepting substandard conditions.

This article is divided into five sections. Following this introduction, the second section analyses the concept of popular ecology (popular environmentalism), contrasting it to an analytical category called environmental rurality (ER), which was used to discuss some of the collective and individual negotiation processes in Mazapil, Zacatecas. Part three introduces the research design, presenting the Mazapil mining area and the Peñasquito project’s specific features followed by the article’s meth-
Popular environmentalism and environmental rurality

Popular environmentalism or environmentalism of the poor is a concept proposed by Joan Martínez (1992a, 1992b, 1995) and Ramachandra Guha (1994) that emerges as a response to a debate about changes in social paradigms from the end of the last century. The response refers specifically to Ronald Inglehart’s (1977) work, which examined transitions in the materialist needs of populations in countries where the material living standards were reflected on economic well-being considered to be above the world average. Popular environmentalism embraced the emergence of environmental movements started by conservationists, such as Earth Action, Red de Amigos de la Tierra Internacional, Green Peace, and The Nature Conservancy, among others, which through organized protests confront companies or public institutions claiming damage to nature. It recognized a spiritual connection and identified these movements as the causes for change in environmental policies (Thompson & Barton, 1994).

This cult of wildlife, as Guha and Martínez (1997) call it, was also a catalyst for the formation of political work strategies that materialized in conservationist projects, especially in the European Union where the legislation on the impact that human activities have on nature is quite inflexible. In fact, it is considered one of the most rigid regulations in the world. (González, 2008). It is also necessary to point out that European environmental policies may be first set in more materialist spheres rather than spiritual ones. Since the sixteenth century most European countries started industrialization processes in which enormous areas of forest were consumed causing a huge energy crisis due to lack of access to wood; this situation weakened food production, generating a shortage of both products (wood and food), which had deadly consequences for the poorest populations (González, 1993; Harvey, 2014).

This crisis was overcome in the nineteenth century thanks to the widespread use of coal and other fossil fuels. Moreover, this process sped up industrial development and gas emissions, such as carbon dioxide and sulfur oxides, which until then had not been artificially generated at accelerated rates. In almost one hundred years these gases devastated the health of poor populations, resulting in numerous deaths. One example of this was the death of almost four thousand people in England in 1952, which was caused by a great amount of thick noxious smoke that kept
the city of London in darkness for a week. Also, there is the case of the Ruhr region in Germany that had an unsustainable level of environmental pollution from the end of the nineteenth century to 1980 when new norms and regulations were enacted to address this problem (Brimblecombe & Pfister, 1990).

In response, the most vulnerable and poorest populations from these nations (also the most affected) confronted their governments seeking solutions that would reduce these problems. This triggered conflicts and governance crises with severe economic losses due to both social and environmental costs (Brimblecombe & Pfister, 1990, Pointing, 1992). These examples indicate that development and economic growth processes often lack mechanisms to eliminate the local socioenvironmental impacts that their very existence cause. This is the reason why they are externalized to other regions through legislations or regulations that consider local nature to be a resource that must be protected from all kinds of unrecommended use by the authorities.

Social popular demands that originally developed in the aforementioned European cases did not have the aim to protect green spaces for any aesthetic or spiritual interest, but they considered this a matter of survival (Brimblecombe & Pfister, 1990). The political transition in this topic was driven by the development of mechanisms that could prevent health risks that generated enormous economic costs. In other words, the underlying reason was a material demand for territory and natural assets that were in good condition to match the standard of living that the population had and was in a steady growth at the time. The result of the aforementioned experiences was legislation that prevented environmental damage in the territory but that transferred the ecological burden and the waste of the material necessities to the world periphery through industrial, colonialist, and imperialist processes \(^2\) that are not restricted to Europe (Clark & Bellamy, 2012; Escalera et al., 2018; Vega, 2006). Therefore, as the quality of the environment and the standard of living were improving in most of these places, the environmental priorities were changing as well. Currently and during almost the entire present century, the European population has been concerned about the effects of chemical contaminants on nature. One of their main actions has been the tightening of standards for local and international environmental protection, as well as development technology to overcome these problems (Eurobarometer, several years). In this way they have moved their survival interest toward an openly interventionist conservationist environmentalism \(^3\) based on abundance. This is not a generalized observation for the entire population of Europe, but it reflects the collective interest that permeates this region, especially inside public institutions.
Conversely, Guha and Martínez propose the conceptualization of environmentalism of the poor as an alternative to this conservationist-ecologist vision. From this perspective, the population that depends on nature to subsist creates a vision that might seem more rational concerning their relationship with their habitat. Instead of establishing a conservationist position, they foster a lifestyle based on the use of these resources, even though this is done to generate a way to make a living as the main objective and not to create an intensive production model oriented to the reproduction of capital.

Guha and Martínez’s proposal offers an interpretation of reality that can be applied to Latin American native communities. Many communities from this region have held a relationship of dependency and balance with their habitat generating a situation of well-being; nevertheless, they have historically been marginalized by the governments of those areas where they subsist and face territorial and environmental conflicts due to this situation.

In the same tone, Kathryn Baragwanath and Ella Bayi (2020) indicate that by guaranteeing the territorial rights of the indigenous communities in the Brazilian Amazon, the capacity of environmental defense is strengthened and the State’s economic costs for environmental monitoring is minimized, since the communities themselves carry out these actions in a very effective way.

They also promote life projects with a limited environmental impact because they have manifested a worldview of attachment and respect for nature. Nonetheless, this observation was only possible after assessing more than 20 years of territorial ownership changes in these lands, where Brazilian indigenous communities fought physically and institutionally for their rights over the land.

Another example of this situation can be found in the research conducted by Aleida Azamar and Ruth Ríos (2020) on the Masehual Siuamej Mosenyolchicaunani, a cooperative organized by indigenous women from the Sierra Norte of Puebla in Mexico, who have established different projects through their work processes that maintain a balanced relationship with the territory that is carried out without seeking to privatize the area but with the intention of creating awareness of its use and the lives that depend from it. The positive outcome of this case has taken almost 50 years to achieve, since these women faced several conflicts because of their gender and their ethnic identity, which at the beginning prevented them from accomplishing their community project.

The environmentalism of the poor manifests itself as a collective process that emerges from below, and through the conflict for the defense of territory and nature, it is built through social agreements based on life
experiences and the vital importance of land use. Therefore, there is an intrinsic dependence with land in such a way that the excess found in the land use processes generate a condition that might put its survival at risk.

Martínez and Guha’s observation is effective if it is expressed in terms of the defense of survival needs that are not framed in processes of commercialization or privatization of nature for commercial purposes, aimed at guaranteeing the reproduction of capital. In their discourse, they developed a position in which the population that is poor and survives from nature is by itself ecological because it recognizes nature’s social value, which is not related to the chrematistic. Its struggles are irremediably ecological, and its position is alien to the one that drives the market since nature is chosen as a matter of survival.

Martínez’s work (1992b) includes a perspective in which the poor, marginalized, indigenous, or rural populations manifest an open and constant opposition against the extraction of raw material in all its forms. This is not completely true, at least in the historical analysis of mining processes in Mexico (Azamar, 2017, 2018). Some historical mining communities are currently open to negotiation processes if they may receive economic benefits, even when there is no environmental enforcement. There are also processes in which the implementation of mining projects is the result of community cooptation done by private groups (Uribe and Toscana, 2020).

Although there is opposition from some groups, it is not usually an absolute position that represents all people who deal with these kinds of projects. The opposition in some cases depends on the economic adversity through which these places have passed. It is important to mention that in Mexico most of the people from mining communities are characterized by both high levels of poverty (Azamar, 2018), and certain degrees of flexibility regarding agreements with mining companies. The historic institutional abandonment of rural and peripheral communities in the country has created important socioeconomic disadvantages (Azamar, 2017). In this way, it can be stated that the negotiation processes to which the population has access are driven by the condition of economic need, an issue that at first is not the responsibility of mining companies, but they use it to take advantage and increase their power and influence. Nevertheless, the abuses that might be generated from this situation pose a risk for the companies because the population is not a passive entity, and people are able to organize to stop a project in case of repeated breach of agreements.

This is how labor market and cooperation dynamics with extractive companies are created, ignoring public administration in the process to improve quality of life—although generally this is the opposite of what usually happens and often, it is only a momentary effect—by accessing an economic return through the rent of the land to get incomes and certain
immediate job benefits. Some community political organizations do not refuse to work in extractive projects if conditions that guarantee access to infrastructure, public services, and other benefits, which they generally lack, are established.

Thus, the popular organization of rural communities for the creation of new functional institutional forms in terms of their economic organization has been fundamental for the development of successful cooperation projects between the population and mining companies (Burgos, 2014).

Not all environmental conflicts of the poor populations that depend on the territory are by themselves ecological, but as Mauricio Folchi (2001, 2019) indicates, in some cases there are actions that have to do with domination over available natural resources. However, this does not disqualify or diminish these movements, since it is a legitimate matter of survival that through other forms and processes achieves its objectives.

Considering the foregoing, one of the original contributions of the present article is identification of the category of environmental rurality (ER) as a way of describing the form of subsistence of Mazapil’s population. The ER category that is proposed is characterized by: (a) the negotiation capacity regarding to the execution of activities that limit, undermine, or totally stop the project; (b) the interest in obtaining an economic benefit from a long-term harmful activity; (c) the acceptance that there is risk; and (d) the construction of agreements to try to mitigate negative impacts through monetary or in-kind support.

The ER establishes new forms of negotiation and institutionalism that reject environmental conservationism; likewise, it manifests an alternative process in the struggles of poor communities that depend on the territory and nature. The interest in this analytical category is developed around the analysis and understanding of social action that seeks to take advantage of its territory and resources toward economic solutions that allow populations to overcome their socioeconomic adversity, under the understanding that this is achieved through destructive extractive practices as a proposal of rejection of the traditional political institutionalism that has made it impossible for communities to improve their living conditions.

An example of ER is what happens in the municipality of Mazapil, Zacatecas in Mexico, where the Newmont Mining Corp (NG) has benefited from the adverse and highly marginalized conditions in which the population lives to sustain its project. It is important to point out that those who have negotiated with the NG mining company have either been victims or observers who are aware of some of the negative effects of this company’s activities. Therefore, most of the conflicts focus on the fulfillment of agreements with the company and on the pursuit of reduction of environmental damage and/or occupational risks.
Peñasquito project: Conflict and social tradition

Mazapil is a municipality located in the north zone of Zacatecas (see Figure 1) where it borders with important mining areas, such as Melchor Ocampo, Concepción del Oro, Luis Moya, and Ojocaliente, among others. In addition to the great mining wealth, these places are characterized by levels of marginalization and poverty that are higher than the national average (Azamar, 2018; Coneval, 2017).

The Mazapil area extends over more than 12 thousand km², being the largest municipality in the area, but it is sparsely populated compared to other smaller ones, since it has barely 17 thousand inhabitants, which represents just over 1% of the total number of people who live in Zacatecas. Despite the preceding, it concentrates the largest number of people employed in the mining industry in the state with approximately 872 workers representing 14% of the economically active population (EAP) (SGM, 2020).

Figure 1 • Peñasquito Location

Having said that, the history of the mining process in Mazapil begins in the early 1990s with a first extractive effort by the Kennecott company, which sold the rights to its concession in 1998 to Western Silver, who in 2006 founded Peñasquito Minera, which in 2007 was sold to Glamis Gold, which in turn in the same year was absorbed by Goldcorp.

In just over 10 years, this project was inherited by at least four different companies without any major intervention from the State in terms of regulating the processes of buying and selling rights. Part of the population claimed that it had not even been informed about these sales (Garibay, 2010).

In March 2010, the mine was inaugurated, with an investment of approximately 1.7 billion dollars, owned at the time by Goldcorp Incorporated through the mining subsidiary Peñasquito Inc. Corp. This mine is low grade, therefore, according to the company itself, the open pit mining method is the most economically feasible for its exploitation.

The complex has a projected life-span of 22 years and contains 1,191,000 tons of mineralized rock with average grades of 0.45 grams per ton of gold, 29 grams per ton of silver, 3.2 grams per ton of lead, and 6.9 kilograms per ton of zinc.

Despite the economic and social benefits that the State suggested could exist from the investments, a year before the inauguration, the ejidatarios of Cerro Gordo began legal actions against the Peñasquito mine for violations in the land use agreement.

It should be noted that this project, being located in the northern part of the state of Zacatecas, is in the semi-desert valley of the municipality of Mazapil. It is a dry territory with few underground water deposits on which the local communities depend. The ejidatarios have commented that the company did not inform them that large amounts of water were going to be used and argued that two norias of the ejido dried up in less than a year. It is necessary to underline that the norias play a role as the main water providers in this desert area. Thanks to this system, animal husbandry, agriculture, and the supply of water to the local communities can be carried out.

One of the most serious problems faced by the population in this regard is that authorities have dismissed the claims of local populations by falsifying data on the real recharging capacity in the area to benefit the company (Garibay, 2010; Garibay et al., 2015). This issue is the one that has contributed the most to collective mistrust of government.

This situation has been reflected by the continuous conflicts between the company and the population because, until 2019, protests and strikes were organized to force the extractive company to negotiate. This issue was resolved with the intervention of public authorities, which both al-
followed the mine to operate and created negotiating tables for local inhabitants. This section analyzes this process. The methodology used to carry out this research is described in the following section.

Methodology

The research that supports this article is of an exploratory type with a qualitative argumentative approach. For this reason, semi-structured interviews were carried out with corporate representatives of the mining project, owners of parallel extractive projects, business representatives, mining workers, academics, social leaders, inhabitants, journalists, and institutional authorities. The scope of the research focused on actors who had had some kind of participation in both the planning of the project and in its negotiation before and during the mine’s operations began. The names and specific position of the participants are not included in order to maintain their privacy.

The selection of the interviewees was based on the sequential sampling design technique, giving priority to those who could share details about the collective sentiments and the position of the company. The size of the sample was limited to a relatively small number of people due to the economic restrictions that travel and stays in the area implied, but despite this, the study was accomplished through several visits to the area, which were carried out from 2017 to 2019.

The results of the interviews were ordered to evaluate the views expressed by those involved. The positions of the actors were mapped based on the methodology presented by Esteban Tapella (2007), so that the analysis of the interview results and the field research process could identify actors’ interests and their viability for both influencing the project and the same production chain that is being analyzed. This issue is graphically exemplified with a relationship map (see Figure 2).

The empirical phase included semi-structured interviews, which focus on the analysis of the influence that the actors may have on the project operation in a general and a particular way and in the direct impact that the mine has on them. In this way the position of the stakeholders to the project shows both personal interest and the conditions that have been imposed for access to the negotiation processes, thus considering the population, businessmen, academics, and journalists. The interviews were conducted with three administrators of the Peñasquito company at different levels of responsibility, two small and medium-sized independent mining entrepreneurs, three mining workers, an administrative worker from an organization representing local mining workers interests, two
local journalists, two local academic analysts on the subject, three leaders of local social movements, a group of five local inhabitants close to the mine, and two institutional representatives, one from the local government and one from the federal government.

The field notes taken were made mainly in the interviewees’ work and home places in order to document conditions of scarcity, benefits received from work, and opposition to the mining project. Although workers have competitive incomes, this does not replace the difficulties of marginalization, lack of access to basic services, social security, and other resources that the State provides only partially and to a limited extent.

As previously stated, the proposed originality of this research is the ER category. It is based on a historical review of the organizational processes of environmental defense that have emerged in the world during the twentieth century, which is addressed in the conceptual section. This helped observe common patterns and particular experiences that indicate the characteristics of the proposed concept. ER is particularly based on the collective population’s understanding. In this way, the interviews and the mapping of actors become fundamental for the operationalization of this conceptual category.

The salient aspects referring to the population’s sentiments regarding the operation of the mine deriving from interviews and field visits taken are discussed in the following section.

Results

Negotiation process and social feeling

Given that the Peñasquito project is an enclave mine focused on exploration and on the benefit provided by cheap labor, and it is subordinated to the external demands of international trade, the following types of conflict have been detected:

1. Territorial conflicts: According to the information obtained in the interviews, territorial conflicts derive from tensions between actors due to the use of the territory and its resources without the existence of clear agreements aiming to minimize socioenvironmental risks and the uncertainty of land tenure among local actors. This is especially visible through the disparity between the company’s and inhabitants’ positions on the use of local territory.

2. Agrarian conflicts: They derive from the fact that the farming population faces violence resulting from land dispossession for mining. This results from a lack of information and legal protec-
tion of properties when owners do not have papers to prove their possessions. This situation was mentioned in the interviews with those who inhabit these spaces. In addition, the mining companies deplete and pollute the water basins, destroying the territory and leaving it unusable for agricultural activities.

(3) Labor disputes: Regarding labor disputes, the main issues are unjustified dismissals, risky work without adequate remuneration, work schemes that cause accumulated stress (excessive hours, noise, small and shared bedrooms), nonexistent collective contracts for employees, unfair competition with local companies, and corrupt unions that act as accomplices of businessmen and politicians.

(4) Socioenvironmental conflicts: these are attributed to springs, natural water basins, and agricultural wells drying up, contamination of the subsoil, poisoning of the population and the ecosystem due to exposure to heavy minerals and different chemicals, noise pollution from explosions and perforations, and visual modification of the territory.

The profiles of the people who participated in the interviews are varied. They are not focused only on community representatives; they are also people who subsist in these spaces and who have different perspectives from each other. It is important to note that the population receives advice from their representatives and academics, journalists, and nongovernmental organizations, among others. This advice nourishes the matrix of positions within the community.

From the perspective of the ER approach, the specific aspects of the actors who are in favor of the mine, even though they are being affected by the project, derive from the possibility of imposing some conditions, since access to these resources is controlled. However, as mentioned later in this article, once the population grants the companies the possibility of operating, the latter no longer have incentive to fulfill their promises to work with the communities, except when conflicts making mining impossible arise.

On the other hand, as can be seen in Table 1, there is disagreement between some of the participants, due to economic issues and/or lack of security in the way the company works. Most disaccord focuses on both the breach of agreements with the company and on the weakness of work security protocols. Some of the residents, the academic representatives, a journalist, and one of the community leaders opted to reject the project, arguing against aspects that harm workers (who are in favor of this mine).
The position of these interviewees responds essentially to the local investigation and knowledge of cases from relatives, friends, and acquaintances who have been directly or indirectly affected by the extractive activity. For their part, community leaders are focused on different perspectives: the first leader, with greater collective influence than the other, does not live in the immediate area but possesses detailed knowledge of the occupational and social risks of the mine. He lives in another region where there is also mining activity, and one of his relatives who has had chronic health problems works in one of the mines. His calls to the organization have served to pressure companies and unions to improve working conditions through negotiation.

The second leader is from one of the few families that have not left the Mazapil area. His influence in the place is medium, but his media impact is high. He has been interviewed several times and appeared in various news stories and interviews to denounce and expose forms of intimidation or violence by mining companies. He has become an example of resistance that seeks to maintain a traditional way of life. However, the lack of collective support leads to the accelerated rural transformation that rejects this proposal.

On the other hand, those who were open to negotiation were the transport leader (who represents most of the drivers that supply water to the mine), part of the population interviewed, and one of the social representatives (organized society). These actors have adopted critical positions, but they recognize that there is limited knowledge of the negative effects of the project. It is also pointed out that the lack of support from businessmen for the creation of local job opportunities has motivated the processes of blockade against the mine, since the population sees in this resistance a way to accessing economic benefits for which the company is willing to pay in order to continue with its activity. Likewise, the interviewees have highlighted that their greatest annoyance is the lack of security in the fulfillment of previous agreements and the concealment of facts that the company knew in advance, such as the intensive use of water, an issue that was not clearly communicated in the processes of prior negotiations.

Administrative staff, some workers, the owners of the local companies, the mining business representative, and the institutional representatives have all adopted a position in favor of the project, without further questioning it. These social actors receive a direct and immediate benefit through an income from the operation of Peñasquito or as part of investments and support in the creation of jobs. These actors have benefited from their activities through operation agreements that are approved by the community. This facilitates the local mining production chain and thereby increases business interest and business creation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Logic or main interest of the actor</th>
<th>Contribution of the actor to the production system</th>
<th>Predominant position regarding the project</th>
<th>Hierarchical power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residents of the municipality of Mazapil</td>
<td>Access job sources.</td>
<td>Potential unskilled labor, negotiation of workspaces</td>
<td>The position of the population is not homogeneous, some of the residents express rejection, but they are a minority. Those who want to negotiate are relatives of active workers or get a benefit in some way from the project and are the majority, although their support for the project is not absolute.</td>
<td>Low, since as individual actors they do not have economic resources or negotiation power that may affect the company or the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrier leader</td>
<td>Create labor cooperation agreements.</td>
<td>Indispensable labor</td>
<td>Negotiation, they are more in favor, but maintain a high level of pressure on the company in order to access better working conditions,</td>
<td>High, the lack of their services and the blocking of the carriers make it impossible to operate the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community leader 1</td>
<td>Negotiate and search to improve the local quality of life.</td>
<td>Bridge for negotiation between the population-employees and the company-State</td>
<td>Negotiation to improve the living conditions of the population affected by the mine. Despite this, they are not in favor of the project, as they actively seek the company to close.</td>
<td>High, since they have great convening power even among several internal mining workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community leader 2</td>
<td>Cancel the mining project and reinforce the traditional life models of the place.</td>
<td>No function, it is a counter-weight to local and national public opinion</td>
<td>Rejection, is reluctant to any kind of negotiation</td>
<td>Medium, although their influence is more mediatric, they do not have relevant social convening power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Logic or main interest of the actor</td>
<td>Contribution of the actor to the production system</td>
<td>Predominant position regarding the project</td>
<td>Hierarchical power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mining workers</strong></td>
<td>Maintain or escalate in the job position.</td>
<td>Unskilled labor</td>
<td>In favor, derived from the economic income obtained as salary and benefits for their families.</td>
<td>Low, it is required to belong to the collective organization to be able to influence or negotiate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peñasquito mining administration</strong></td>
<td>Maintain or escalate in the job position.</td>
<td>Specialized labor, negotiation with the population and other actors</td>
<td>In favor, derived from the economic income obtained as salaries and other benefits.</td>
<td>Medium, although they lack a union or collective organization, they have relevant information regarding the project and generally they represent the company in a public way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other mining companies</strong></td>
<td>Reach agreements with the population.</td>
<td>They support with a certain type of raw material, although their contribution is marginal.</td>
<td>In favor since a part of their productive activity is destined for Peñasquito.</td>
<td>Low, they do not reject the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business representative</strong></td>
<td>Improve local productive conditions to attract more investment.</td>
<td>Provide tools, machinery, and training to stakeholders interested in this activity.</td>
<td>In favor, because in front of the increase of this activity, its economic capacity is strengthened.</td>
<td>Medium-low, although it is an important work organization in the state, they do not have enough resources to impose productive conditions on the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organized civil society</strong></td>
<td>Make visible and report unfavorable conditions for society and nature.</td>
<td>Regulation</td>
<td>Rejection, they have supported the population affected by the mine and have not had any benefit from the project.</td>
<td>Medium, they have various organizational capacities, but their work processes are more attached to the current regulatory framework, which limits their capacities for action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Logic or main interest of the actor</th>
<th>Contribution of the actor to the production system</th>
<th>Predominant position regarding the project</th>
<th>Hierarchical power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>Discuss and investigate through a scientific methodology the life processes and the impact of the mining project in the area.</td>
<td>Scientific information analysis</td>
<td>Rejection, both researchers noted that the negative effects of the project outweigh the potential benefits.</td>
<td>Medium, although their papers may be conclusive or very precise about the risks and damages, the publication processes may be limited in scope and time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td>Report on social, institutional, and business events or irregularities of any kind.</td>
<td>Media information, analysis of the facts</td>
<td>Rejection, their position is the result of being witnesses and chronicles of the events occurred.</td>
<td>Medium, their position should be relatively neutral when reporting. Their opinions are considered separate aspects of their work environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authorities</td>
<td>Improve local productive conditions to attract more investment.</td>
<td>Regulation, negotiation</td>
<td>In favor, as it is mentioned or justified that the aim is to improve local living conditions through the development of productive activities.</td>
<td>Medium, they depend on federal regulations and have limited negotiation power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal authorities</td>
<td>Promote and improve the conditions of current or future productive projects through the creation or modification of standards and other regulations.</td>
<td>Regulation</td>
<td>In favor, as it is mentioned or justified that it seeks to create national investment opportunities.</td>
<td>High, they can exercise legal processes that prevent/limit/expand the activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration with information obtained in the field.
A particularly relevant issue, as noted in the ER when describing the population’s relations with the State, was the lack of specific rapprochement among the population—both those who oppose the mine and those who are open to negotiation—with the authorities. This is because there is little confidence in the authorities’ actions regarding the collective bargaining and work processes since they apparently lean toward companies without promoting common benefit agreements. Consequently, the population occasionally seeks the support of the State to review compliance with the previously reached agreements. The mapping table of social actors elaborated from the interviews illustrates the hierarchy of power that exists in the community (see Table 1).

Table 1 highlights the work and power relationships that exist between the different actors that participate directly or indirectly in the Peñasquito mining process. It shows when analyzing the collective position of the actors, that the position in favor of the company is strongest, with actors of broad influence such as the State itself at the federal and municipal level in support. In terms of the negotiation, the local residents interviewed, the transport leader, and one of the social leaders expressed their openness to dialogue with the company and the State. The position of the interviewees only represents their profile and also allows a more up-to-date and closer view of the situation than that which could have been obtained by reviewing a historical archive of notes on the matter. In this way, the researchers, journalists, and one of the community leaders contacted, articulated opposition to this activity.

As previously mentioned, these positions derive essentially from the specific effects interviewees face in which the long-term socioenvironmental costs are usually weighted at a lower level than the immediate economic benefits. In this sense, only the collective organization has proven to be effective in stopping the activity of the mining company, but the focus of those who participate from work (transporters) is oriented toward the generation of immediate economic income. On the other hand, protests, and symbolic closures of the mine by the organized population have had effects on the mine’s production. For example, more than half of the mining extraction in 2019 was lost due to the lack of negotiation.

Figure 2 is a relationship map that is divided into nine spaces that depend on the combination of the aspects measured by each of the axes. The x-axis shows three positions regarding the project: rejection, negotiation, and support. The y-axis presents three possibilities of influence on the operation of the mine by the interviewed actors, which was called low, medium, or high, depending on their conditions and organization. Each actor position derived from the author’s interpretation of the interviews, from which it was placed on the map in relation to the aforementioned criteria.
As can be seen in the map of actors shown in figure 2, the trend among the interviewees is toward negotiation. But the relationships of the local actors with the company are fluctuating between conflicts that may include occupation of facilities or roads by the residents and/or workers in order to promote company respect for agreements through negotiation. It is worth noting that the same situation occurs between the State at municipal level and the worker-residents, since the local public administration can carry out acts of violence against those who affect this project.

At the same time, those who are completely against and without intention of executing negotiations with the company are a group that continuously collaborates with each other: journalists, academics, organized civil society, and one of the social leaders. However, their actions are usually limited to the frameworks in which they work and therefore they have less influence.

Table 2 shows the specific signage for the map in a synthetic way for the different interrelated actors. Although there is some dissent among the...
Table 2 • Signage Map of relationships between actors with influence in the Peñasquito project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actors</th>
<th>Signage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Settlers</td>
<td><img src="people.png" alt="People" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrier leader</td>
<td><img src="truck.png" alt="Truck" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community leader 1</td>
<td><img src="person.png" alt="Person" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community leader 2</td>
<td><img src="person.png" alt="Person" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining workers</td>
<td><img src="worker.png" alt="Mining Worker" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peñasquito mining administration</td>
<td><img src="businessman.png" alt="Businessman" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other mining companies</td>
<td><img src="flag.png" alt="Flag" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business representative</td>
<td><img src="business.png" alt="Business Card" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organized civil society</td>
<td><img src="organization.png" alt="Organization" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td><img src="presentation.png" alt="Presentation" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists</td>
<td><img src="journalist.png" alt="Journalist" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authorities</td>
<td><img src="government.png" alt="Government" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal authorities</td>
<td><img src="government.png" alt="Government" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support/collaboration</td>
<td><img src="arrow.png" alt="Arrow" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence/cooptation</td>
<td><img src="arrow.png" alt="Arrow" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermittence (negotiation, conflict)</td>
<td><img src="dashed_line.png" alt="Dashed Line" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Own elaboration
interviewees, only the social leaders showed opposite positions. For this reason two icons were created, which are located in different quadrants. The interconnecting lines mark the relationships between each actor, such as the support-collaboration that indicates the existence of actions that generate mutual benefits. For example, the yellow line indicates that one or several actors exert some type of influence on another; it may be due to economic stimuli and other actions, as in the case of the company on workers and the population. This type of influence is because their support, income, and other benefits may be conditioned if they exercise protest actions, although this influence can also be the result of information as in the case of social leaders who mobilize the community and workers.

Conclusions

The conflicts and processes of empowerment of populations in situations of adversity that give rise to environmentalism of the poor have certain limits in their interpretation of reality. This is especially true for the variety of forms and agreements that communities may have with companies, although companies understand the impacts and costs of their decisions. It is therefore worth considering this situation from the perspective of ER.

The ER can be identified in the way in which the population decided to establish their economic priorities due to the adverse situation in which they find themselves. Among the greatest difficulties of this type of social order is the lack of strong organizations with a history of fighting these companies. However, it is relevant that resistance movements are made up of individuals with different life experiences to help face the challenges of a negotiation, such as the one presented in the case of the Peñasquito mine in Zacatecas.

It is necessary to understand that the condition of poverty and marginalization that prevails in the region is a fundamental aspect for the forced negotiation process in which the communities have few or no alternatives to this type of activity, despite the risks it generates. However, even with the time that the project has been in execution and the obvious negative effects, positions in favor of it can still be observed, especially from the institutional and political aspects, since this type of activity generates economic income for these actors, although paradoxically, the same does not happen with the affected population. It is a situation in which the benefit is limited to a few actors in situations of power, and therefore, these are the ones who impose the conditions in favor of the project.

The mapping of actors makes it possible to identify the multiple ways in which some sectors of the population and companies interact with re-
spect to this mining project. It also helps distinguish some of the elements and conditions that have allowed the mining project to continue operating. Although it should be noted that the information obtained in the interviews, specifically that of researchers and the journalist, does not necessarily represent a general collective position of the rest of the workers in their own union. It does show a different perspective from the one that an inhabitant who depends on the work or income from the mine might have.

Despite this, as previously noted, the conflict actually encompasses multiple dimensions regarding the stakeholders’ positions on access to resources in the territory and the income that can be obtained from them. That is why, among the universe of interviewees, there is an inclination toward the negotiation of the project. This answers the question of this article, since those who are in this position do so from an adverse condition that forces that posture, that is, a negotiation forced by multidimensional conditions.

Finally, it is worth noting that this research makes a proposal based on this empirical case by mapping the condition, influence, and interests of the actors. These factors are also analyzed by contributing in an original way to the ER proposal, which presents a social multidimensionality that helps understand in a more detailed way the damage that mining has caused in Mazapil.

ALEIDA AZAMAR ALONSO is a doctor in international economics and development from the Complutense University of Madrid. She is currently a full-time Level C research professor at the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, Mexico, and coordinator of the Master in Sustainable Societies at the same institution. She is also president of the Mesoamerican and Caribbean Society for Ecological Economics. She is also cocoordinator of the Latin American Critical Geographic Thinking Working Group of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO). She is a member of the National System of Researchers CONACYT level 1. She has published as author and coauthored different books. She has more than one hundred scientific and popular science articles published in Mexico and abroad. She collaborates with the newspapers El Universal and Cronica in Mexico. She has obtained various awards and scholarships, including the Latin American Looks Publication Award, a state of debate by CLACSO and Siglo XXI (2020), and awards for area research in 2017, 2019, and 2021 by the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, among others. Email: gioconda15@gmail.com

NOTES

1. Alongside, groups with more violent practices have emerged, but in essence they pursue the same goal: the recovery of nature. Like Frente de Liberación Animal, Frente de la Liberación de la Tierra, and Armado de la Liberación de la Tierra, among others.
2. Mitchel Cohen (2002) highlighted the central importance of the toxic material trade from Europe, United States, Canada, and other industrialized countries toward the periphery with the purpose of reducing the environmental costs in the places of origin. Originally, it started as a process of negotiation, but afterward it was implemented throughout economic and even military pressure tactics.

3. Fernando Estenssoro (2015) emphasized that the environmental European and US interest during the 1970s almost destroyed international agreements processes because, at a first glance, it seemed that the aim was to restrict the models of industrialization and the territorial use of the periphery countries, such issue has more to do with an imperialist power position looking for a particular benefit and not with an environmental commitment.

4. “The social movements of the poor are frequently related with their battles for survival, and therefore are ecologists . . . because they attempt to remove the natural resources from the economic sphere, from the generalized market, from the commercial rationality . . . to preserve them” (Martínez, 1992b, p. 2).

5. This term lacks a unique definition; therefore, the common aspect of most theoretical approaches is taken as a reference: the satisfaction of necessary aspects to maintain the standard of living associated with the location well-being.

6. The term “successful” refers only to economic agreements (monetary or in kind) in which the population has been able to meet their subsistence needs throughout the benefits obtained from extractive companies.

7. In 2019, Newmont Mining Corp. bought the company Goldcorp for 10 billion dollars, changing its name to Newmont Goldcorp, which has led the company to become the main producer of gold worldwide.

8. This concept refers to the degree of purity or concentration of mineral resources in a mine.

9. They are water wells dug with a pick and shovel, regularly they are 4 meters in diameter by 30 or more deep.

10. The information gathered in this analysis is extensive and outside the scope of this work, but it will be used to explore in more detail some of the ER perspectives in other future endeavors.

REFERENCES


Cohen, M. (2020). *Residuos tóxicos y el Nuevo Orden Mundial*. ecoPortal. https://www.ecoportal.net/temas-especiales/contaminacion/residuos_toxicos_y_el_nuevo_orden_mundial/#:~:text=El percent20comercio percent20en percent20residuos percent20t percentC3 percentB3xicos,en percent20 percent20dere percent20poluci percentC3 percentB3ces,percent20poluci percentC3 percentB3ces,percent20poluci percentC3 percentB3ces.


Formas de resistencia y negociación colectiva forzada en la minería

**Resumen:** Este artículo analiza los procesos de resistencia y negociación entre diferentes sectores de la población de Mazapil, Zacatecas y los responsables de la empresa minera Peñasquito, a través de una valoración desde el enfoque de la privatización ecologista y los movimientos de resistencia ante este tipo de actividades. La investigación incluyó metodología de corte cualitativo con un enfoque etnográfico que se ejecutó en áreas rurales y marginales donde la presencia del Estado es débil y la población adolece de mecanismos y herramientas adecuadas para una negociación en condiciones equitativas. Los resultados señalan que en su mayoría los entrevistados se encuentran a favor de la negociación, aunque el tipo de relación entre estos tiende hacia el conflicto por el control de los recursos disponibles.

**Palabras clave:** apropiación territorial, despojo social, extractivismo, Mazapil, Peñasquito, ruralidad ambientalista

Formes de résistance et négociation collective forcéé dans le secteur minier

Cet article analyse les processus de résistance et de négociation entre différents secteurs de la population de Mazapil, au Zacatecas, Mexique, et les responsables de la société minière Peñasquito, à travers une évaluation fondée sur la privatisation environnementale et les mouvements de résistance à ce type d’activité. La recherche s’appuie sur une méthodologie qualitative et une approche ethnographique menées dans des
zones rurales et marginales où la présence de l’État est limitée et où la population manque de mécanismes et d’outils adéquats pour négocier dans des conditions équitables. Les résultats indiquent que la plupart des personnes interrogées sont favorables à la négociation, alors que leurs relations s’organisent autour du conflit pour le contrôle des ressources.

**Mots-clés** : Appropriation territoriale, dépossession sociale, extractivisme, Mazapil, Peñasquito, ruralité environnementale.