"Siempre está la minería"

Small-Scale Gold Mining, The Construction of Existential Security and the Contribution of the Fair Mined Program Oro Verde

Marjolein Boelens
VU University

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Small-Scale Gold Mining, The Construction of Existential Security and the Contribution of the Fair Mined Program Oro Verde

<u>Master Thesis</u>

Marjolein Boelens, VU University

Social and Cultural Anthropology

Date: 28th of June 2013

Student number: 2505682

Supervisor: Marjo de Theije

Second Assessor: Ton Salman

VU ⊀ VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM

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[1] There is always mining (small-scale gold miner Monica)

Característica general, alegría total

Invisibilidad nacional e internacional

Auto-discriminación sin razón

Racismo inminente, mucha corrupción

Monte culebra

Máquina de guerra

Desplazamientos por intereses en la tierra

Su tienda de pescado

Agua por todo lado

Seiz represas

Que ni el discovery ha explotado

Hay minas llenas de oro y platino

Reyes en la biodiversidad

Bochinche entre todos los vecinos

Y en deporte ni hablar

General characteristics, total happiness

National and international invisibility

Auto discrimination without reason

Imminent racism, a lot of corruption

Monte Culebra (literally meaning mountain snake)

War machine

Displacements for interests over land

Your fish shop

Water everywhere

Six dams

That not even 'discovery' has exploited

There are mines full of gold and platinum

Kings in the biodiversity

Gossip among all neighbours

And not to speak of sports

Preface

First of all I would like to thank the miners and community members who gave me their trust and the ability to engage in their lives, being honest and sincere. I would like to thank Jovanny and my *hermano Chocoano* Edinson who made me feel at home while living in the environmental station, who always kept an eye on me, and who made my time in Tadó a time to never forget. I want to thank James, for trusting me in the fulfilment of this thesis and bringing me back to earth when I could not do this on my own. Special thanks goes to the IIAP and especially Helcias Ayala, who helped me organize practical issues and who brought me into contact with many people related to gold mining. I want to thank Fairy, my host mom in Quibdo, who took care of me as I was her own daughter. And of course I want to thank Lucas and Didier, as my own personal *mototaxi* drivers, who always brought me to the right places safely. I want to thank Eliseo, Luis, Gabriel and Oscar for their liveliness and for waking me up every morning with a loud "Compiiiii" to greet my *hermano Chocoano*. I want to thank ASOCASAN for giving me the trust and possibility to stay in this region, for its openness and collaboration. I am very grateful for the help of my translator Ruth, with whom I experienced many special and amusing moments and who was never afraid to tell me her side of the story. I also want to thank Jilmar and Bertha, for translating and transcribing.

Additionally I would like to thank Alexandra Uran for staying at her beautiful house in Medellin and for the special conversations we had. I am grateful to the help of my supervisor Marjo de Theije, who made this research possible, and trusted me in the fulfilment of my research. I also want to thank my parents; Jenny and Martin, for letting me go to a country that they perceived to be highly dangerous, and for trusting in my abilities to bring this investigation to a successful conclusion. Of course I cannot forget my sisters, for their trust and special gift that brought me a lot of luck during my research. I want to thank Sandra, Carlijn, and Marianne for just being my friends and always being there for me when I needed them. I want to thank Melisa for being my mirror and letting me realize that life is not something that can be controlled. I want to thank Sanne who despite her own thesis had time to look at mine, and gave feedback and encouraged me to believe in what I wrote.

And last but certainly not least I want to thank my classmates and teachers for making this year a magnificent one.

Abbreviations

AMICHOCO	Fundación Amigos del Chocó
ARM	Alliance for Responsible Mining
ASOCASAN	Consejo Comunitario Mayor Alto San Juan (Tadó)
CECN	Comisión Especial para las Comunidades Negras, Special Commission for Black Communities
CNRR	Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación
COCOMACOIRO	Consejo Comunitario Mayor Condoto-Iró
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación
FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionario de Colombia
FLO	Fairtrade Labelling Organisations International
FT/FM	Fairtrade/Fairmined
FM	Fair Mined
FUNDAMOJARRAS	Fundación Las Mojarras
GOMIAM	Comparative Research on small-scale gold mining in the Amazon
GRUMASAN	Grupo de Productores de Mineros Artesanales del Alto San Juan
IIAP	Instituto de Investigaciones Ambientales del Pacífico
M-19	Movimiento de 19 de Abril de 1970
OTE	El Observaatorio de Territorios Étnicos

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Introduction

In the western part of Colombia, bordering the Pacific Ocean lays Chocó; a region rich in biodiversity, surrounded by rivers and forests and inhabited by indigenous people and a large Afro-Colombian population. Heavy rain, humidity, high temperatures, mountains and deep impenetrable forests characterize the region. It is in this region where the fair mined program Oro Verde (green gold) aims to improve the livelihood of small-scale gold miners through supporting artisanal mining and reducing the environmental impact of mining on the bio diverse nature of Chocó. Afro-Colombians inhabit Chocó since the beginning of the 16th century when many Africans were brought to Colombia in order to work as slaves in gold mining and agriculture activities in the country. After independence, Afro-Colombians continued their gold mining activities and small-scale gold mining became one of the most important economical activities in Colombia, especially in Chocó. Due to the high gold prices in the past years gold production in Colombia has reached record levels. This leads to many conflicts on the environmental, social and political level.

Chocó is generally known as one of the poorest region of the Colombian country and the armed conflict concerning conflicts between various guerrilla groups, paramilitaries and the government still determines daily life of the people. Small-scale gold miners, and especially mechanised miners face conflicts in which armed groups claim their rights over mining areas and land by the use of violence. Also mining organisation in Colombia is characterized by conflicts. The organisation structure of gold mining contains miners, governmental institutions, policy makers, ethnic, social and environmental networks, mining associations and private companies. All these actors have different interests and regulations that often result in conflicts on the political, environmental and social level. The national government seems to favour large-scale mining companies over small-scale miners, although the majority of the miners in Colombia is involved in small-scale mining. The mining code regulates mining activities in Colombia and although some reforms are being made, the code assumes that "all mineral deposits are property of the state" (GOMIAM, 2011:10).

In Tadó gold mining is the main economical activity for many communities. Because this does not meet basic needs other activities like agriculture, fishing, wood extraction and hunting form an important part of people's livelihood as well. Practices of unsustainable mining seem to threaten the wealthy biodiversity of Chocó. The use of mercury to separate gold from dirt is a common technique in gold mining and an important reason for the pollution of water in the Tadó region. It is estimated that miners in the region use 30 kilograms of mercury per site per month (IIAP, 2001), which would make up 7200 kg per year, and is highly polluting. Environmentally unsustainable gold mining also leads to deforestation; a study by Ramirez-Moreno and Ledezma-Rentería (2007) shows that only in Chocó already 360 hectares of forest per year are destructed due to gold mining. GOMIAM (2012) emphasizes environmental conflicts created by unsustainable mining such as deforestation, soil destruction, water pollution, water stagnation and the devastation of strategic ecosystem. Besides the large negative environmental impact of gold mining, it also has a negative impact on the health of the gold miners. Many gold miners suffer from high blood pressure and physical exhaustion caused by

mining. Also on the socio-economical level, gold mining is related to conflicts. GOMIAM (2012) recognizes conflicts between community leaders and illegal miners, between community members and the state, within communities, and within families. These conflicts contain conflicts over (collective) land in relation to illegal mining and the increasing number of immigrants, which results in higher costs related to housing and increased prostitution and alcohol consumption.

In order to overcome these issues the Oro Verde initiative was created by the Community Councils of Tadó and Condoto in association with NGO's and it "differentiates responsibly mined gold and platinum in order for it to be sold as green and fair metals in specialized market niches". (GOMIAM, 2012) A case study conducted by GOMIAM shows that the villages Condoto and Tadó together are populated by 114 households and consist of almost 500 registered Oro Verde miners. (GOMIAM, 2012) According to this research, in Tadó 84 small-scale gold miners participate in the Oro Verde program of which 40% are women. In the time of my fieldwork the amount of small-scale gold miners that participate in Oro Verde had fallen to approximately 10 active gold miners in Tadó. Oro Verde attempts to revert the negative impact of unsustainable mining by supplying "sustainable development alternatives for marginal mining communities by promoting fair trade processes and the verification of the fulfilment of ten certification parameters as a guarantee of a responsible social and environmental practice of small-scale mining" (GOMIAM, 2012). Oro Verde gold miners do not use mercury in the extraction process; instead, they extract the gold by using artisanal techniques. Oro Verde faces various challenges; land rights, certification costs and requirements, conflicts between state, communities and community leaders and illegality. To tackle these challenges, we should gain more knowledge on the relations of Afro-Colombian miners with mining (GOMIAM, 2012) and their communities. We also should gain more knowledge on how people construct existential security and how the fair mined program Oro Verde can contribute to this construction.

This thesis provides an analysis of the construction of existential security of these small-scale gold miners, and examines how the fair mined program Oro Verde contributes to this construction by using a theory of access (Ribot and Peluso, 2003).
The guiding question in this thesis is: *How do small-scale gold miners in Tadó, Colombia construct existential security and how does Fair Mined program Oro Verde contribute to this construction?*

In my research I will utilize the definition of small-scale gold mining used by GOMIAM (2012) that refers to small-scale gold mining as "mining that is labour-intensive, poor in technology and mechanization, mostly informal, outside legal frameworks of nations and often out of sight of national policies." In this thesis I make a distinction between small-scale mechanised mining and small-scale artisanal mining. Mechanised mining I define as mining that uses machines in the extraction process and characterised by the use of a retro-excavator. Artisanal mining I define as poor in technology and using artisanal techniques in the process of extraction. I also use the term *barequeros,* which refers to miners that do not own land and visit mechanised mines with their artisanal tools in order to find gold.

Methodology

During my fieldwork I lived between two communities called 'Angostura' and 'Playa de Oro'. These communities are located approximately 20 kilometres of the village of Tadó and take a thirty-minute drive in a mototaxi (local transport) from Tadó. I lived in a house (environmental station) that is related to two organisations, ASOCASAN and the IIAP. ASOCASAN is the community council of 31 communities in the region of Tadó. The IIAP is an institute funded by the government and specialised in environmental research in Colombia. In this house I lived together with two men, both related to ASOCASAN and the institute and originated from near communities.

I gained access to my informants through the network of GOMIAM and the IIAP. Through participant observation during gold mining, local meetings and daily life I gained important data about the topic of my research. Also interviews were an important part of my research, and related to the level of my Spanish I worked with a translator who during the interviews clarified what my respondents said. She also helped me to transcribe the interviews.

Although I did not experience dangerous situations, safety was an important subject during my research and I constantly needed to adapt to the local situation. Because of safety reasons I could not visit the mines on my own, and therefore my translator or someone I trusted always came with me. I made sure that my housemates always knew where I was, and that I always was with at least one person I trusted.

All photos, presented in this thesis are made by myself. And within this thesis I choose not to use the real names of my respondents in order to protect their anonymity.

Theoretical framework

'Pacificos', 'negros', 'communidades negras', 'Chocoanos' and 'Afro-Colombianos' are all terms used by black people from Tadó when referring to themselves. For the purpose of this thesis, I have chosen to use the term Afro-Colombians when referring to these Colombians of African origin. In the first place, I have excluded the terms 'Pacificos' and 'Chocoanos', as these terms refer to the region where these people live. 'Afro-Colombians' is a more neutral term in this regard. Moreover, I have excluded the term 'communidades negras' (black communities), a term used in the constitution of 1991, since this term implies a group of people. As I do not perceive Afro-Colombians to be merely part of a community, but also individual agents, I believe that the term 'Afro-Colombians' leaves more room for this duality.

A guiding concept of this thesis is human security and especially existential security. In order to describe the construction of peoples' security we should understand how people perceive security. Salman (2010:25) states that "the notion of 'human security' is helpful only when it is acknowledged that both security and insecurity come in many different shapes and forms, and that peoples' perceptions, appraisals and responses are as crucial as 'the facts' of insecurity". Therefore I emphasize the importance of existential security that I define as peoples' perceived security. In order to make this concept more operable, I use the access theory described by Ribot and Peluso (2003) as a basis to give insight in this construction process. Ribot and Peluso (2003:153) define access as "the

ability to derive benefits from things". The concept of access they refer to "aims to facilitate grounded analyses of who actually benefits from things and through what processes they are able to do so" (Ribot and Peluso, 2003:154). I argue that access theory gives insight in the construction process of existential security because access to-, and being able to benefit from resources forms a substantial part of the construction of peoples' perceived security. I state that the ways in which people benefit from resources determines how people construct their existential security. Access theory provides a tool to identify mechanisms that determine how people construct their existential security and affect peoples' daily life, well-being and conflicts. "Focusing on natural resources as the 'things' in question, we explore the range of powers that affect people's ability to benefit from resources" (Ribot and Peluso 154) I perceive the ability to derive benefits from resources as a determinant factor in the construction of existential security.

Ribot and Peluso (2003) distinguish various mechanisms that shape access processes and relations: rights-based- and illicit mechanisms, and structural and relational mechanisms. Rights-based access includes legal access and refers to access attributed by law, custom, or convention. Ribot and Peluso (2003) refer to illegal access as operating through coercion, or obtained through illegal mechanisms. Ribot and Peluso (2003:164) state, "it is a form of direct access defined against those based on the sanctions of custom, convention or law". Structural and relational mechanisms are related to capital and social identity. These mechanisms influence who has access to resources through access to technology, access to capital, access to markets, access to labour, access to knowledge, access to authority, access to social identity and access via the negotiation of other social relations (Ribot and Peluso, 2003). Access to one of these mechanisms can influence access to resources.

I approach the theory of access as a tool to analyse the construction of people's existential security and focus especially on access to identity, territory and authority. I add two forms of access in order to make this theory more suitable for my research, access to economical activity and access to governmental services. I define access to economical activity as access to activity that provides an income. I define access to governmental services as access to services provided by the government and related to health, education and public order. Although access to governmental services may overlap access to authority, I have chosen to make this distinction because in this context it can contribute to a clearer explanation of my argument.

Wider theoretical relevance

This research contributes to the wider theoretical debate because it provides insight in the process of constructing existential security from the perspective of the miners. This can contribute to themes such as environmental sustainability and considers these themes from the perspective of the miners. This research can be seen as an introduction to the topic of mining in Chocó, and providing an overview of the situation and conflicts in this region. The thesis provides a different perspective on views about environmental sustainability and can help to improve the balance between environmental sustainability and human security.

Outline of the paper

The thesis is divided in two parts in order to be able to compare the construction of existential security by small-scale gold miners and the role of Oro Verde in this construction. The first part of the thesis describes how small-scale gold miners construct their existential security through access to Afro-Colombian identity and community and gold mining. Through Afro-Colombian identity, community and gold mining miners have access to territory and local authority, economical activity and technology. I argue that this access is limited due to contradictory laws and regulations on the regional and national level. However, miners seem to construct their existential security through informal ways of access, which they locally transform into formal ways of access.

The second part of the thesis describes the vision and local implementation of the Fair Mined program Oro Verde, and analyses the role of the program in the construction of existential security of the miners. I argue that the program only limited contributes to this security because of contradictory regulation within the organisation. Within the framework of Oro Verde inconsistencies in various regulations of all participating actors lead to the locally changing of the programs' regulation into a more accessible and achievable way of working.

I

Construction of existential security among small-scale gold miners in Tadó

This part of the paper describes and analyses how small-scale gold miners in Tadó, Colombia construct existential security. Access theory forms an important tool in order to construct this security and this chapter focuses on access through Afro-Colombian identity, social relations and community and access through gold mining.

The first chapter will describe the context in which miners in Tadó construct their security, which is highly related to the armed conflict. In this chapter is emphasized that miners have limited access to governmental services as a consequence of the armed conflict and the 'invisibility' of the region. I will argue that through access to social relations or community this lack of access is complemented by a construction of social control. The second chapter analyses how access to Afro-Colombian identity and community provides access to territory and authority through law 70 that was implemented in 1993. Through this law a system of collective territories is created and provides people in Afro-Colombian communities access to territory and authority. The chapter explains this right to collective territories, the local implementation by the community council ASOCASAN and the relation of collective territories with gold mining. I will argue that through Afro-Colombian identity and community people gained access to territory and local authority. However, this access is limited because of the existence of overlapping and contradicting laws that allows regional and national governments to still make decisions over land. In the last chapter the importance of gold mining within the construction of existential security is emphasized. Gold mining provides access to economical activity, and therefore contributes to the construction of existential security. I make a distinction between mechanised and artisanal mining. This chapter shows that through mechanised mining miners have access to technology and thereby the possibility to a larger income and physically less demanding work.

1. The armed conflict, invisibility and social control

Since independence Colombia has been the setting for a complex armed conflict where many actors are involved and changed over time. During the civil war, referred to as *La Violencia* (1948-57) the political regime changed and various guerrilla groups revolted against the regime. The start of the current conflict is defined by the CNRR as the result of the establishing of communist guerrilla groups as the FARC, EPL and ELN in 1964 (Offstein, 2003). It is estimated that this conflict resulted in 674,000 homicides, of which 94,000 could be directly attributed to the conflict and of which 51,500 were civilians (Otero, 2008:6). According to Otero (2008) "between 2.5 and 4.3 million people were forcibly displaced" (Garcia-Godos and Andreas O. Lid, 2010:491) as a result of the conflict. The most violent actors in the conflict have been considered the paramilitary groups, groups who are organized and function as military groups but are not considered as a part of the formal armed forces of the state. These groups control a large part of the illegal drug trade in the country and are seen as the main responsible actor of the displacement of many Colombians.

Afro-Colombians and indigenous people are considered the main victims of the conflict as a result of the 'invisibility' of these groups. In Colombian history the idea of a *mestizo* country is being idealized and became the dominant ideal of the countries politics. Wade (1993:11) refers to *mestizo* as "the ideology of *blanquemiento,* or whitening, seen in a national context" and explains that the notion of

mestizaje prefers the whiter to the darker. De Friedemann argues that the "promotion of the democratizing power of *mestizaje* has resulted in the 'invisibilization' of black people, who only appear in the national panorama as stereotypes, in spheres related to aesthetics and physique" (as cited in Castillo and Abril, 2009:132). Wade (1997) argues that race and geography and strongly related in the nation, and since the beginning of nineteenth century the country has been divided in the Andean, Pacific and Caribbean and Amazonian- river Orinoco area. The Colombian capital is located in the Andean region and this region is mainly populated by *mestizo* people and considered as the most economic developed region. Afro-Colombians, mulattos, and indigenous people generally inhabit the other regions. This geographical division can be related back to colonial times and "the serious lack of public services, health and education in the latter regions is consistent with the Andean-centrism of the central government" (Castillo and Abril, 2009:132).

Locally the armed conflict is referred to as '*la violencia'* or '*conflicto armado',* and because of the existence of this conflict and the invisibility of the Afro-Colombians, miners and their families have decreased access to governmental services related to the public order, health and education. In this chapter I argue that on the basis of this decreased access people construct a system of social control carried out by the local community. This chapter emphasizes the importance of this system within the construction of existential security at this insecure background. The first paragraph shows the lack of access as a result of this subordinated position through the armed conflict and the invisibility of the region in Tadó. Subsequently the second part of the chapter demonstrates how social control is constructed through access to social relations and community and aims to increase existential security.

1.1 Reflections of the armed conflict and invisibility of Afro-Colombians in Tadó

The armed conflict is reflected in the daily lives of people is Tadó. This is visible in the presence of the many strikes in the Chocó region that during my three months of fieldwork occurred three times; a *paro armado* (armed strike), *paro cafetero* (coffee strike), and a *paro indigena* (indigenous strike). The armed strike was announced by the FARC as a 20-day suspension of transportation and aimed to draw attention to the Colombian government and the humanitarian crisis in the region of Chocó as a result of the exploitation and corruption by the state. Transport is shutdown, and the FARC claimed to punish each offender adequate. 'El tiempo', a Colombian newspaper, emphasizes the incapability of the police in the region to control and overcome these events. (El tiempo, 2013) My translator explained that these strikes happen very often and when the rules that have been set up by the guerrilla are violated, this may result in the explosion of buses or other means of transport. Being informed about the strike proved to be difficult; both national media and the government could hardly give clear information, and locally people did not know what to expect from the strike. My informants in Quibdó, advised me to return to Quibdó as soon as possible, because I could get stuck in the rural area for 20 days. In Tadó people started to collect food to overcome the 20 days, and *mototaxis* gathered around the village of Tadó in order to buy food from the truck drivers. Within the communities people seemed to remain relatively calm, and argued that during these kinds of strikes except the difficulty to obtain food and fuel, generally nothing happens. In these periods people are tied to their

homes, and do not have access to local transportation. This impedes visiting a hospital, buying food and continuing normal daily life. Both the indigenous strike as the coffee striké resulted in the transportation stop in certain areas of Chocó, however, these strikes were not directly related to violence.

Another problem related to the armed conflict is the extortion of mechanised miners by guerrilla groups. These groups make contact with these miners and claim money for the rent of the land they mine on. Guerrilla groups threaten these miners by stating that they will kill them when they do not receive the money. For this reason organizing interviews with these mechanised miners proved to be difficult; all mechanised miners I met were very suspicious, and only gave me their telephone number when I gave them mine, for the reason that they do not respond to unknown numbers because the possibility of being threatened by guerrilla groups. This was less of a problem for the artisanal miners, because, as they explained, they simply do not earn enough money to be interesting for these armed groups.

The invisibility of the Afro-Colombians was noticeable at various levels. People in the surrounding communities of Tadó have limited access to governmental services related to health and public order, and this was especially visible in emergency situations. People do not have access to services like an ambulance, a fire brigade and limited access to police services. The next paragraph will describe some situations related to this lack of access and demonstrating how through access to social relations and community people constructed a system of social control.

1.2 Access to community as a basis for existential security

"Access via the negotiation of other social relations of friendship, trust, reciprocity, patronage, dependence, and obligation form critical strands in access webs." (Ribot and Peluso, 2003:172) This form of access is related to all other forms of access and in the situation of Tadó community plays an important role within the maintaining of access to resources. Therefore I also refer to this type of access as access to community.

Various situations showed the existence of social control through community access as a substitute for the lack of access to governmental services. During my fieldwork I travelled a lot between Quibdó, a city in Choco, and Tadó and between the communities and the village of Tadó. During this travels I noticed that my housemate always knew when I was on my way to the environmental station. Below I described one of these situations in my field notes.

> "Today I'm travelling from my accommodation in Manungara to the environmental station located between the Angostura community and the Playa de Oro community. Not knowing the length and details of this trip I get into the chocho (or mototaxi) of Lucas, a driver that has proven ASOCASAN to be reliable, because my informant from ASOCASAN tells me we can call him whenever we need him in order to transport us between the communities. Lucas tells us that he regularly provides transportation to estranjeras (foreign people) who are connected to ASOCASAN or the institute.

After a scary, bumpy 15 minutes drive on a slippery dirt road from the Manungara community, holding the hand of my scared translator who keeps her eyes as close as possible, we arrive at the paved main road. This road will eventually lead us to our next accommodation, the environmental station. We pass several communities, and Lucas mentions every name of these communities while we drive through. People are sitting outside on plastic chairs, watching us, and they seem to be surprised by this white blond girl in the chocho. After a 30/40-minute trip we arrive at the environmental station, and I meet the manager, Hernando, a 28-year-old man. When asking him whether he was aware of our arrival he smiles and tells me he already heard that we were coming half an hour ago. When I ask him later how he knew we were coming he tells me that his family lives in the Corcovado community and that they often communicate with him when foreign people are on their way to the environmental station." (Field notes, 21th of January, Tadó)

This situation demonstrates the presence of social control within the communities I have visited. People constantly seem to communicate with each other about unusual situations in order to be able to act upon these activities. The visibility of this social control underlines the importance of community in sustaining existential security. The access to social relations and community also seems to substitute the lack of access to governmental services. This can be found in an example related to drugs and crime, which is clearly not tolerated by the community.

'One of my informants, Yarlinto, a 28-year-old son of a miner, brings a visit to the environmental station. Hernando, my 28-year-old housemate and a friend of Yarlinto, joins us and we take a seat on a plastic chair under a roof next to the station. This place is often transformed into an eating space when ASOCASAN has a meeting here, but now it is just an empty open space with concrete floor. Hernando and Yarlinto start questioning me about Holland and they react quite shocked when I tell them about the use of marihuana in Holland. Yarlinto tells me that in Colombia it is seen as very dangerous to be related to someone that uses marihuana, because when people here use this they are often related to other criminal activities. When I ask him whether there are people in these communities that use marihuana he tells me that there are probably people who do this, but only in their houses because they know the community does not tolerate the use of drugs. Hernando adds that people who use drugs are going to be in big trouble with the people in the community when using it in public, because the existence of drugs in the community means more crime within those communities and of course this is not what the people want.' (Field notes, 21th of February, Tadó)

As a response to the limited access to governmental services, people and communities seem to have created their own system of rules and defence mechanisms against local crime in order to construct existential security. This is also reflected in emergency situations such as accidents and an example is found in the situation where one of the best friends of my informant died in a mine. While having a conversation with Yarlinto he was called away from his house by his neighbour because of an accident that happened in a nearby mechanised mine.

'"Call me in 20 minutes", says Yarlinto," I really need to have a look in this mine". When calling him back after 20 minutes I get in contact with a Yarlinto that sounds shocked and broken. "Dios mio[2]one of my best friends, Freed, died in the mine of his father. They were working and when it started to rain the mountain collapsed on him. His body is covered by mud, Dios mio, we are now going to dig his body….. I lost my friend' (Field notes, May 21st 2013, Amsterdam/Playa de Oro)

Three hours later they found his body. Yarlinto tells me afterwards that people from the surrounding communities, El Tabor, Tapon, Angostura, Carmelo, Corcovado, all came to the mine in order to help searching for the body. Representatives of governmental institutions like militaries, doctors, policemen or local leaders were not present. This underlines the invisibility of the Afro-Colombians and demonstrates the way in which access to community complements this lack of access to governmental services.

Also, the organisation of practical issues within the communities is organized through the access to social relations. In Angostura, the church is a meeting place for people from the community to talk about new lights surrounding the football field but also about how to act when there is another *paro* (strike). I visited some of those meetings and this gave me insight in the way people depend on each other and their community. Andres, *presidente* of one of the communities told me that social control within those communities' forms one of the main roles in constructing existential security in peoples' daily lives.

2. Access through Afro-Colombian identity and community

"Access is often mediated by social identity or membership in a community or group, including groupings by age, gender, ethnicity, religion, status, profession, place of birth, common education, or other attributes that constitute social identity" (Ribot and Peluso, 2003:170-171). This chapter describes how access to Afro-Colombian identity and community forms a significant part in the construction of existential security and creates access to territory and local authority. However, by the existence of overlapping and contradicting laws, this access still seems to be limited at the local level.

Twenty six per cent of the national Colombian population consists of Afro-Colombians (Comisión para la Formulación del Plan Nacional de Desarollo de la Población Afrocolombiana, 1998), of which the majority lives along the Pacific and Caribbean Coasts. The department of Chocó is populated by the largest population of black people of Colombia; 85% of the people living in Chocó are Afro-Colombian. Around 1500 the first Africans came to Colombia as slaves. Since the "discovery of gold in the Chocó in 1680 there was a huge increase in the number of slaves in the Pacific and southern Colombia, with 9,400 slaves sold in Popayán alone from 1680 to 1800" (Ng'weno, 2007:102-103). Through law 70, a law designed on the basis of Afro-Colombian identity, a system of collective territories was created in

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[2] Oh my God

1993. This chapter emphasizes the role of Afro-Colombian identity and community in providing access to territory and local authority. Through this access miners are able to construct their existential security. However this access is limited because of the power that municipal and national governments still have in the decision-making process of the territory.

The first paragraph of this chapter describes how Afro-Colombian identity and community are the basis *of* the right to collective territories. The second paragraph illustrates the local implementation of the collective territories and the role of the community council ASOCASAN within this process. Subsequently the last paragraph focuses on the relation between gold mining and collective territories.

2.1 Afro-Colombian identity and the right to collective territories

Since 1959, law 2 states that "vast areas of the country, including extensive swathes of the Chocó, were declared state forest reserves and tierras baldías (empty or uninhabited lands)" (Asher, 2009:37). Contrary to the Afro-Colombians, the indigenous communities have been recognized as a cultural distinct group for a longer period of time. Although 10 to 30 per cent of the Colombian population is of African descent, 90 per cent living in the Pacific region, Afro-Colombians for a long time have been defined as *mestizos* with the same rights as other Colombians. Afro-Colombians did not have special rights over land, and were not considered as a cultural distinct group. Indigenous communities were recognized as a distinct group and therefore mainly subject for various development interventions, while Afro-Colombians were ignored.

After long struggles, proposals and resistance by Afro-Colombian movements, AT55, a law for black communities, was drafted in 1991 by the CECN. This law affirmed, "to protect black identity and promote socioeconomic development among black communities in the Pacific and those living under similar conditions in other parts of the country" (Asher, 2009:47). Subsequently, the Colombian government implemented law 70 in 1993. The law recognized Afro-Colombians as a distinct group that needed special rights. The objectives of law 70 are "the protection of black communities' ethnic identity and rights as well as the promotion of their economic and social development in order to guarantee equality" (Cárdenas, 2012:309). Escobar (2008:220) refers to this law as a "strategy by government to institutionalize problems and make them manageable". I will complement that being Afro-Colombian and part of these black communities, provides access to territory and local authority, the authority of organizing collective territories.

All my informants referred to this law and could explain the content of the law. Felipe, a 30-year-old man, working for ASOCASAN explained:

> *"Based on the peaceful struggles of the black people, the constitution of 1992 recognizes Colombia as a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. This created the Law 70 of 1993 for the black communities. Those administrative figures are related to in the community council of, in this case, Tadó and is evident from Tapón to Guarato. Here ASOCASAN designed an internal regulation which follows the standards of 1993."* (Felipe)

Although this law seems to be an important part of the construction of existential security, it should be noticed that also this access is limited. Overlapping laws result in conflicts on the political and decision-making level, and still municipal and national governments have the power to make decisions over territory that can affect these communities. As I already mentioned in the introduction, all mineral deposits are referred to as property of the state, and by the existence of the mining code there is many overlap in authority. The mining code distinguishes mining that requires a mining title, mining supported by machines, and mining that does not require a mining title, artisanal mining. Everyone who can fulfil the requirements of the mining authority has access to a mining title, which can be granted up to 30 years and may be extended for an additional 20 years. However, less than one per cent of the requests have been processed. Environmental requirements take an important part in this code but the code does not define capacity, size of mining area, human resources or technology. The mining code defines illegal mining as mining that does not meet the conditions. The mining code recognizes mining areas within collective territories, however still these communities need mining titles, and individuals can be eligible for these titles as well. These overlapping and contradictory regulations over the use of land cause conflicts at all levels and through economic selectivity (Ribot and Peluso, 2003:170) and the invisibility of the group the Afro-Colombian communities are in disadvantage and therefore I believe this access to be limited.

2.2 Local implementation of collective territories in Tadó

"The constitution declares that Colombia is a multi-ethnic, multicultural country and within these ethnic groups are the black communities. What we do is defend those rights of these communities". (Diego)

Access to identity forms the base for the access to collective territories and local authority of these territories within Afro-Colombian communities. The community council of Tadó, ASOCASAN carries out the implementation of law 70 and the collective territories. This paragraph describes the role of ASOCASAN within the communities and the organisation of territories in the region. ASOCASAN is the 'Consejo Communitario Mayor del Alto San Juan' that literally means the Senior Community Council of the Alto San Juan region, or Tadó.

ASOCASAN consists of 21 local councils and 31 communities, which are illustrated in figure 1. All local councils have a local *presidente* (speaker) who is responsible for the local implementation of the *reglamento interno* (Internal regulation). Figure 1 shows the organization chart of ASOCASAN. Felipe, member of ASOCASAN explains that the local councils exist in order to regulate the use of territories in the communities. He explains:

> *The Senior Council consists of five persons; a presidente, a member who is in charge of the administrative board, sports, organization, education, health and natural resources, these are [names]. And there are 21 local councils, for example Mauricio is the presidente of the community council of Playa de Oro, and Andres, besides being a member of the board, is the local presidente of Carmelo [.....] Every three years the reglamento interno provides what*

should be generated by the local assemblies. These councils send delegates to elect the senior council and the representante legal. (Felipe)
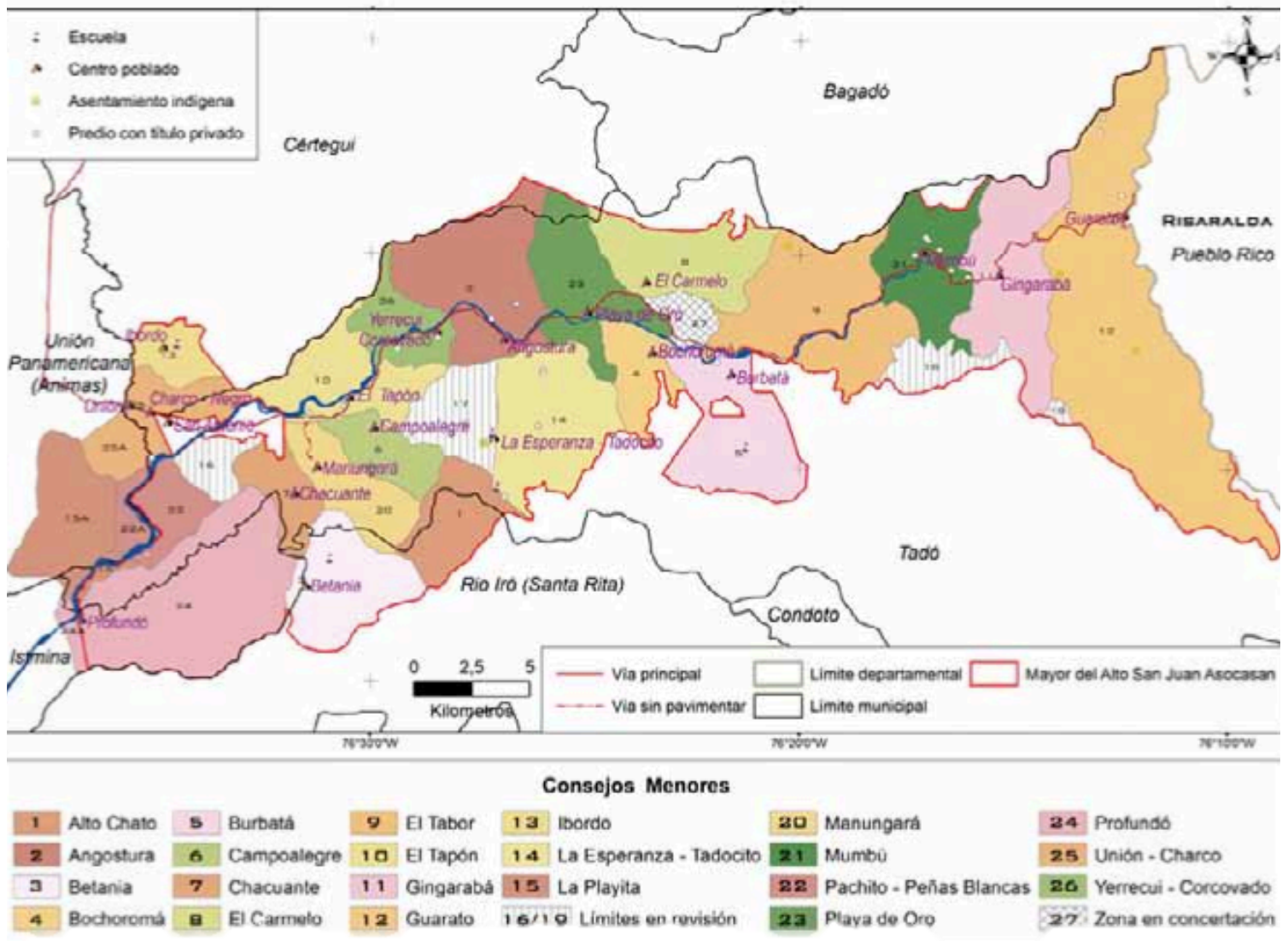

Figure 1. Local community councils of ASOCASAN (OTE, 2011)

ASOCASAN regulates the use of this territory through an internal regulation, and makes a distinction between common use areas and family use areas. The community council claims to be guided by law 70 and the regulation states:

'The Senior Community Council of Alto San Juan, ASOCASAN, is an ethnic-territorial organization located in the municipality of Tadó, Chocó. The organisation is guided by the principles and regulations of law 70, its' implemented regulations and other rules related to ethnic groups. Its' principles and actions are orientated on the management, use and defence of territory, community welfare starting from their traditional practices according to their worldview, to the appropriation of their ethnicity with a responsible autonomy and an harmonic maintenance of the nature and social life'. (ASOCASAN, 2010:7)
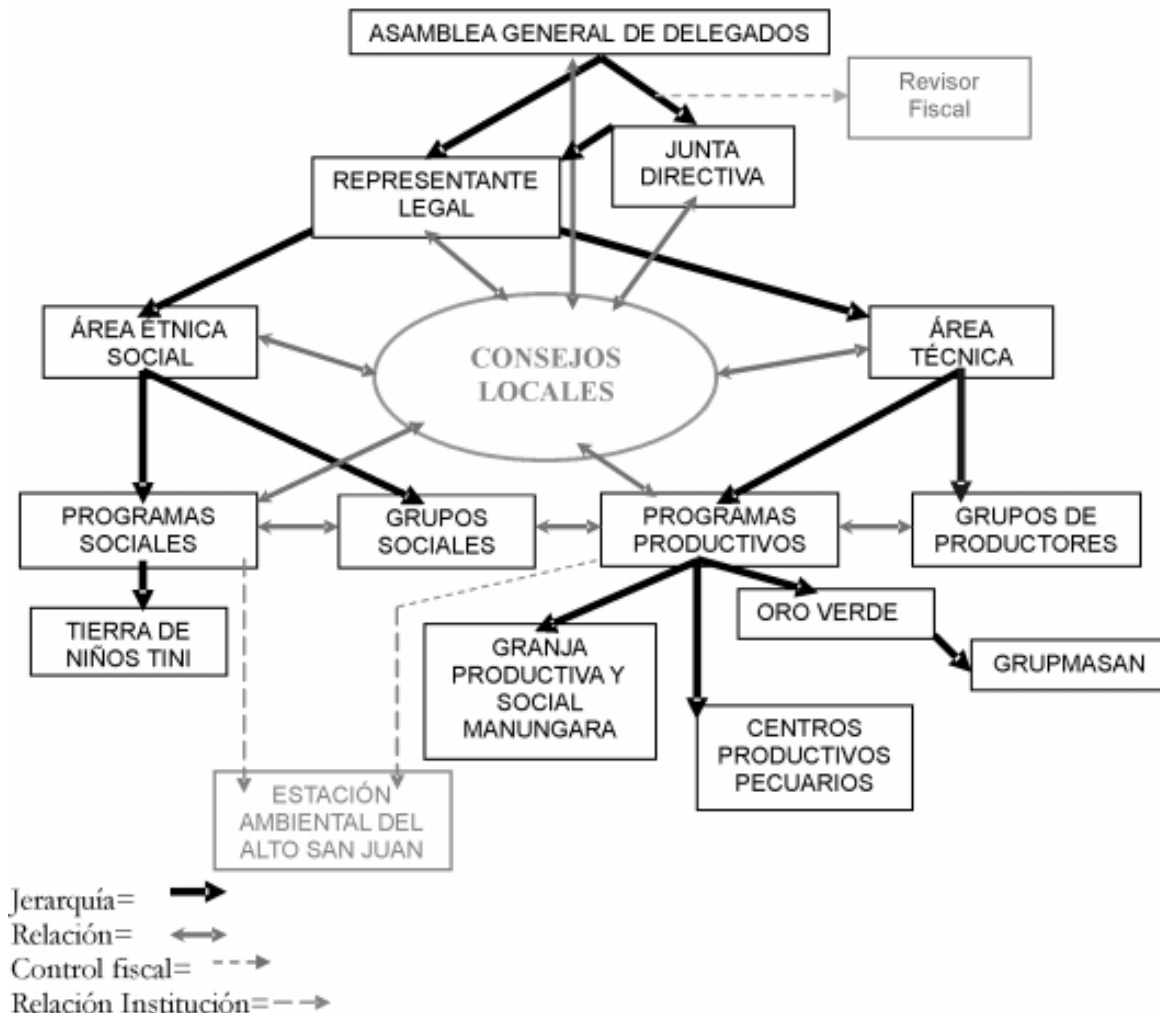
ORGANIGRAMA

Figure 2. Reglamento Interno (ASOCASAN, 2009b)

The organization chart shows the importance of the local councils (*consejo locales*) and Mauricio explains that the final decisions are to be made by the *asamblea* in cooperation with the *representante legal* and the *junta directiva.* The *representante legal* is an important face of the organization and leads all meetings that take place in the communities. This is also confirmed by Mauricio, *presidente* of a local community who argues that the *representante legal* has high recognition of the territory and therefore helps the local councils but also is an important face on the national and international level. According to Mauricio, being a *presidente* is all about organizing daily life in his community.

> *'We monitor and look where we can do some work in the community, a laundromat, establishing an Internet room. It is our mission to find and manage where we could do community work'.* (Mauricio)

Becoming a *presidente* of the local council is decided through election. Mauricio explained that the 28th of November an election has taken place to choose the board of directors. How this works is all explained in the *reglamento interno* and this regulation also defines the requirements that *presidentes*

have to meet in order to be chosen. Mauricio and Andres both explain that it is not allowed to be an alcoholic, and that you have to be a mediating person. Other important requirements described in the *reglamento interno* are that members of the council have to be of Afro-Colombian ascendency and belong to a black community in the area of influence of ASOCASAN. Subsequently they have to be recognized by the community as suitable, tolerant and having the capacity to conciliation, and not to be active in public office.

Within their regulation, ASOCASAN, distinguishes '*el visitante*', '*el colono*' and '*el nativo*'. They refer to '*el nativo*', or the native, as people from black communities that can enjoy the rights, which are in line with law 70. '*El colono*', or the settler, is referred to as a person or family from land different than the area of influence of ASOCASAN. ASOCASAN claims that territorial rights are recognized for these people, however these people should have established a direct relationship with the land. This can be established through the practice of traditional activities or through bonding with families with rights. '*El visitante*', or the visitor, is being described as any person that is from outside the territory and visits the territory for commercial, institutional or kin reasons. According to ASOCASAN, these people do not enjoy special rights. ASOCASAN stresses the importance of being registered in the census of the organisation.

Spirituality and ancestral knowledge

The *reglamento interno* devotes a chapter to 'the spiritual authority in the territory'. "We validate and recognize that ancestral knowledge, which our territory gave us on the basis of our spiritual and environmental heritage, heal the diseases of our bodies and souls" (ASOCASAN, 2009b). Article 42 recognizes the importance of the spiritual authority of *comadronas, curanderos, sobanderos* and *conocedores,* which I generally translate as spiritual healers, and refers to them as spirits of their territory. According to ASOCASAN this influences the strategies and development of their social programs and health education. Spiritual and environmental heritage is highly related to ancestral knowledge; both are an important part of the vision of ASOCASAN.

Authority and territory

The *reglamento interno* refers to *fundamental social principles* related to community life and define how to act when people do not abide by the rules. ASOCASAN states that all activities conducted by individuals or territorial groups that go against the life, the physical integrity, spirituality or psychology of persons, families or habitants of the community will be sanctioned by the controlling authorities of this territory. Here they refer to activities that affect the 'peaceful Pacific life' within the community such as physical aggression by the use of firearm, irresponsible parenthood, theft or theft of property, and libel, slander or perjury. According to the *reglamento interno* the public control system and militaries of the state have the responsibility to carry out actions related to the collective territories, this in cooperation with the *junta directiva* of ASOCASAN.

Use of territory

The territory available for the Afro-Colombian communities extends an area of 54.517 hectares and is located within the municipalities of Tadó and Rio Iró. ASOCASAN indicate to have a managing plan of

the territory. This plan is realized by the *junta directive* with the participation of the local councils and shows the use, management and conservation of the territory. The plan needs to contain one or more of the following criteria "mining exploitation places, livestock and agroforestry, conservation recovery and protection of mulches and environmental, promotion of ethno tourism, preservation and cultural attractions." (ASOCASAN, 2009b) Unfortunately I was not able to get this plan as one my informants of ASOCASAN told me that this plan is still in the making.

Collective and familiar property

An important theme that is addressed in the internal regulation of ASOCASAN is the distinction between collective and familiar property. ASOCASAN distinguishes 'common use areas' and 'family use areas'. The collective areas are described as those lands that have been collectively used in the history of one or more communities, or those that have been used by specific family groups but not have been used for the past five years. These 'common use areas' are under the responsibility of the board (*junta directiva*) and can be used for social or environmental programs. Examples of 'common use areas' are forests, rivers and streams, beaches and other areas normally used by the people within the territory. Diego, member of ASOCASAN, explains that this offers the people food security, because when people do not have the money to buy food, they can make use of resources within the collective territories. The regulation explains the allocation of *usofructo.* My translator Jilmar explained the term *usofructo* as something that refers to the use of a property that does not belong to someone. In the case of collective territories this means that a person may request the *usofructo* of 'common use areas'.

'Family use areas' are illustrated as recognized and legalized family property. The regulation states that this property is under the control of each family as private property but also under the responsibility of the community council and complying with the rules and regulations of ASOCASAN. The regulation emphasizes the collectiveness of rivers and streams and states that family owned lands lose their rights when not being occupied or used for five or more years.
ASOCASAN underlines the importance of their 'fundamental principles' within the use of territories, and explained as respect for life, no violence and village autonomy.

As this data shows, the existence of collective territories does not exclude the existence of family territory. Large parts of land are owned and used by families. Andres, *presidente* of a local community council explains that 90 per cent of the land is transmitted from father to son. Also miner Juan underlines this system of inheritance:

> *"I've inherited the land, together with my brothers, from my grandfather, and when I stop working my children stay working. There is plenty of land to work on today".* (Juan)

The regulation does not explain the legislation of this family property and neither my informants nor documents could explain how family property is formally organized.

Use of the environment in the territory

Nature and the environment take an important part in the internal regulation of ASOCASAN. This part emphasizes the priority of human consumption over any other in the use of natural resources. It states that sustainability is found in traditional use of the territory. ASOCASAN refers to wildlife, flora, communal forests, hydro biological resources and mineral resources as the base of their existence. Activities related to the environment and related to community culture are the gathering of fruits and seeds, planting and harvesting of traditional plants and the fabrication of tools and crafts. ASOCASAN distinguishes methods of processing or cultivating the land that are prohibited and which, if implied, will be prosecuted. These include the growing of illicit crops like coca and marijuana, fishing with certain tools and other harmful or toxic methods that harm ecosystems and human health like the looting of genetic resources, fishing with dynamite or other explosives, commercial use of timber without permission and sacking river material for commercial purposes without permission or license. The regulation emphasizes that the extraction of minerals shall be carried out in harmony with the landscapes and natural life.

Collective territories and gold mining

Figure 3 shows the mining areas within the region of influence of ASOCASAN. Within the collective territories it is allowed to rent family owned property, however this should be done in consultation with the community council. Many families rent their land to mechanised miners and receive a part of the income of these miners. This is often done in an informal way, because mechanised mining is still prohibited in Colombia without a mining title and as mentioned earlier in this chapter this makes these families vulnerable. Jhon, a mechanised miner who rents land from a community member states:

> "*Basically the work has been that there are some holders or co-owners of the land and you give them a percentage of what is produced. The problem is that the country, to exploit, needs to provide a mining title, an environmental licence and this doesn't work. My cooperative has requested for this mining title since 2001 and never got any answers. And to receive an environmental license you also need a mining title, and this one is not easily given".* (Jhon)
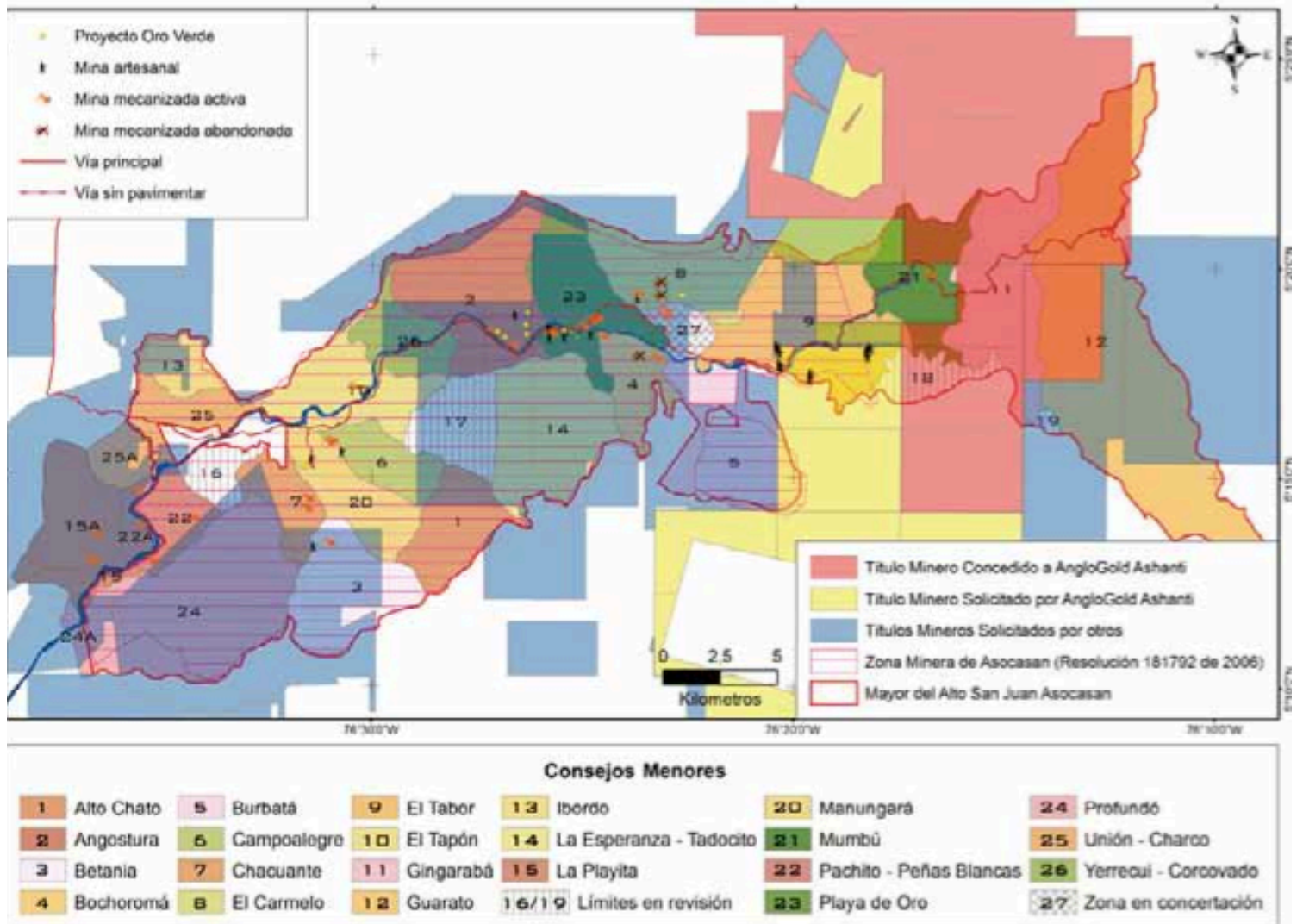
Figure 3. Mining areas in the region of influence of ASOCASAN

"A mi tierrra llego un fulano

llevandose todo mi oro

a mi tierrra llego un fulano

llevandose todo mi oro

vestido de blanco entero

y con acento extrangero

prometio a cambio de oro

dejarme mucho dinero

el tipo de kien les hablo

nunca mas aparecio

cogio mi metal precioso

y todo se lo llevo

ladron te fuiste

con mi oro

y me dejaste

sin mi oro"

(Chocquibtown – Oro)

"To my land came a guy

taking all my gold

to my land came a guy

taking all my gold

Entire white dress

and with a accent of a foreigner

he promised in exchange for gold

very much money

The type of which we speak

never returned

he grabbed my precious metal

and took it all

Thief, you went

with my gold

and you left me

without my gold"

This song, written and performed by Chocquibtown, a famous band from Chocó, is about the robbing of a person who rented his land to a mechanised miner, and left the area without paying the agreed amount. The emphasis lays on the foreigner accent of the thief and the music video positions this man as a *mestizo* man with a white *sombrero* who looks down upon his black employees working in the mine. This story is based on an important problem in the region where mechanised miners make (informal) agreements with families or artisanal miners who own land, renting the land for gold mining purposes and promising the people a part of the income. These agreements are on an informal base because formally it is illegal to use machines in gold mining without a mining title. It often occurs that these mechanised miners leave without paying the agreed amount of money to the landowners.

Presidente of a local community, Andres, explains that ASOCASAN developed rules for the use of the collective territories in order to reduce the negative impact of mining on the communities.

> *"In addition to the land within the collective territories, there are some lease holders who rent land and they talk to the junta directive and set conditions. They are, for example, not allowed to work from Saturday six o'clock in the evening until Sunday because in this way the river is clean for activities like the cleaning of clothes. They also make some requirements for social compensation. They must pay tuition of 500.000 pesos to the municipality to enter the territory. And when something needs to be done, like a bridge that needs to be build, they are*

This shows the possibility of renting your family owned land to mechanised miners at the local level, and also the benefits in doing this for both the community as the miners and their family. So although formal access to territories is still limited, people seem to construct informal ways to access these territories by renting their land to mechanised miners. Although this is prohibited by the state because of the absence of the mining title, the community council and the municipality seem to approve this informal access. Thereby transforming this way of informal access, into a formal way of access at the local level.

3. Access through gold mining

Gold mining is seen as the main economical activity in Choco and is highly entangled with Afro-Colombian identity through history and heritage. Therefore I argue that gold mining provides access to economical activity and is part of the construction of existential security. The first paragraph illustrates how gold mining is entangled within Afro-Colombian identity and how it provides access to economical activity. Subsequently the third paragraph explains the difference in technology between mechanised and artisanal mining and argues that artisanal mining lacks access to technology. In contrast, mechanised mining provides access to technology and therefore contributes to a higher income and physical less demanding work. Miners perceive this as part of the construction of their existential security.

3.1 Gold mining, Afro- Colombian identity and access to economical activity

"Today I am visiting the mine of Alexander, that I have already visited several times. When I am waiting for more people to come together with Yarlinto, Alexander's son, we see a very small bird sitting on a branch of a tree. Yarlinto whispers: 'Hé look at that bird....we call it a *pajarito de oro*[3]...It is a very special bird'. I smile and ask him why this bird is special, Yarlinto continues: 'The older people say that when you see this bird, you should be really happy, because it means that there is a lot of gold in that place'. (Field notes, 20th of February 2013)

Many local traditions, stories and myths are related to gold and mining, and illustrate the significance of gold mining in Afro-Colombian identity. One of those traditions is the *ombligada* (ombligo means navel), this is a tradition practiced when a baby is born. The navel of the newborn child is filled with a natural substance, which can be a plant, an animal or mineral. Every type of substance has its meaning, and gold means that it would give the child good luck in mining. Escobar (2008:113) refers to this tradition as the "paradigmatic of the conceptualization of nature of black groups in the Pacific" and emphasizes the importance of the relation between nature and identity in this tradition. Escobar (2008:113) claims that "the navel thus functions as an interface between the natural and human orders".

---

[3] Bird of gold

Afro-Colombians also believe in *veedores* (literally translated as suppliers), who are paid to tell the miners where they can find the gold. Both community leader Jair and *presidente* Mauricio describe the strong relationship between mining and identity in Chocó.

> *"Mining is innate in Chocó. Mining is natural; it is natural at the rural part, at the countryside. So you are born, and from your birth the first thing you do is going to the mountains and work in the mines".* (Jair)

> *"We understand mining because it is something ancestral, something from us, something that our ancestors did and that we have to defend".* (Mauricio)

Mining can be approached as a substantial part of Afro-Colombian identity because of its part in history and expressions of heritage, and because it is the main economical activity within Chocó. Since the beginning of the 16th century, when people of African descent were brought to Colombia in order to work as slaves in the mines, gold mining is one of the most important economical activities in Choco. "Afro-Colombians have for centuries mined gold as both freemen and slaves in this hinterland of the mining and slave city of Popayán, creating a strong identity with gold mining" (Ng'weno, 2007:147). This is also the case in Tadó where mining has been the main economical activity for more than 400 years. Mining engineer Jorge emphasizes this economical importance not only for the sustenance of the family but also for trade and the marketing of the domestic product. He refers to gold mining as "the engine of the economy *Chocoana*"(Jorge). Rudy, a 57-year-old mining engineer, also sees gold mining as the main development tool of the department, and something that became the basis of development of the communities in Chocó. He refers to gold mining as "the motive of all development in Chocó" (Rudy). Mining engineer Santiago states that mining, and especially artisanal mining is deeply connected to the Afro-Colombian culture because of its' culture of surviving.

> *"Mining like it is practiced or it has been practiced by our people, when I say our people I refer to the black element, has been a labour of subsistence not to create wealth, but simply to survive, and why? Because they did not have the culture to generate wealth, they only worked for what they needed that week, their daily bread, not for wealth".* (Santiago)

Becoming a miner is more often the rule rather than the exception. Being born in this region in general means that you will work in the mine at least for a period of your life. This can be during your study, when you need money to eat, when you are a child and need to help your parents in the mine, when you lost your job and cannot find an alternative yet, or because mining is what your parents did and what you are going to do because there is no money for an alternative. Mechanised miner Jhon explains me that he entered this type of work through his family, and succeeded his father who worked for more than twenty years in gold mining.

Because mining is one of the main economical activities in the communities, it highly determines peoples' daily lives. Other economical activities within the region are related to agriculture, timber, fishing and hunting. Around the communities of Tadó many small-scale gold mines are located, some related to the fair trade program of Oro Verde and others just working for themselves. Working days are from Monday to Saturday, and Sundays are used to wash clothes (because the rivers are clean that day), cleaning, fishing and to party. Saturday is often the day that the small-scale gold miners sell their gold. The Oro Verde miners sell their gold to the intermediary of the program; miners that do not participate in Oro Verde go to Tadó to sell their gold in a *compra de oro*, which literally means buying gold. Juan explains:

> *"Well, we work and in the weekend, on Saturday, we take the gold to sell it. Here we wash (lavar) every two days, I keep the gold with me and then sell it to the secretary in Playa de Oro".* (Juan)

Picture 1. Compra de Oro, Tadó, Colombia

Around the communities, people transport themselves by what they call *mototaxi* or *chocho.* These are small tuk tuks that can transport a maximum of five people and a driver. These *mototaxis* are often gathered in large amounts around the central park of Tadó, from where they transport people to all surrounding communities. The drivers come from Tadó but also from these different communities. When people in Playa de Oro need a *mototaxi* they wait on the side of the road and hope that the one that is coming is not overcrowded. It can take an hour before a *mototaxi* is coming and therefor this way of transport is not very reliable. It is also possible to call a driver, but people usually do not do this because the driver will count double. Miners generally do not use *mototaxis* when they go to their mines because this is too expensive and because their mines are not accessible from the main road. They walk to their mines, and some of them have a bicycle. Alexander, Oro Verde miner, explains that

sometimes they treat their selves by taking the bus or *mototaxi* after a long day of work, but usually this is too expensive.

Small-scale artisanal gold miners seem to have difficulties with earning enough money to sustain their living, and this shows that also the access that gold mining acquires is limited. Yarlinto, Oro Verde miner, explains that in a six-day workweek he hopes to earn approximately 20.000 Colombian pesos, which is 7,98 euro. He explains that it often occurs that he earns less and sometimes, when they cannot find sufficient gold because they were not able to *lavar* (last part of the extraction process where the gold is separated from the dirt by panning), he earns nothing. Also Juan, Oro Verde miner, underlines that after a week of work, it is not always assured that he has enough money for sustaining a living for him and his family.

> *"There are times that we worked fourteen days and left with only one thousand pesos. You need to pay your bills, but cannot find enough gold nor pay, so it was hard".* (Juan)

Oro Verde miner Monica states that although gold mining sometimes does not provide enough for a living she and her family never face hunger. She explains that she always searches for ways to gain a living, and when this is not possible in her own mine she will go *barequeando*. *Barequando* thus seems to function as a rear guard to provide an income and sustain a living.

This analysis shows that through history, heritage and economy, gold mining made itself inseparable from Afro-Colombian identity. Gold mining provides access to economical activity and is therefore an important element in the construction of existential security. However, this access is limited because artisanal miners do not seem to be able to always earn enough for their livelihood.

3.2 Gold mining and technology

This paragraph shows how access to technology can contribute to the construction of existential security. We describe the extraction process of gold mining and distinguish artisanal gold mining and mechanical gold mining. In this paragraph I argue that access to technology can contribute to the construction of existential security. Mechanised mining provides this access.

The climate and the mining process

Chocó is one of the regions in the world with the highest amount of rainfall through the year. The climate is very humid and hot and forms a significant factor that influences the mining process. Chocó is characterized by intense rainfall, which can last from one hour to three or four days. In practice this means that, no one knows when it is going to rain, when it stops raining or how intense the rainfall is going to be. During these heavy showers, electricity stops functioning and often the telephone signal disappears. Generally this happens approximately once a week and can take up to days until it turns back to normal. Therefore the climate is a very insecure factor and especially related to the mining process. When it's raining very heavily it can be dangerous to work in the mines because of the erosion of the land. Also, when it rains this can disturb the process of cleaning the land and eventually

'*lavar*' and find the gold. This can result in not finding enough gold for a living. In both artisanal as mechanised mining the climate is a determinant factor.

Artisanal mining

"Artisanal gold mining is a lot of work for a little money" (Jair)

The extraction of gold through processes of artisanal mining is performed by miners who own land, and by *barequeros;* miners who do not own land or cannot find sufficient gold on their lands and therefore visit mechanised mines in order to find gold. Contrary to mechanised miners, who extract gold on one spot for a few months, the artisanal miners that own land often work on one spot for years. Oro Verde miner Monica states that she respects the mechanised miners but she knows that these mines will only last for a month to the maximum of a year, while artisanal mining is "*para siempre*", forever.

In the small-scale artisanal gold mines I visited, 4 to 8 people are working in the mine, both women and men. In some of the mines, children come to the mine after school to help and learn about mining but also because the miners can keep an eye on them during their work. The owners of the land often decide what happens in the mine and take the lead in the mining process. In the mine of Oro Verde miner Juan is worked only when Juan works. Juan tells his colleagues what to do, when to do it and how to do it. He is the final responsibility in the mine and can decide who works with him. All miners indicate that trust is an important topic within this work, and that they only work with people they trust. People they can trust are generally approached as family but in some mines also friends are working together.

Small-scale gold miners use several tools and techniques in the extraction process. A *batea* or pan shown in picture 2 and 3 is a round wooden bowl that is used in the whole process of the extraction of gold. It is known as an important tool for the last part of the process, *lavado en batea* or panning.

Picture 2. La batea

Picture 3. Batea and almocafre

An *almocafre,* also shown in picture 3, is a tool that is used to loosen soil and rocks. *Cachos* can be described as crescents and are used in pairs of two. They are used in the beginning of the process. A

shovel, or *barra* is used to remove soil and rocks. A *canalón,* shown in picture 8, is a rectangular wooden duct, designed to flow water and soil through. The bottom of the *canalón* is covered with a burlap sack on which a metal grid is placed. Its' function is to separate the soil from stones and other needless material. *Motobombas* or pumps, shown in picture 4, are used to remove soil. These are machines with a hose on both sides, one to pump the water out of a river or creek, the other to pump water with high pressure to the part of the mine where soil has to be removed. This tool is officially not allowed in Oro Verde mines and is not an artisanal tool, but is frequently used by small-scale miners to facilitate the process.

Picture 4. Motobomba

Cleaning the soil

The process of extraction starts with the cleaning of the soil. This generally is the most time-consuming part of the extraction process, because it takes a long time to get to the part of the soil that contains the gold. This is shown in picture 5 where you can see that the upper part of the soil needs to be removed in order to get lower part that contains the gold.

Picture 5. Removing soil

The soil generally consists of gravel and stones in all sizes, which makes the removing process physically demanding. The miners I've visited usually use a *motobomba* to remove the soil first. One person, mainly the owner of the mine, constantly spurts water on the part of the soil that needs to be removed. Sometimes they make a structure of sticks, found around the mine, on which the hose rests and causes a constantly flowing of water at one particular part. During the spurting of the soil, two or three other people in the mine start to clear away the larger stones. One uses the *cachos* to select and collect the stones and then puts them on the *batea* of another person. When the mine is really small this person then throws the stones on a part of the land that is already cleaned or not of use, this is shown in picture 6. When the mine is bigger, the miners form a line, and exchange the filled *batea* with an empty one, by throwing. The filled *batea* above, the empty one below, this is shown in picture 7. This process generally takes ninety per cent of the working day in the mine.

Picture 6. Selecting stones and gravel with cachos

Picture 7. Exchanging the batea

Picture 8 and 9. Separating gravel from gold through the canalón

During the cleaning process a small canal is created so that the water can flow away. The mines I've visited already had this small canal so this one was used or extended during the process.

When after a day and sometimes more days of work the large stones are removed, the *canalón* is being installed. I saw two different methods of doing this, the first one placed the *canalón* in the canal allowing water running through it, the second one placed the *canalón* off the ground and spurting water through it with the *motobomba.* Constantly, soil is placed in the beginning of the *canalón,* and then flows through it together with the water. In this way, the gold remains in the *canalón* between the fibres of the burlap sack. This part of the process is shown in picture 8 and 9.

Lavado en batea

After separating the gravel from the gold by using the *canalón,* what remains is a mixture of gold and very refined substance. The *batea* is used to separate the gold from this substance. First, the grid is being removed from the *canalón* and the burlap sack is placed in a large *batea.* The sack is washed out and the content stays in the *batea.* Then someone, generally a woman, starts spinning the *batea,* flows off some of the refined substance, adds a small amount of water by using her hands and repeats this method until there is almost nothing but gold.

Picture 10. Lavado en batea

Barequeros

Barequeros are known as the miners that work in mines of other miners only with their *batea* in order to find gold. This technique is used extensively in Tadó, and almost everyone I have spoken to has ever done this in his life.

Mechanised mining

Methods of mechanised mining can be distinguished in various ways. Because mechanised mining is not the focus of my research I will give a short explanation of one type of mechanised mining with the use of a retro-excavator. *Mineria de 'retro'* is the most known type of mechanised mining, and is characterized by the use of a retro-excavator and often uses mercury in the cleaning process. *Barequeros* often work in mines with retro-excavator. Picture 11 shows a mechanised mine with retro-excavator. And picture 12 shows the larger *motobomba* used in the mechanised mines.

Picture 11. Minería con retro-excavadora

Picture 12. Motobomba in mechanised mines

Jhon, a mechanised miner who works with retro-excavator explains that in his mine work about eleven people, from Monday until Saturday. These workers sleep in an encampment near the mine, and they receive a monthly salary. He pays a percentage of the gold to Juan, the owner of the land he works on. Depending on the amount of gold and the size of the area, mechanised miners stay at the same spot between twenty days to months. Asking Juan about the use of mercury he laughs and explains that they use something called a *retorta,* demonstrated in picture 12.

Picture 13. Retorta

This oven separates gold from dirt by using a very small amount of mercury. According to Jhon, the same mercury can be used approximately a year, and therefore does harm the environment less than the unsustainable use of mercury. According to Jhon, the remaining mercury is taken away in special containers.

Mechanised gold mining is physically less demanding than artisanal mining because of the access to technology, and through this process of mining more gold is extracted which provides a higher salary for the miners. Mechanised mining has a larger impact on the environment than artisanal mining, because more land can be processed in shorter time and because of the use of chemicals in the extraction process however, I argue that through access to technology, mechanised mining can be an important part of the construction of existential security.

4. Conclusion

This chapter illustrated how small-scale gold miners and their families in the region of Tadó construct existential security through access to community, access to territory and local authority and access to economical activity and technology. The first chapter showed that due to the armed conflict and the 'invisibility' of the Afro-Colombians, miners and their families have limited access to governmental services related to health, education and public order. On the basis of this limited access, miners and their families seem to construct existential security through a system of social control that is created through the access to community. Access to social control seems to complement the lack of access to governmental services.

Subsequently, the second chapter shows the importance of Afro-Colombian identity and community in the construction of existential security. Through law 70, a law that recognizes Afro-Colombians as a distinct group, Afro-Colombians gained rights over territories and this provided them access to territory

and local authority. However, because of the overlap with other laws, national and regional governments still have the power to make decisions over territories. Therefore, I argue that law 70 contributes to the access to territory and authority on the local level, however this should still be approached as limited access. ASOCASAN, the community council of Tadó, carries out the local implementation of this law at 31 communities, consisting 21 local councils. Using an internal regulation, ASOCASAN has set up rules in relation to the use of collective territories and made a distinction between *common use areas* and *family use areas. Collective use areas* are described as forests, rivers and beaches, *family use areas* are described as legalized family property. Both types of land are under the responsibility of the community council. It is allowed to rent family property to mechanised miners, however, this should be done under the control of the community council. Although mechanised mining without a mining title is prohibited by the Colombian state, the community council seems to have transformed this illegal status at the national level to a legal status at the local level in order to regulate this way of using the land.

The last chapter of the first part, emphasizes the importance of gold mining as contributing to the access to economical activity and access to technology. Through history gold mining became an important economical activity in the region of Chocó and also an important part of Afro-Colombian identity. This is reflected by the many traditions, myths and stories related to gold mining. Gold mining thus provides access to economical activity. However, I argue that this access is limited because the amount in which miners can derive benefits from this access depends on how much gold they can find. This is related to the climate and miners' access to technology. The second subparagraph of the chapter makes a distinction between artisanal and mechanised mining, and illustrates the difference in technology between both types of mining. Subsequently it shows how access to technology can contribute to a higher income, and physically less demanding work.

II

The contribution of Fair Mined program Oro Verde to the construction of existential security.

The first part of the paper analysed the construction of existential security through access theory of small-scale gold miners in Tadó. This part of the paper will further elaborate this by analysing how the fair mined program Oro Verde tends to contribute to the construction of existential security. Again, access theory will be used in order to recognize the process of construction. The first chapter of this part of the paper describes the fair mined program Oro Verde, and illustrates the vision, organisation and local implementation of the program. The second chapter analyses how Oro Verde contributes to the construction of existential security by defining their role in access to territory, technology, markets and economical activity.

5. Oro Verde; vision, organization and local implementation

Oro Verde is a result of an alliance between several institutions. A member of AMICHOCÓ, Luz, explains that Oro Verde is constructed out of four organizations; ASOCASAN, the community council of Tadó, COCOMACOIRO, the community council of Condoto, AMICHOCÓ and FUNDAMOJARRAS. Both AMICHOCO and FUNDAMOJARRAS are foundations that aim to contribute to the sustainable development of people in Chocó. Within my research I will focus more on the local implementation of Oro Verde by the community council ASOCASAN rather than the role of both AMICHOCO and FUNDAMOJARRAS in the program.

5.1 Vision and organisation

The Oro Verde program claims to promote practices of small-scale gold mining and aims to improve the living conditions of miners through global (fair trade) markets, by fulfilling ten criteria for certification (Corporación Oro Verde, 2004).

1. There should be no massive ecological destruction. This state being defined by changes to an ecosystem that places it beyond a possibility of recovery.
2. There should be no toxic chemicals used in the extraction process.
3. The mined areas should gain ecological stability within three years.
4. Topsoil removed from the site should be replaced during the exploitation process.
5. Tailings and pooling's must not exceed the local ecosystem capacity for rehabilitation.
6. The silt load into stream river or lake system will be controlled in quantity and frequency so that the native aquatic ecosystem is not disrupted.
7. The mining operations must be conducted with the agreement of the local community council.
8. The origin of gold and platinum (for royalty purposes) must be declared in favour of the respective municipality.
9. In forested areas mining activities must not exceed 10% of a hectare during rational periods of two years.
10. Local, regional and national regulations must be followed.

Oro Verde argues that through small-scale artisanal mining, "inherited from their African ancestors from colonial times" (ARM, 2010) environmental problems caused by mid- and large-scale mining can be reduced. For this reason Oro Verde states not to use chemicals nor machines that have high

impact on the environment in the extraction process. Luz underlines that only in difficult cases the miners are allowed to use excavators to move land.

> "Sometimes we use excavators when we need to improve the activity of the artisanal mining, for example Katalina in Tadó she has a problem with a big rock in her land so we, the community council use a machine to open the mine, so Katalina could work." (Luz)

Oro Verde provides an additional premium of 15% on the sale of gold. This additional premium is meant to be reinvested in community projects in order to encourage the miners to be active in the development of their communities. This premium is paid every year, and 2% of the premium is directly paid to the miners when they sell their gold. Oro Verde refers to itself as "environmentally and socially responsible" (ARM, 2010) and argues that although the program has some challenges, "it provides Afro-Colombian communities with additional income to support their families and the opportunity to drive their own social progress" (ARM, 2010). Challenges are faced in the field of mining rights within Colombian politics, which is described by the program as an unclear issue in Colombian politics.

Fair trade/ Fair mined gold label

Inspired by Oro Verde, the Alliance for Responsible Mining was created and developed a 'Fair Mined standard' that can be applied to artisanal mining around the world.

The community council of Condoto and Rio Iró was the first organisation that was certified as FT/FM gold in 2011, the community council of Tadó obtained this certification in 2012. This standard aims to improve working conditions of the miners, strengthen producer organizations, improve environmental management, gender equality, the elimination of child labour in mining, fairer market access and improved governance in the sector (ARM, 2013:4). Since the 1th of May, the partnership between ARM and FLO terminated, and therefore the gold can now be sold under the conditions of the Fair Mined standard.

It is important to notice that the FM standard emphasizes that the FM gold needs to comply with the national legal frameworks (ARM, 2013:8) of the country. ARM argues that when national legislation does not recognize the rights of small-scale artisanal miners, they will lobby for improved public policies (ARM, 2013:8).

5.2 Local implementation

The community councils of Tadó and Condoto are responsible for the local implementation of the program. In Tadó, ASOCASAN is responsible for the implementation of the Oro Verde program and created a producers group of artisanal miners.

ASOCASAN

ASOCASAN is the community council of the Alto San Juan or Tadó region. As described in the first part of the thesis ASOCASAN is responsible for the implementation of collective territories within the communities but also for the implementation of projects such as Oro Verde. The first part of the paper already described the role of ASOCASAN in the organisation of collective territories. In this chapter I

will focus more on GRUMASAN, which is the producers group of artisanal miners in the region, and designed to implement and organize mining and Oro Verde in Tadó. The organization chart in the first chapter shows that ASOCASAN perceives Oro Verde as a subordinate program of the community council and GRUMASAN is related to the program as the producers group.

Although ASOCASAN established rules in relation to the communities, Andres, the *presidente* of a local community argues that every community has its' own rules. He refers to the *Fiesta Patronales de la Virgin del Carmen (*Patronal feast of the Carmen Virgin) that takes place from the 14th until the 16th of July and in which the people living and working in Carmelo are not allowed to work in the mines in order to keep the rivers clean and to ensure that all the people from the community can be present at the feast. He also states that with ASOCASAN they sometimes check the mines whether they comply with the local rules. He refers to a rule that states that fuel is not allowed to be located close to the engine. Andres also demonstrates that the Oro Verde program has six components; a purchase fund, a premium fund, a health fund, an administrative fund, a compensation fund and an operability fund. All funds are for the miners, and the premium fund will be divided for 50% to the miner and 50% to the community. However, this is not reflected in the documents I have at my disposal.

GRUMASAN

GRUMASAN, the producers group of artisanal miners in the Tadó, is designed in order to improve the quality of life of the members of the Oro Verde program. GRUMASAN aims to "maintain and improve mining production practices and fair trade in the collective territory of the black communities of the Alto San Juan, looking for increased production, improved working conditions and better prices that contribute to the development of the region" (ASOCASAN). The organisation is divided into a general coordinator, technical and operational secretary, administrative assistant, and a premium committee. The premium committee is responsible for the whole process around the premium; the administration, management and the distribution and access to certain resources. According to the *reglamento interno* this committee should always ask for approval in general meetings and report to the assembly of GRUMASAN. .

The *reglamento interno* of GRUMASAN distinguishes a *sustainable mining family unit* (ASOCASAN, 2009a) as the "traditional system of mining production of the Colombian Pacific black communities" (ASOCASAN, 2009a) In addition they also distinguish a *family miner unit* and *sustainable collective* enrolled within the framework of Oro Verde. GRUMASAN strives for the primacy of the collective interest, the active participation of *Mining Family Units* and the *Sustainable Collective* in decision-making, gender-equity and transparency and punctuality. GRUMASAN argues that "the activities and actions shall be conducted in good faith, responsibility, respect, trust, harmony, punctuality, discretion, transparency and honesty." (ASOCASAN, 2009a) Its' mission is highly linked to the improvement of life quality through modernization and sustainable (green) development.

> "Improve the quality and productive capacity of the *Family Mining Units* and / or *Sustainable Collective*, enabling, implementing modernization processes, ensuring a market in the framework of "green markets, clean production and fair trade", respecting and preserving the

environmental and cultural criteria, gender equality, establishing the practice as a mechanism for income generation, and the promotion of food security and sovereignty". (ASOCASAN, 2009a)

Working conditions

In the *reglamento* the working conditions of the miners are defined. The first theme is 'freedom to work' and argues that all persons involved in activities within the mining units should not be subjected to work under pressure or any form of forced labour that violates human rights, cultural principles, religion and gender. Every person that is member of the family unit or collective may work in another mining unit.

Other themes that are described in the *reglamento* are the 'right to no discrimination' and 'the absence of child labour in mining units'. The involvement of children in mining units is allowed when children help their families after school or in holidays, but only when this work will not jeopardize schooling or the need for recreation, and does not harm the social, moral or physical development of the children. This is described from a perspective in which the participation of the children in mining also contributes to the transferring of knowledge from generation to generation. The last theme emphasizes 'health and safety conditions in mining units', and states that in order to ensure proper functioning of the equipment and machinery used in mining units, ASOCASAN develops processes of inspection, through training sessions on health and safety.

Rights and duties

An important part of the *reglamento* is the chapter that focuses on the rights and duties of the Oro Verde miners. According to the *reglamento* the miners are required to "sell their entire production of gold and platinum to the program, to comply with the criteria established by the program and the fair trade market, to respect and ensure the safety and welfare of the group members, the community council and other persons involved in the program, to comply with the recent rules established by the community council of ASOCASAN, to participate in the events organized by the producers group and the senior council and to invest in resources obtained by the program determined by the program" (ASOCASAN, 2009a). The rights described in the *reglamento* are highly related to the duties of the program. According to the *reglamento* Oro Verde miners have the rights to receive training and technical improvement, but also social and economical benefits are mentioned, though not really specific. The right to receive the premium and to be a member of GRUMASAN as long as the miner meets the criteria is the last right described by the *reglamento*.

Requirements for membership

In the *reglamento* GRUMASAN formulates the requirements for participation in the Oro Verde program. These requirements are limited to being enrolled in the census of ASOCASAN, comply with the Oro Verde and fair trade criteria, selling their whole production to Oro Verde permanently and not having issues with the law, conflicts with producing partners that are socially, economically and technically related to the program.

Conversations with the miners, community members and members of the community council showed that when someone wants to participate in the program they should feel connected to the vision of the program. Diego, member of ASOCASAN, states:

> *"Some people want to participate only because they are looking for more money, because they heard that one of the benefits is the premium. But for us it is not about the money but it is about the responsibilities we have towards a responsible environment. There are people who want to participate for the money but who do not want to get involved in the environmental awareness."* (Diego)

Removal from the program

An Oro Verde miner can be removed of the program when he does not comply the rules. Penalties are attached that differ from the loss of benefits, temporary or permanent suspension. The *reglamento* distinguishes 'mild faults' and 'serious faults'; mild faults include not following up recommendations of the *junta directiva, representante legal, coordinator tecnico, secretario operativo* of ASOCASAN and verbally attack fellow workers of the producers group, serious faults include the use of unauthorized heavy machinery in the production process, the use of mercury or other contamination in the production process, the sale of production not to the program, changing the production system by other forms of land use and physically attack fellow workers of the producers group, *junta directive, representante legal* and the working team of the organization.

6. Oro Verde and access

By using the theory of access this chapter analyses how Oro Verde tends to contribute to the construction of existential security of small-scale gold miners and their families in Tadó.

I will relate the types of access that small-scale gold miners already have to Oro Verde and to how they contribute to this access and the construction of existential security. In the first part of this paper I argued that through law 70, Afro-Colombians gain access to territory and local authority. However, I argue that this access is limited because of overlapping and contradictory regulations over territory. This chapter shows that also within the Oro Verde program the use of territory causes problems because of the contradictory and overlapping rules between different levels of the organisation. This is also reflected in the access to technology, wherein Oro Verde dedicates high value to the artisanal way of mining, but what seems to be more complicated on the local level. The second paragraph emphasizes this type of access. The last paragraph shows how Oro Verde contributes to the limited access that artisanal miners have to economical activity, and how access through global markets is established.

6.1 Oro Verde and access to territory

Juan, Oro Verde miner, and owner of a large part of land, works only on a small part of this land. His mine is located a half hour walk from his house, crossing a river on a rickety bridge, and following the brown coloured river for over 20 minutes. My translator explains that the river has its' brown colour because of the mechanised mine that is located near to the mine of Juan. After having walked through

a beautiful rainforest you arrive in an organized small-scale mine; narrow and deep small canals are constructed with stones found during the extraction process and plateaus are built in order to form the basis for newly planted trees. A small wooden lodge near the mine is built to cook lunch, to provide shelter from the rain but also to receive visitors of the mine. In the centre of the mine a small hut is constructed with sticks and black plastic that provides protection for the sun and rain when resting and where the miners save their stuff. Because the mine is located within the forest, there is almost no wind and there are no trees to protect the miners from the strong sun. The first time I visited this mine, I returned totally sunburned and withered due to these severe conditions. Juan seems to be a real proud miner as he tells me how he likes his job and how he works as hard as possible to make this mine a highly organized mine. Juan tells us that near to his mine there is a mechanised mine that we can visit. When I ask him whether this is a large competitor for his mine and his gold, he answers me with a doubtful yes and I become aware that this mechanised mine is also located on his land. As I later talk about this with another miner he tells me that Juan rents his land to these mechanised miners and receives a part of their income. Later Juan explains in an interview:

> *"This is what happens, they are working here through an agreement we signed, and every time they 'hacen un lavada' ('do a wash', last part of the mining process) they give me twenty per cent of the income over their production. When they have a pound of metal, they give me twenty per cent, I am going to safe this and split this with my brothers" … "I do this to earn a living but also because in front of my mine there is a spot that I cannot work on with artisanal techniques, because it is to steep".* (Juan)

According to Luz, member of AMICHOCO, the Oro Verde program does not allow this type of leasing land, and she emphasizes, "Who decides to rent his land is out of the program". (Luz)
She also stresses that there are some miners within the program who rented their land to mechanised miners before they participated in the program. According to Luz, they do not need to do this anymore because the program offers them enough income for a livelihood.

> *"Before he and his family decided to rent the land. His relatives, or his father, I do not know, rented the land, and the machine left, because maybe he worked for a month and that's it. But he has chosen to work his land, to get money for himself and his family and not to rent the land to another person"* (Luz).

The perspective of the miners seems to conflict with this approach; Oro Verde miners do not need to rent their land anymore because they now gain enough money for their livelihood. The situation of Juan shows us that this is not true, and that miners within Oro Verde still need to rent their lands in order to gain a livelihood. The question is whether the exclusion of renting land by miners who participate in the Oro Verde program then contributes positively to the construction of existential security of these miners. Also, the previous part showed that through the community council, the renting of land to mechanised miners is approved when this is established in consultation with the

community council. This shows the contradicting rules within Oro Verde, and therefore contribution to access to territory by the program is limited.

6.2 Oro Verde and access to technology

The Oro Verde program emphasizes the importance of environmental sustainability, and this is visible in the ten main principles formulated by the program and described in the beginning of this part of which 8 are based on environmental sustainability. Through artisanal mining techniques Oro Verde stresses to provide a more sustainable living and to improve life conditions of the miners. Andres, *presidente* of a local community council, claims that the most important goal of Oro Verde is to have 'clean gold', so their miners do not use mercury in the extraction process. AMICHOCO developed a figure together with GOMIAM that distinguishes nine methods of extraction in gold mining in Chocó, which is shown in figure 4.

Figure 4. Small-scale gold mining in Chocó, Colombia (AMICHOCO and GOMIAM, 2012)

Luz, member of AMICHOCO, stresses that their miners only work with mining techniques described in figure 4 that do not require a mining title. Thus she states that miners work with *mina de agua corrida, guache, hoyadero, mazamorreo* and *zambullidero. Mina agua corrida* is a method that uses water from the streams in order to wash the gravel and materials on the terraces. Together with the water the gravel flows through a *canalón* that separates the water, gravel, stones and gold. The gold remains in the *canalón* and is being separated from the remaining sand by *lavado en batea.* A *guache* is a technique that uses underground tunnels that are supported by wood. According to Oro Verde these tunnels can last up to twenty years in operation. The mines I visited did not use this technique. Through the technique of the *hoyadero* a vertical hole is dug, in order to reach the deeper gold. This is done by hand and the hole can become 15 meters deep. I have not observed this technique but some

miners told me that they sometimes use it, depending on the type of land they work on. According to figure 4, the *mazamorreo* technique is being done in the summer, and is often being done by women. These women make a selection of the gravel and *lavar* with the *batea.* In Oro Verde mines I never observed this, but in Tadó I observed an older lady doing this on the banks of the river. Through the *zambullidero* technique gold is extracted from the bottom of the river or creek. According to Oro Verde women generally carry out this technique. In the mines I visited, this technique was not performed. Figure 2 gives a good intention of the possible techniques and methods used by Oro Verde and small-scale gold miners. During my research I observed that these techniques were often combined in the process of extraction.

The three types of mining that Oro Verde claims to be of highly impact for the environment and therefore not allowed to use by Oro Verde miners are *arranque con motobombas, elevadores de tierra* and *mineria de 'retro'.* According to Luz *explotación con dragueatas* neither is allowed but there happen to be some conflicts between AMICHOCO and the community council of Condoto around this technique, therefore she referred to this technique as doubtful.

Miners that use the *arranque con motobombas* technique use a pump to transport water at high pressure. After this they use a *canalón* to clean the rest of the soil. According to figure 4 this technique has a medium-scale impact on the environment. *Elevadores de tierra* are elevators lifting ground and used to absorb the soil and clean it afterwards. It requires aluminium pumps and hoses.

Although the use of machines is being presented as prohibited by Oro Verde at the local level, and only allowed in certain exceptional cases, the use of machines and especially *motobombas* by Oro Verde miners seems to be accepted and necessary in the extraction process. Oro Verde miner Monica argues that by the help of the program she was able to buy a *motobomba* that helped her to improve her working conditions and she states that the use of machines is necessary within their work:

> *"Machines are helpful so that the people can work better because there are terrains very deep. In a reunion with the producers group we proposed this. There is a lady in Playa de Oro who has a mine, but this one is deep. For her it would be helpful to have a retro excavator."*
> (Monica)

Juan also states that doing this type of artisanal mining is highly related to the type of land you are working on. Oro Verde miners cannot work on high terrains because they are not in a position to move this land without the use of a retro-excavator.

> *There have been many difficulties. The first one is that, this type of mining depends on the type of land that you have. Whether it is high or low. When you are not able to work it on your own you need some partners or colleagues. We had times that we have not been able to work. We have been working with six people but suddenly we could only work with two because when the production is not given people leave, are not encouraged to work anymore*

and are going to work elsewhere. That is one of the difficulties and another is when we do not have a good production we do not have enough to feed ourselves and to buy the fuel, then my colleagues help me and lend me money. (Juan)

All miners I visited used *motobombas* in the extraction process of gold and this seems to be accepted by the community. This shows the dilemma between technological development and environmental sustainability. Technological development improves economical development and working conditions of the miners. Through environmental sustainability large parts of nature in Chocó are maintained. The program is presented as providing benefits for both sides. However, my research shows that sustaining an environmental sustainable way of mining does only limited contribute to the construction of existential security of small-scale gold miners. By using artisanal techniques, miners have a lack of access to technology that results in a lack of income and the ability to gain a secure livelihood. Although the use of machines in the extraction process of gold is prohibited by the program, at the local level gold miners use *motobombas* in order to improve their working conditions and level of income. As mentioned in the precious paragraph, ARM emphasized that Fair Mined gold mining activities should comply with the legal framework of the country. This could be part of the reason that ARM forbids the use of all machines in the extraction process of the Oro Verde miners. However, the emphasis on environmental sustainability also seems to exclude the possibility to technological improvement.

6.3 Oro Verde and access to markets and economical activity

The program of Oro Verde argues to improve livelihoods and working conditions of small-scale miners through access to (global) markets and economical activity in the form of the 15% premium. Ribot and Peluso (2003:166) perceive access to markets "as the ability of individuals or groups to gain, control, or maintain entry into exchange relations". Oro Verde provides access to the global Fair Mined market, and argues that this contributes to their objectives. However, Andres, *presidente* of a local community, explains that at this moment Oro Verde faces large difficulties in the production, and states that the demand for Oro Verde gold is much higher than Oro Verde can provide. Therefore the program seems to lose important customers. He also illustrates the problem of the 'mechanised mining boom', the emergence of mechanical mines in the region, whereby many miners prefer to rent their land to mechanical miners instead of participate in the program.

Oro Verde stresses to provide a more sustainable income that contributes to the construction of security. Monica, Oro Verde miner, explains that by using artisanal techniques they are only able to get a small amount of gold everyday, which secures them of gold for the next day, and does not exhausts the land. However, the first part of this thesis showed that Oro Verde miners still have difficulties in gaining sufficient income for a livelihood. The artisanal way of mining provides limited access to economical activity and this is only partly solved by the Oro Verde program. In addition, according to the miners the premium, a 15% extra on the gold price, is, besides the 2% that is directly paid to the miners, generally paid every beginning of the year. However, this year, the miners did not yet receive the premium and are pending for it since the beginning of 2013. Therefore I argue that by

providing access to global markets and improving access to economical activity Oro Verde's contribution is limited and not sufficient in order to contribute to miners' existential security.

7. Conclusion

Oro Verde is created as an alliance between four organizations, and locally implemented in Tadó by the community council of the region, ASOCASAN. The community council perceives the program as part of their organisation and created a producers group of artisanal miners, GRUMASAN, in order to implement the objectives of Oro Verde. By the use of an internal regulation, they describe rules related to the program, working conditions, rights and duties, requirements for participation, and grounds on which miners can be removed from the program. Oro Verde has been labelled as Fair Mined gold, a gold standard provided by ARM.

This part showed how Oro Verde contributes to the construction of existential security by describing how the program attempts to contribute through access to territory and authority, technology, markets and economical activities. I argue that through rules that forbid the renting of land by Oro Verde miners, Oro Verde limits the access to territory and local authority that the miners already informally constructed. Because artisanal mining does not produce enough income, the miners seem to need the income that they obtain from the renting of their land. Promoting only artisanal ways of mining, from an environmental sustainable point of view, also forms a problem that limits or does not provide access to technology. The previous part showed that access to technology could provide more income and physical less demanding work for the miners. Because Oro Verde prohibits the use of all machines, this access to technology is limited and therefore miners seem to have constructed an informal way of using this machinery.

The last paragraph of this part shows that Oro Verde aims to improve peoples' livelihood through access to global markets and economical activity. The previous part showed that miners gained access to economical activity through gold mining, though; this access is limited because gold mining cannot provide a fixed or secure income due to factors such as the climate. Oro Verde attempts to contribute to this reduced access by providing the 15% premium on the gold price. 2% of this premium is paid directly to the miners when they sell their gold, the remaining 13% is paid ones a year. My research showed that this premium has not yet been paid this year. This indicates that Oro Verde has not been able to contribute sufficient and access to economical activity, although miners receive 2% extra on the gold price, can still be perceived as limited. The same applies to access to global markets, which is provided by Oro Verde, but seems not to be able to contribute sufficient to the construction of peoples' existential security.

Conclusion

Gold mining is the main economical activity in the region of Chocó, Colombia. This region, rich of biodiversity, is perceived to be the poorest region of Colombia. The region is inhabited by a large population of Afro-Colombians, former slaves of African descent, who were brought to Colombia in the beginning of the 16th century in order to work in the mines. Gold mining is related to many social, environmental and political conflicts. In order to overcome these conflicts, Oro Verde, a FM gold program was created in cooperation with NGO's, by the community councils of Tadó and Condoto. Also Oro Verde faces many challenges related to these conflicts. To gain more knowledge on the construction process of existential security and analysing how Oro Verde contributes to this process is essential in overcoming these challenges. Also research is needed concerning the relation between Afro-Colombian miners, gold mining and the community. This thesis provides an analysis of the construction process of existential security, by identifying access mechanisms that determine whether people can benefit from resources. I argue that these mechanisms provide insight in the construction of existential security of small-scale gold miners.

The first part of the thesis analyses the construction of existential security of small-scale gold miners by identifying access mechanisms related to the ability to benefit from the resources in the region. This part shows how miners construct existential security through access to territory and local authority, Afro-Colombian identity and community, governmental services, economical activity and technology. Miners in Tadó have limited access to governmental services due to the armed conflict and the invisibility of Afro-Colombians in Colombia. These governmental services are related to health, education and public order. In order to maintain access and construct existential security miners replaced this access by access to community and created a system of social control. Within this system, the access to community complements the lack of access to governmental services in situations related to crime, the armed conflict, emergency situations and community organisation. Afro-Colombian identity and community also provides access to territory and local authority. This access is gained through law 70 that recognizes Afro-Colombians as a distinct group and provides them the right to collective territories. The community council of Tadó, ASOCASAN, carries out the local implementation of this law in 31 communities, with 21 local councils. In their internal regulation ASOCASAN distinguishes *common use areas* such as forests, rivers and beaches, and *family use areas* that are defined as legalized family property. Both types of areas are approached as responsibility of the community council and use of this territory should comply with the rules of ASOCASAN. Because the Colombian state perceives all mineral deposits as property of the state, this access is still limited. National and regional government still have the power to make decisions over land that overrule the right to collective territories and here the miners are in disadvantage because of their lack of access. Also, renting land to mechanised miners is nationally forbidden, because of the illegal status that mechanised miners without mining title have. However, the community council and the miners have converted this illegality at the national level to legality on the local level in order to be able to control territories.

Gold mining, through history entangled with Afro-Colombian identity, provides access to economical activity and technology. Traditions and myths show how gold mining is reflected in Afro-Colombian identity. I approach access to economical activity as limited because it depends on the access to technology and the climate whether the miners can benefit enough from mining for their livelihood. I argue that access to technology results in physically less demanding work and the improvement of the income of the miners.

In the second part of the thesis, the contribution of Oro Verde to the construction of existential security is examined. Oro Verde is an alliance between four organizations, build upon 10 criteria for certification of which 8 are related to environmental sustainability. This means that Oro Verde miners do not use chemicals in the extraction process nor cause massive ecological destruction that goes beyond the possibility of recovery. In order to improve the lives of the miners Oro Verde states to provide access to global markets and offers the miners an additional premium of 15% on the gold price. 2% of the premium is directly paid to these miners when they sell their gold, 13% is meant to be paid every year. The program has a Fair Mined label, endorsed by ARM, and must comply with the rules of this standard as well. ASOCASAN, the community council of Tadó is responsible for the implementation of the program in Tadó. ASOCASAN perceives the program as part of the council and created a producers group of artisanal miners, GRUMASAN, to regulate and implement the program in Tadó. This producers group established rules related to working conditions and requirements for participation in Oro Verde.

Contradictory regulations within the program associated with access to territory make it hard for Oro Verde to contribute to this type of access. AMICHOCO argues that renting land is prohibited for Oro Verde miners. However, ASOCASAN seems to approve the renting of land when this is done by the terms of the community council. Again this shows how miners construct their lack of formal access through informal access transform their national formal non-access to local formal access.

Because of the importance of environmental sustainability, access to technology is limited. The program only supports the artisanal way of mining that is poor in technology. Therefore the program does not contribute to this type of access and miners are again forced to gain this access through informal ways. This is shown in the use of *motobombas* in the Oro Verde mines, which is prohibited by AMICHOCO, but used by the miners and tolerated by the community council.

The Fair Mined standard provides access to global markets. Nevertheless, miners do not seem to take advantage of this yet, because of the large demand of green gold that they cannot meet and which results in the loss of many important customers of the program. This also applies to the 15% premium, that on paper certainly contributes to the construction of existential security, but in practice proves to be difficult because the miners cannot rely on the payment of the yearly premium; the premium of this year was expected in January, but the miners did not yet receive this amount of money.

Overall, I argue that miners in the region of Tadó construct their existential security through access to territory and local authority, Afro-Colombian identity, governmental services, economical activity and technology. This access is most of the time a limited form of access, due to contradicting and

overlapping regulations on the local, regional and national level. However, in consultation with the community council, miners construct their existential security through informal forms of access that are locally perceived as formal access and transformed in order to contribute to their existential security. Similarly, due to overlapping regulations within the organisation and certification, Oro Verde cannot or only limited contribute to the construction of existential security of the miners. Within the framework of the organisation miners seem to construct their own informal ways of access that contribute to the construction of their existential security and that are formally not approved by the program.

In relation to the Oro Verde program, further research on how technological improvement can be obtained without having a large impact on environmental sustainability would be really useful. Additionally, comparative research on *barequeros,* artisanal and mechanised miners and the construction of existential security can provide interesting results about how to contribute to the existential security of the miners. Another theme, which I could unfortunately not discuss within this thesis, is found in corruption and power relations and is highly related to the construction of existential security of the miners.

Executive summary

The region of Chocó, Colombia is one of the most bio diverse regions of the world, but also the poorest region in economic terms. A large Afro-Colombian population populates the region and the main economical activity of the region is gold mining, which is highly entangled with Afro-Colombian identity. Fair Mined program Oro Verde is active in this region and aims to overcome conflicts related to gold mining on the social, environmental and political level. This program faces many challenges and in order to surpass these challenges this thesis provides an analysis of the construction of the existential security of small-scale gold miners in Tadó. Existential security is approached as peoples' perceived security, and through the identification of access mechanisms the process of construction is clarified.

The first part of the thesis examines how small-scale gold miners in Tadó construct existential security through access to Afro-Colombian identity, community and gold mining. As a consequence of law 70, a law that acknowledges Afro-Colombians as a distinct group, Afro-Colombian community have the right to collective territories. In Tadó this is implemented by the community council, ASOCASAN, and provides access to territory and local authority. However, this access is limited as a result of existing laws and regulations at the national and regional level that overlap this law. Because of their economical position Afro-Colombians are disadvantaged, and this limits their access. Access to economical activity is gained by the means of gold mining, which is intertwined with Afro-Colombian identity and community through history. However, this access is limited because gold mining does not provide a fixed income and the amount of income is dependent on factors such as the climate and access to technology. A distinction is made between artisanal and mechanised mining, and the study shows that access to technology, which is visible in mechanised mining, can contribute to the construction of existential security of the miners.

The second part of the thesis describes the contribution of Fair Mined program Oro Verde, an alliance between four organisations, to the construction of existential security. The community council ASOCASAN implements the program in Tadó. The emphasis of the program on environmental sustainability results in the lack of access to technology, that enables the miners to gain sufficient income from this economical activity. Because the program cannot offer additional access to territory, economical activity and technology, miners constructed their own informal access outside the framework of the program. This is illustrated in the use of *motobombas* or pumps, which are prohibited by the program, but used by the miners and tolerated by the community council. Also the promised 15% additional premium on the gold price is not guaranteed; only 2% is directly paid to the miners when they sell there gold, the remaining 13% meant to be paid every year but not yet paid over last year.

This thesis shows that small-scale gold miners in Tadó construct their existential security through various forms of access, that are generally limited due to overlapping and contradicting regulations. For this reason small-scale gold miners construct their existential security through informal ways of

access, transforming them in formal ways of access at the local level. Since Oro Verde does not turn this around, and still access to technology and territory is restricted, the contribution of the Fair Mined program is limited.

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Appendices

List of Informants

This list provides the censored names of all informants that I have interviewed. Besides this list I had 'informal' contact with more miners, community members and members of the community council.

Name	Function	Date of interview
Juan	Miner	17 February 2013
Andres	*Presidente* local council	15 February 2013
Mauricio	*Presidente* local council and miner	29 January 2013
Santiago	Mining Engineer	10 January 2013
Felipe	Member ASOCASAN	6 March 2013
Jhon	Miner	26 January 2013
Monica	Miner	18 February 2013
Hernando	Member ASOCASAN	15 March 2013
Yarlinto	Miner	18 March 2013
Gabriel	Mining Engineer	14 March 2013
Diego	Member ASOCASAN	17 February 2013
Alexander	Miner	18 March 2013
Jair	Leader local community	11 January 2013
Rudy	Mining Engineer	10 January 2013
Jorge	Miner	11 January 2013
Rodolfo	Lawyer	10 January 2013
Noel	Mining Engineer/Lawyer	17 January 2013
Julian	Lawyer	16 January 2013
Oscar	Member ASOCASAN	23 January 2013
Luz	Member of AMICHOCO	7 February 2013
Elisa	Finance & Development ARM	7 February 2013
Ercilia	Ministerio de Minas y Energia	6 February 2013
Eduardo	Member ASOCASAN	8 March 2013
Walter	Mining Engineer	16 January 2013
Juan Carlos	Leader local community	17 January 2013
Cristian	Member ASOCASAN	23 January 2013